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*Apuntes* 92, 175-204 ISSN: 0252-1865 eISSN: 2223-1757 doi: 10.21678/apuntes.92.1564 © Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Article received on June 30, 2021 Article approved for publication on June 1, 2022

# Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the workload of caregivers: a case study of Tabasco university lecturers who worked from home

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*Abstract.* This study analyzes the effect of telework on the lives of professors from the Multidisciplinary Unit of the Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco (UJAT) in Mexico, during the COVID-19 confinement, concentrating on care work in homes with children 15 years old or younger. The main question explored in this study is whether telework affected female professors more than male professors. The results show that female professors assumed the main role in care and domestic tasks, reconciling these demands with teleworking from home. This resulted in a reduction in hours of sleep and lead to physical and mental health problems (stress, depression, anxiety).

Keywords: COVID-19, gender, telework, care work, mental health

#### 1. Introduction

One of the measures taken to deal with the health emergency resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic was the suspension of in-person classes in all the learning centers of the world. Educators and students went from a process of in-person teaching to other teaching strategies that emerged to allow learning to continue. In most cases, what made it possible to continue work and educational activities from home were the new information and communication technologies (ICT). All these changes affected the way that people live and work, and had a significant impact on the physical and mental health as well as the welfare of the working population (Eurofound, 2020).

In the United States, the percentage of the labor force that was able to work from home through telework in 2020 was 37%, and these were primarily people who worked as managers, educators, and professionals in the areas of information technology, finance, and law. For the Mexican case, the percentage fluctuated around 25% of the working population (Dingel & Neiman, 2020; Gottlieb, Grobovsek, & Poschke, 2020). The occupational category that includes university professors has been identified as one of the groups that can work from home to a great extent (Dingel & Neiman, 2020; Gottlieb et al., 2020; Monroy-Gómez-Franco, 2020).

In Mexico, the official recognition of the COVID-19 pandemic (Acuerdo [Consejo de Salubridad General], 2020) had implications for primary, secondary, baccalaureate, and higher education, and affected 33.6 million students from 3 to 29 years of age enrolled for the 2019-2020 school year. Of these, 3.6 million were in the higher education system and by the time this academic year ended, 2.5% had dropped out of their studies (Acuerdo 02/03/20 [Secretaría de Educación Pública], 2020; Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, 2021). During the pandemic, educators began to work from home. Telework shifted the space where teaching activities were carried out from schoolrooms to homes, while influencing social relations in the home as well as work satisfaction (De los Heros–Rondenil, Murillo, & Solana–Villanueva, 2020).

Working from home as a result of the social distancing measures implemented to prevent the spread of COVID-19 meant that a series of conflicts arose from the processes of reconciling paid labor and domestic work, which had important effects on members of households (Actis, Iglesias-Onofrio, Pérez de Guzmán, & Viego, 2021; Lewis, 2020; Palumbo, Manna, & Cavallone, 2021; Pérez de Guzmán, Ulloa, & Iglesias-Onofrio 2020; Power, 2020).

The purpose of this study is to analyze the effect that telework had on the lives of professors from the Multidisciplinary Academic Division of Comalcalco (DAMC) at the Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco (UJAT) in Mexico during the COVID confinement, The focus is primarily on care work and domestic chores in households with children aged 15 years or less, from March to July 2020. The central hypothesis is that teaching in the telework modality primarily affects female professors, since the care work in their homes falls mainly to them and this has implications for balancing their work, family, and personal lives. The distribution of who takes care of certain activities and who is in charge of others is a consequence of the social and cultural construction of gender, which situates women as the main providers of care work.

The individuals that make up the target population of this study are higher education professors at the DAMC. The university has 12 academic divisions. The DAMC has four professional degree programs related to health (Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco [UJAT], 2020). During the 2020-2021 academic year, this division accounted for 7.6% of all undergraduate students at the university. UJAT suspended academic and administrative activities in March 2020 due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This affected a little more than 27,000 students enrolled on various undergraduate, specialized, and graduate programs (Decreto 3018 [Titular del Poder Ejecutivo del Estado de Tabasco], 2020; UJAT, 2020). During the COVID-19 public health emergency, the DAMC established strategies for the use of information and communication technologies so that professors and students could engage in academic activities from their homes. It also trained professors in digital skills and, during the first months of confinement, used various platforms to develop emergency distance teaching strategies. Applying a more homogeneous strategy, they started to use the Microsoft Teams platform in the semester that followed the outbreak of the pandemic. DAMC was one of the pioneers at UJAT in providing competency-based training in academic planning to its professors for the use of educational platforms (UJAT, 2021).

This article is organized as follows. The second section provides a reference framework for the analysis, including concepts and a review of various studies related to the subject of this research in various countries around the world. The third section describes the mixed methodological approach employed in this study. The fourth describes the most important results of the research while the fifth provides a discussion of these findings. Finally, the sixth section concludes.

