



## Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and remote work: an autoethnographic exploration in the era of telecommuting

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**Resumo:** Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurobiological condition that impacts focus, impulse control, and organization, potentially hindering educational and professional development. This research aims to investigate how remote work affects employees with ADHD, acknowledging the scarcity of studies in academia regarding this relationship. The study adopts an autoethnographic and autobiographical approach to examine the impact of remote work on individuals with ADHD. Notably, the use of ChatGPT as a methodological tool is emphasized for analysing autoethnographic impressions and creating thematic categories. This approach seeks to comprehensively capture the nuances of experiences, providing a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by these professionals. It was observed that telecommuting, driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, poses challenges such as social isolation, blurred boundaries between personal and professional life, time management difficulties, and feelings of alienation, exacerbating these challenges for those with ADHD. The research not only offers an in-depth understanding of the difficulties individuals with ADHD face during remote work but also highlights the methodological innovation of incorporating technologies like ChatGPT for qualitative analysis. Additionally, practical strategies are identified to assist these professionals in overcoming obstacles, aiming to create more inclusive and productive work environments. Despite the benefits of remote work, such as flexibility and cost savings, it also presents challenges, including maintaining focus, managing time, and establishing clear boundaries between work and personal life. The study underscores that, for those susceptible to distractions and in need of structure, remote work can create additional tensions, challenging the notion that telecommuting is entirely autonomous and flexible.

**Palavras-chave:** Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); remote work; telecommuting; remote job.

### **Transtorno do Déficit de Atenção e Hiperatividade (TDAH) e trabalho remoto: uma exploração autoetnográfica na era do teletrabalho**

**Abstract:** O Transtorno do Déficit de Atenção e Hiperatividade (TDAH) é uma condição neurológica que impacta a concentração, o controle de impulsos e a organização, podendo potencialmente prejudicar o desenvolvimento educacional e profissional. Esta pesquisa visa investigar como o trabalho remoto afeta os colaboradores com TDAH, reconhecendo a escassez de estudos acadêmicos sobre essa relação. O estudo adota uma abordagem autoetnográfica e autobiográfica para examinar o impacto do trabalho remoto em indivíduos com TDAH. Destaca-se o uso do ChatGPT como ferramenta metodológica para analisar impressões autoetnográficas e criar categorias temáticas. Essa abordagem busca capturar de forma abrangente as nuances das experiências, proporcionando uma compreensão mais profunda dos desafios enfrentados por esses profissionais. Observou-se que o teletrabalho, impulsionado pela pandemia de COVID-19, apresenta desafios como isolamento social, fronteiras difusas entre vida pessoal e profissional, dificuldades

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na gestão do tempo e sentimentos de alienação, exacerbando esses desafios para aqueles com TDAH. A pesquisa não apenas oferece uma compreensão aprofundada das dificuldades enfrentadas por indivíduos com TDAH durante o trabalho remoto, mas também destaca a inovação metodológica de incorporar tecnologias como o ChatGPT para análise qualitativa. Além disso, são identificadas estratégias práticas para auxiliar esses profissionais a superar obstáculos, visando criar ambientes de trabalho mais inclusivos e produtivos. Apesar dos benefícios do trabalho remoto, como flexibilidade e economia de custos, ele também apresenta desafios, incluindo manter a concentração, gerenciar o tempo e estabelecer limites claros entre trabalho e vida pessoal. O estudo destaca que, para aqueles suscetíveis a distrações e que necessitam de estrutura, o trabalho remoto pode criar tensões adicionais, desafiando a noção de que o teletrabalho é totalmente autônomo e flexível.

**Keywords:** Transtorno de Déficit de Atenção com Hiperatividade (TDAH); trabalho remoto; teletrabalho; *home office*.

### **Trastorno por Déficit de Atención e Hiperactividad (TDAH) y trabajo remoto: una exploración autoetnográfica en la era del teletrabajo**

**Resumen:** El Trastorno por Déficit de Atención e Hiperactividad (TDAH) es una condición neurobiológica que afecta la concentración, el control de impulsos y la organización, pudiendo obstaculizar el desarrollo educativo y profesional. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo investigar cómo el trabajo remoto afecta a empleados con TDAH, reconociendo la escasez de estudios en la academia sobre esta relación. El estudio adopta un enfoque autoetnográfico y autobiográfico para examinar el impacto del trabajo remoto en individuos con TDAH. Destacadamente, se enfatiza el uso de ChatGPT como herramienta metodológica para analizar impresiones autoetnográficas y crear categorías temáticas. Este enfoque busca capturar de manera integral las sutilezas de las experiencias, proporcionando una comprensión más profunda de los desafíos enfrentados por estos profesionales. Se observó que el teletrabajo, impulsado por la pandemia de COVID-19, presenta desafíos como el aislamiento social, la difuminación de límites entre la vida personal y profesional, dificultades en la gestión del tiempo y sentimientos de alienación, exacerbando estos desafíos para aquellos con TDAH. La investigación no solo ofrece una comprensión profunda de las dificultades que enfrentan las personas con TDAH durante el trabajo remoto, sino que también destaca la innovación metodológica de incorporar tecnologías como ChatGPT para el análisis cualitativo. Además, se identifican estrategias prácticas para ayudar a estos profesionales a superar obstáculos, con el objetivo de crear entornos laborales más inclusivos y productivos. A pesar de los beneficios del trabajo remoto, como la flexibilidad y el ahorro de costos, también presenta desafíos, como mantener la concentración, gestionar el tiempo y establecer límites claros entre el trabajo y la vida personal. El estudio subraya que, para aquellos susceptibles a distracciones y que necesitan estructura, el trabajo remoto puede crear tensiones adicionales, desafiando la noción de que el teletrabajo es completamente autónomo y flexible.

