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Home Sweet Home? The Mediating Role of Human Resource Management Practices in the Relationship between Leadership and Quality of Life in Teleworking in the Public Sector

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Abstract: Remote work in pandemic times has become a strategic alternative for organizations and has persisted in the post-pandemic context, remaining present in hybrid models of work arrangements, blending in-person work and telework. Thus, this paper proposes a model to identify the relationships between leadership, human resource management (HRM) practices, and quality of life in teleworking (QoLT) for civil servants. For this purpose, a structural model was tested in which HRM practices mediated the relationship between leadership and QoLT. The relationships assumed in the analysis of the tested mediation model were significant, confirming all four hypotheses researched. The novelty of the tested mediation model is the greatest contribution of this work, demonstrating the crucial role that HRM practices play in the relationship between leadership and QoLT. As practical implications, this research has yielded a diagnosis, allowing for a better understanding for public managers of how leadership and HRM practices are related and how they influence quality of life in the challenging context of teleworking. The findings suggest that leadership has a strong impact on HRM practices, highlighting the crucial role of leadership in shaping teleworkers' perceptions of HRM practices. Additionally, leadership significantly influences the quality of life in telework, amplifying this impact through the perception of HRM practices. Therefore, leaders should be attentive to how relationship-building, training and development, and performance and competency evaluation in HRM practices are implemented and executed, as they profoundly influence the promotion of quality of life, considering the complex and challenging environment of telework, including workload, social distance, and work–family conflict.

Keywords: leadership; human resource management practices (HRM practices); quality of life in teleworking (QoLT); mediation model

Citation: Melo, T.A.d.; Demo, G. Home Sweet Home? The Mediating Role of Human Resource Management Practices in the Relationship between Leadership and Quality of Life in Teleworking in the Public Sector. *Sustainability* **2024**, *16*, 5006. https://doi.org/10.3390/su16125006

Academic Editor: Lucian-Ionel Cioca

Received: 30 April 2024
Revised: 8 June 2024
Accepted: 9 June 2024
Published: 12 June 2024

1. Introduction

Driven by the advent of the 21st century, social innovation and technological development have directed organizational management and ways of working towards increasingly flexible arrangements, such as remote work. Teleworking can be understood as an expression of remote work and is used synonymously with it [1,2], as will occur in this paper. Teleworking is a flexible work arrangement that, through ICTs, allows teleworkers to carry out their activities in locations other than the employing organization. It is characterized by temporal and spatial flexibility [3–5] and has become increasingly present, bringing together a set of advantages and disadvantages with multifaceted implications for workers, organizations, and society [3,4,6].

Additionally, the pandemic context caused by COVID-19 and its variants changed the dynamics of the personal and professional lives of countless workers who began to (tele)work from home, distancing themselves from the usual work environment, intensifying the adoption and use of ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) [3,6–8],

currently named Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICTs) [9]. The pandemic also challenged organizational resilience, notably concerning management capacity in the face of the new normal [10].

From this perspective, Positive Organizational Studies (POSs)—the positive Psychology research stream that anchors this paper—contribute to the search for improvements in work environments, valuing the organization's internal strengths and focusing on health in the face of the detriment of illness and suffering at work [11]. Furthermore, POSs support workers' professional development and growth [12], paying attention to the impact of mental, emotional, and social factors on the relationship with work and advocating well-being as a prerequisite for greater productivity [13].

In this way, these different work arrangements demand leadership responses to complex, uncertain, volatile, and ambiguous scenarios, highlighting the relevance of the effectiveness of human resource management practices (HRM practices) [4] and the promotion of quality of life in teleworking (QoLT) [7]. Furthermore, the imminent redesign of the world of contemporary teleworking [7] must pay attention to the importance of the role of the leader [11] and the guarantee of QoLT, resulting from the design of HRM strategies, policies, and practices, which need to be continually revisited and rethought.

Despite the increasing number of organizations adopting teleworking, theoretical and empirical studies related to teleworking are still scarce and incipient, especially in public services, concerning proposals aimed at the effects of flexible arrangements [3,6,13] based on leadership [5], based on HRM practices [7], and intending to improve QoLT [14].

From the contextualization outlined, this study aims to answer the following question: Can leadership, human resource management (HRM) practices, and quality of life in telework (QoLT) be integrated into an explanatory model to inform telework management in public services? Therefore, the general objective of this study was to propose a model to identify the relationships between leadership, HRM practices, and QoLT in civil servants' telework. Regarding specific objectives, this research proposes to (1) test the measurement models of the study variables, examining their reliability, internal validity, and construct validity and (2) test a structural mediation model of HRM practices in the relationship between leadership and QoL in telework.

For this purpose, a structural model was tested in which HRM practices mediate the relationship between leadership and QoLT in order to also meet research agendas, namely (i) advancing the lines of HRM studies, namely in the identification of antecedents and consequences of HRM practices [15,16]; (ii) investigate the role of HRM practices as a mediating variable in research models [11,17]; and (iii) strengthen the development of national studies on teleworking in public services [13].