## 2. Reference Framework

## Telework and care work: concepts and implications during the pandemic

In the pre-pandemic era, telework was an option for some types of occupations and workers with a certain level of digital competencies (Dingel & Neiman, 2020; Gottlieb et al., 2020; Monroy-Gómez-Franco, 2020), involving work from home or "in places outside the employer's premises"<sup>1</sup> (Organización Internacional del Trabajo, 2011, p. 11), temporal flexibility in relation to schedules and work hours (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001), and the use of ICT to carry out the work, communicate with peers or supervisors, and submit a product or service in a synchronous or asynchronous manner (Actis et al., 2021; Thibault, Briz, Fandos, & Álvarez, 1998; Organización Internacional del Trabajo–Eurofound, 2019).

The work done at home during the COVID-19 emergency did not fulfill all the characteristics of telework found in our review of the literature because it was not the product of a voluntary choice by the worker, there was no control of schedules or working hours, and there was a lack of digital competencies for the adequate use of ICT. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this research we use the concept of "telework" because its definition includes elements that were developed in this stage, such as "work done with the help of ICT from outside the employer's premises" (International Labour Organization–Eurofound, 2017, p. 5), and whose product, as noted by Actis et al. (2021), "should be shared with the enterprise in a synchronous or asynchronous manner" (p. 49).

In May 2020, 6.3 million people over the age of 18 in Mexico were teleworking from their homes; in 93% of the cases this was a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática [Inegi], n.d.). The home became a space where paid activities were carried out but, at the same time, it was also an indispensable space for the care and social reproduction of families, especially during the public health emergency.

Care work refers to all work that is done to sustain daily life—both that of individuals as well as all members of the household, and can include raising children, cooking, cleaning, obtaining water or firewood, caring for the older adults in the family, doing the shopping, administrating the household, etc.

<sup>1</sup> All translations from Spanish are by *Apuntes*.

It also includes mental tasks such as planning schedules, and taking care of the emotional tasks that are necessary in family relations. There also may be other activities depending on the socioeconomic situation of the household (Pérez, 2014; Power, 2020). Care work includes all activities and occupations that directly or indirectly involve care processes and include "provision of personal services to satisfy basic physical and mental needs that permit an individual to function on a socially acceptable level"<sup>2</sup> (Himmelweit, 2007, p. 581). Given that the majority of these goods and services are delegated to the circuits within the household, they exist in invisibilized economic spheres that are associated with unpaid and reproductive activities (Pérez, 2014, p. 105).

Around the world, 75% percent of care work is done every day by women and girls (Moreira da Silva, 2019). This work has been naturalized according to the generic attributes of individuals, and thus this division between those who engage in certain activities and those who engage in others has been socially constructed. Lagarde (1996) notes that daily life is structured around gender norms and that the performance of each person depends on their behavior and on the management of this normativity in social relations. Gender "is a constitutive element of social relations based on the differences that distinguish the sexes and gender is a primary form of significant power relations" (Scott, 2002, p. 32). It entails the assignment, based on sexual difference, of the social attributions and representations on which societies structure their lives and construct their culture (Lamas, 1986). The social structure that organizes the roles of gender in hierarchies places women in reproductive and unpaid activities (Benería, 2019; Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020; Pérez & Gálvez, 2009; Rubin, 1986). The construction of social hierarchies and of the gendered social order has implications for the welfare of individuals as it reproduces privileges and/or maintains subordinations that promote inequalities.

For Young (2005), the structure of work and occupations according to gender has long-lasting consequences in the lives of individuals and can limit the opportunities open to them. This author notes that particular attention needs to be paid to care work given that society as a whole depends on the regular performance of this activity, and that it remains invisible and undervalued; furthermore, people who devote themselves to this work have less time and energy to engage in other tasks and activities. This leads to an understanding of how the distribution of tasks or of

<sup>2</sup> Free translation from Spanish by Apuntes.

recognition limits the options of individuals who do this kind of work, especially in times of crisis.

In Mexico, families and women continue to be the main providers of care. The family is the first place that primary care needs are taken care of. At the same time, there is a feminization of care work within the family—80% of this work is done by women, and it can be extended through the whole female family network: grandmothers, aunts, nieces, etc. (Orozco-Rocha & González–González, 2021, pp. 128, 130). During the COVID-19 confinement, gender inequalities in the workplace became accentuated and the number of hours spent on care work by women increased (Power, 2020; Solanas, 2020). The closure of schools and the isolation of homes changed paid care work for children (nurseries, schools, nannies) into unpaid work (Lewis, 2020), while also adding to the care work already being done in homes.

Working from home led to paid work filtering into family life and to the blurring of boundaries between work and family, thus increasing work– family conflict (Noonan & Glass, 2012). "Others have countered that it gives rise to greater conflicts because of additional family demands resulting from greater proximity and accessibility" (Golden, Veiga, & Simsek, 2006, p. 1340). That is, if workers are at home almost the whole day, they will demand more time, attention, and affection (Feng & Savani, 2020).