**Palabras clave:** Trastorno por Déficit de Atención e Hiperactividad (TDAH); trabajo remoto; teletrabajo.

## **1 Introduction**

In recent years, remote work has become an increasingly prevalent reality in various professional sectors. The acceleration of this phenomenon has been intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated social isolation measures and encouraged the adoption of remote work practices. The expansion of remote work has challenged the

geographical boundaries of organizations, allowing the workplace to be virtually exercised from any point on the planet (De Macêdo *et al.*, 2020; Nohara *et al.*, 2010).

According to Araújo and Lua (2021), the pandemic has shed light on a wide range of issues related to remote work, making this topic even more current and relevant. In the meantime, many employees, unfit and/or unprepared for remote work, found themselves immersed in a new work context. Within this context, new and more challenging conflicts have emerged, necessitating further investigation into the topic and providing opportunities for updating innovative management strategies, as well as refining existing tactics, to ensure business survival.

Telecommuting offers advantages such as flexible schedules, reduced commuting, and access to talent in different locations across the country and the world. However, significant challenges arise from this modality, especially for employees facing adverse attention conditions, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). For these employees, such changes can pose additional challenges in terms of adaptation, organization, and concentration (De Macêdo *et al.*, 2020; Lopes; Do Nascimento; Bandeira, 2005; Ward; Bhabha, 2001).

ADHD is a neurobiological condition that affects concentration, impulse control, and organization. In general, the analysed articles indicate that ADHD can have negative consequences, particularly in educational development and professional performance. Understanding how remote work affects employees with ADHD is crucial for developing appropriate solutions to stimulate the good work performance of these employees, promoting their proper inclusion in the job market (Castro; De Lima, 2018).

However, it is important to note that the relationship between remote work and ADHD is still a relatively unexplored topic in academic literature. Nohara *et al.* (2010, p. 157) assert that "social facts – created from the way society perceives itself and the world around it – can only be explained through the social effects they produce." Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the social and individual effects of remote work for employees with ADHD to better understand their specific experiences and challenges.

It is relevant to highlight that ADHD affects 3% to 7% of the population, according to Lopes, do Nascimento, and Bandeira (2005), and its carriers often face negative consequences in adulthood, such as disorganization, distraction, difficulty on task prioritization, and indiscipline, according to Castro and de Lima (2018). At the same time, remote work demands organizational and disciplinary skills (De Macêdo *et al.*; 2020; Barros; Silva, 2010). By investigating the challenges faced by employees with ADHD in remote work, the aim is to

understand how this work modality can affect the productivity, concentration, organization, and quality of life of these employees. For Castro and de Lima (2018, p. 67), "Such difficulties are identified as obstacles to success in the profession, despite their sometimes notable capabilities."

Regarding remote work, Amador and Rocha (2018, p. 4) state that "there are numerous publications that problematize this practice, bringing questions from different contexts for our reflection." Additionally, Araújo and Lua (2021) highlight the existence of more questions than answers on the subject. In this sense, this work aims to contribute to a better understanding of the impact of remote work on the work performance of individuals with ADHD, analysing the implications of remote work on the work experience of one of the authors the author's work experience, who suffers from ADHD, through an autoethnographic analysis centred on personal experiences, elucidating insights and concerns, in the face of inclusivity challenges rarely discussed in the context of telecommuting.

## **2 Theoretical Background**

Despite receiving notable momentum and visibility with the COVID-19 pandemic, REMOTE WORK has been the subject of academic reflections for several decades, as evidenced by Mello's definition (1999, p. 7): "the Telework Process emerges as a modern alternative for business management, focusing on flexible work alternatives to make companies more competitive and dynamic".

However, discussions on the subject date back further, as noted by Rocha and Amador (2018, p. 153): "Remote work, less linked to industrial production and necessarily tied to the use of ICT, has its earliest conceptions presented in the 1970s." The term "ICT" is defined by Nohara *et al.* (2010) as "Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)." This period also marks the first recorded instance of the term "telework" (Araújo; Lua, 2021, p. 3). Subsequently, more substantial research began, "becoming a subject of academic analysis from the 1990s" (Rocha; Amador, 2018, p. 154).

Since then, this new form of flexible work has captured the attention of many scholars, sparking discussions and research worldwide, with numerous companies adopting this model to optimize their processes and enhance employee productivity. In line with Rocha and Amador (2018, p. 153), "the possibility of working anywhere has become a highly accessible and often attractive reality."

In Brazil, historical records show the adoption of remote work even before the pandemic. Barro's and Silva case study (2010) reveals evidence of its use in 2000 when Shell Brasil officially adopted it for some employees. According to the authors, "the Shell case reveals different aspects that can influence individuals' perception of their own condition and likely success and satisfaction" (Barros; Silva, 2010, p. 88).

In Brazil, however, the national scientific production records are a few years behind. Considering publications on SciELO, it can be concluded that the topic is relatively new in Brazil, despite millions of workers already engaging in remote work (Nohara *et al.*, 2010).

