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The required competencies for a consultant to deal with a situation of crisis (the COVID-19 pandemic) while working from home

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September, 2021

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Behavior

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to discover which were the required competencies for a consultant to deal with a situation of crisis (COVID-19 pandemic) while working from home.

The goal is to understand i) if the consultants were indeed prepared to work from home, due to the short notice of the companies and the government, ii) which were the most important competencies that enabled the consultants to deal better with the situation and iii) the real impact of working from home during the pandemic and the quarantine period.

To empirically investigate the above question a qualitative research approach will be used and in order to collect empirical evidence, a total of 18 qualitative interviews have been conducted with consultants from different business areas that worked from home during the pandemic. The results will thereafter be compared to the theoretical framework by utilizing an inductive and deductive approach, in order to, find patterns or relevant information that lead to conclusions.

The results suggest that the most relevant competences in the context of working from home during a crisis are: i) interpersonal communication, ii) anxiety and stress management, iii) manage time and iv) e-leadership. These competencies will cause a greater impact on the consultants' performance, well-being at work and ability to work from home, if adequate training is provided by the companies.

Working from home provides in the majority of the cases a better work-life balance, however, this depends on the individual's personal situation, personality and competencies acquired.

Keywords: competencies, work from home, consultants, pandemic, crisis management, health crisis

JEL classification:

H12 Crisis management

J24 Human Capital • Skills • Occupational Choice • Labor Productivity

O15 Human Resources • Human Development • Income Distribution • Migration

Resumo

O objetivo desta tese é descobrir quais são as competências necessárias para um consultor lidar com uma situação de crise (pandemia COVID-19) enquanto trabalha em casa.

O objetivo é perceber i) se os consultores estavam preparados para trabalhar em casa, devido ao aviso de curto prazo das empresas e do governo, ii) quais foram as competências mais importantes que permitiram aos consultores lidar melhor com a situação e iii) o impacto de trabalhar em casa durante a pandemia e o período de quarentena.

Para investigar empiricamente a questão acima, uma abordagem de pesquisa qualitativa será usada e, a fim de recolher evidências empíricas, um total de 18 entrevistas qualitativas foram conduzidas com consultores de diferentes áreas de negócio que trabalharam em casa durante a crise. Os resultados serão posteriormente comparados com o enquadramento teórico, utilizando uma abordagem indutiva e dedutiva, a fim de encontrar padrões ou informações relevantes que levem a conclusões.

Os resultados sugerem que as competências mais relevantes, no contexto do trabalho a partir de casa, durante uma crise são: i) comunicação interpessoal, ii) gestão da ansiedade e do stress, iii) gestão do tempo e iv) e-Leadership. Estas competências são as que irão causar um maior impacto no desempenho dos consultores, no bem-estar no trabalho e na capacidade para trabalhar em casa, se as empresas oferecerem formação adequada.

Trabalhar em casa proporciona, na maioria dos casos, um melhor equilíbrio entre trabalho e vida pessoal, mas esta gestão depende da situação pessoal do indivíduo, da personalidade e das competências adquiridas

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1. Introduction

The current global situation, living a pandemic, lead to some changes in the way of working for individuals and in several industries, it changed the working conditions. For example, if a consultant spent 100% of his time in the office, the pandemic certainly showed to the companies that it is indeed possible to have their employees working from home on a daily basis and that not every employee is required to be at the office or their place of work. On the other hand, a coffee shop assistant still needs to be at the shop every day, but it is now required to use a mask, disinfect his/her hands, and adapt some behaviors to meet the rules imposed by the government and his/her employer.

Each profession has its own peculiarities and as it would be difficult to study them in a transversal way, this research will be focused on the consulting field. The purpose of this study is to understand the impact in the consultant's professional life, of working from home in the current framework of a global health crisis. Accordingly, this study aims and purpose is to discover the following:

“The required competencies for a consultant to deal with a situation of crisis (COVID-19 pandemic) while working from home”

To empirically investigate the above question a qualitative research approach will be used. The first part of the thesis incorporates the main theoretical framework, which is divided into three topics: i) crisis management - COVID-19 pandemic, ii) the competencies of a consultant and iii) working from home linked with work-life balance. The second part will be composed by the collection and analysis of data and finally the last part will be the conclusions of the comparison of the information collected vs theoretical framework.

The information obtained with this study could be valuable to the companies that have the intention to prepare their employees to a future situation of crisis, to still deal with the current one, or to prepare for a new structure of work, through training based in the competencies required to manage situations of crisis. Such information will be useful for the leaders, for the managers and consequently for the employees of each company that intend to change the workflow structure and provide additional training to the employees. The study will be mainly relevant for those who are working in directly in the field and see that there are some issues with regards to the pandemic crisis and the consequent changes in employees' behaviors and the structure of work applied since the beginning of the pandemic. Furthermore, it can also be useful if the companies, after the pandemic, still want to continue with the implementation of remote work, to know in which areas is more

important to focus, for their employees have all the tools to be able to work from home, not only the laptop, but the resilience, the motivation, the strategies to manage their time, between other competencies that may be applicable.

Furthermore, considering the topics above mentioned and the purpose of this study, we have the following research questions:

- I. *“Were the consultants prepared to work from home during this period of crisis?”*
- II. *“Which individual, interpersonal and instrumental competences are required to be able to work from home?”*
- III. *“Is it possible to have a work-life balance while working from home during a crisis?”*

Question I, the goal is to understand if the consultants were indeed prepared to work from home, due to the short notice of the companies and the government. This question will be analyzed considering the competencies that the consultants needed to work from home, if they already had those competencies, if they were required to develop them or if they did not develop them at all. Such question is also linked with the working conditions at home (wi-fi, light, etc), if the company was prepared for the digital and remote work, and the materials that were available or not for the consultants (organization laptop, headphones, etc).

Following, question II is to understand which personal, interpersonal and instrumental competencies were the most important competencies that enabled the consultants to deal better with the situation and if the three groups of competencies were all important to manage the pandemic crisis, which will allow the companies to focus more on what is really important and not in providing training on competencies that had little or none impact.

Finally, question III, is regarding the work-life balance during the pandemic crisis. The consultants were not able to leave their houses during a period of time unless they were going to the supermarket or to the doctor for example, consequently, they most likely, as almost everyone, spent 24h/7 days a week at home, with their families or alone, which could have seriously impacted this balance, either from a positive (saving time on commuting for example) or negative way (worked more time due to have more time available, due to no commuting or not performing activities outside their homes (hobbies)).

Considering the above, it is also one of the goals of this research to analyze the impact of working from home during the pandemic situation and the quarantine period, which can bring us new insights on this issue, as the consultants were sent home without any previous warning and were obligated to adapt fast to this new routine.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Crisis management - The COVID-19 pandemic

At the end of December 2019, COVID-19 was firstly detected in the city of Wuhan, China. On 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a public health emergency of international concern. The pandemic suddenly dominated our daily lives, and the definition is now familiar to all of us — an infectious disease where we see significant and ongoing person-to-person spread in multiple countries around the world at the same time (Savic, 2020). As suggested by the World Health Organization, in the absence of any specific treatment at the time, one of the ways to stop the spread of COVID-19 was self-quarantine and isolation (Dubey and Tripathi, 2020). In this sense, to prevent the spread of the virus and protect workers, governments around the world instructed companies to close their offices and enable employees to work from home — to telecommute and to close stores, restaurants, coffee shops, hairdressers and so on.

Considering the above, the world was and still is facing a health crisis. A crisis is a total or partial disruptive event where people, equipment, property, or the environment may negatively affect the organization's value. According to Vandelier (2016), a situation of crisis implies a crisis management process, which leads to a prepared and more flexible organization, able to adapt fast to the changing conditions during an emergency period as the one we are living nowadays. Therefore, a crisis needs to be managed in order to not get any bigger than it already is. In this sense, is important to focus on the concept of crisis management. It can be defined as the acts and behaviors that are taken by an organization to be ready for a major catastrophic situation (Lockwood, 2005).

Although we are facing a health crisis, from the global point of view, this impacts each individual and consequently the organizations in several ways, mainly from a human resources point of view, in this sense, this study aims to understand these impacts in the consultant's job and the competencies required to manage this crisis.

Some of the impacts of a crisis like this may be the following (Vanderlier, 2016): i) panic inside the organization, ii) lack of morale and motivation that might cause low performance, iii) misinformation or fake news, iv) psychological problems and recovery (as stated in the last 2

paragraphs), v) cancelation of recruitment and scheduled or future training and/or vi) loss of key staff and knowledge (due to financial issues the company may need to dismiss employees or they may leave due to cuts in the remuneration or benefits).

For example, during the economic crisis in Greece, employees noticed that the financial, human, and technical resources were subject to several cuts in the organisations they worked for, their suppliers as well as their clients (Chatrakul Na Ayudhya et al., 2019). This situation led to feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, the deterioration of their professional status, due to remuneration reduction and rising costs, as they ended up experiencing an increasing loss of meaning in their work.

Looking closely to the actual health crisis, Bavel et al. (2020) enhance the difficulties that arose to the families during this health crisis, especially stress and coping - avoiding this is not an option. Even if a family is free from the virus, it may lead to stress and anxiety, as we needed to change our behaviors (stay more at home, using masks, work from home, isolation - quarantine) and it may also impact the family's economic situation due to lay-off or loss of a job. Social connections are essential for human beings to regulate emotions, cope with stress and stay resilient - one of the solutions for this issue is on the online interactions with friends and co-workers, as well as working from home. On the other side, the intimate relationships with the family can be an issue, as the individuals are forced to be isolated at home with their immediate family members (partner, parents, grandparents, sisters, etc) or the individuals someone may share a house with (colleagues, friends, between others) during weeks or months. This forced isolation can lead to anger, explosive behaviors. Furthermore, public health emergencies may affect the health, safety, and well-being of individuals, causing them, for example, insecurity, confusion or emotional isolation and communities, such as owing to economic loss, work and school closures or inadequate resources for medical response (Pfefferbaum et al, 2020).

2.2. Competency – The definition

To arrive at the concept of competence, we must first define what is a qualification. Qualification is often defined in 2 parts: as the set of "know-how" that the individual has and the degree of autonomy and capacity with which the worker must carry out the tasks that have been entrusted to him (Almeida & Rebelo, 2011). Following this line, the competency is the possession of multiple qualifications that go beyond the job position and that tend to progressively replace the qualifications of a more technical character, allowing the polyvalence of the worker and giving him decisive capacities that will give him value to the company. Also, according Parente (2008) the qualification leads to the knowledge and capacities detained by the employees, but as well, states that the formal training (school) leads to know-how and the experience allows to improve this know-how, however, there is no way to guarantee that the employees are able to use this know-how in the right

situations. In this sense, the competencies are distinguished from the qualifications exactly due to the use of this know-how when really required.

In addition, Neves et al ((2015) state that competence is the adequate use of the individual's capacities in a certain domain of knowledge, of know-how and know-be, which is more focused on the individual than the qualification concept. The competence is more focused on the job function or task. Furthermore, Gilbert and Parlier (1930) state that competencies have three main characteristics: i) the knowing – the explicit reference to the domain of the professional activity, ii) the articulation of the competence with the theoretical knowledge and iii) the capacity to use such knowledge. On the other hand, a competency is the ability learned in order to perform a task, a duty or a role, as concluded by Roe (2002), which is in part in accordance with some of the definitions mentioned previously.

The goal of this work is to understand which were the competencies that were developed by the consultants due to the pandemic situation, namely, during the situation of work, that completely changed, from the office to their homes, from a face-to-face situation, as meetings, work side by side, even lunch together to an isolation in their homes, without physical contact and obliged to stay at home most of the time due to government rules.

According to Meignant (1999) the competence is recognized in the situation of work and it is not through diplomas, as he even states that we all know self-taught individuals that are competent and graduates that are not competent. In this sense, it is possible that consultants developed new competencies or even improved some competencies (applying them in real situations) that they already had in the new situation of work - at home and isolated from their colleagues during a pandemic crisis.

2.2.1. The competencies of a consultant

Restricting the research into the consulting field, a consultant should have 3 types of competencies: business, technical and consulting (Bergholz & Nickols, 2012). Consulting is not just a profession, but also a business and a process, as so, consultants should have or develop their technical, business and consulting skills in order to succeed in their work. Considering the competencies presented by Bergholz & Nickols (2012), it is possible to note that some can be developed through on job experience (such as negotiation) and others are more related with the individual's personality and natural abilities, such as relationship building, creativity and self-discipline.

The following table shows some examples of the mentioned competencies:

Business	Consulting	Technical
Strategy development	Time management	Competitor analysis
Talent management	Work-alone self-discipline	Risk analysis and mitigation
Marketing plan	Interpersonal communications	Focus on results and outcomes

Table 2.2.1.1: Examples of competencies divided in 3 groups by Bergholz & Nickols (2012)

According to Gonçalves (2015), the competencies are categorized into three types, as follows:

- Instrumental: includes cognitive, methodological, technological and linguistics skills;
- Interpersonal: individual and social skills, as self-expression, social interaction and cooperation;
- Systemic: skills related to interacting with systems as a whole (combination of understanding, sensitivity and knowledge; this type of competencies requires prior acquisition of interpersonal and instrumental skills).