In the context of telework, testing more advanced models, such as mediation models, including HRM practices [18], can help fill in gaps identified by previous studies, for example, investigating contextual factors arising from the pandemic crisis [19,20], the effects of flexible arrangements [13], the challenges of management and contemporary work practices [21], and the demands for empirical evidence [17] in pandemic and post-pandemic contexts in public services [1,20,22–24], notably in public education services [25].

In this sense, this research can complement the existing literature on the topic by focusing on the agendas indicated by recent studies, such as the importance of the role of leadership [19,20], the role of HRM practices [2,7,23,26], and the promotion of QoLT [13,14,21,23,24,27–29] for the implementation and execution of flexible work arrangement programs. Additionally, studies investigating telework can be promising, feasible, and timely, considering the research gaps on the topic in the field of administration, especially in the area of HRM, with a focus on public services, where national (Brazilian) publications are still scarce [13]. As a theoretical contribution, this work presents progress for Positive Organizational Studies, especially in the still-unexplored relationship between leadership, human resource management practices, and quality of life in teleworking in public services. Furthermore, concerning its practical implications, the empirical or diagnostic material resulting from the results collected are practical implications produced

to support public managers in favor of increasingly strategic, humanized, and effective human resources management. Finally, a contribution of a social nature is also envisaged through the promotion of healthier and more productive working environments, which offer greater quality in service and the provision of services to customers, citizens, and society in general.

2. Theoretical Framework and Study Hypotheses

Historically, leadership theories have been discussed in different periods and academic areas, strengthening studies of organizational behavior [30]. This research is based on the understanding of leadership from Bernard Bass's transformational leadership theory [15]. This leadership style is considered influential, motivating, and inspiring, as it intellectually stimulates followers and aligns organizational vision with the team's perspectives [31,32]. In this sense, transformational leadership reveals a leader who builds positive and influential human relationships that mobilize followers towards a collective results-oriented relationship, achieving organizational goals and meeting workers' professional and personal goals [33].

Therefore, this study adopts the conceptual basis of leadership discussed by [34] and [35], supported by a transformational leadership style [36,37]. Leadership is a power relationship focused on the persuasion and influence of the leader, acting as a mechanism for interaction between team members in favor of achieving collective goals [34]. In this way, leadership is understood as exercising influence over people so that collective efforts achieve shared organizational objectives [35].

Previous studies have investigated leadership in the context of flexible work arrangements, indicating that the implementation of telecommuting in organizations and the participation of telecommuters may be influenced by a performance-oriented culture [38,39], hierarchical culture [40], diversity management (especially with a gender agenda) [40–43], institutional support [39–41], and telecommuter satisfaction [39]. Additionally, [44] highlighted the importance of leadership, which values the implementation of best project management practices [44] in organizations, as these can directly impact telecommuters' work–family balance [6,44,45].

Other studies have emphasized leadership based on the relevance of autonomy, temporal and spatial flexibility [6,45], talent management in companies [38], leader–member relationship [46,47], communication effectiveness [37,46], engagement [36,45,47], telecommuter burnout [48], the peculiarities of electronic leadership [37,49,50], and cybersecurity [45].

The current scientific literature also indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic and its variants have required leadership to guide teams amidst instability and turbulence [4,5,37,51]. Furthermore, a leader must inspire and support those led [52,53], commit to the meaning of the work performed [4], and implement and consolidate HRM practices [11,15,54].

Aligned with the valuation of people and organizational goals, human resource management (HRM) practices contribute to the promotion of better results [16,55] and greater employee development [16,56]. Organizations seek to integrate behavioral and organizational strategies, valuing a behavioral perspective within the scope of HRM [15] and reinforcing the premise that workers are much more than mere resources [57]. This idea is inspired by the seminal work of [58], which proposes that when it comes to HRM practices, theories can be grouped into two versions: hard (conservative) and soft (modern). Both advocate for the integration of HRM practices into business strategies. However, while the former emphasizes calculative aspects, understanding people as any other economic resource, the latter understands people as valuable organizational assets and essential organizational competence by the Resource-Based View proposed by [59].

The contribution of studies from the fields of psychology, finance, strategy, and economics, among others, is of paramount importance for the scientific development of a more strategic HRM [15,30], which legitimizes the proposal of people as protagonists in the work environment, producers of knowledge, and responsible for superior organizational results [57,60–62]. In this sense, HRM is a strategic approach aimed at people's develop-

ment, integration, and well-being [16,55], managing talent and joining forces to achieve organizational goals [63].

Due to political, economic, social, and cultural transformations, organizations seek adaptation, innovation, and investment in human capital [60]. It is in this scenario that HRM is progressively marked by the following phases: (1) personnel department function, (2) human relations function, (3) labor relations function, and, recently, (4) strategic function [60,64].