Examining the SciELO – Brazil data provided by Nohara *et al.* (2010), it becomes evident that, despite discussions spanning decades, scientific production still has much to explore. According to Rocha and Amador (2018, p. 153), "far from being mere novelty, this work modality has brought forth various questions that must be carefully analysed." The author emphasizes the lack of consensus regarding the concept of the modality, which appears quite heterogeneous, as reflected in diverse terminologies and scenarios designated by the same terms (De Macêdo *et al.*, 2020; Rocha; Amador, 2018). This perception is supported by Araújo and Lua (2021, p. 3), who state, "telecommuting, remote work. The literature records the use of different terms for work carried out at home. The definition of concepts in this field is diverse and undergoes significant temporal modifications." Another expression variation, possibly related to geographical factors, is presented by Bridi *et al.* (2020, p. 2), "home office is a term predominantly used in Brazil to refer to work done at home."

Despite the observed terminology variations, this academic project focuses on the functional evaluation of the work arrangement. Curiously influenced by location, schools of thought, and temporal lapse, it is worth noting that "it does not matter much what you call it—as long as you practice it properly" (Mello, 1999, p. 38).

In this perspective, it is understood that regardless of the terminology used, TELEWORK is an organizational innovation capable of adjusting work forms, transcending spatial and temporal limitations through technologies massified in recent decades, such as information technology, telecommunications, and information (De Macêdo *et al.*, 2020; Bridi *et al.*, 2020; Nohara *et al.*, 2020).

In the literature of business, administration, and applied sciences, the observed focus revolves around the benefits of the modality and the conditions for its success. The modality is perceived as "an evolutionary trend in the world of work [...] as a naturally advantageous path in times of ICT expansion" (Rocha; Amador, 2018, p. 156).

According to Rocha and Amador (2018) and Araújo and Lua (2021), the flexibility of the modality, combined with the growing technological diffusion, makes REMOTE WORK relevant to the contemporary context. Thus, "telecommuting has proven to be a very strong trend in today's world of work" (Rocha; Amador, 2018, p. 160).

Its significant benefits, for both the organization and employees, reinforce perceptions of productivity and dynamism. For the organization, the adoption of REMOTE WORK can make it more agile and dynamic, with greater market reaction capacity, as asserted by Mello (1999). It also enables increased productivity and cost reduction, according to ROCHA AND Amador (2018). From the employee's perspective, both authors agree, highlighting the flexibility of professional and personal routines as the most impactful benefit (Mello, 1999; Rocha; Amador, 2018).

In addition to the method's advantages, the media has played a significant role in fostering interest in this work format, as stated by Araújo and Lua (2021, p. 3): "The media's role is also noted in the effort to present this type of work as a kind of opportunity for personal freedom and autonomy – 'you as the owner of your time.'"

This media influence was evident in the pandemic context of COVID-19, with isolation and social distancing recommendations resulting in a significant increase in TELECOMMUTING enthusiasts, affecting various segments and economic sectors of the country and the world (Bridi *et al.*, 2020). Thus, "the pandemic brought a global reality with constant changes, requiring continuous adaptations" (Araújo; Lua, 2021, p. 3-4), which are still not well understood, demanding considerable effort in new research (De Macêdo *et al.*, 2020).

Data from the IPEA's Conjuncture Letter indicate that "8.2 million people who continued working during the Covid-19 pandemic carried out their work remotely" (Góes; Martins; Nascimento, 2021, p. 1). Companies expected the normalization of business to drastically reduce the home office model, but this did not happen. On the contrary, operational areas increased from 1.1 days per week in 2021 to 1.6 days per week in 2022 and expect to remain at 1.4 in the future (Pacini; Tobler; Bittencourt, 2023).

Despite the expectations of a decrease in the number of adherents to the modality, the remote work method "was the alternative found for the continuity of work activities" (Araújo; Lua, 2021, p. 4). Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic propelled the mass adoption of this modality, demonstrating to companies in various industry sectors that this work mechanism is viable, even in traditionally more resistant sectors. In this regard, "there is unanimous

acknowledgment of the worldwide strong acceptance trend of this work modality, as well as its accelerated growth" (Rocha; Amador, 2018, p. 154).

According to the analysis by Araújo and Lua (2021), a noteworthy issue regarding this work modality is the ambiguity surrounding its characteristics, as both advantages and disadvantages are presented. Research on the subject indicates a variety of negative (disadvantages) and positive (advantages) points of telecommuting (Nohara *et al.*, 2010). "The most frequently found topics in the literature concern the identification of advantages and disadvantages in the implementation of telecommuting by workers, organizations, companies, and society" (Rocha; Amador, 2018, p. 155), with current emphasis on studying the topic through ergonomic research (De Macêdo *et al.*, 2020).

In Barros and Silva's perspective (2010, p. 86), "perceived advantages include greater autonomy in organizing work, flexibility in managing one's own time, and a sense of improved quality of life, especially when this quality of life includes improved family relationships." This understanding is corroborated by Rocha and Amador (2018), emphasizing that telecommuting offers various advantages to workers, such as flexible working hours, the possibility to organize time to balance social, family, work, and leisure demands, time savings on commuting, and autonomy in organizing work, especially regarding space and time. On the other hand, organizations or companies also benefit from telecommuting, as they can reduce costs related to physical space, equipment, and maintenance, increase productivity, and experience greater development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) (De Macêdo *et al.*, 2020).