The model proposed by Neves et al. (2015) is not that different from Gonçalves (2015). According to them, competencies can be divided by personal, interpersonal, and instrumental. The personal competencies, as the concept self-explain, is related with the individual only. The interpersonal competencies are based on the individual and the ones around him, the relationship with others. Finally, the instrumental competencies are related with method and planning. In the below table it is possible to find some examples of the referred competencies:

Personal	Interpersonal	Instrumental
Establishing of objectives	The interpersonal communication	Manage time
Give information and feedback	Working inside virtual teams	Prepare and manage meetings
Solve problems and make decisions	Manage conflicts	Public speaking

Table 2.2.1.2: Examples of competencies divided in 3 groups by Neves et al. (2015)

The competencies mentioned above, as well as, others, could be some of the ones that were more relevant for the consultants during the pandemic crisis while working from home. In this sense, some of these competencies will be analyzed in more detail in the next section.

2.2.1.1. Give information and feedback

According to Klugger and Denisi (1996) feedback is the term used to talk about communication and interpersonal learning and is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement, but this impact can be either positive or negative (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Moreover, Neves et al. (2015) states that in a cybernetics perspective, it is the information related to the results of a process which is received retroactively, and it is used to adapt or change the process itself.

Notwithstanding his central impact on learning, feedback is not completely explored (Higgins et al., 2002), and is a process which still faces challenges, such as timing, miscommunication and emotional barriers. As so, in this process it is important to: i) research the causes of the poor performance, ii) make a prudent management of the physical and psychological distance, iii) adopt active listening behavior, iv) give adequate feedback and not threatening one and v) have a behavior that is open to learning (Neves et al, 2015).

2.2.1.2. Establishing goals

First of all, it is necessary to find the definition of “goal” which is the act of stating clearly what you want to achieve or what you want someone else to achieve (Cambridge dictionary). Furthermore, goals should be: i) quantitative (able to be measured in numeric terms), ii) qualitative (possible to be described in a specific way) and, iii) time-framed (have a date to begin and a date to end, a deadline), (Kubr, 2002).

The establishment of goals is extremely important for the consultant, as well as, for the team. When these goals are set collaboratively with the client, it increases the effectiveness of the consulting process. This happens because, when involved in this process, the parts become more committed with the goals themselves and motivated to achieve them (O’Driscoll & Eubanks, 1993). This process is of extreme importance in a team, as it will allow to define the team strategy, the available resources, and manage all the members through communication and information sharing (Luís, 2012).

2.2.1.3. Solve problems and make decisions

This competence can be quite important for consultants, as they are now facing more decisions on their own, as they are working from home and sometimes there is not time for asking for help. Our everyday life and work are fulfilled with uncertain situations for which we do not have immediate

solutions. As so, a problem refers to a question or issue that is uncertain and so must be examined and solved (Jonassen, 2011).

Regarding decision making, what matters is not the decision itself but the process of the decision, how we decide (Neves et al, 2015). The need to make a difficult decision puts us at risk of anxiety, confusion, doubt, error, regret, embarrassment or loss, as such decisions can have serious consequences (Hammond et al, 1999). We learn from our experiences in the past, but this does not mean that we will always make good decisions, as we will sometimes make bad decisions (Neves et al, 2015).

2.2.1.4. Resilience

As per Coutu (2002), resilient people possess three characteristics: a staunch acceptance of reality; a deep belief, often buttressed by strongly held values, that life is meaningful; and an uncanny ability to improvise. Herrman et al. (2011) defines resilience as a positive adaptation, or the ability to maintain or regain mental health, despite experiencing adversity.

Coutu (2002) states that more than education, more than experience, more than training, a person's level of resilience will determine who succeeds and who fails. As per Hobfoll et al (2015), resilience is not a static phenomena, it is something that can be built or diminished over time. In this sense, the concept of speed of recovery and regrowth or regeneration following stress must be considered and, is an enormously powerful capacity. Moreover, resilience is neither ethically good nor bad, as it is merely the competence and the capacity to be robust under conditions of enormous stress and change. Hence, this competence will be further analyzed, in order to understand if consultants were able to stay resilient during the pandemic crisis which caused stress and change completely their lives as of March 2020.

2.2.1.5. Motivation management

For Vroom (1964), motivation is defined as the willingness to do something, when that thing is conditioned by its capacity to satisfy some need of the individual, meaning that all individuals will try or want to do something if this brings to them some benefit. Motivation is also defined as the desire to exert high levels of effort towards certain organizational goals, which are also conditioned by the individual goals, as it is within people and is driven by human needs (Lopes, 2003).

With regards to motivation management, Kirilina and Panina (2017) stated that individuals' motivation has a direct impact on high-performance at work for every employee, which leads to the company's prosperity, therefore, motivation has to become one of the primary objectives of any

organization. Furthermore, Kirilina and Panina (2017) add that a truly motivated employee means a loyal employee that is, enthusiastic about his or her job and ready to be beneficial for their company. Ozkeser (2019), confirms this, as motivating the employees to do their tasks, enables them to work with higher performance and enthusiasm.

A satisfied individual would certainly contribute positively to the realization of organizational goals and objectives, while a dissatisfied employee may not only contribute but also can even act in such a way that the realization of such goals and objectives could be destroyed (Abbah, 2014).

Further to the above, the use of appropriate motivational techniques improves interpersonal relationships, where communication is the primary factor in changing behavior, enabling individuals to have a better integration in the team and organization (Lopes, 2003).

Individuals will be motivated to work, depending on the benefits received, on their organization integration and on the results they seek, which can differ from company to company and from individual to individual, especially during a crisis.

2.2.1.6. Proactivity

According to Bindl and Parker (2012), proactivity is a type of goal-directed work behavior in which individuals actively take charge of situations to bring future change in themselves or their organization, as individuals are more likely to take actions, if they predict some changes for them or for the environment around them (organization), which is also confirmed by Strauss and Parker, (2014), as proactivity involves self-starting and future-focused action that aims to bring change, either in the self or in one's work environment.

Engaging in proactive activities implies going beyond routine behavior by developing new strategies or even pursuing alternative goals (Fay & Sonnentag, 2012), therefore, consultants may have needed to be proactive and to adapt their behaviors to their new work situation, due to the pandemic crisis, which will be further analyzed.

2.2.1.7. Work inside virtual teams

The rise and continuous development of information and communication technologies led to the creation of new mechanisms for coordinating work and, subsequently, new collaborative organizational forms, business models and working practices (Lilian, 2014). Changes in working environments have implied a tendency from individual-based work performance towards a team performance, and an increase in global teams, where working methods are claimed to differ from the traditional teams, because of their reliance on technology for communicating and disseminating information and knowledge (Jarvempaa & Tanriverdi, 2003).

The virtual team members may represent great diversity, and as such there are activities that should be promoted, as team building for example, in order to respond to diversified competing demands, to address ambiguity of remote communication, and establish personal relationships with different team members which, in turn, require implementation of accessible, stable, and user-friendly technology (Nunamaker, Reinig, & Brigg, 2009).

According to a study (Ibrahim, 2015), virtual leadership (leadership in virtual teams) contributed positively to intra-team communication and intra-team communication impacted positively job performance. Despite we are working of virtual teams, its shown that the leadership behaviors still contribute to the effectiveness of communication within the organization and employees job performance.

2.2.1.8. Interpersonal communication

Communication is defined as the process of acquiring all relevant information, interpreting this information and effectively disseminating the information to persons who might need it (Zulch, 2014).

Interpersonal communication is communication about relationships, between human beings (Biocca & Levy, 1995). Interpersonal communication has the following characteristics: i) is from one individual to another, ii) is face to face and iii) the form and content reflect the personal characteristics of the individuals as well as their social roles and relationships (Hartley, 1999).

Furthermore, Neves et al (2015) state that it can be faced as a set of competencies. The individual competencies of communication result from learning processes, namely, social learning. The greater problem with this competency is that most of the individuals do not believe that they may have a problem of communication, taking from granted the efficacy of their forms of communication, which can lead to misunderstandings.

2.2.1.9. Leadership

According to Yammarino and Avolio (2013), leader-follower interaction process occurs in a particular situation (context) where a leader (superior or supervisor) and followers (subordinates or direct reports) share a purpose, a vision or mission and, jointly, accomplish things (such as goals, objectives, tasks) willingly, as so, without coercion.

McCauley et al. (2010) define leadership development as the growth of a collective's capacity to produce direction, alignment, and commitment. The leadership functions require defining a purpose or goal for a collective (a team), generating endorsement and commitment among followers in support of that goal (Barnard, 1938). Furthermore, if a leader manages, by any means, to ensure

that all critical functions, as task accomplishment and group maintenance are adequately taken care of, then the leader has done his or her job well (Hackman & Walton, 1986), however, leaders and followers play important and interdependent roles in generating leadership (Day & Dragoni, 2015), as so, a leader is not independent and cannot act on its own.

2.2.1.9.1. E – Leadership

Considering the current worldwide situation, e-leadership should also be mentioned in this section. Likewise, e-leadership can be understood as a result of the technological development and of the great change in global economy.

An e-leader may lead their virtual teams without ever physically meeting their followers (Trivedi & Desai, 2012) and, consequently, the concept of e-leadership refers to leaders who mainly communicate via information technology, and whose interaction with followers, as well as, the collection and dissemination of information required to support organizational work, is facilitated by information technology (Avolio & Kahai, 2003).

2.2.1.10. Manage Time

Manage time is a competency which provide the tools that allows to improve the performance and productivity to achieve specific results (Neves et al, 2015). Sometimes there is the believe that there is no time or even the underestimation of how much of the time a job will take. However, it is possible to work around these obstacles, if it can be learned to establish priorities and practice time management to forecast in a realistic way, how much time it has to perform a task.

Manage time will allow to spend the energies, talents and time on the important tasks in a more efficient way, while at the same time starts connecting daily planning to long-term goals and objectives. (Farrell, 2017).From the previous analysis to each competence, it is possible to understand that some of them are related with each other and can have impact on the others, such as interpersonal communication and give information and feedback or work inside virtual teams and interpersonal communication.

2.3. Work from home and the work-life balance

Due to the pandemic, work from home, until that stage practiced sporadically by companies, became mandatory in several countries, as it was, and it is a question of physical and financial survival. It is estimated that more than four out of five people (81 percent) in the global workforce of 3.3 billion are being affected by full or partial workplace closures (Savic, 2020).

Working from home is defined by Savic (2020) generically as, employees working outside of their company's offices, and it includes four basic characteristics: (1) a person who is an employee of a company or a staff member of an organization; (2) actual work engagement with a company or an organization on specific tasks; (3) work being performed outside the company's physical premises; and (4) telecommunication with the employer. In order to work at home it is necessary to show strong motivation and self-discipline (Olson et al., 1995), however, the "performance" of an employee working remotely could be less visible (Bailey, and Kurland, 2002) and lead to performance appraisal issues in the future, as co-workers find it harder to see the amount of work and effort put on a job by the employee, and the time effectively spent on work.

However, working from home also requires the analysis of the different roles in the life of an individual, namely, professional and personal life, which are mixed in this situation. There are roles related to the job itself, such as the employee, the manager and/or the union representative, while there are also roles not related with the job, such as the family role (being a parent, a husband or a son) or the leisure that could translate into being an athlete or a musician, for example (Frone, 2003).

Remote working can increase the available time for other activities (Klopotek, 2017), but this extra time is not always spent on rest or leisure activities because it is filled with household chores, other paid work, or even be redirected to more work as opposed to recuperation time (Grant et al., 2013). Furthermore, work can complement and, indeed, improve family life, but in the recent decades work has largely competed with the family, and won (Hochschild, 1997). As per Hochschild (1997), the first shift (at the workplace) takes more time, while the second shift (at home) becomes more hurried and rationalized. The longer the workday at the office, the more individuals feel pressed at home to hurry, to delegate, to delay, to forgo, to segment, to hyper organize the precious remains of family time.

Further to the above, may arise a negative conflict in the relation work-family, in which both roles are not compatible, or the resources are limited, and consequently, the participation in one role leads to difficulties in the other role (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985), also confirmed by the study of Klopotek (2017), as the biggest disadvantage of working from home is the difficulty in separating home affairs from the professional ones.

The concept of work-life balance is inherent to modern societies because work is constituted as a separate realm from the rest of our lives. The employers, after all, purchase workers' time and their attendance at a designated place or space (Felstead et al., 2002). This work life balance can be improved during the pandemic due to the reduced commute time, less time in meetings, fewer interruptions, more breaks, however, on the other hand, it is possible to have disturbances at the

household due to the restrictions imposed and the closed down of schools and kindergartens, for example (Ipsen et al., 2021).