The studies carried out before the pandemic on telework and its implications for work family balance revealed both advantages and disadvantages (Campbell, Boell, Keating, & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2013; Duxbury, Higgins, & Neufeld, 1998). Various studies found that telework had positive consequences for employees, such as a better balance between work and family life as a result of being able to control where work was done, freedom to adjust working hours, lack of interruptions, savings of time and money because of not having to travel to work, and better control over labor demands to adapt to family needs (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Golden et al., 2006; Organización Internacional del Trabajo-Eurofound, 2019; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001; Rau & Hyland, 2002). Other studies note that work from home actually leads to more conflicts between work and the family, since it can cause work fatigue and, ultimately, perpetuate the exploitation of women both in terms of the payment they receive for work and their domestic responsibilities (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013; Campbell et al., 2013; Duxbury, Higgins, & Lee, 1994; Golden et al., 2006; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, telework and family balance came into conflict. There was more domestic work and family stress, and the boundaries between work and daily life were blurred (Actis et al., 2021;

Palumbo, Manna, & Cavallone, 2020; Pérez de Guzmán et al., 2020;). There were even effects on mental health and the stress levels of parents and/or care workers (Hamel & Salganicoff, 2020; Ozamiz–Etxebarria, Berasategi, Idoiaga, & Dosil, 2021). In Mexico, by May 2020, 92% of women aged 18 or above who worked from home also tended to domestic tasks, compared to 73% of men. At the same time, 34% of the women working at home took care of others in the same period, in comparison to 19% of men (Inegi, n.d.). Studies in Spain (Farré, Fawaz, González, & Graves, 2020), the United States (Alon, Doepke, Olmstead-Rumsey, & Tertilt, 2020; Collins, Landivar, Ruppaner, & Scarborough, 2020), Hungary (Fodor, Gregor, Koltai, & Kováts, 2020), and Germany (Arntz, Ben-Yahmed, & Berlingieri, 2020) report that there telework affects men and women in different ways, and that many of these impacts have to do with the work and time dedicated to the care of children. This demonstrates that similar patterns have been observed in studies carried out in different parts of the world, as Chung (2020) also notes. This is the case because the responsibility for the household and its care is sustained by women and girls as a structural condition of gender. It even turns out, as Del Boca, Oggero, Profeta, and Rossi (2021) report with regard to the situation in Italy during the first two waves of the pandemic, that the time spent by women on care work does not depend on the work arrangements of their partners. Conversely, male partners spent less time participating in housework and helping children with schoolwork when their partner was at home, resulting in an increased gender gap during the pandemic; that is, the fact that these women workers remained at home increased the gender gap in housework as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic exacerbated gender inequalities in employment, in particular because of the closure of schools and all that this implied for care work at home. During the confinement, when paid work from home and care responsibilities became irreconcilable, some mothers reduced their work hours, took a leave from work, or were dismissed from their jobs (Fuller & Qian, 2021). Nevertheless, men who work from home have taken note of the invisible work that taking care of children and domestic tasks involve. Given that paid and unpaid activities, play, and the virtual classroom coincide, parents cannot ignore the demands of childcare and have had to get involved. Nevertheless, the greater visibility of care work and household tasks do not mean that men are increasing their contributions to these activities (Collins et al., 2020).

Professors in the higher education sector teleworked in order to assure remote emergency teaching (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020) and other educational management activities. Labor productivity in the teaching sector during the confinement was associated in part with the employment situation of couples, and the number and age of the children they had at home (Arntz et al., 2020; Staniscuaski et al., 2021), and even had repercussions on academic careers due to double or triple work days during the health crisis alternating different roles in the home, which in some cases could lead increased stress and fatigue (Elgueta, 2021; Flores-Sequera, 2020; Saldívar-Garduño, & Ramírez-Gómez, 2020). The latter was due to the fact that the confinement reaffirmed traditional gender role models and particularly impacted mothers with small children.

## 3. Methodological approach

In this study we used a mixed methodological approach, both quantitative and qualitative. We think that this allowed us to provide a more comprehensive vision of the effects of telework on the lives of professors as well as to understand the ways that they were affected by the health emergency.

### Population studied and sources of information

The target population for this study were professors at the UJAT DMAC who were teaching during 2020. According to the university's Dirección General de Planeación y Evaluación Institucional (DGPEI), there were 102 active professors at the time. The period covered by this study is March to July 2020.

Two sources of information were used. The first was a survey. This instrument consisted of a questionnaire that allowed us to gather specific and firsthand information about the target population. It contained 31 questions divided into four sections: (a) sociodemographic characteristics, (b) resources available to carry out distance work and their characteristics (March-July 2020), (c) work satisfaction, and (d) division of domestic work. For this analysis we used eight questions related to sociodemographic characteristics, one question from the section on the resources available for distance work and their characteristics, and four questions on the division of domestic work. This instrument was administered online in October 2020. The questionnaire was answered by 78 professors, which equated to a response rate of 76%. The second source of information, which was central to the qualitative analysis in this study, were interviews with key informants. Based on a review of the results of the quantitative information collected, it was possible to identify themes that needed to be analyzed in depth in order to understand the effects of the change in the work modality from in-person to telework. These included gender roles, time devoted to care

work by the professors, and their mental health. It was therefore decided to interview the professors to discover their opinions on these subjects. The characteristics of the informants were: (a) they were parents, (b) they worked fulltime during the confinement, and (c) they taught a variety of courses at the DAMC. A semi-structured interview guide was prepared with questions about their experiences during this change in work modality and its implications on their home lives. Five professors were interviewed: three women and two men. The interviews were carried out by phone, given the confinement situation in December 2020. The interviews lasted between 30 and 55 minutes. They were transcribed and analyzed using ATLAS.ti, version 8.