Thus, it becomes evident that telecommuting presents a series of advantages for both workers and organizations, providing greater autonomy, flexibility, and an improvement in the quality of life, contributing to cost reduction and increased productivity. For Barros and Silva (2010, p. 84), flexibility is among the most cited benefits, and a positive outcome is "the release of stress from facing city traffic [...] less commuting also means less exposure to urban violence." Authors Rocha and Amador (2018) also highlight the importance of flexibility as one of the attractive points of the modality for employees, as the opportunity to perform work in any location gains prominence as a viable and attractive proposal.

However, while flexibility is considered an advantage, it is also a central point for the main challenges of flexible work. After all, "flexibility [...] comes with the cost of the absence of temporal and spatial limits of professional work and domestic and family tasks" (Araújo; Lua, 2021, p. 5). The evidence of ambivalent points in the literature highlights the undeniable

complexity of the topic, emphasizing the importance of understanding both the potential advantages and disadvantages.

Authors Araújo and Lua (2021, p. 5) also analyse that a considerable part of the research on telecommuting focuses on the analysis of effectiveness and the impact of the modality, with a restricted emphasis on the economic perspective, overlooking the workers' viewpoint. This perspective is considered by Rocha and Amador (2018), who point out that literature focused on the business sector is directed toward productive performance and profit.

Therefore, aiming to better understand the complexities of the modality, it is essential to comprehend the main disadvantages associated with it. The main risks of telecommuting are the difficulty of controlling employees and the loss of their integration and connection with the organization. This relationship has raised doubts among those concerned only with company productivity and those concerned with the subjective effects of work. Many management publications have addressed methods of controlling remote work. This research seeks to discover the best methods for controlling employees who work remotely to keep them motivated and productive according to the company's objectives (Rocha; Amador, 2018).

Most research predominantly adopts an administrative and functionalist focus; however, telecommuting presents significant challenges to workers, such as social and professional isolation, difficulty in delineating personal and professional boundaries, family conflicts with the new routine, difficulty in concentration, and time management for defining work hours are some of the negative points (Araújo; Lua, 2021).

The consideration of both positive and negative aspects of remote work allows the inference that a generic analysis is incapable of capturing a real reflection of the various variations gathered under this term. The literature only records nuances of the multifaceted possibilities of reality involved (Rocha; Amador, 2018).

The work-life balance transcends mere organizational issues and becomes a complex challenge, involving the pursuit of sustainable balance between personal and professional spheres. Thus, the implementation and practice of flexible work are not exempt from significant challenges. Upon examining pioneering records in the country, including Mello's perspective (1999), there is a variance in opinions on the effects of flexible work, signifying less interruption and greater efficiency for some or impracticality for individuals more inclined toward interaction with colleagues. There is no consensus on the effects of this practice on society and the individual (Barros; Silva, 2010).

For Mello (1999), the careful selection of collaborators is crucial, with management responsible for choosing professionals compatible with the modality, such as individuals with advanced task self-management skills. In later records, responsibility, apparently limited to professional characteristics, is redirected to the organization (Nohara *et al.*, 2010). Recent research presents practical results in the 2019 pandemic scenario, as stated by Bridi *et al.* (2020, p. 2), "many workers had to adapt to a new way of performing their work within the work they do."

Although there are different perspectives, a challenging point has been repeatedly observed in various studies – the routine management of teleworkers (De Macêdo *et al.*, 2020). There are numerous reports of inconsistencies related to balancing the working hours of telecommuters. "Autonomy is granted to the teleworker to manage their working time, but dictated by the workload, paradoxically taking away control from the worker, who is compelled to respond to demands without time and availability restrictions" (Rocha; Amador, 2018, p. 158).

The lack of organization and the novelty of remote work led to excessive dedication to professional activities and neglect of personal life. Furthermore, it is observed that some individuals are prone to increasing the amount of work they do in an effort to earn more money, leading to the creation of subjective and deeply intimate patterns and controls, to some extent alienating (Nohara *et al.*, 2010). The thin line between personal and professional life confuses and extends the workday, prompting the need to reevaluate the personal meaning attributed to time, thus requiring a critical analysis of priorities and individual values, confronting the traditional idea of productivity and efficiency (Mello, 1999; Araújo; Lua, 2021).

Thus, the dilemma of the modality extends beyond the physical boundaries of the organization. The transition to a remote work environment presents obstacles not only in organizational matters but also in aspects related to the well-being of the individual. As stated by Barros and Silva (2010, p. 83), "there are no references to help define the boundaries between work and personal life time and space."

"Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurobehavioral and multifactorial disorder characterized by persistent patterns of inattention, disorganization, impulsivity, and hyperactivity" (Abrahão *et al.*, 2020, p. 1026). Despite the disorder being treated in children for a century, only a few decades ago, a high frequency of its persistence in adult life was observed, compromising their development, including in the professional sphere" (Castro; De Lima, 2018; Lopes; Do Nascimento; Bandeira, 2005).

In the workplace, the main difficulties presented by individuals with ADHD involve "the lack of ability to maintain attention for a long period; lack of organization (lack of discipline); insufficient ability to fulfil commitments; inability to establish and follow a routine" (Lopes; Do Nascimento; Bandeira, 2005, p. 67). Some residual signs of the disorder are identified in difficulties to carry out work, easy distraction, and an inability to concentrate (Lopes; Do Nascimento; Bandeira, 2005, p. 67). According to Castro and De Lima (2018, p. 62), "such symptoms are frequently and disproportionately presented in relation to individuals of the same age, causing distress to the individual."