Taking again the economic crisis as an example, at the time, many employees requested time off from work due to their or family members health issues (Chatrakul Na Ayudhya et al., 2019), which may also be one of the issues that employees are facing nowadays, since we are facing a health crisis, and this can impact their work-life balance as well.

According to a study of Ipsen et al. (2021) there are three advantages, such as i) work-life balance, ii) work efficiency and iii) work control and three disadvantages: iv) home office constraints, v) work uncertainties and vi) inadequate tools, related to working from home during the pandemic. There are both advantages and disadvantages, as such, what works for some, may not work for others.

However, from the analysis of a study done by Dubey and Tripathi (2020) about the COVID-19 and the link with the sentiments regarding working from home, it was found that 73.10 % of the tweets had positive sentiments as compared to 26.10% negative sentiments, which means that individuals had a positive outlook towards the concept of work from home. As well, more than 60% of the people tweeted with emotions of trust, anticipation and joy related with working from home culture while a few tweeted with fear, sadness, anger and disgust. Moreover, the results of the study conducted by Ipsen et al. (2021) revealed that working from home was experienced predominantly as positive for the majority of the respondents, with fewer respondents considering it mostly as a negative experience.

Furthermore, one of the goals of this research is to understand how it was for the consultants to work from home during a pandemic situation and the quarantine period, which can bring us new insights on this issue, as the consultants were sent home without any previous warning, one day they were working from the office and the other day they were locked down in their homes and were obligated to adapt fast to this new routine.

3. Methodology

This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the research method that has been followed for this study. It includes: (1) research design, (2) type of sample and characterization, (3) data collection and (4) interview structure. The goal of this thesis is to give voice to the consultants identified previously and understand which are the main competencies that were needed for them to work during the pandemic crisis in Portugal. To achieve this, a qualitative research methodology was appropriate, as it allowed to investigate which were such competencies and how the consultants dealt with the pandemic crisis while working from their homes.

3.1. Research Design

Qualitative research can help researchers to access the thoughts and feelings of research participants, which can enable development of an understanding of the meaning that people ascribe to their experiences (Sutton & Austin, 2015) and it enhances the involvement of everyone related to the study (Pathak et al. 2013).

According to Gill et al. (2008), there are a variety of methods to gather information in qualitative research, including observations, textual or visual analysis (e.g. from books or videos) and interviews (individual or group). The individual interviews were chosen for this thesis as they are the most common and it finds the research purpose (Chew-Graham, May & Perry, 2002) and can be used to explore the views, experiences, beliefs and motivations of individual participants (Gill et al. 2008). Furthermore, while constructing this dissertation, there was a need to collect additional information from the consultants previously interviewed. In this sense, a small questionnaire with only 6 open questions was built in order to have a more complete base of information.

The method to analyze the data (transcriptions) will be the thematic analysis, as it provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of information. The thematic analysis is a method that allows to identify, analyze and report patterns (called themes) within data, and it minimally organizes and describes the data set in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, the thematic analysis is a technique used to analyze textual data and elucidate the theme (Vaismoradi et al, 2016), in this sense, it will be used in the present research.

3.2. Type of sample and characterization

There are two types of sampling techniques, probability and non-probability sampling (Saunders et al., 2016). This research will be composed by a non-probabilistic sample, which is a type of sample that does not depend on probabilities and will not use random procedures. The sample will be based on the snowball effect, meaning that contact will be made with certain individuals from big four companies, as well as other consultancy companies and it is expected that such individuals also nominate others that will allow this study to have the number desired of interviews.

This research will be a qualitative study and the sample will be composed by consultants from Informational Technology, Tax, Human Resources and other areas. The consultants should have at least 6 months of experience in the area prior to the pandemic, in order to understand how the covid-19 pandemic has changed attitudes, behaviors and actions at work. The consultants should also have been working from home during the quarantine period in Portugal and for at least 3 months (total amount of time also including the quarantine period). The sample is composed by 18 consultants, from senior managers to junior consultants, with ages varying from 23 up to 41 years old. The sample is

constituted by 72% of females and 28% of male consultants. The average age of the interviewees is 28.11 years, and the average seniority is approximately of 4 years (3.97). Regarding the functions, 1 of the interviewees is a senior manager, 1 is at a manager position, 8 are in senior positions and 8 are positioned as junior consultants.

Finally, with regards to the area of consultancy they are working, 6 are from the IT area, 2 from a management area, 6 from the tax consultancy are, 3 from human resources and the final one from the real estate business. The table 2 shows the demographics of each interview candidate. Characteristics have been divided into gender, age, nationality, function in the company, area of consultancy/expertise and seniority.

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Function	Area	Seniority	Children
A	F	27	Senior	Tax	4,5	0
B	F	26	Junior	Tax	2,5	0
C	F	34	Manager	Tax	12	0
D	M	29	Senior	IT	5	0
E	F	26	Senior	Tax	4,5	0
F	F	27	Junior	IT	2	0
G	M	27	Senior	IT	1,5	0
H	F	26	Junior	Management	1	0
I	F	24	Junior	IT	1	0
J	F	27	Junior	IT	0,5	0
K	F	41	Senior Manager	Tax	14	3
L	F	26	Junior	IT	1,5	0
M	F	23	Junior	HR	1	1
N	M	33	Junior	Real estate	3	0
O	M	27	Senior	HR	2,5	0
P	F	27	Senior	Tax	4,5	0
Q	M	25	Senior	Management	4,5	0
R	F	31	Senior	HR	6	0

Table 3.2.1.: Sample characteristics

3.3. Data Collection

The information for this research was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, which taken place in January of 2021, through the video-conference platform Zoom (due to the

current pandemic crisis, it was not possible to conduct face to face interviews). All the 18 interviews were conducted in Portuguese language, as it was easier to the interviewees as it is their mother language and all of them provided authorization to record the interviews for the researcher to capture the data easily.

3.4. Interview Structure

The interviews' guideline consisted of 4 areas of discussion (appendix A). At first, the interviewee was welcomed and thanked for participating in this study and the objective of the research has been introduced. Secondly, were asked general questions about the characteristics of the interviewee, such as age, seniority, function, description of their job and if they were still working from home. In the third part, the questions were more focused on the competencies and in trying to understand how the experience of working at home was, discussing issues such as work-life balance, motivation, stress, objectives, etc. In the final section, it was asked to the interviewees to make a quick reflection on what they could have done differently now that they know that this was not only a 2 week or one month situation and what they think about the current global pandemic and what are their expectations about what will happen for them with regards to work from home and their companies in the future. The interviews were conducted in an informal, conversational, and story-telling perspective so that, the individuals feel more comfortable about sharing their experiences and feelings about this phase of their professional lives.

The interviews had been reproduced word by word, however, laughter and other kind of interruptions were ignored as they are not relevant for the analysis. The audio-recordings lasted from 13 minutes to 64 minutes. The difference in the length of the interviews can be explained by the variations in the communication style, personal experience of consultants, their openness to talk about these matters (as some on the matters can be quite personal) or their personality traits.

3.5. Questionnaire Structure

The questionnaire applied to the same consultants had some direct responses and others completer and more detailed, which can be influenced by the individual's communication style, experience and so on, as explained above. The questionnaire questions can be found at appendix B.

3.6. Thematic Analysis

Considering that we are facing qualitative data that is complex and can have a very large content (depending on the interview length), it is important to find a way to manage the results and organize them. In this sense, the researcher transcribed the raw data and later categorized it according

to meanings - such process is called coding (Saunders et al., 2016) and it is part of the thematic analysis as mentioned previously.

Following it is possible to find the themes and the meanings related to such themes, that will allow to code the interviews (the more detailed tables can be found at appendix C). The themes were defined according to the literature review, from a deductive perspective as well as, the interviews information from an inductive perspective, in order to have a more completed coding. It was divided by remote work and work-life balance, as below.

Themes	Description
Remote work	The overall experience. The experience of employees working outside of their company's offices and communicating only through video-chats, telephone, their home environment, the advantages and disadvantages of working from home.
Work-life balance	Personal vs professional life - quarantine + family + hobbies + work + home tasks, all together in the same environment.

Table 3.6.1.: Thematic analysis – Table of codes I

Secondly, the themes were divided by competencies, namely as, personal competencies, interpersonal competencies and instrumental competencies, and inside of such themes, we have subthemes as it is possible to verify in the following table.

Themes	Description
Personal competencies	Competencies developed by the individual and his will to have success, that are not dependent on his relation with others.
Change orientation	The degree to which an individual is or is not satisfied and the magnitude of the change that is needed to develop his personal and professional success.
Proactivity	It is going beyond routine behavior by developing new strategies or even pursuing alternative goals.
Establishing goals	The act of stating clearly what you want to achieve and how you will achieve it.
Resilience	Positive adaptation, or the ability to maintain or regain mental health, despite experiencing adversity.
Motivation management	The use of appropriate motivational techniques that improve interpersonal relationships, where communication is the primary factor in changing behavior, enabling individuals to have a better integration in the team and organization.
Anxiety and Stress management	To choose and exercise healthy self control and self-management in response to stressful event.
Interpersonal competencies	Competencies related to the individual and his relationship with others, namely, the team or peers
Work inside virtual teams	Work only based on communication through informational technology and possibly remote. Global and multi-cultural environment.
Interpersonal communication	The ability to communicate and to be perceived as well as to listen and respond to the message communicated.
E-Leadership	Leaders who mainly communicate via information technology, and whose interaction with followers is facilitated by it.
Instrumental competencies	Fundamental competencies with intrinsic value that can be applied in any situation from personal to professional matters
Manage time	The ability to manage the tasks you have to do and organize them according to your time and deadlines imposed.

Table 3.6.2: Thematic analysis – Table of codes II

4. Results analysis

4.1. Work from home during the health crisis

The main objective of the analysis of the working from home experience is to understand how it was for the employees to work outside of their company's offices (and communicating only through video-chats, telephone), how they managed their home environment and what they consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of working from home. For interviewee A, overall, it was a good experience, although some difficulties may have arisen, as she stated: *"I already had an office set up at home even before I actually had to use it, so it was a simple transition. With both people working from home, we realized that we had some practical impossibilities at times, like the internet, but we tried to make up for it."* (Interviewee A).

For some consultants working from home was a great experience, as interviewee I, stated that her life improved a lot and gained time outside of work as she said: *"It's like that, I honestly... my life has improved a lot since I came home, because I wasted a lot of time in transport and transit, and we ended up gaining a lot more time outside of work, in this aspect it has improved a lot."* (Interviewee I).

Interviewee Q stated that he could work from anywhere but at the end, is exhausting working from home for so long as he stated: *"I think there are both. It has positive and negative impacts. In other words, on the one hand I can choose my office. I live in Lisbon normally but I'm not from Lisbon. I live in another land. I can work in Lisbon as much as I can work in my homeland. And even at home, one day I may be working more in the office, one day I may be working more in the living room, I can vary and I like that. We ended up getting less tired of space. On the other hand, it creates more mess. At some point you get tired of being at home so much, there are these negative points."* (Interviewee Q).

On the other hand, interviewee C shared her experience that was not so good, as she would consider that bringing work to her home was not good, and now she is at home all the time working, as she stated: *"Look, in general I would say it's negative, because there it is, bringing work home, I think it was never ideal, because even in a normal situation, on the days you have to bring it, after a day of work, it's still you have to bring work home, it's not the ideal situation and it's because something is wrong. Either because you lack resources in the company, which you need to help you complete the work, or because you didn't manage your day perfectly and you will have to work out of hours, or because you wrongly negotiated the delivery of the work with the client and therefore, in a normal situation, having to bring home work from the office is bad enough. Therefore, being at home working is not ideal, it is not, it is not ideal."* (Interviewee C).

Furthermore, interviewee F stated that she'd prefer to work only one or two days from home it was good, but everyday has a negative impact as follows: "I spend less time on transport, it can be good or bad. You can wake up at 8am and do your stuff or wake up at 8:50am and turn on your pc. There has to be some discipline. There is no physical separation between work and home is not very positive. If it was a day or 2, now every day, no." (Interviewee F).

Interviewee G, who moved from his parents' house during the pandemic crisis, stated that his experience was better when living alone. In his parents' house he was working on his bedroom, there was not two different spaces, one for working and one for resting, as he mentions:

"Here again I think I'm a case apart, because in the meantime I moved from being at my parents' house, to living alone. So it's a little... it's a little different. But even so, I moved relatively recently, I've been here for 2 months, almost 3. But what was my life at my parents' house where my room became mine office, this experience I did not consider anything positive. Because there was a time when I could no longer be... a room when you live in your parents' house and your private space, which is usually where you rest, read or be on the computer doing things in my personal life, became my professional workspace and the mix of fields I honestly didn't like at all. Now that I'm in a house of my own where I have an office, this office is on purpose... and I only use it to go to work. Even though we're having this conversation here in the room, so I don't feel that impact so much. I have an area that is the room where I can relax, I have the bedroom, and I have the office to work. But in situations where there was only one division for everything, that was a negative factor." (Interviewee G).