#### The scope and limitations of the information

Because of the restrictions imposed to prevent the spread of the virus, the questionnaires were administered online. As noted above, the target population were professors engaged in telework. The questionnaire was not administered to all household members since that was not the purpose of the study. But the information collected about all household members were age, sex, and family relationship with the professor.

In order to carry out the interviews, we found the interviewees through the UJAT's DGPEI, where we obtained the contact details of professors who fulfilled the characteristics we established and who were willing to be interviewed. Finally, only five professors agreed to be interviewed so we had to limit ourselves to this number.

#### Quantitative analysis

Of the 78 professors who responded to the questionnaire, 58% were women and 42% were men (Table 1). One-third were 25 to 34 years old. Sixty percent were 35 to 45. Among the male professors, only 42% were in the latter age group and the remaining 24% were older than 45.

The most frequent level of education among both the women and the men was a Master's degree, followed by "specialization."<sup>3</sup> At the time the questionnaire was administered, 79% of the men and 60% of the women lived with a partner. The percentage of professors who lived with children was similar (62% and 58%, respectively).

<sup>3</sup> Translator's note: a short postgraduate degree which does not require a thesis.

Characteristics	Men	Women		
Age group				
25–34	33	33		
35–44	18	42		
45–54	24	18		
55 or older	24	7		
Educational level				
Doctorate	12	7		
Masters	48	67		
Specialization	27	22		
Licentiate	12	11		
Live with a partner				
Yes	79	60		
No	21	40		
Live with children				
Yes	58	62		
No	42	38		
Computer equipment available				
1 computer	36	64		
2 computers	46	31		
3 computers	18	4		

Table 1 Sociodemographic characteristics of the population surveyed (in percentages)

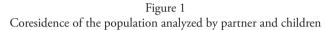
Source: compiled by authors based on the "Questionnaire for university professors, UJAT, October 2020."

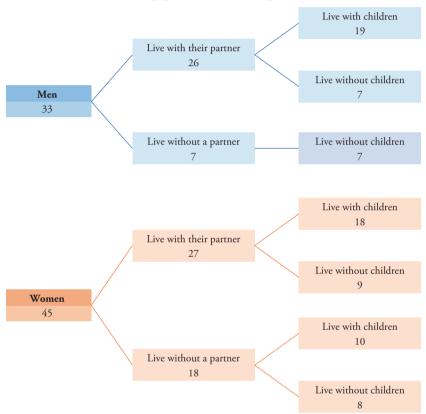
Lack of physical access (Van Dijk, 2017) to computer equipment (desktop computers, laptop, or tablet), which is the first level of the digital divide, was not an issue in the cases studied since all the professors surveyed had some kind of computer; the majority had laptops (97.4%). With regard to whether they had two or more computers, we found a difference that favors men: 64% of the men had two or more while only 35% of women had more than one. All paid teaching activities—including preparing or giving classes, practicums, checking homework, supervising the work of the students, grading, tutoring, and even providing emotional support to the students—which had been carried out almost entirely on campus, now all had to be done in the homes of the professors.

Figure 1 provides the selection criteria for the cases considered in this study, breaking down co-residences of professors with partners and children. The majority of the men live with a partner and children. Among

the women, more live with children of any age in comparison to the men, those of whom lived without a partner did not report living with children.

For the purposes of this study, the first criteria of interest are the cases of men who live with children, with or without a partner (19) and the cases of women who live with children, with or without a partner (28).





Source: compiled by authors based on the Questionnaire for university professors, UJAT, October 2020.

The second and last criterion taken into consideration was the age of the children who live with the professors (Table 2). In the case of men, 18 have children 15 years of age or younger and a little more than half of these are 5 or younger. Among the women, in 21 cases they reside with children 15 years of age or younger (62% of these are between 6 and 15). The descriptive analysis presented below refers to the 39 cases of male and female professors on which this study focuses.

Men	Cases	Percentage	
With children 5 years old or less	10	56	
With children 6 to 15 years old	4	22	
Both	4	22	
Total	18	100	
Women	Cases	Percentage	
With children 5 years old or less	6	29	
With children 6 to 15 years old	13	62	
		1.0	
Both	2	10	
Both Total	2 21	10 100	

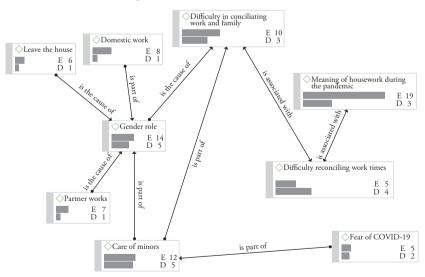
Table 2 Professors with children 15 years or younger

Source: compiled by authors based on the Questionnaire for university professors, UJAT, October 2020.

## Qualitative analysis

Based on the discourse of the persons interviewed (Figure 2), we were able to establish connections regarding the roles and experiences described by the professors.

Figure 2 Connections between categories about conciliation between telework and care work



Source: compiled by authors based on interviews with UJAT professors, December 2020.