In this light, valid concerns arise about the necessary working conditions in telecommuting for the efficient performance of employees with ADHD. In the literature, there are relevant reports of difficulties in carrying out remote work by these employees. "More than a challenge, discipline is seen as a requirement for the success of the teleworker, as it is easy to lose control of one's own routine in the face of multiple demands and responsibilities" (Barros; Silva, 2010, p. 83). In Rocha and Amador (2018, p. 158), "workers find themselves compelled to develop self-control and self-discipline techniques to meet the many demands of immaterial production." Issues related to attention can also be seen in Araújo and Lua (2021, p. 6), "difficulty in concentration due to the presence and demands of other family members."

These specificities are often overshadowed by the benefits of the modality, as stated by Nohara *et al.* (2010, p. 162), "a positive indicator to plan your own schedule." However, the same scientific productions that present the positive aspects of the modality also address the fragility traits of this work mechanism for individuals with ADHD, as in the passage on the same page as the previous citation from Nohara *et al.* (2010, p. 162), "respondents reported that managing their own pace of work requires discipline." If flexibility is a positive aspect for some, for others, it can be a challenge, considering that personal characteristics such as self-discipline are conditioning elements of the perception of telecommuting (Barros; Silva, 2010).

When considering the impacts of telecommuting on individuals with ADHD, two factors emerge as possible challenges. The first is the difficulty of concentration in the face of demands and distractions in the home environment, which can compromise productivity and efficiency at work. The second factor is the need for self-control and discipline since the absence of a defined structure and the flexibility of telecommuting can make task organization and meeting deadlines challenging.

In Rocha and Amador (2018), it is observed that, although the teleworker apparently has autonomy in time management, this perception is limited due to the high volume of tasks

and the need for self-control. When confronting the perception of intrinsic implications of remote work and the individual conditions of an employee with ADHD, an apparent incompatibility is found. Associating an individual naturally predisposed to distraction and indiscipline with the flexible work modality that presupposes, even indirectly, self-control leads to a conclusion that is at least dubious. Thus, the notion that telecommuting is an entirely autonomous and flexible option is challenged. While these are hypotheses that deserve further investigation, it is important to consider these factors, as the diversity of situations and circumstances related to this practice renders the advantages and disadvantages described in the literature insufficient to comprehend its real complexity (Rocha; Amador, 2018, p. 155).

### **3 Method**

Through a qualitative approach and autoethnographic and autobiographical analysis (Santos; Torga, 2020; Santos; 2017), the authors aim to provide an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by professionals with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in the context of remote work. The goal is to identify practical strategies and recommendations that can assist these professionals in overcoming obstacles and fostering a more inclusive and productive work environment.

The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the relationship between employees with ADHD and remote work, aiming to comprehend the characteristics and dynamics of the investigated phenomenon. The qualitative approach allows for a nuanced and contextualized understanding of the study object by exploring subjective, cultural, and social aspects of the topic (Castro; De Lima, 2018; Barros; Silva, 2010).

The study focuses on one of the researcher's own work experience, specifically, the researcher diagnosed with ADHD who occupied the same position both in-person and remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research delves into the challenges faced during these two distinct phases, examining the tasks performed, the impact on productivity, and the decision to switch back to in-person work.

To achieve the proposed objectives, two data collection methods were employed: a literature review (Saunders; Lewis; Thornhill, 2016; Yin, 2015) exploring the conceptual nuances related to remote work specifically for individuals with ADHD, and autoethnographic and autobiographical analysis, offering the researcher's experience in the context of work and life vis-à-vis the studied literature (Santos; Torga, 2020; Santos; 2017).

The literature review aimed to examine existing literature on key aspects involving Remote Work and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). It involved the analysis of primary and secondary sources, such as scientific articles, journals, books, theses, and dissertations, to establish a comprehensive theoretical foundation (Saunders; Lewis; Thornhill, 2016).

Autoethnographic analysis, chosen to collect and analyse data, considers the researcher's experiential perspective, allowing for a critical analysis of personal beliefs and experiences (Santos; Torga, 2020; Santos; 2017). The researcher constructed a personal narrative in the form of a personal diary during the remote work period, providing a frequently overlooked perspective—the reality of individuals dealing with mental health disorders (Lopes; Do Nascimento; Bandeira, 2005).

Data analysis involved an inductive approach for the literature review, identifying patterns, key concepts, and convergent and divergent points in the consulted sources. Autoethnographic analysis used reflexivity as an analytical instrument, separating personal perception from critical self-reflection. The analysis comprised two main topics: a personal narrative and a critical self-reflection of the researcher (Santos; Torga, 2020; Yin, 2015).

In parallel, ChatGPT-4 was introduced to verify the interaction between the autoethnographic texts and the author-assigned codification. This incorporation aimed to add an element of objectivity and reduce subjectivity in the analysis (Morgan, 2023; Hamilton *et al.*, 2023).

Morgan (2023) highlights the advantages of employing ChatGPT for thematic analysis, emphasizing efficiency, consistency, and objectivity. The model's rapid processing of extensive text volumes enhances reliability, but challenges such as contextual understanding limitations persist. Human validation is crucial, as individual coders provide a nuanced understanding that AI lacks. Combining automated analysis with human oversight ensures accuracy and contextual relevance (Hamilton *et al.*, 2023).

#### **4 Results and discussion**

The perception of an individual with Attention Deficit and/or Hyperactivity Disorder was articulated in personal narratives within the diaries, employing reflective language in the first person (Medeiros, 2023; Santos, 2017).