For some of the consultants working from home was not at all a good experience. For example, interviewee K was not prepared to work from home during several months and with her husband at the same time as she mentioned: *"Being at home... Imagine, my house doesn't have an office per se. I work at the living room table and my husband works in the entrance hall, it's not a sound isolated place, I had to put a table there. It's not a great situation, but he's now back to teaching face-to-face."* (Interviewee K).

As well, for interviewee P, the most difficult part was the space to work, as she is working in her living room and does not have an office at home, as she mentions: *"I don't really like having my desk in the living room as a desk, it's not exactly the most comfortable thing, because I don't have another room, apart from the bedroom, where I can form an office. If I had I would love it, but since I don't have it, I don't really like that part."* (Interviewee P).

Furthermore, interviewee O, shared that for him the transition was the most difficult part, from working 100% at the office and in the next day (and during several months) working 100% from home. Although he mentioned some advantages of working from home, overall, he mentions that it was difficult for him due to losing his routine as follows: *"I think the main difficulty was the fact that*

we went from a 100% office reality to a 100% home reality. That is, there is no transition. Because we had the possibility to work from home, yes, but considering that in the core world of recruiting, we do a lot of interviews, the truth is that we lived in a pre-covid time when digital was not very fashionable yet, that's why the interviews were all in person. We did not work from home very much, but obviously when we wanted to, we had this possibility and that's why I think the main difficulty was going from 100% physical to 100% digital. (...) But the truth is that getting out of a routine of waking up at x hours, taking a shower, going to the office, being at the office, having lunch etc, to be at home where we can wake up 5 minutes before a meeting, an interview, because people they won't know and I think the main difficulty, besides the IT system and going from 100% physical to 100% digital, was not having a routine, really.” (Interviewee O).

4.2. Competencies

4.2.1. Motivation management

Further to the theme “motivation management”, the opinions are divided. A satisfied individual would certainly contribute positively to the realization of organizational goals and objectives, while a dissatisfied employee may not only contribute but also can even act in such a way that the realization of such goals and objectives could be destroyed (Abbah, 2014). In this chapter, we will analyze the motivation of the employees and how they managed it during the pandemic crisis.

There were consultants that at the beginning have not felt immediately lack of motivation, but over time, it hit them, as states interviewee B: *“In the first two, three months I didn't feel unmotivated, but then I confess I did. Because at some point, I really couldn't stand being at home anymore... Seeing other things, being with people and talking to people, so I think there were times when I felt unmotivated, yes.” (Interviewee B).*

Furthermore, Interviewee F stated that she lives on the countryside and therefore, she does not have were to go to get a quick coffee, as she claimed: *“I was a little sick, tired of being at home. I live in a place where there is nothing at all. I can't go for coffee, without taking half an hour (walking). I could go by car, but it's not the same. I felt very closed and limited.” (Interviewee F).*

On the other hand, there were interviewees that felt immediately the lack of motivation, possibly due to the area of consultancy they work in (Human Resources), as interviewee O stated: *“I felt unmotivated because time was passing by and things did not happen, that is, we remained at home, we did not return to the offices, the market did not return, the market as a whole did not return to its full operation or at least one progressive start, and therefore, of course I felt unmotivated.” (Interviewee O).*

The interviewee R also shared the same feeling as interviewee O, namely with regards to the market progress at the beginning of the pandemic crisis as she claimed: *“In our activity there are always peaks. At the beginning when we went home in March, all the processes were canceled and therefore we were left with little to do, it is strange. In that respect it was difficult. There was a great lack of motivation and uncertainty, without knowing where we are going. Then things were restored, I managed to have new clients, I managed to close the processes and the motivation returned. It is very cyclical, but at the beginning I had a great lack of motivation.”* (Interviewee R).

When asked about his motivation during the pandemic, interviewee N claimed that he thought that the market would go down as follows: *“That I felt. In the early days, we did not have much demand, I thought “this is going to explode”. I was more worried. But then the demand started to grow and recover.”* (Interviewee N).

However, there are also interviewees that felt unmotivated but due to their work in a general way and not due to the pandemic crisis or working from home, as stated by interviewee G: *“Well, I think ... I don't think so. My motivation was not impacted by these, okay, by all these external factors. My motivation was obviously not the same all along, but I think I cannot blame the reality that we live for it”* who also added *“Then I had the fact of being able to leave the house and I found comfort working at home, I had my division, my office, so I ended up being able to get out of these pressure and demotivation moments, which was better for me”* (Interviewee G), meaning that, as he left his parents' house and bought a house of his own it ended up helping him to have a division of spaces of leisure and work.

As well, interviewee P stated: *“Yes, a lot. Okay Jessica, I don't think it's because of being at home or the pandemic, it's what a normal person feels when working at a company like this.”* (Interviewee P).

Interviewee I shared the same opinion, as the informants N, P and G stated that their lack of motivation was not related to the health crisis that we are currently living in, meaning that they would probably feel the same way if they were working at their offices on a normal day.

Interviewee Q has a different perspective, namely that the lack of motivation could have been there as well, if he was working at the office. But, as he was working from home during a health crisis, it had a bigger impact on him: *“I think this is a lot of ups and downs. I think we are much more susceptible if the project is going well or not. At times when the project is going badly, I think we are still going further down, there it is, because we are more isolated too, and because we are at home ... I think this all has a greater impact. (...) I think it is all a bit more volatile when we are in this regime.”* (Interviewee Q).

Finally, there were also some interviewees that stated that they did not feel a lack of motivation during the pandemic and while working from home, as such interviewee H claims that: *“I think demotivation no. Sometimes I was frustrated as the ease and availability (of colleagues) was not so great. The boss was always on calls, whether in real meetings or asking questions and ... and that's it ... she didn't have all the time for me, and I was frustrated but it never got to demotivate me.”* (Interviewee H).

4.2.2. Leadership and E-leadership

This competence was analyzed based on the relationship of the interviewees with their subordinates as well as, with their superiors. The researcher tried to understand which initiatives were taken by the individuals to maintain contact and to communicate with others, in order also to understand if this may have an impact on the individual's performance/job.

According to interviewee E, which is a senior consultant, it was not easy to manage the subordinates while working from home: *“It is a bit difficult to guarantee that the person understood what you are explaining, that he understood the urgency or non-urgency of the work you went through, he realized what it is for, what he is doing and understand that. (...) we organized the buddy's program, to ensure that all staffs 1, have a senior with whom ... who is allocated to them, who will try to speak to them from time to time, with whom they can speak when they have doubts (...). Something that has to do with evaluations, or asking for feedback, anything, or any questions you have about how something works ...”* (Interviewee E).

Furthermore, interviewee O, who is also a senior consultant, stated that it was needed to trust more his followers as it is not possible to control so much their day working from home as he mentioned: *“I think this point, for those who are the boss/leader, along with the orientation of change, were very important because they are two points in clear connection, because we have to trust our elements, we cannot, so effectively, control their day -to-day, being close to help, support and even review work and, therefore, we have to depend on digital tools, different means to lead and support.”* (Interviewee O).

From other perspective, in interviewee F's company, there was no plan to keep up with the newcomers, as she claimed that: *“Whoever is below, the strange part is when someone new enters, there is no introduction. It only appears on” teams” (a Microsoft platform for team meetings) and I don't know who they are. I feel like 10 people came in and I do not know any of them. If they tell me that they belong to my team, I say “ok”. Nobody makes a call to introduce the person. Only a generic email appears saying who entered the area. If I went to the office, I would probably already had contact with them.”* (Interviewee F).

For interviewee N the experience with e-leadership was not great as he mentioned that it was not showed by his leaders: *“it was a competence that was not demonstrated, as in Portugal there is no habit of working at a distance, and it is a very big failure, as the future stops for a more digital situation and more at a distance.”* (Interviewee N).

In addition, interviewee R shared that her leaders worked the relationship with the teams and show up with initiatives but overall could have gone better: *“The leaders worked on the close relationship with the teams and the market, greater publication of articles, debates, conferences and weekly communications with the teams. This competence, although necessary, was not always well applied. unclear and diffuse messages, having the opposite effect.”* (Interviewee R).

4.2.3. Work inside virtual teams

This competence is related to the ability to work only based on, communication through informational technology, possibly remote and involving a global and multi-cultural environment. Interviewee K stated that in relation to the colleagues that she shared clients with, the relationship improved, but with colleagues that she does not share any clients with, the communication decreased or stopped with, as she claimed: *“I think that for the teams that you work with, on specific clients, it ended up going better and creating a very close relationship, we were very dependent on each other, because we talked every day. But with these who I had no clients, (...) I feel that I have not talked with those people in a year. If I were in the office, I would always speak to these people every day, but not at home.”* (Interviewee K).

Considering a different perspective, interviewee L states that her company does not impose video chat nor the camaras on and, she misses the physical contact with the colleagues as she claims: *“there is a lack of more physical contact, seeing people, because for example, my company, we make calls every day, sometimes more than once, whenever there is a doubt, we call, and everything. (...) There are many companies that the person must have a camera and all that. We only have the computer on (...). This client (company that I work as a consultant) had this policy that in those two days that we worked from the office, he offered lunch and we all went. I think it's these little pieces that really make a difference, but in terms of the working relationship itself, I think it's the same.”* (Interviewee L).

From a more optimistic perspective, interviewee M says that she and her colleagues actually became closer: *“I have noticed that my colleagues and I have become even closer. (...) we have a meeting every morning, also to learn about each other's difficulties and to help each other in the best way. We have a slack channel; at any time, I can send a message to a colleague of mine saying "I need help with this".”* (Interviewee M). As well, interviewee D feels that his team communicates a lot, but it is normal that individuals have different relationships with their colleagues, ones closer and others

less as he claimed: *"In my company, as it is a small company, we are 9, we are all careful and understanding. We communicate a lot, I am more connected with one or the other person, and so on. Of course, there are stronger connections between some people. We always try to know how people are doing, but there are people I don't contact every day, I'm not always asking how they are and vice versa."* (Interviewee D).

4.2.4. Anxiety and Stress management

Considering the coding system, stress management is the capacity to choose and exercise healthy self-control and self-management in response to a stressful event. As such interviewee E stated that she did not have a serious stress problem, but she admits that it was needed during time to adopt some changes in her behavior to avoid anxiety and stress accumulation: *"I never felt the need to ask for help. But I had to force myself a lot to worry about myself. (...) make sure that at the weekend it was possible to relax. Don't spend the whole weekend on the couch watching TV or things like that."* (Interviewee E).

Furthermore, interviewee O states that he did not have a real stress problem but instead he had moments of stress due to his job and the market: *"I had moments of. Why? Because obviously, coupled with the fact of being in a company that lives from results, that lives from billing, obviously I did. Because when I don't make money, I put that pressure on me, so these moments of anxiety were due to pressure instilled from me to me. So yes, I had moments of stress, anxiety, many moments."* (Interviewee O).

On the other hand, some interviewees felt that the pandemic caused them stress, as interviewee G stated: *"I think that at the beginning of the pandemic when we suddenly started lockdown, I was really scared and anxious about. (...) This period of our life is a period marked by uncertainty and a lot of anxiety; I think that is undeniable."* (Interviewee G).

Considering a different point of view, there are interviewees that said that working from home was more stressful for them, as interviewee P claimed: *"Yes, it got worse. I have been doing yoga for a while, but an amateur yoga. I try to do it on a regular basis, I try to do more at night, to sleep better. But I didn't feel as much of a need as I am now working from home."* (Interviewee P) and interviewee Q also stated: *"I consider my work to be stressful, by nature and in a normal environment. I think that sometimes working from home, it can get even worse... First, because we are a little bit more alone and it is difficult to share our pains with our colleagues, although it happens anyway, we have spaces for that. But it is not so instant."* (interviewee Q).

It is also important to find ways to manage stress, as interviewee P find on yoga or for example, interviewee K found out therapy and meditation, as she stated: *"It was a very difficult year. At the end of the year, I was worse. It was the accumulation. I had a year away from the company, I came back,*

and I had to pick up a very big client. Then, it was starting all over again, coming home due to the pandemic, it was exhausting on a psychological level. In the meantime, I also had health problems at home, with my children. I tried to do meditation and I'm going to start doing psychotherapy." (Interviewee K).

For interviewee R, the help of her colleagues was crucial to manage her stress: *"I dealt with the help of colleagues, sharing information, sharing the problem, looking for solutions, not keeping the topics to myself. Have a joint decision making."* (Interviewee R).

There are also consultants that stated that working from home was better for their stress issues or at least such issues did not get worse due to working from home. Interviewee B stated that she prefers to work from home as it is less stressful for her: *"I think not. I did not have. I think it's more stressful for me to be in the office than here at home."* (Interviewee B).

For interviewee N it was the same as he claims *"No. Quite the contrary. I am more calm, more relaxed, I am not so stressed. Isn't there that pressure of "have you done this yet?", "Have you already done that?". We have a chat, we exchange messages, there is no such thing as peeking at what I'm doing or going to see the papers. There are not always people to interrupt."* (Interviewee N).