The purpose of the qualitative analysis was not to provide quotations from the interviewees on the subject but rather to contextualize the significations of the opinions together with the quantitative results, compare them with theory, and demonstrate the specificities experienced by the teachers.

The three female professors interviewed had children between 8 and 23 years of age, all of whom lived at home. These women did all their professional work using the ICT approved by the university. The two male professors interviewed were married. One was to be a father in March, but already had a child when the interview was conducted in December 2020. Both men worked outside their homes in spaces where they had better internet reception and they could concentrate on their work. At the beginning of the pandemic, all the professors developed an emergency remote teaching strategy that involved a combination of educational platforms, email, and social networks such as WhatsApp and Facebook. Given that the subjects they taught had to do with health, they were immersed in different activities to improve online teaching and, above all, to conduct practicums virtually. Both the female and the male professors were committed to their work as educators. It is also important to note that, in addition to dealing with the vicissitudes of the COVID-19 pandemic, in November 2020 Tabasco suffered one of largest floods ever experienced in the state (Camhaji, 2020), which affected remote teaching and the living conditions of both professors and students.

#### 4. Results

As a result of the COVID-19 social distancing measures, teaching at the UJAT changed to a virtual modality, using the internet. These telework activities took place as whole families were confined to their limited home space every day. These emerging conditions triggered a series of conflicts between telework and care work.

Below, we discuss the findings of this study regarding the ways the professors combined paid work with care work—an interaction that was both intense and significant in their lives and those of their families.

#### Telework and care work at home

In the period from March and July 2020, as the pandemic escalated, the care of professors' household members, above all the minors, was carried out primarily by the wives and mothers. Nevertheless, the perceptions of the female and male professors regarding domestic work during the period varied (Table 3).

Table 3 Division of domestic and care work: professors with children 15 years or younger (in percentages)

Division of activities from March to July 2020	Both equally	Primarily my partner	Primarily me or only me	Another person	This activity was not carried out	Total
		Men				
Domestic tasks	50	28	11	0	11	100
Care of minors	83	11	6	0	0	100
Supervision of schoolwork	72	11	6	0	11	100
		Women				
Domestic tasks	24	0	57	14	5	100
Care of minors	29	0	57	10	5	100
Supervision of schoolwork	33	0	43	14	10	100

Source: compiled by authors based on the Questionnaire for university professors, UJAT, October 2020.

Most of the male professors stated they cared for minors and supervised their schoolwork equally with their partners (83% and 72%, respectively). When it came to domestic tasks, half said they shared these responsibilities with their partners, while a little more than a fifth mentioned that it was primarily their partner who tended to housework. Only 11% of the male professors said they alone carried out these tasks. In contrast, the majority of female professors stated that they tended to most of the domestic tasks, the care of minors, and the supervision of schoolwork. Between 24% and 33% stated that they shared these activities equally with their partner. This coincides with the information garnered from the interviews, in which the female professors noted that care work was primarily carried out by them. One of the female professors told us:

I couldn't do what my husband did: "I am going to work [somewhere else] because I can't concentrate here, because here I don't have what I need." Because who would take care of my daughter? So, it is expected that the woman, that it's part of her work, because we are used to categorizing her work as in the home, even though you [also] work at something else, right? Although you have a job, the housework is yours. (Carolina, interviewee, personal communication, December 2022)

Domestic activities entail preparing food, cleaning the house, washing clothes, and keeping the home comfortable, all of which were indispens-

able during the pandemic (Actis et al., 2021). These responsibilities in the space of the home are gendered and largely carried out by various female household members (Benería, 2019). And indeed, in the homes of those female interviewees where there were other women that could share direct care activities, such as the daughters or mothers of the informants, they did help out:

So, I do have to distribute the household work. Fortunately, my oldest daughter is home now. She is only studying for her university entry exam [...] But, yes, she helps me a lot with the cleaning, things like that. (Consuelo, interviewee, personal communication, December 2020)

My mother lives with me. During the week she keeps an eye on the girl while I am in class, [making sure] that she is paying attention to her class, because, well, after all they are children, right? They get distracted, they are into something else. (Carolina, interviewee, personal communication, December 2020)

The role of female family ties (grandmothers, aunts, adolescent daughters) has been instrumental in helping employed mothers deal with their triple day jobs: paid, domestic, and care work (Amilpas, 2020). This is a "familiarized" and feminized care strategy (Orozco-Rocha & González-González, 2021).

In the case of the male professors, it is noteworthy that 61% spend more than an hour or even two hours cleaning the house, washing, or ironing. Although they participate in these activities, it can be characterized as providing support and not exactly as a responsibility. One of the male professors, who is a father, told us:

> Yes, of course. I sometimes help my wife, eh! Washing dishes, cooking, cleaning. This semester it turned out that she, since she works at night [she is a nurse], I take care of the girls. When she is here during the day, she stays with the girls, and, well, I have to go to my mother-in-law's house to teach my classes. (Cosme, interviewee, personal communication, December 2020)