Following the transcription, ChatGPT 4 was utilized to create thematic categories, in order to enhance both the structure and depth of the storytelling process. The results are presented in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4.

In Table 1 it is presented the early stages of adaptation, describing the initiation of remote work and the challenges faced by the author, such as loss of focus, irritability, and demotivation.

**Table 1 - The Beginning or Early Challenges**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Excerpts</b>
Start of remote work	Feeling of normalcy and hope	Computer, mouse, chair, table and water bottle. Apparently, another normal day of work had begun, except for the fact that I was working at the table where I had had dinner the night before. Like most new things in life, I found it curious to have more freedom. Excitement, setting up a workplace, getting water, notifying the family and checking the clock. Work began, but with it came hope, the first normal thing in an atypical routine. Everything will be fine, I imagined.
Difficulties with concentration	External and internal noises	The first few days were the hardest. Start of the workday. Restart of the desired routine. Feeling of belonging and pride. Working while listening to the news, kitchen, family, TV, neighbours, fly...normal, the noises have always been here. I know this environment, it's always been like this, no noise interests me. What will this change in your life? Stop. Anguish, external noises, internal noises. Thoughts. What am I thinking. It's just noise, I'm here with my work. Start over! Start over! Computer screen, letters, words, lighting, reading, forgetting, reading, daydreaming, thoughts. Where am I, what happened, when did I stop, where was I? Beginning of a new cycle. It's okay not to get it right the first time, the important thing is to keep trying. Failure.
Strategies for concentration	Change of environment, headphones, schedule	After the first few days of low productivity, I started to think about strategies to regain my work productivity and receive the long-dreamed feeling of self-pride. In the following days, several changes were made: changing the environment, looking for a comfortable chair, headphones, therapeutic frequency for concentration, structuring a routine schedule. However, as expected, it was not enough for an inattentive person to concentrate. There were still the people, the voices, the smell of food and all the other distractions mentioned earlier. Ah, people! People had a knack for making noise. Person, cough, clearing of throat, voice, pot, stove turning on, cutlery, faucet, sound of footsteps, among other sounds. However, the problem was not with the individual sounds, but with the sound as a whole. A maddening sound.
Difficulties and temptations	Loss of focus and irritation	Trying and adjusting were almost mantras in my daily life. I remember the joy of achieving 30 minutes of attention, usually followed by an irritating restlessness, in a way that everything could be interesting. I would hear the sound of the birds and be tempted to go to the window to look. I would hear the faucet dripping and want to turn it off. The simple way the wind gave life to objects. The movement of the clothes hanging out, the sound of paper in the gentle breeze. Everything around me seemed to awaken, inviting me to contemplate it. I resisted for a while. What happened and what am I doing were constant doubts. I had done it before, what had changed, I wondered. I am here, but I am far away, I need to be here.

**Source:** elaborated by the authors (2025).

On analysing Table 1, it is possible to notice that the individual's remote work journey unfolds with an initial sense of normalcy and hope, embracing the newfound freedom. However, challenges arise in maintaining concentration amidst external and internal noises, leading to moments of frustration and the acknowledgment that success may not come instantly. Various strategies, such as changing the environment and implementing a routine, are attempted, but persistent distractions, particularly from people and their sounds, continue to pose difficulties. The individual grapples with the fluctuating balance between focus and temptation, experiencing both moments of joy in achievement and the constant struggle to resist distractions, ultimately revealing a dynamic and evolving mental state shaped by the complexities of remote work.

In Table 2 it is presented the strategies employed by the author to enhance her concentration, such as changing the environment, using headphones, and creating a schedule. It also addresses the ongoing challenges she faced, including a scattered mind and procrastination.

**Table 2 - Strategies to Cope with TDHD**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Excerpts</b>
The mind and sound	Attentive mind vs. scattered mind	For me, beyond identifying things, sound seemed to reverberate as my body would react to the world. Sounds have always been in my memory in a striking way, but only when writing this analysis did I realize how much sound resembles my mind. I identify it in two variations. The attentive mind, harmonic, with all sounds resonating at the same frequency. The scattered mind, with several disordered and overlapping thoughts scrambling reason, resembling several disturbed sounds. So, sometimes, when there is a lot of internal noise, external noise can maximize the confusion of ideas. And, when I least expected it, I got lost in the conversation of sound.
Silence as productivity	Night as the ideal work period	Amid the noise comes the intoxicating silence. Only the emotion of an idea is capable of silencing the conflict of emotions, raising the clarity of imagination. It's the noise! It can only be the noise. A new strategy is designed in the immediate rush for results. Silence is attentive, silence is productive. Where is the silence? The silence of the night emerges in the brilliant mind. Soon, the day is exchanged for the night until the clarification of a new point. Silence, productivity. Computer. Screen. Production. Ecstasy. Given two hours of productive silence, I received a visit from a messenger of inattention. A distant cousin who always accompanies him. Different name, similar irritability. Tall, malnourished, few facial expressions, spreading sadness wherever he goes. You must know him as boredom. From time to time it arises, guaranteeing a blur of my goal. Within minutes, it awakens a kind of incessant sleep. Attention "sleeps", what's your problem? And back to the time of sleepy boredom.
Difficulty concentrating	Rituals for attention	I didn't understand how people sat down, looked at the screen and started doing what they did. It seemed instant and enjoyable. My whole life has been accompanied by rituals created by me in the mission of concentrating my mind on the activities that I wanted and needed to perform. So, imagining sitting down and starting, in the

		same way that a computer turns on and works, seemed impossible. I mean, it seemed unreal.
Competitiveness as fuel	Challenges and frustrations	In general, the experiences had the only result of disappointment. However, I saw it with dissatisfaction. After all, I never conformed to the difficulty. I even accepted its existence, however, as a goal to be overcome, almost like a game. I have always loved games, for them attention was turned on 100%. Over time, I unveiled the fuel: competitiveness. Perhaps it is some instinctive survival mechanism, which would make perfect sense, considering that this factor releases in me the energy necessary to compensate for the series of activities left aside by something difficult to name. When I think about the subject, I see a cloud of thoughts: confusion, insecurity, fear, procrastination, shame, anger, confusion and tiredness. For now, this is the clearest definition accessible in my mind.