4.2.5. Interpersonal communication

This is the ability to communicate and to be perceived as well as, to listen and respond to the message communicated. Communication changed a lot during the pandemic, as the employees were working from home and only communicating through calls or platforms like teams, zoom, skype, slack, and so on. According to interviewee H, the colleagues' availability is not the same as it was at the office, which is not good from her perspective: *"in the office i would get up and go to my colleague's table and ask questions. Or send a message via skype and then go there to clarify the doubt. At home this was a little bit different, it was a little bit more boring, we have to see if the person is available on skype or sometimes they are on calls (...), whether the availability is not as great as it was in the office."* (interviewee H).

For interviewee E, the relationship with the partners remained the same while it changed with the management group, possibly improving due to the better personal knowledge of these individuals: *"with the boss... It's a bit difficult to say. The partners, I think, the contacts I had, were only when you had to check something with them and you went to the office, and now when you need to check something with them, you call them. In terms of the management group, you had a first phase in which you started to know people a little better, because you are seeing them, people are at home, making a video call from their children's room, or are making a video call and are in normal clothes, you gain a more personal yet basic knowledge there."* (Interviewee E).

Furthermore, interviewee G claims that at the beginning of the pandemic, at his company, nobody turned on the cameras: *"I used to have easy access to a person and I just had to call him, or go to him to be able to solve whatever it was. Now this communication had to be done via teams or by call, something that at the beginning I was not very used to. This turned out to be a challenge, at the beginning you didn't turn on the camera, the way of communicating was not so personal, and in the long run, I ended up getting used to it."* (Interviewee G).

The same situation happened with interviewee L, in which no one turned on the cameras and it became difficult to communicate. Interviewee K responded in a simpler way just stating that teams facilitated the communication while working from home: *"The fact that we work a lot with the Teams allowed this communication to be always maintained and encouraged"* (Interviewee K).

Interviewee Q stated that this competence needs to be continuously developed, as working from home and communicating via videocalls also leads to communication errors and misunderstandings, as he mentioned: *"The means of communication are less personal, but not less susceptible to errors and misinterpretations. For this reason, continuing to work on interpersonal communication is key for the work to be well developed."* (Interviewee Q).

Furthermore, interviewee Q mentioned that always felt support from his leaders as he stated: *"Yes, I feel that everyone's adaptation was immediate and successful. I have had complete freedom to contact my leaders and clarify all kinds of questions, problems or doubts with them. This was the case that occurred in a project that I started during the pandemic period and I needed to carry out more regular video call sessions with the company leaders to clarify issues and absorb useful knowledge for the project."* (Interviewee Q).

For interviewee N who works with real estate, the experience was not the best one with regards to interpreting his clients and doing his job in general, due to its nature, as he claims: *"It was challenging to do the virtual tours. It is one thing to be in person, it is another to be online. We don't know if people are listening to us or if they are understanding what we are saying. We don't have real feedback from the other side. Visits were by call or zoom. When you are with the person, you understand by the behavior, whether they like the house or not, if they have any doubts, and online it is not easy to perceive."* (Interviewee N).

For a different perspective, interviewee I stated that the communication at her company was difficult at the beginning of the pandemic, but nowadays is even better than it was before the pandemic as she mentioned: *"I think it was more in the beginning, in the adaptation period. Nowadays we don't have any problems in communicating with each other, even the opposite. I think we are more aligned now than before the pandemic."* (Interviewee I).

From Interviewee J point of view, and considering that she switched jobs during the pandemic, it is not easy to communicate as she barely knows her colleagues, as she states: *"I haven't met anyone in person yet. I met the person with whom I signed the contract because I went to the company, but my team, boss, colleagues, only saw them via teams."* (Interviewee J). Further she also says that *"I feel like I'm not so comfortable, it's not to talk, but sometimes a small thing, ok... I don't know... I don't feel comfortable... to be honest."*, (Interviewee J), which shows that she is not comfortable clarifying her doubts and to speak with her teammates.

4.2.6. Manage Time

The competence of managing time is defined as the ability to manage the tasks the individual has to do and organize then according to the time and deadlines imposed, however, while the individual is working from home, this could really be difficult. Interviewee I claims that although she had some distractions, such as her family, she was able to focus as she states: *"No ... I know of cases of people who had more difficulties in concentrating while being at home, because they have children or family members at home, but I, despite having my family at home, we are each in our own division and it was not difficult to concentrate, that is, it was easier to manage my time. Facilitated in other things. I managed to do other things throughout the day."* (Interviewee I).

For interviewee D, working from home during all of this time lead him to take more time to do the required tasks, as he is sometimes bored or get distracted as he claims: *"In my work we have something that is like programming, and I remember that when I was at the client, to do programming I would prefer to be at home quietly, instead of going to the client or the office that day, spending time, money on transport and lunch, in 3 hours I took care of it at home. Now being in the situation I am in, doing this job that took less time, now I take more time. I get bored, I get distracted, it takes me longer. I can't do it so fast, but I do it anyway."* (Interviewee D).

Regarding this competence, Interviewee O claims that it is easier to find a distraction and that he needed to define well his routine while working from home: *"It was necessary to create a routine, self-discipline. When it is to work is to work, when it is to play it is to play, when it is to do something else, it is to do something else. So yes, I had my day-to-day life very well defined."* (Interviewee O).

For interviewee P, it was really difficult to separate the working hours from the non-working hours, as she said: *"I only work now, my cell phone is available 24 hours a day, my computer just isn't there because I hang up when I go to sleep. And even the people who work with me are not concerned with whether I'm busy or not, whether I'm doing something work related. I'm constantly being bombed with calls and messages on teams, when it's not on teams, it's on the phone. Customers also call and text anytime, if needed. I think that was, and is, the big challenge. know how to turn off the computer, turn off the phone, make this separation."* (Interviewee P).

In addition, interviewee K stated that she did not manage well her time at all as she said: *“I don't think I had it. So, I ended up working more hours. I didn't realize that I could and should hang up. Despite being at home, I also had a schedule. I didn't have a schedule, as you have ... I felt I didn't have ...”* (Interviewee K).

On the other hand, interviewee R, states that working from home was not negative regarding managing her time, arguing about flexible hours, as follows: *“I was able to do the same tasks, not at the same times or in the same time period. I can't work 8 hours a day in a row, or 4 in the morning and 4 in the afternoon. It extended much more. There was no work schedule from 9am to 6pm. There was a greater flexibility. But also, before (the pandemic), we didn't stick to schedules. I felt that the pandemic still got it worse. I don't see this as a negative thing.”* (Interviewee R).

Furthermore, interviewee N stated that as he is organized, he did not feel that it was difficult to manage his time while working from home: *“I've always been very organized about it. It is a job that I can work on anywhere, mobile phone, tablet, computer. I was more careful at the time of the virtual visits to have no background noise, otherwise everything was normal.”* (Interviewee N).

4.2.7. Establishing goals

Establishing goals is the act of stating clearly what the individual wants to achieve and how the individual will achieve it.

For interviewee A establishing goals was crucial as she stated that: *“I think that setting concrete goals in view of my tasks/responsibilities was fundamental. For example, list the to do's I had to ensure they were done on day X, to ensure, on the one hand, that I didn't get distracted from my daily tasks, and on the other hand to try to impose some limits on my work and manage to separate life professional stuff.”* (Interviewee A).

On the other hand, interviewee P needed to define goals in the sense of separating her personal life from her personal life by following a schedule as she said: *“it was necessary to establish a more or less fixed schedule and organize my daily work accordingly. Daily lists with priority jobs and others with extended deadlines (which I only did if there was time for that).”* (Interviewee P).

From interviewee R perspective, it was important to define goals, as she needed to manage her work, her child at home and other tasks at the same time, as she mentioned: *“While working from home, it was essential to set daily and monthly goals, as we had already done before, but now reconciling family, children, in the same physical space requires greater organizational capacity.”* (Interviewee R).

Furthermore, interviewee Q, stated that while working from home it is even more crucial to define goals and to know where the team wants to go: *“it is crucial for the team to stay focused. With the distancing of co-workers, the definition of team goals to be met became extremely relevant. In my*

case in the form of tasks to be completed each day, for example so that all members know where to focus.” (Interviewee Q).

For interviewee N, that faced also a physical and health limitation during the pandemic, it was necessary to set some goals in order to get back to “normal” and not stick to the bad things that were happening, as he states: *“during the pandemic and associating the physical limitation, I had to establish basic goals to get out of the “gap” in which I found myself. I started with basic things like, for example, not staying in bed all day, reading, watching movies, and then continuing on this positive “lift”, going back to studying and looking for new situations to meet clients on my own initiative in the new reality that we are living in.”* (Interviewee N).

Finally, for interviewee E and K, it was not important at all during the pandemic, as they were already doing this before, as interviewee K stated: *“No, because this was a practice before the pandemic”* (Interviewee K).

4.2.8. Resilience

This competence is composed by the positive adaptation, or the ability to maintain or regain mental health, despite experiencing adversity.

For interviewee B, it was not easy to deal with the work from home situation, as she states that sometimes she needed to change workplaces in order to change the air, as follows: *“Many times it became difficult for every day, to be the same and to maintain the same mood/energy at work. We went from being with everyone every day, to being almost always alone. Overcoming the mental state was challenging, but the important thing was to find new activities and ways to unwind at home. As for the work itself, it hasn't changed in the end, as it's all done from a computer.”* (Interviewee B).

For interviewee E, the most difficult part was to adapt to work as a team in distance and to integrate the new members of the team during the pandemic as she said: *“It was necessary to adapt the way of working in a team and of integrating people with less experience.”* (Interviewee E).

Interviewee I felt that the superiors asked more from her during the pandemic, as she was working from home and it was not expected that she had a personal life ongoing, such as doing things in her free time, as she stated: *“Yes, because we are working from home, people lose track of how busy their colleagues are and demand tasks beyond those we can manage. In addition, our superiors, as they think that, because we are in a pandemic situation, we are not going anywhere, can demand more work from us until later every day.”* (Interviewee I).

Interviewee R and Interviewee O needed to adapt to work from home, to the business failures, and others issues, as Interviewee O mentioned: *“There were complicated moments, of business failure, work, invoicing that my company was not unfamiliar with and, from one moment to the next, we had to adapt and find new ways to motivate ourselves, to overcome and above all, of not going under and*

Resilience played a key role in this field. I could give several examples since it was a skill that clearly gained ascendant in this period, but the fact that we have gone through this entire period, we have had the capacity/transformation to successfully adapt to work from home, I think is the greatest example.” (Interviewee O).

Finally, with regards to interviewee P, she mentioned that she needed to adapt some behaviors and her space of working at home to continue to perform quality work: *“Adapt the space (home) to my work; managing work according to a more or less fixed schedule, in order to be able to establish a "cut" between professional and personal life, even if in the same space (home). This was crucial to maintaining the quality of my work.”* (Interviewee P).

4.2.9. Proactivity

Proactivity can be defined by a going beyond routine behavior through development of new strategies or even pursuing alternative goals. According to interviewee G, working from home lead to a bigger proactive behavior, as you need to communicate even more and be willing to do that: *“But I think this would be more the biggest blockage of remote work, is the issue of having to be proactive to communicate, to reach out to another person.”* (Interviewee G).

In addition, interviewee B, stated that it was necessary to be proactive, in order to communicate with the others involved in her work as mentioned: *“Yes, in the sense of being in permanent contact with the team. Having the attitude of calling, chatting, discussing issues, talking about everyday life, to try to obviate the fact that we don't see each other in person.”* (Interviewee B).

From interviewee R and O point of view, this competence is of most importance due to his job core, as interviewee R said: *“In order to keep clients and candidates in a time of great uncertainty and little receptiveness to change from both sides, creativity and proactivity were essential. Example: present business case at meetings, work on different approaches to the market.”* (Interviewee R).

Interviewee H stated that proactivity is also allied with establishing goals: *“Yes, allied to setting goals, because I was more proactive in my tasks, as I had an organization done my way. it was a good habit”* (Interviewee H).

For interviewee N, it was important to focus on the final result and not on the way to it in order to be more proactive during the pandemic as he said: *“During the pandemic, it works more with a focus on the end result, not so much on the "course" but on the "destination””* (Interviewee N).

Interviewee I stated that she had so much work that she did not have the time to be proactive in relation to her job: *“I didn't have the fact that we have so much work every day until late that we don't even have time to be proactive very sincerely.”* (Interviewee I).

Finally, interviewee P and A both stated that it was necessary, but not only due to the pandemic, as it is inherent to their job anyway: *“It was a necessary skill, but not because we are*

working from home. It is something that is always expected, regardless of the context in which we are living." (Interviewee P), and *"I believe that no more than during face-to-face work."* (Interviewee A).