This discourse of help makes it clear that those who manage and are responsible for the care work are the wives, even when they also have paid jobs. The husbands help, but only in an adjunct way. It must be kept in mind that 33% of the female professors live with children who are 15 years old or younger and do not have a partner. Consequently, the care work falls entirely to them. The male professors interviewed were very committed to their paid work and structured their lives around it. Both left their homes

to work in another space where there were better working conditions (better internet). The female professor interviewed did not do this. Pérez de Guzmán et al. (2020) notes that for men, paid work is a central activity, fundamental to their life project, and care of their children is viewed more as an obligation rather than an activity that is life-fulfilling. Andrew et al. (2020) found that the participation of fathers in care of children is centered primarily on activities that required less effort, concentrating on passive care of infants, which consists of watching over children or watching TV together. The care of school-age children was one of the most important responsibilities for these women. School supervision activities became necessary as a consequence of the closure of schools. In households where the professors worked, school-age minors had to study remotely in parallel. This meant that—in some cases—they attended virtual classes or engaged in learning activities in the home under the supervision of adults. The female professors commented that this activity meant developing specific supervision strategies:

> I have to set a few more limits, be more flexible when it comes to the kids, since I am already battling with them. Yes, this is tough because they are at the rebellious stage [...] My youngest daughter is the one who causes me the most trouble. As I said, it is the transition between primary and secondary [school], and that's it. (Consuelo, interviewee, personal communication, December 2020)

> And added to this now you have to watch over the home. You have to check that the child is paying attention to their own class and [for] those that don't have someone to help them, it becomes very complicated. (Carolina, interviewee, personal communication, December 2020)

When there were children who were studying from home, care tasks were required for direct school supervision. Mothers primarily supervised these activities, even though they also had to carry out their teaching duties. This is similar to the situation encountered in Germany by Arntz et al. (2020), who notes that, when both parents of minors under 13 work, it is the mothers that take on the principal role of supervisors, spending three times more on caring for children during the week than did their male counterparts.

Another theme that emerged in relation to care work was self-care. Selfcare is fundamental for maintaining the physical and mental welfare of caregivers and all the members of their household. One of the professors noted: Yes, thank God, [my mother] lives here with me. She helps us a little with things related to meals. Because, well, sometimes I have classes from seven to two in the afternoon without breaks; that is, one class ends and another starts. And it continues, with homework, and you have to do a mini-evaluation between class[es]. Sometimes the kids are late, and it is my mother who helps me and tells me: "Hey, you haven't had breakfast." (Casandra, interviewee, personal communication, December 2020).

Adaptation to telework can affect self-care. Actis et al. (2021) found that one of the effects of telework experienced by mothers with small children, during the months of February to April 2020, was that the time they dedicated to themselves almost disappeared. One strategy for maintaining equilibrium in work was for these care roles to be assumed by another person, who might be a female relative or a person from the outside the home.

## Female professors' time at home

Some of the care activities were the result of the transfer of the paid economy (nurseries, schools, nannies) to an unpaid one (Lewis, 2020), which, in the first months of the COVID-19 crisis, led to an increase in gender inequality in both of these economies. One difficulty found in reconciling work and family was related to the use of time and pressures of time. In the home, telework increased the demand for work time; for example, teaching a class required the development of digital skills (which had to be learned within a certain period); materials for virtual use; distance supervision; academic management from home; the use of ICT through telephones or computers, with more usage hours than was usually required for in-person teaching. All the new online activities had an impact on the professors' workdays, in conjunction with other household activities. One of the female professors summed it up this way:

Right now, I continue to think that one hour, let's say one hour which is part of our academic work, right? Or one hour of distance, is equivalent to two or three hours [more], because of the timely monitoring that the student needs [...]. I'd say, as professors, we know that the homework, the preparations, and this is never considered as part of your job, but now, the work itself requires you to spend more time, especially connected, right? [...] This part is something I have experienced myself because since you never log off, never finish working, you spend the whole day on the computer, and you stop to eat, to look over the children's homework, and everything else. (Carolina, interviewee, personal communication, December 2020) The workloads for telework, which was an emerging modality that had recently come into use, apparently led workers to extend the time they had available for this activity (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001) but this only meant an overlapping of tasks in order to deal with the overall workload at home and a shrinking amount of free and self-care time to offset these changes. That is, this apparent flexibilization of schedules was in detriment to the time that teachers had available. At the same time, since this happened at the same time and in the same place that care work took place, it was seen as a disadvantage:

> When one has children, a husband, well with this [...] dedicating certain spaces and times to them and preparing the meals, unless the husband is, like, very modern and prepares meals for them, which is good. Yes, it has been a disadvantage [for] women, let's say, being mothers and homemakers and wives. (Consuelo, interviewee, personal communication, December 2020)

This informant's comments are consistent with our quantitative results. The female professors engaged in various care activities and domestic tasks in their homes in a timeframe that is longer than that of male professors. Specifically, 57% of the female teachers devoted more than two hours to the care of minors. This is in contrast to male professors, who stand out in this time frame in activities related to the supervision of learning by minors, with 72% participation. These results demonstrate that although women continued to dedicate the most time to the care of children during the pandemic, men did participate in these activities, as Farré et al. (2020) point out, and even increased the time spent caring for children to almost four hours—in comparison to the three hour increase on the part of women. Nevertheless, this increase did not significantly reduce the time gap—which long predates the pandemic—vis-à-vis women, who, in the case of the participants in this study, spend nine hours a week more on childcare.