Source: elaborated by the authors (2025).

The individual's state of mind, as revealed in Table 2, unfolds in distinct categories. The mind's relationship with sound is portrayed as a dichotomy between an attentive, harmonious state and a scattered one marked by disordered and overlapping thoughts. Internal noise exacerbates the confusion of ideas, leading to unexpected moments of getting lost in the conversation of sound. The concept of silence emerges as a key factor for productivity, particularly during the night, offering clarity and imagination. However, the challenge of maintaining focus is highlighted, with the individual describing rituals developed over a lifetime to concentrate. The narrative reflects a competitive mindset, where challenges are seen as games to be overcome, fuelled by the instinctive survival mechanism of competitiveness. Despite experiencing disappointment and a cloud of conflicting emotions, the individual sees difficulties as goals to be conquered, providing clarity amidst the complexity of their mental landscape.

Table 3 describes the author's fatigue and the dialogue she had with management regarding her unproductivity.

**Table 3 - Fatigue and Dialogue**

Category	Subcategory	Excerpts
Weariness and exhaustion	Tension and confusion	It was a tumultuous period. If on the one hand there were complaints from dissatisfied supervisors, on the other there was despair, exhaustion and insecurity in myself. Trying to force adaptation was exhausting, there was no longer any clarity about when I started and when I stopped. Just a new confusion. However, this confusion is different from the first ones. It was the confusion of tiredness, the tiredness of not stopping trying. The continuous work consumed me and the constant tension wasted away. After failed tests to establish an effective mechanism to activate my productivity, there was no other option but to open the game with the boss. Thinking about admitting being unfit seemed scary, to the point of not being able to sleep at night. I believe that assuming vulnerability is unpleasant for anyone, not only because of the judgment of others, but because of their own perception of themselves. Nothing is as frustrating as

		giving up on yourself. The feeling of feeling different can even be good in some situations, but that was far from materializing into a positive feeling. It was confusing not to understand what was different about me.
Dialogue with the boss	Difficulty explaining unproductivity	The dialogue could only be harsh. Discussing unattained results could only be unpleasant, but consistent with the situation. It hurt to perceive the distrust of his commitment, amid so many attempts. However, the claim was legitimate. Convincing someone of something that you don't even understand can make the situation even more confusing, like swimming against a current. As the conversation unfolded, after explaining the apparent factors of unproductivity, a solution emerged.

Source: elaborated by the authors (2025).

It is revealed a profound struggle with weariness and exhaustion, particularly in the face of tension and confusion during a tumultuous period. The attempt to force adaptation led to a state of constant fatigue and a lack of clarity about work boundaries. This exhaustion was not just physical but also stemmed from the ongoing effort without clear results. The individual faced a daunting challenge of admitting vulnerability and unproductivity to the boss, a process marked by fear and sleepless nights. The dialogue with the boss, while harsh and uncomfortable, eventually led to a breakthrough. The difficulty in explaining unproductivity gave way to a solution, highlighting the complex emotional texture of the conversation. The individual's journey reflects the emotional toll of persistent efforts, the fear of judgment, and the ultimate relief that comes with addressing and finding solutions to challenges.

Finally, in Table 4 it is detailed the author's adaptation to the reality of remote work, the benefits of in-person work, and final reflections on the experience.

**Table 4 - Adjustment and Contemplations**

Category	Subcategory	Excerpts
Adapting work to reality	Return to face-to-face work	The solution was an agreement. An agreement to adapt work to my reality, acknowledging the difficulties faced and seeking viable alternatives. It was comforting to return to the face-to-face work approach. Difficulties in face-to-face production also existed, but it would be unfair to compare them. In each sector, there was a collaborator, so that they could organize themselves in a rotation system. There was something different about having a place to work, as if my mind was able to understand. When I got there, I observed an atmosphere of production in the other sectors. There was the smell of coffee in the break room, the noise of printers in rooms and I could hear my colleagues on work calls. Somehow, this had a meaning for my attention.
Benefits of face-to-face work	Atmosphere of production and belonging	The first day started and everything went back to normal, moments of inattention that did not determine my attention. I remember the relief of finding my space or seeing that I fit into something. In these moments, the noise of thoughts seems to come into tune with the outside. Completing each demand awakened a fascination and intense involvement in me. The frenzy of conquest. The perception of capacity. Thus, I could feel a mix of belonging to living in society.