4.2.10. Change orientation

Orientation to change is the degree to which an individual is or is not satisfied with his current situation and; the magnitude of change that is needed to develop his personal and professional success. Interviewee H understands that she was able to adapt to work from home and to the changes in her work routine as she stated: *"Yes I think we have to be willing to change. In my case I adapted well with the technological and the team changes. Everything worked well with skype, email and telephone. One difficulty I felt is that the more senior positions had much more time for doubts than the younger ones, while in the office we could easily go to their secretary to clear up doubts."* (Interviewee H).

From interviewee I perspective, her company will get back to normal although they were able to change during the pandemic, so this orientation to change did not have a greater impact for her as she shared: *"Yes, however it is a temporary change, for the simple fact that the whole company wants to go back to the same post pandemic situation (going back to the office every day, doing the same things as they used to). Even though more than 50% of people want to keep these changes, they don't have much power over them."* (Interviewee I).

There are some individuals that already worked from home during the pandemic, although possibly in a hybrid way, as was the case of interviewee L that stated: *"I think it's necessary, but I didn't have the need since I was already working 3 days from home before the pandemic"* (Interviewee L). As well, interviewee B also stated that she needed to adapt her workplace at home and her routines due to the pandemic and working from home during several months: *"Yes. Everything changed: our daily lives, the work environment, our routine. I had to adapt to the conditions I had at home, and I started not being as comfortable in terms of infrastructure as I was at the office. I ended up changing things to feel more and more comfortable working from home so that, I can be more productive and be comfortable."* (Interviewee B).

Interviewee N shared that he really needed to change his work routine as he was unable to be on the street approaching clients and needed to develop the business on the digital platforms *"It's a matter of adaptability, if we want a result, we have to take a step. If I can't walk down the street directly talking to customers, what can I do? how to get there? "Using and abusing" of social media"* (Interviewee N). In addition, interviewee A which agrees that orientation to change was required, added that some employees were not happy with the measures taken by the company with regards to the pandemic and work from home as follows: *"Yes, I believe that this situation forced all professionals to adapt to their reality and expectations. For example, in the context of the pandemic,*

several companies took measures that were not even understood/well interpreted by workers, so those who were discontented had to look for other opportunities that met their professional expectations.” (Interviewee A).

For interviewee R it was also a big change and was required adaptability to the new framework that we are living as she mentioned: *“Yes, the personal and professional world has changed from the way we knew it before, change was the watchword - personal, professional change, even in the way we relate to each other.”* (Interviewee R).

4.3. Work-life balance during the health crisis

At this section, there is a focus on the role of the individual as a parent/daughter/brother, as a working professional, and an adult that is required to do tasks at home (laundry, cleaning, etc). The goal is to understand if, it was possible to manage all of these roles during the pandemic crisis while working from home or if it was not possible to manage at all. According to interviewee A, she stated that her work-life balance suffered an impact, as she now gained time without the commute to work but on the other hand, is more difficult for her to just turnoff the computer and stop working at the end of the business day: *“On one hand, it got worse as I find it more difficult to turn it off (the computer), as I said earlier. I easily see myself and it's 8pm and I'm working, just like I would if I were in the office, but I don't know. It's different, there's more of that temptation to "I'll just go here for the computer, have dinner and come take a look." It's harder to switch off, but on the other hand I feel like I've gained some time because I don't have to take transport to go to work, and in the morning, I don't have to wake up 2 hours before going to work. It got better on one side and worse on the other.”* (Interviewee A).

From interviewee C point of view, she is not able to have a break between her personal and professional life, as they are both on the same place as she shared: *“So what happens is that, being at home, you end up managing your time a little more autonomously, maybe because today you began not at 9 but at 9:30, you already know that maybe you'll drag your day a little bit, so at the end of the day you make up for a little more. It's not that I didn't do that at the office, but at the office you ended up being more regulated because you either have transport to catch or because you had dinner to go and make. And being at home is different, you leave the computer on, then come back here, then I don't know what... So, um... you end up not being able to make a break between what is your personal life and your professional life, and I think this can bring you some disadvantages, either in professional or personal terms.”* (Interviewee C).

For interviewee J, it is the same thing, as she shared: *"I notice that I end up working longer. I feel I have more time, because I also don't waste time on transport to come home, but I also see that there are days that I work more... more hours"* (Interviewee J).

On the other hand, interviewee B shared that now she does some home tasks during the day, prepares her lunch and saves time on the commute to the office everyday: *"I think there are two answers there. Just because on the one hand. Let's forget about the pandemic by putting that aside. Of course, personal life has changed a lot. As I said earlier, just the fact of not wasting time going home or going to the office, I manage to do on weekdays everything I couldn't do before. Now, at this moment, I can make lunch at home, hang out the clothes, put the dishes to be washed, take a 10-minute break to hang out... In this personal aspect, a lot has changed. In social, everything changed."* (Interviewee B).

According to interviewee H, she is now able to do things that she was not able to do at the office, but she is not missing work because of it. She even stated that she always manages to respect her working hours and not stayed working late as she mentions: *"I work with a program that is quite slow and also with an excel that takes some time to think because it has many lines and instead of looking at the computer while it is thinking, I cannot literally, be doing anything. Sometimes I cleaned my dishes or went to take care of lunch, things like that. That's true, but I don't stop working to deal with these things. At the office, I didn't take advantage of these dead times."* (Interviewee H).

For interviewee D, working from home helped him to improve this work-life balance, but he also mentions that he has some negative impacts as follows: *"If everything is ok, I focus on work, but now leaving the house, worrying about taking transport, having lunch, the routine. When you have a problem, you camouflage the problem. It's not that it's not there and you don't think about it. Being at home, you don't have that. You don't have that stress, that routine, that interaction with people, it's easier for the problem to come to mind, basically."* (Interviewee D).

The family could have a several impact while working from home and managing your work-life balance. Interviewee K stated that her work life balance remained bad, as she was working at home with 3 kids, when the schools were closed, and her husband is a teacher that was giving online classes as follows: *"I was at home with 3 children, 2 with 1 year old at the time and 1 with 3 years old and my husband teaching children at home too. He is a teacher. In the morning I would stay locked in the room with the kids while he was teaching, to make sure they didn't go to him, who was teaching in the lobby. It was impossible. I worked with them next to me, I couldn't not work. TV was their best friend. I had 3 year old Rafael taking care of the sisters. Working from home is awesome if you're alone."* (Interviewee K).

On the other hand, interviewee R who is also a mother, stated that her work-life balance improved a lot, although at the beginning of the quarantine it was hard as she said: *“For me it has improved a lot. Just the fact of not being in traffic, with the stress of putting him at school (the kid), having to be at the office at 9 am, having to run out of the office to pick him up at 7 pm. Now I really got to know what the work life balance is. The initial part was more complex, we were really confined. It's hard to keep kids at home quiet. It was winter, the weather was not so good, all of this had an impact. But then everything has suffered an adaptation, we had to pull our heads, find methods, strategies and things for them to do. March and April were the hardest to reconcile everything. We were neither good parents nor good professionals, sometimes we have to calm down and try to achieve a balance.”* (Interviewee R).

For interviewee L, who already had 3 days of remote work even before the pandemic, it did not change, as she stated: *“I think it remained the same. Because I already had 3 days at home. I've already worked at another company that didn't have my home days here, I always went to the office and I think you can achieve a much better balance by being at home for a few days. Because there it is, you waste less time in transport, in traffic, leaving home earlier, I think this helps everything here for balance.”* (Interviewee L).

5. Discussion of Results

The main goal of this study is to provide answers to the research questions mentioned in the introduction chapter.

5.1. Work from home during the health crisis

Further to the first research question: *“Were the consultants prepared to work from home during this period of crisis?”*, literature mentions the difficulties that arose to the families during the present health crisis, especially, stress and coping (Bavel et al., 2020). At the beginning of the pandemic, it almost all of the interviewed consultants felt stress due to the situation, as they were not able to predict what was happening next, if it would be just a 15-day thing or not and what would be the measures imposed in the future. There are three advantages of working from home, such as i) work-life balance, ii) work efficiency and iii) work control and, three disadvantages: iv) home office constraints, v) work uncertainties and vi) inadequate tools, related to working from home during the pandemic, according to Ipsen et al. (2021). Considering this, it was not possible for the consultants to have a good preparation (to prepare themselves, mentally and physically, to work from home) for what was coming next. The consultants had a 360 degree change from working almost 100% of the time in the office to work 100% from home, in a matter of a week. With regards to the physical

preparation, such as their home conditions and tools needed to work from home, some of the consultants mentioned that they were not prepared to work from home, but easily adapted to the situation. The mental preparation was not so easy. Consultants mentioned that it was fine at the beginning and, later on, they noticed some issues but, others mentioned that they prefer to work from home and, it is perfectly fine.

Furthermore, previous research states that social connections are essential for human beings to regulate emotions, cope with stress and stay resilient (Bavel et al., 2020). Literature also stated with regards to this matter that, public health emergencies may affect the health, safety, and well-being of individuals, causing them, for example, insecurity, confusion or emotional isolation (Pfefferbaum, B. et al, 2020).

5.2. Competencies

In order to answer the second research question: *“Which individual, interpersonal and instrumental competences are required to be able to work from home?”*, each competency will be further analyzed and then some conclusions will be presented.

5.2.1. Motivation management

Literature (Lopes, 2003) states that motivation is the desire to exert high levels of effort towards certain organizational goals, which are also conditioned by the individual goals, as it is within people and is driven by human needs. Kirilina and Panina (2017) stated that individuals’ motivation has a direct impact on high-performance at work for every employee, which leads to the company’s prosperity, therefore, motivation has to become one of the primary objectives of any organization.

The empirical evidence demonstrates that most of the interviewees felt a lack of motivation due to:

- i. The job itself;
- ii. The pandemic crisis;
- iii. Being obligated to work from home during several months in a row, without any expectations of coming back to their offices and;
- iv. The area of consultancy (the market stopped for a while due to the health crisis).

Considering the above, is notable that the ability to motivate themselves and to keep working is important on times like this. Furthermore, literature also states that the individuals will be motivated to work, depending on the benefits received, which can differ from company to company, especially during a crisis. Some of the consultants (from the same company) mentioned that their employer imposed some measures with regards to the pandemic crisis, namely, give the employees an extra

month of vacation, but without remuneration and not payment of bonus with regards to the year. It is important to mention that these consultants may have lost some of the motivation to work. Adding this to the isolation, the loss of the routine, the market impact resultant from the health crisis and, the fear to leave their homes, it had an absolute impact on their motivation and life. In this sense, it was necessary for them to go further all of these problems that aroused and manage to stick to the tasks or activities inherent to their jobs.

5.2.2. Manage time

According to literature, manage time is the competency which provides the tools that allow to improve the performance and productivity to achieve specific results (Neves et al, 2015). Per the empirical evidence results, it was found that at home, in general, it is easier to get distracted and to work longer hours, due or not, to those same distractions, depending on the case.

Sometimes there is the belief that there is no time or even the underestimation of how much of the time a job will take (Neves et al., 2015), but this was not the problem for the consultants. Overall, the individuals shared that they have issues separating the personal life from the professional life, namely with regards to their work schedule, which in most consultancy companies complies 8 hours and overtime. The consultants have difficulties to turn off the computers, cell phones and stop working at a certain hour (6 or 7 pm) and normally delay this situation, which can seriously impact the personal life, as they stop doing other things and, are most of the time working.

Furthermore, Farrell (2017) states that managing time will allow to spend the energies, talents and time on the important tasks in a more efficient way, however, while the consultants were obligated to stay at home, they ended up working more hours, instead of looking for new ways of spending their free time at home. The companies should implement measures or provide training on managing time for the employees, in order to avoid the long hours of working, which can lead to less productivity and other problems.

5.2.3. Anxiety and Stress management

Per the empirical evidence, it was possible to find that the competence of stress management is of major importance while working from home. According to literature, stress management is the ability to choose and exercise healthy self-control and self-management in response to stressful events (Nelson & Low, 2010). According to the World Health Organization (2005), stress, especially the stress relating to work, is the second most frequent health problem, impacting one third of employed people in the European Union. Some interviewees stated that the stress was already present in their life, and it increased during the pandemic crisis, while for others the stress felt, did not change since they were working from home. Nonetheless, it is possible to confirm in this study

that is important to find ways to minimize stress at work, especially while working from home, as the colleagues are not able to see each other and notice the problem.

Part of the consultants mentioned that they were already trying to manage their stress problems through yoga, therapy, weekend getaways or just by sharing it with colleagues. However, it is of extreme importance for the companies to pay attention to this issue and, provide training on stress management or implement measures at work, such as yoga classes or even provide therapy sessions to the employees, for example.

5.2.4. Work inside virtual teams

According to literature, the rise and continuous development of information and communication technologies, led to the creation of new mechanisms for coordinating work (Lilian, 2014). Per the results, it is possible to conclude that is difficult for the consultants to get closer to their co-workers working on a virtual team (from home). The interviewees stated that some of their relationships at work disappeared and others stay at the same place, meaning that there is no space to grow a work relationship while on a virtual team, but that could happen if the team is working side by side in the office.