An important activity that the male professors and the male partners of female professors shared was shopping. For a third of the men, doing the grocery shopping took more than two hours daily. This was pointed out by two informants:

> Yes, sure, well, this thing happened, right? We all got COVID [in his home, where he lives with his mother, siblings, and wife]. I didn't have any symptoms, recovered rapidly. So, my family did quite well, but the one who then had to do the shopping was me. (Carlos, interviewee, personal communication, December 2020)

Yes, the truth is that I am afraid of COVID. I go out less, only for what's essential. As little as possible. My daughter, you can count on your fingers how many times she went out of the house. The one who goes out is my husband. Yes, its him. (Carolina, interviewee, personal communication, December 2020).

This result is similar to that found by Farré et al. (2000), according to which men were in charge of doing the shopping for the household because of the health restrictions; this contributed to an increase in the average time that they dedicated to care activities. At the same time, the difficulties in time use had implications for socio-spatial relations in the home. One female professor commented on this:

> Being at home is like working 24/7 because you never disconnect as such, right? Rather you are always available to a certain point. The barriers of working hours were erased, so to speak. These lines that existed, when you had personal time, time for the family, time for work. (Carolina, interviewee, personal communication, December 2020)

For these individuals, working from home primarily meant difficulties in negotiating the limits between the social space of the home and telework.

The effects on the physical and mental health of the professors are shown in Table 4. In all the issues they were asked about, women indicated that they were more affected than the men. The differences are almost 20 percentage points when it comes to physical health, mental health, interpersonal relations, and especially, sleep cycles.

	Men		Women	
Ways in which you felt you were affected	Cases	%	Cases	%
Ability to relax, disconnect mentally from work issues	10	56	13	62
Physical health	7	39	13	62
Mental health (depression, stress, anxiety)	5	28	14	67
Interpersonal relations	4	22	11	52
Sleep cycles	9	50	16	76
Eating habits	10	56	13	62

Table 4 Effects of telework on physical and mental health (in percentages)

Note: the percentage was calculated on the basis of the total number of men or women, as applicable. Source: compiled by authors based on the Questionnaire for university professors, UJAT, October 2020. It is striking that female professors cite twice as many effects on their mental health than male professors. But the effects of these changes to their lives during the pandemic are also reflected in the changes in the time dedicated to paid labor (Table 6). The increase in the number of hours worked compared to the hours they worked before can lead to work becoming exhausting (Sardeshmukh, Sharma, & Golden, 2012) and, at the same time, it can cause an imbalance between work and family life (Campbell et al., 2013). In order to adapt to this extended telework, the female professors developed personal strategies to compensate for the time deficit.

Table 5
Telework: changes undergone in the daily lives of female and male professors (in
percentages)

Changes undergone between March and July 2020	Male		Female	
Changes undergone between March and July 2020	Cases	%	Cases	%
To harmonize distance work with household tasks, I sacrificed hours of sleep	7	39	15	71
To deal with family issues, I cut down on hours of work	7	39	2	10
I suffered negative effects from reconciling family and labor responsibilities	5	28	4	19
There were episodes of violence in my home due to cohabiting, distance work, and the COVID-19 crisis	2	11	4	19
I worked more hours than in the in-person modality	8	44	17	81

Note: the percentage was calculated on the basis of the total number of men or women, as applicable. Source: compiled by authors based on the Questionnaire for university professors, UJAT, October 2020.

For women, reconciling and balancing work meant changing routines and schedules to a greater degree than for their male colleagues (Table 5). However, a higher percentage (39%) of the men reported having to cut down their hours of work to deal with family issues than did women (10%). Now, while women reduced fewer work hours to deal with family problems, a greater number reduced their hours of sleep (39% men and 71% women). Female professors balanced the time they lacked to fulfill their family and work hours using the time they used to dedicate to themselves: 81% of the women reported that they worked more hours in the distance modality than in the in-person modality, while for men, this percentage was 44%. At the same time, female professors reported more incidents of violence as a result of increased family time together due to telework. Indeed, gender violence was a phenomenon that increased during the pandemic and was associated with forced confinement in homes: González (2020) reported a tripling of calls made to report gender violence from March 2019 to March 2020.

Striking a balance between telework and care work while in confinement generated a higher level of stress among female professors. In addition, concerns arose from the threat of catching COVID-19 and fears for their children and/or the older adults with which they were in contact.

> I felt, truth be told, anxiety and depression [...] Currently, I am hopeful. I know they will vaccinate and that soon we will be outside once again, living a normal life. Obviously, the economy has also been affected. Fortunately, I also have a job but there are relatives that won't have them now or didn't have them. There are also worries, and that's what made me lose some sleep. (Casandra, interviewee, December 2020)

All the female interviewees mentioned having experienced the effects of telework in terms of poor sleep quality, anxiety, and depression during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. (2021) found that Spanish professors experienced high levels of anxiety, stress, and depression after the COVID-19 confinement began, although these levels were already high in comparison to men in other professions in the previous months. The levels were still higher among female professors, and having school age children increased the effects of stress. These authors note that, during the pandemic in particular, having a family contributed to an increase in stress, since the situation involved dealing with a financial crisis, caring for and dealing with the schooling demands of children, and other demands. These results coincide with those of research in the United States carried out by Hamel and Salganicoff (2020), who found that among parents of minors 18 years or younger, 57% of mothers mentioned that their mental health worsened as a result of the pandemic, while only 32% of the fathers reported this effect. Thus, mothers may feel more overwhelmed by work at home, care work, and stress caused by the COVID-10 pandemic.