Errors and imperfections	Importance of self-analysis	It must be admitted that there were still mistakes, incorrect page numbers. Documents not printed. Forgetting some requests. Mistakes of any human being. Some make mistakes there, others here. It will never be perfect. Imperfections also teach, they strive and when determined, they can leave their mark on history. This is the voice of truth; the truth is not always good or pleasant. In all organizations there are voices of truth, each with a story and a different way of leaving its legacy to the world. In the game of productivity, perfection is about looking at your pieces and organizing them according to your capabilities.
Reflections on the experience	Difficulties and learnings	In the midst of writing this analysis, I was able to observe other discrepancies. I believe that an article written at home for months can sprinkle more of this little-explored reality. A defined work and a chosen subject. No one could imagine that its conclusion would take more than 2 years. It is difficult to describe the urge to walk every time I sat in the chair to produce it. Many times I gave up. Others I wrote. But there is a curious feeling of never being good enough, after all you don't feel like you really belong. I try to observe what has changed in order to be able to finish it. Suffering and anguish of not believing in being capable played a big role. You start to produce, but you don't quite understand where you are going. Confusion. Attempt. Agitation. Thoughts. Panic. Escape. An assumption of failure. When I look at what has changed, I realize more internal factors. Attempts. Deceptions. Attempts. Defeat. Depression. Dissatisfaction. Attempts. Discipline. Attempts. Self-knowledge. Attempts. Self-analysis. Attempts. Conquest.
Panic attacks	Discomfort and vulnerability	In the last days of writing, I was able to observe panic attacks while recording the autoethnographic analysis, resulting in a slowdown in production. You can't write well when you feel suffocated. Finishing each part of the work and starting it awakened a hypnotizing fear. Somehow, talking about yourself and exposing vulnerability on a delicate subject is uncomfortable. Attempt. Forgetfulness. Confusion. Insomnia. Insecurity. Walking. Attempt. Procrastination. Attempt. Anguish. Panic attack. To define the period as challenging would be a great euphemism. But if I learned anything, discomfort is always present, giving us the meaning of existence.

Source: elaborated by the authors (2025).

The individual's state of mind, as depicted in Table 4, undergoes a profound transformation through various stages. Initially, adapting work to reality involves reaching a hopeful agreement, returning to face-to-face work, and finding comfort in a structured environment. The benefits of face-to-face work are highlighted, emphasizing the atmosphere of production and a sense of belonging, ultimately fostering intense involvement and fascination. However, the narrative acknowledges errors and imperfections, emphasizing the importance of self-analysis and accepting the imperfections inherent in human endeavours. Reflections on the overall experience reveal a journey marked by difficulties, learning, and self-discovery, with the individual grappling with a persistent feeling of inadequacy. The narrative culminates in the exploration of panic attacks during the writing process, showcasing the discomfort and vulnerability inherent in exposing oneself. Despite the challenges, the individual recognizes the presence of discomfort as an integral part of existence, ultimately attributing meaning to the journey. The analysis captures a complex

interplay of emotions, growth, and self-awareness within the context of the individual's work experience.

## **5 Conclusion**

With the advent of remote work, driven by social isolation amid the COVID-19 pandemic, understanding this modality became essential. A gap exists in the literature regarding employees with ADHD in association with remote work performance, motivating this research. Additionally, the author's personal experience, diagnosed with ADHD, adds relevance. She encountered considerable difficulties in performing professional tasks remotely, such as lack of discipline, inattention, and constant stress while managing work from home. This personal experience motivates an in-depth investigation into the impacts of telecommuting on employees with ADHD, aiming to comprehend how frequently these difficulties are faced by this group in their efforts for inclusion.

Analysing the experience of an employee with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in both in-person and remote work settings reveals the manifestation of dysfunctional behaviours common to any individual. These include significant difficulties in concentration and errors caused by inattention—inherent characteristics of the disorder. However, it is crucial to emphasize that the transition to remote work tends to exacerbate performance impairment, highlighting critical aspects. Amongst these, inattention, restlessness, dysregulation, extended working hours, and challenges in maintaining a proper sleep routine stand out. These challenges directly impacted the researcher's productivity, resulting in negative influences on her self-esteem and constant suffering and distress.

When confronting perceptions obtained from the literature review and autoethnographic and autobiographical analysis, an incongruence between remote work and ADHD-afflicted employees becomes evident. While remote work offers advantages like flexibility and reduced physical space costs, it presents significant challenges. These challenges include distracting elements hindering focus and organization, time management, establishing clear boundaries between work and personal life, and lack of information about the condition.

Associating this work environment with any individual having attention within normal psyche limits is already challenging. However, when combined with an employee with ADHD, these challenges are amplified, demanding even greater adaptation efforts. This

incongruence underscores the importance of developing strategies and policies catering to the specific needs of employees with ADHD in the context of remote work.

For this purpose, companies and individuals need to reconsider and redefine notions of success and fulfillment, considering not only professional demands but also the personal needs for rest, leisure, and worker care. Workplace adaptation, the implementation of psychological support structures, the establishment of clear routines, the use of organization/time management tools, and the setting of clear goals and deadlines are relevant measures to create a more inclusive and productive organizational culture. Additionally, promoting awareness helps employees deal with themselves and their colleagues, reducing the stigma of mental health disorders.

The literature indicates a scarcity of publications on ADHD related to telecommuting, indicating a field ripe for exploration. Thus, this work can serve as a foundation for subsequent qualitative studies with a larger participant sample, focusing on the individual employee or the company reconciling its needs with the reality of diverse staff. Developing new research is essential for raising awareness and understanding of ADHD, benefiting both individuals suffering from symptoms and those unfamiliar with the disorder. This contributes to constructing a more inclusive and supportive work environment, promoting the optimal performance of employees with ADHD for the organization, as well as providing workers with a sense of usefulness and belonging in society.

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