As found previously and per the literature, the use of technology to communicate can also bring some issues, as so, there are activities that should be promoted, as team building for example, in order to, respond to diversified competing demands, to address ambiguity of remote communication, and establish personal relationships with different team members which, in turn, require implementation of accessible, stable, and user-friendly technology (Nunamaker, Reinig, & Brigg, 2009).

It is important to be able to work on a virtual team these days, considering the global health crisis. However, on final terms, each interviewee was still able to do their work besides the difficulties of the situation and maybe some distance regarding other teams or colleagues in the organization. Considering this information, some companies may consider important to implement measures that allow the consultants to improve their relationships at work, but this depends on the company culture and what they really want to provide to their employees in terms of organization climate.

5.2.5. E-leadership

E-leadership is an important competence when you receive newcomers at your company while working from home. The leader is required to keep up with them, give them comfort, produce direction, alignment, and commitment (McCauley et al., 2010). The consultants felt that the newcomers were not comfortable approaching them, as well as some consultants also shared that they did not feel comfortable in certain situations, to speak with their superiors.

According to literature, leaders and followers play important and interdependent roles in generating leadership (Day & Dragoni, 2015), as so, a leader is not independent and cannot act on its own. It is necessary for the follower to produce an effort and contribute to the relationship. The results showed this problem, it will continuously happen, and it could have an impact on the newcomer's experience in the company, as well as it will impact every consultant in the team (interdependent roles).

A leader can also try to do everything that is within his reach, for example, as the buddy's program mentioned by a consultant, and still the newcomers do not feel comfortable to speak with their superiors and/or colleagues. Furthermore, it is important to keep up with the subordinates, for them to not feel lack of support, not feel that they are working alone and that they've lost some kind of direction.

5.2.6. Interpersonal communication

In the literature, interpersonal communication is communication about relationships, between human beings (Biocca & Levy, 1995). Interpersonal communication has the following characteristics: i) is from one individual to another, ii) is face to face and iii) the form and content reflect the personal characteristics of the individuals, as well as their social roles and relationships (Hartley, 1999). The interpersonal communication has defined previously do not fit completely the framework where this thesis is positioned. Consultants were working from home and were not able to have a face-to-face communication. Such communication was only done through video calls or messages on platforms as skype, slack or teams.

Furthermore, Neves et al (2015), states that the individual competencies of communication result from learning processes, namely, social learning. Considering this, is important to mention that some consultants mentioned that at the beginning of the pandemic, they did not even turn on their cameras, so they did not see the person who they were talking to. Literature even adds that, the greater problem with interpersonal communication is that most of the individuals do not believe that they may have a problem of communication, taking from granted the efficacy of their forms of communication, which can lead to misunderstandings. Most of the consultants mentioned that i) they did not want to bother their colleagues, as they felt that their availability to talk was not the same as before (which is already a problem of communication) and ii) the means of communication are less personal, but not less susceptible to errors and misinterpretation.

Considering the above, interpersonal communication was one of the competencies more required during the health crisis while the consultants worked from home and, is one of the fields that should be reviewed by the companies with regards to remote work.

5.2.7. Establishing goals

Per the literature, the establishment of goals is extremely important for the consultant, as well as, for the team. This happens because, when involved in this process, the parts become more committed with the goals themselves and motivated to achieve them (O'Driscoll & Eubanks, 1993).

Furthermore, the process of establishing goals is of extreme importance in a team, as it will allow to define the team strategy, the available resources, and manage all the members through communication and information sharing (Luís, 2012). Most of the consultants confirmed that establishing goals is essential for them, even when we were not facing a worldwide health crisis. Yet, they mentioned that while working from home, it was fundamental.

The consultants mainly used this competence for daily lists with priority jobs or to-do lists in order to not get lost with other tasks that were not so important. On the other hand, the interviewees that have kids, mentioned that they needed this competence in order to manage the family, children and work in the same physical space, as working from home requires greater organizational capacity from them.

5.2.8. Resilience

According to the literature, resilient people possess three characteristics: a staunch acceptance of reality; a deep belief, often buttressed by strongly held values, that life is meaningful; and an uncanny ability to improvise (Coutu, 2002). Considering that the consultants were required to change their way of work from one day to the other, resilience was the right word to describe the health crisis period. They needed to adapt their homes to have a new space to work, needed to create new routines and adapt their behaviors, taking into consideration that they were now required to work from home for a period indetermined of time.

Herrman et al. (2011) defines resilience as a positive adaptation, or the ability to maintain or regain mental health, despite experiencing adversity. The health crisis was an enormous adversity. It changed completely everyone's lives.

For some of the consultants interviewed, it may had had a greater impact, as they needed to analyze the new paradigm, to adapt to the new circumstances and start implementing new strategies with regards to their work on a daily basis, instead of just seeing everything fall apart and give up. As such, resilience was a competence indeed necessary for the consultants working from home during this health crisis.

5.2.9. Proactivity

Literature states that proactivity involves self-starting and future-focused action that aims to bring change, either in the self or in one's work environment (Strauss and Parker, 2014). The

consultants mentioned that it was important to be proactive with regards to the communication. Considering that the consultants were working from home, they needed to be proactive in order to initiate the contact with others, which can be more difficult when they are not in the same physical place.

Furthermore, engaging in proactive activities implies going beyond routine behavior by developing new strategies or even pursuing alternative goals (Fay & Sonnentag, 2012). Some of the consultants, due to their business area, needed to implement new behaviors to fight the effects of the pandemic, nonetheless, many of the consultants confirmed that proactivity is a competence that is part of their jobs, and they need to apply it at all times, and not just during the pandemic crisis period.

5.2.10. Change orientation

Literature says that change orientation is the degree to which an individual is or is not satisfied and; the magnitude of change that is needed to develop his personal and professional success (Nelson & Low, 2010). This competence is not included in the theoretical framework, as it was a result of the interviews conducted. While conducting the interviews, it was possible to verify that some individuals were more open to the changes that were occurring, and others had some difficulties to deal with the situation.

According to literature, when organizations attempt a major change, the employees often understand the new vision and want to make it happen (Kotter, 1995). In this sense, the consultants mentioned that the difficulty was mainly due to the 360-degree change, from office based to home based work.

Part of the consultants also mentioned that they prefer to work at the office due to the easy communication and interaction with the colleagues. It is impossible to not cross orientation to change and interpersonal communication competencies, considering the matter of working from home, especially in the referred circumstances. Individuals were obligated to work from home and some of them do not have the right conditions to do so or, they have an extrovert personality, and then prefer to be on a face-to-face working situation. Nonetheless, after a few months, most of the consultants were able to deal with the changes imposed, although they were temporary, as we already get over the most critical points of the health crisis.

5.3. Work-life balance during the health crisis

Finally, the third research question *“Is it possible to have a work-life balance while working from home during a crisis?”*, it is quite controversial. A study conducted by Ipsen et al. (2021) revealed that working from home was experienced predominantly as positive for the majority of the

respondents, with fewer respondents considering it mostly as a negative experience. The results from the present study were similar, as most of the consultants mentioned that they saved time that was spent previously commuting and they now have time during the day (breaks) that they can spend doing domestic tasks. However, the consultants also mentioned that they ended up working more hours that they were supposed to, due to already being at home and did not need to prepare to leave work or did not spend time commuting. The consultants spend the gain of “free” time resulting of working from home, working more hours.

Literature mentions that there are different roles of the employee, ones related to the job itself, such as the employee, the manager and/or the union representative, while there are also roles not related with the job, such as the family role (being a parent, a husband or a son) or the leisure that could translate into being an athlete or a musician, for example (Frone, 2003).

Working from home during a health crisis, in which the individuals needed to be isolated prohibited a lot of behaviors, such as, not going out with friends or go to the cinema. It may have taken from the consultants some kind of social role, but it imposed or enhanced other roles, such as the family role. The majority of the consultants did not report any issue with regards to their families and working from home, but there were two cases of working moms that needed to improvise, as they had their kids at home while working and it was not easy to deal with that. This confirms what was already mentioned in literature by Klopotek (2017), that the biggest disadvantage of working from home is the difficulty in separating home affairs from the professional ones.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to respond to the three research questions mentioned in the introduction.

In this sense, the research allowed to confirm that the most difficult thing for the consultants during this situation of crisis was the isolation, the fact that the social connections were only made through video-calls or other means, and they needed to stay at home, away from their loved ones, from work, from the restaurants, from the beaches and so on. In addition, some of the consultants mentioned that their homes were not prepared for a working from home framework and, the companies at the beginning stage were also not prepared with regards to infrastructure matters.

Most of the consultants interviewed did not report situations of work from home previous to the pandemic, although some of them had that possibility one or two days a week, but from the results obtained, this culture is not present in many companies neither in the employees, which may lead to some problems with regards to this matter.

Notwithstanding the above, they adapted to the change imposed by the health crisis, continued with their work tasks from their home (in some cases, improvised) office and managed the difficulties in their own way. As such, and responding to the first research questions, the consultants were not prepared to work from home. If a new quarantine is needed, probably most consultants will be more prepared for it, has during the past 1 and half years, they had the opportunity to adapt their homes and to have a space for work also at home.

Finally, with regards to this matter, it is important to mention that some consultants exposed that they will most certainly going back to the office as soon as possible, as their companies prefer to have their employees at the office. There are some consultancy companies that already had implemented 1 or 2 days of working from home, however, the ones that did not had benefit, most likely will continue without having it, due to the culture of the company. Some may implement working from home days, but not the majority, considering the feedback received from the consultants interviewed.

Furthermore, it was possible to anticipate that some of the most relevant competencies for consultants during the health crisis would be the same as the ones mentioned in literature, as almost all the competencies indicated are transversal to other professions. Nonetheless, it was expected to have significant differences as a result of this investigation, due to the specific context in analysis (situation of crisis - COVID-19 pandemic), reason why the study was conducted.

Further to the above, it is possible to confirm that indeed some of the competencies were relevant, however, there were other that emerged during the referred investigation, such as change orientation and anxiety and stress management.

It is important to mention that all the referred competencies have its own impact and importance on the consultant's job, however, considering the scenario of working from home during a crisis, some of them can be more relevant to analyze, for the managers of the companies.

The researcher will evidence the four most relevant competencies, which are the ones that are considered to be more worthy of investment, namely, with regards to training or implement new procedures within the companies. The four competencies are the i) interpersonal communication, ii) anxiety and stress management, iii) manage time and iv) e-leadership.

Interpersonal communication suffered a massive change within this new framework of working from home. Now, consultants are not communicating to each other face to face, but only through messages, video-calls, e-mails and so on. All types of communication depend on technology. If interpersonal communication is of great importance when consultants are working at the office, when working from home is even more important.

Technology really facilitated our lives within the last one and a half years, however, it has also its own issues, and with regards to interpersonal communication, it can lead to an improvement of misunderstandings and unclear messages. Therefore, managers should invest on a training based on interpersonal communication for their employees, but with a focus on technology and the ways of communication that technology allow us to communicate.

Anxiety and stress management is not something new for most of the consultants interviewed. This competence is always of great importance, but the researcher wants to give emphasis to the fact that when the consultants are working from home, it becomes more difficult to notice the state of mind of the colleagues or their team members. When consultants rely on technology to communicate, it is not possible to capture every signal someone is passing, as you only see a face (when you see), you don't see the body, the movements, is not easy to analyze the person's behavior.

Further to the above and in order to avoid future issues of anxiety and stress between the employees, managers can implement weekly yoga classes, provide counselling to the consultants that may need it or just manage to have a coffee (informal) break at the end of the week with their team, to speak about non-work matters and relief a little from the week.

Manage time is the competency that the consultants did not implement very well. Most of the consultants reported situations of working late hours, availability 24h/7 and so on. If the problems reported continue to occur during a long period of time, it can lead to problems such as, anxiety and stress at work, decrease in productivity, fatigue, and others.

Although it cannot be for the best interest for some managers, create a culture that respect the working hours, the work-life balance of employees and consequently their personal life, can also have

benefits for the company, such as increase of productivity during the working hours and a better climate, for example.

E-leadership is a competency that is related with technology, leadership, and interpersonal communication. In a normal working situation, leadership may fail, and interpersonal communication can fail as well. Considering the current framework, trying to lead a team or integrate a new member only through video-calls, messages and e-mails is not the easiest task. The consultants mentioned that some programs were implemented to welcome the new members, such as the buddy program, however, it was not enough.

A suggestion for the managers to welcome a new member is to i) arrange two meetings a day, one in the morning and other at the end of the day, to give the new members a direction and be able to manage closely their daily tasks and ii) arrange a video-call to present the newcomer to the team and the team be able to know this person as well. Point i) can also be applicable to the older members of the team, as working from home implicates an increase of “lonely” work and this measure can help the consultants.