### 5. Discussion

The female and male professors at UJAT included in this study had to telework from their homes due to the health emergency and the social distancing measures implemented amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, telework was an option for mothers who felt they had control over the time and place they worked and could balance these activities with domestic responsibilities (Chung, Birkett, Forbes, & Seo, 2021). However, this was not the case of women professors during the pandemic.

During the months that work activities were done at home, the female professors were the ones who primarily played the role of care givers and were responsible for domestic tasks. This resulted in an uneven distribution of such obligations between the sexes, reproducing gender roles in which women are placed as the providers of these tasks (Lagarde, 1996). Care work inside the home during the confinement required more intensive and constant work since all household members stayed at home, especially when there were minors. Pérez de Guzmán et al. (2020) note that when labor compatibility becomes critical, workers who are mothers prioritize care of children in the organization of their daily life. The tasks of supervising children's schoolwork—in lieu of school attendance—and dealing with the emotional discord of children who, alongside other household members, were confined to a particular space, were done primarily by female professors in their homes. But they were also shared with mothers and older daughters, as noted by Orozco-Rocha and González-González (2021) and Amilpas (2020) in studies about care work in Mexico. In this case, the results demonstrate that they had to extend their work hours (81% of the women reported that they worked more in the distance modality than before) in order to fulfill care work and domestic tasks at the same time. This entails working more quickly or redistributing the time saved because of not having to commute, as noted by Hilbrecht et al. (2008). These female professors stated that they increased the number of hours spent on paid work on a weekly basis but did not reduce the number of hours or the intensity of work dedicated to care and domestic work. The overload of most of the domestic tasks and childcare during confinement, in the case of working mothers, is similar to the results found in other countries by Alon et al. (2020), Del Boca et al. (2021), Feng and Savani (2020), and Power (2020).

These female professors had to utilize hours that they usually spent sleeping—rather than work time—to deal with any family conflicts that developed, according to 71% of those surveyed. Work-related stress, anxiety, depression, and sleep problems all intensified during the pandemic. Female professors reported that their mental health was affected twice as often as male professors. The time and energy deficit that occurred under these conditions led women to use all the hours available, even at the cost of the time allotted to self-care, since this workload is taken on as a social mandate (Lagarde, 1996; Peña-Contreras, Calderón, Arias-Medina, & Sacaquirin, 2021).

Parents that teleworked from home were involved in childcare and domestic work, as shown in the studies of Andrew et al. (2020) and Chung et al. (2021). In the case of the professors who were fathers, they involved themselves—to a greater extent than before and with the participation of their partners—in caring for and supervising the studies of their children. In addition, they were also involved in activities such as shopping

for the home. The extent to which they did the shopping increased in part because the confinement rules authorized only one member of each household to enter commercial establishments to shop, and also because, according to traditional gender roles, the man is the main provider for the household. Nevertheless, the participation in care activities of men who worked at home did not necessarily increase in households with small children to the same degree as that of mothers, as noted by Collins et al. (2020). Moreover, their participation, as illustrated in Andrew et al. (2020), was focused disproportionally on tasks that did not require as much active effort in care work. Del Boca et al. (2021) note that although working from home during the pandemic implied that both men and women became more involved in family tasks, it did not rebalance the asymmetric equilibrium within the relationship; on the contrary, men spent fewer hours on domestic activity and the education of children when their female partners stayed at home.

All these results show that telework creates a considerable and unequal burden in care work that largely falls to female professors. The consequences of the pandemic compounded existing inequalities in households by increasing inequality in the distribution of care work, with repercussions on physical and mental health. It is likely that the effects of the pandemic on the care work of workers in nonprofessional occupations were more intense, which could have increased gender inequalities.

#### 6. Conclusions

The results of this research allow us to conclude that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, female university professors who teleworked from home and had children 15 years or younger were more affected when it came to care work in the home because they were the ones who took on the greater proportion of these activities—in some cases together with other women who lived in the household. The female professors even spent more hours on paid work than did the men. The care work and domestic tasks in which male professors participated the most were supervising children's' schooling and shopping for the household.

The care work carried out by female professors had consequences for them, such as fewer hours of sleep and effects on their mental health including work stress, anxiety, and depression; male professors were less affected. All the information collected allows us to conclude that during the COVID-19 pandemic, when work from home characterized by special and temporal flexibility prevailed, care activities in the households of the female and male professors studied were intensified and this had a greater effect on female professors. This reflected gender inequalities and the roles assigned in the division of labor in the household.

# 7. Acknowledgements

We thank the UJAT administration and, in particular, the DGPEI for the facilities they provided us to administer the questionnaire and carry out interviews. We are grateful for the collaboration of the female and male professors who kindly shared their experiences for this research during the difficult times of the pandemic.

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