Give information and feedback, as well as, solving problems and make decisions, although were mentioned in the theoretical framework, were not mentioned in the results analysis. While conducting the interviews and afterwards, analysing the results obtained, it was possible to see that the referred competences were not so relevant for the evaluation (although mentioned a few times by the consultants), as they are also related with other competencies studied. Give information and feedback is inherent to interpersonal communication and solving problems and make decisions can be related to proactivity as well as, interpersonal communication.

On the other hand, while conducting the interviews, the researcher noticed that anxiety and stress management, as well as change orientation (both not studied in the theoretical framework), should be further analyzed, as it is possible to verify.

Finally, with regards to research question iii), the conclusion is that the consultants were able to improve their work life balance mainly due to the time that they were not spending on commutes to work, but also ended up working more time throughout the day due to “already” being at home.

However, it is important to retain that, the work-life balance depends on the individual’s personal situation, personality and competencies acquired. For example, if the individual is single and lives alone, it is possible to manage better the time than an individual that is married and has 2 kids.

Furthermore, if the individual manages well his time, he will work the same hours as if he was at the office and, will not end up working more hours due to being working from home. There are some consultants that due to personality traits may work longer hours (even at the office) and this does not mean that they are not able to manage their time.

In addition, the consultancy culture in Portugal is still connected with working more than 8 hours/day, as so, some consultants just accept this as “normal” and, don’t have a work-life balance. This said, even if the consultants manage well their personal situation, have the competencies necessary to manage their time and don’t feel the need to work longer hours, the culture of the companies where they work overcomes it, still, while working from home.

7. Limitations and future research

The findings of this research are limited, due to different types of biases.

First of all, the type of answers given by the consultants were very often not deep or not directed to the real point of the question made. As mentioned before, some of the interviewees gave straight answers or did not elaborate their answers even when asked to do so, which may be explained by the variations in the communication style, personal experience of consultants, their openness to talk about these matters (as some on the matters can be quite personal) or their personality traits.

Secondly, the pandemic had its first impact in Portugal as of March 2020, and it is still ongoing. Considering the above, the consultants sometimes had difficulty to explain their perspective, possibly since such perspective changed several times during this period. For example, at the beginning of the pandemic, they did not feel lack of motivation (because it was a new thing, working from home) but, felt lack of motivation after 3 months of working from home and now, one year and a half later, may not feel this lack of motivation again.

Furthermore, the sample was small (only 18 participants), and it was not composed by consultants from all hierarchical positions, namely it did not include a Director or a Partner, as it may not be completely reliable, so the saturation of information may not be reached.

The sample could also have been composed by more representatives of each area of consulting business, as from real estate, there is only 1 participant. Considering this, future research should increase the number of participants, in order to have a more diversified sample.

To conclude this section, future research should also focus more on the competencies analysis, as due to the available time and length of the research, it was not possible to do a deep and elaborated study of each competence in analysis and consequently have consistent results.

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Appendix A

Interview Guideline in Portuguese

“Boa tarde XX. O meu nome é Jéssica Almeida e sou aluna do Mestrado em Gestão de Recursos Humanos e Consultoria Organizacional no ISCTE. No momento, estou a fazer a minha tese que tem como objetivo principal entender quais são as competências mais relevantes que um consultor deve ter para lidar com uma situação de crise como o COVID-19 enquanto trabalha a partir de casa e como essas competências são colocadas em prática diariamente.

Farei primeiro algumas perguntas gerais com o objetivo de conhecê-lo/a melhor e sua experiência de trabalho em geral e, em seguida, perguntas específicas sobre a situação da pandemia covid-19 e a sua experiência durante a mesma.

Esta entrevista durará aproximadamente 30 minutos, tenho permissão para gravá-la?

Obrigada, vamos avançar então.

Perguntas gerais - Parte I

- Pode confirmar-me a sua idade?
- Há quanto tempo trabalha nesta empresa?
- Em que área de consultoria trabalha? Pode fazer uma breve descrição do seu trabalho?
- Quando iniciou a situação de teletrabalho?
- Ainda se encontra em teletrabalho?
- Em algum momento teve receio de perder o seu trabalho devido à pandemia? Se sim, o que levou a esse receio?
- Como se deu a transição na sua empresa do trabalho no escritório para o trabalho a partir de casa?
- Que adaptações ao seu trabalho lhe foram solicitadas durante a pandemia?
- Que desafios enfrentou quando começou a trabalhar a partir de casa? Pode dar-me alguns exemplos?
- Como respondeu a esses desafios?

Perguntas mais específicas - Parte II:

- Sente que foi possível efetuar o mesmo trabalho que fazia no escritório, a partir de casa? Ou seja, conseguiu fazer as mesmas tarefas?
- Acha que foi necessário ter mais auto-disciplina e gerir melhor o seu tempo agora que trabalha a partir de casa?
- Notou diferenças na sua relação com a chefia e/ou com subordinados? Exemplos?
- E com os clientes?
- Relativamente ao equilíbrio entre a vida profissional e a vida pessoal, acha que foi possível mantê-lo? Exemplos?
- No que respeita à parte da casa se ter transformado em escritório, considera que foi algo com um impacto positivo ou negativo no seu trabalho? Porquê?
- Em algum momento teve problemas de ansiedade, stress ou alguma sensação semelhante? Se sim, como resolveu ou de que forma está a tentar lidar com isso?
- Ao final destes meses todos, sentiu-se desmotivado?

Perguntas finais - Parte III:

- O que sente que podia ter feito de diferente?
- Como acha que vais encarar a nova fase (situação pós covid-19), ou seja, o retorno à normalidade? Acha que algo vai ser diferente do que era?
- As questões terminaram e a entrevista acabou. Quer acrescentar algo ou há algo que não tenha sido questionado antes, algo que ache importante dizer?

Muito obrigada”

Appendix B

Google Form Questionnaire Content

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1rPCIXLlainKIJustn2NfJtXpMjrL-ySsnpEs-3xtE9A/edit>

“Sou a Jéssica e sou aluna do Mestrado de Gestão de Recursos Humanos e Consultoria Organizacional no ISCTE Business School, e, no âmbito da minha tese cujo objetivo é entender quais foram as competências necessárias para que um consultor tenha sucesso a trabalhar a partir de casa numa situação de crise (pandemia), gostaria que respondesse a este questionário cujo fim é completar as entrevistas efetuadas e portanto, compreender que competências foram utilizadas ou não durante o contexto da pandemia e de que forma foram utilizadas.

Peço que no início do formulário indique o seu nome para que eu consiga associar os dados à entrevista já efetuada na primeira fase de recolha de informação e que tente responder da forma mais completa possível.

Muito obrigada pela participação.

Jéssica Almeida

1. Resiliência (adaptação positiva, ou a capacidade de manter ou recuperar a saúde mental, apesar de passar por adversidades). O objetivo é entender se, perante desafios que possam ter surgido, se conseguiu adaptar e continuar a desempenhar a sua função com sucesso. Acha que foi uma competência a que teve de recorrer durante a pandemia? Se sim, pode dar exemplos?
2. Estabelecer objetivos (o ato de definir objetivos a alcançar e a forma como o vai fazer). O objetivo é entender se foi necessário incluir algumas metas relativamente ao seu trabalho e às tarefas que tinha de desempenhar devido à situação de teletrabalho durante a pandemia. Acha que foi uma competência necessária? Se sim, pode dar exemplos?
3. Proatividade (comportamento de trabalho direcionado a objetivos, no qual os indivíduos assumem ativamente o controle das situações para gerar mudanças futuras em si mesmo ou na organização). O Objetivo é perceber se teve de ter mais

comportamentos proativos na situação de teletrabalho. Acha que foi uma competência necessária para si durante a pandemia? Se sim, pode dar exemplos?

4. Orientação para a mudança (o grau em que um indivíduo está ou não satisfeito e; a magnitude da mudança necessária para desenvolver o seu sucesso pessoal e profissional). Acha que foi uma competência necessária ao teletrabalho durante a pandemia? Se sim, pode dar exemplos?
5. Comunicação interpessoal (a capacidade de se comunicar e ser percebido, bem como ouvir e responder à mensagem comunicada). O objetivo é entender se existiram entraves na comunicação com os seus colegas ou se pelo contrário tudo correu bem, apesar de estarem em teletrabalho. Acha que foi uma competência necessária ao teletrabalho durante a pandemia? Se sim, pode dar exemplos?
6. E-leadership (líderes que se comunicam principalmente por meio da tecnologia da informação e cuja interação com os seguidores é facilitada por ela). O objetivo é entender se sentiu que os seus líderes, quer diretos ou indiretos, conseguiram comunicar consigo e se se sentiu à vontade para comunicar com eles. Acha que foi uma competência necessária ao teletrabalho durante a pandemia? Se sim, pode dar exemplos?"

Appendix C

Table of codes

Themes	Code	Description	Quotes
Remote work	Work from home experience	Employees working outside of their company's offices and communicating only through video-chats, telephone and so on, during the pandemic	"One of the things that led me to the company where I am, was precisely the interpersonal relationship and having a dynamic day-to-day life. If I can do the same, I can, but in a different way. It does not mean that it is detrimental to my daily life and the final result, but it is clearly different." (Interviewee O)
Work-life balance Personal vs professional life - quarantine + family + hobbies + work + home tasks, all together in the same environment	Personal vs professional life	The role of the individual as a parent/daughter/brother, as a working professional, and an adult that is required to do tasks at home (laundry, cleaning, etc). The gain or loss of time while working from home due to: i) commuting, ii) working from home without supervision and iii) managing their hobbies.	"I notice that I end up working longer. I feel I have more time, because I also don't waste time on transport to come home, but I also see that there are days that I work more... more hours" (Interviewee J).
Personal competencies Competencies developed by the individual and his will to have success, that are not dependent on his relation with others	Change orientation	The degree to which an individual is or is not satisfied and; the magnitude of change that is needed to develop his personal and professional success	"Did I try to do something? At a professional level, difficult, I think, taking into account the core business that it is. On a personal level, obviously trying to diversify as much as possible, I enrolled in a course that I have just finished in commercial management and sales, I tried to arrange things to occupy my time." (Interviewee O)
	Proativity	Going beyond routine behaviour by developing new strategies or even pursuing alternative goals.	"With no other option, a business like my company's lives a lot of proactivity as it depends a lot on the business relationship with its customers. So, of course, proactivity was necessary to keep us close to clients, candidates, so as not to lower our levels of activity, profitability and even motivation. As an example, it could be our change in KPI's with a greater focus on the customer." (Interviewee O)
	Establishing goals	The act of stating clearly what you want to achieve and how you will achieve it	"I think that setting concrete goals in view of my tasks/responsibilities was fundamental. For example, list the to do's I had to ensure they were done on day X, to ensure, on the one hand, that I didn't get distracted from my daily tasks, and on the other hand to try to impose some limits on my work and manage to separate life professional stuff." (Interviewee A)
	Resilience	Positive adaptation, or the ability to maintain or regain mental health, despite experiencing adversity	"At a time, I didn't know in what position to be at home and weeks ago I moved to my sister's room to change the air, but I also easily recovered from it, spent a weekend elsewhere, then came back to reality and adapted to it." (Interviewee B)
	Motivation management	the use of appropriate motivational techniques that improve interpersonal relationships, where communication is the primary factor in changing behavior, enabling individuals to have a better integration in the team and organization.	"Now it seems that I just drag myself from the bed to the secretary next door, but otherwise ... it ends up losing a little motivation." (Interviewee A)
	Stress Management	To choose and exercise healthy selfcontrol and self-management in response to stressful event	"I felt more anxious about not being able to leave the house. When the measurements were lower and we were already able to go out to dinner, I noticed that the anxiety decreased a little." (Interviewee H)

Themes	Code	Description	Quotes
Interpersonal competencies Competencies related to the individual and his relationship with others, namely, the team or peers	work inside virtual teams	Work only based on communication through informational technology and possibly remote. Global and multi-cultural environment	"I had colleagues who had more doubts, others who tried to help. Some relationships were strengthened and others were weak due to the distance." (Interviewee N)
	interpersonal communication	The ability to communicate and to be perceived as well as to listen and respond to the message communicated	"in the office i would get up and go to my colleague's table and ask questions. Or send a message via skype and then go there to clarify the doubt. At home this was a little bit different, it was a little bit more boring, we have to see if the person is available on skype or sometimes they are on calls (...), whether the availability is not as great as it was in the office." (interviewee H)
	E-Leadership	Leaders who mainly communicate via information technology, and whose interaction with followers is facilitated by it.	"It is a bit difficult to guarantee that the person understood what you are explaining that he understood the urgency or non-urgency of the work you went through, he realized what it is for what he is doing and understand that." (Interviewee E)
Instrumental competencies Fundamental competencies with intrinsic value that can be applied in any situation from personal to professional matters	Manage time	The ability to manage the tasks you have to do and organize them according to your time and deadlines imposed	"Previously, the fact that you are in the office and at the end of the day you go home, it ends up being a motivation to get your work done, finish what you have to finish and go home. And it doesn't happen when you're working from home. (...) at the limit, we don't finish that at 8, we finish at 9, and we are in the comfort of our home." (Interviewee Q)