Strategic human resource management (SHRM), proposed by [57], is based on (1) the contributions of the Resource-Based View, discussed by [59], with the focus on valuing people and their interactions as essential resources for organizational results. However, it goes further in the (2) movement to identify new organizational roles, perspectives, and challenges that produce the foundations for SHRM [60,65].

Thus, strategic HRM is a new look at HRM strategies, policies, and practices, enunciating the importance of integration with organizational objectives; aligning results at the organizational, group, and individual levels; and considering environmental variables and the heterogeneity of the actors involved [60,65,66].

SHRM promotes interaction between strategies, policies, and practices [30,62,65,67], which are designed according to the organizational culture and market scenario and may therefore differ from one organization to another [62]. In this sense, it is possible to state that strategies (i) are at the macro level of HRM and determine the guidelines that guide HRM; (ii) are located at the middle level, with policies that articulate proposals that coordinate and inspire practices, seeking alignment with them [30,60]; and (iii) are at the micro level, with practices that are positioned, representing the execution of routines, processes, and actions by operationalizing policies, occupying a fundamental place for obtaining results in organizations [57,60].

It is important to emphasize that the strategic function of HRM practices is not limited to private sector organizations but is fundamental in the sphere of public administration [60], demanding the engagement of civil servants (who play a crucial role in the execution of organizational practices) [63] to achieve effective results for society as a whole [60].

The scientific literature indicates that among the main HRM practices, the following stand out: recruitment and selection, training, development and education (TD&E), communication, relationship, working conditions/work safety, participation/autonomy, performance and skills assessment (PSA), and remuneration and rewards [18,65]. Thus, HRM practices refer to the actions themselves, that is, proposals within the scope of human relations, which are articulated by organizational policies to achieve desired results [11]. Conceptually, this study is based on the Resource-Based Vision [59], which is in line with strategic human resource management (SHRM) [57], with a focus on valuing workers, who are seen as protagonists in achieving results at different levels—individual, group, and organizational [54,57]. In this sense, SPM integrates strategies, policies, and practices [67] designed in line with the market scenario and organizational culture and can therefore differ from one organization to another.

It is important to highlight that previous research has addressed HRM practices in the context of telecommuting, emphasizing the importance of redesigning HRM in light of the future of work [68,69], especially considering the implications of the (post) pandemic scenario on organizations and telecommuters [70,71]. Researchers have also explored other topics based on HRM practices, such as the organizational climate [72], telecommuter turnover [73], non-adherence to telecommuting programs by workers [7], organizational performance [74], work intensification [75], and the impacts of telecommuting on workers, organizations, and society [76]. Furthermore, HRM practices are fundamental for developing QoLT [7].

Discussion on quality of work life (QWL) stems from research focusing on the organizational context and addressing workers' behavioral, psychosocial, and motivational qualities. Thus, theoretical contributions on QWL result from analytical models proposed by different researchers, such as (1) the eight categories and factors of QWL (1973—Richard Walton);

(2) basic dimensions of the task (1975—Hackman and Oldham); (3) the sociological, psychological, political, and economic dimensions of QWL (1979—William Westley); and (4) the organizational, behavioral, and environmental factors influencing QWL (1983—Werther and Davis) [14].

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), quality of life is the individual's perception of their position in life about their cultural context, their value system, their expectations, their needs, their standards, their objectives, their beliefs, and their policies [77]. It is a complex definition considering psychological aspects, physical health, social relationships, personal beliefs, and other variables that permeate lived experiences. Therefore, having a good quality of life at work means performing one's functions while valuing well-being and mental and physical health [78]. A QWL program aims to improve work practices to achieve results with adequate working conditions and social integration [79]. For [80], QWL is an opportunity to redesign the nature of work, focusing on workers' quality of life and improving productivity for the organization. [81] argue that quality of life at work is a human resource management strategy to achieve motivation and personal and organizational well-being through healthy productivity.

Despite the multiplicity of concepts on quality of life at work, it is worth noting that the common point is the search for improvements in the organizational work environment [78]. It is important to emphasize that QWL can be understood from the perspective of the organization and/or the workers, namely (1) the perspective of organizations—organizational management prescription that informs guidelines, organizational practices, and labor relations aiming at the development of collective and individual well-being and (2) the perspective of workers, which manifests the understanding of the organizational context and work situations, reflecting experiences of well-being, the possibility of professional growth, collective and institutional recognition, and respect for individual attributes [82].

Thus, studies on QWL have enabled the understanding of workers' and organizations' perspectives in an integrated and interdependent manner, as common interests are negotiated to promote work environments prioritizing dignified work conditions and the well-being, health, and safety (both physical and mental) of workers [14,21,28], thus preventing, for example, increases in occupational risks [14].

QWL highlights how work impacts workers' spheres of life, valuing the individual–work–organization triad [14]. In turn, quality of life in teleworking (QoLT) can be understood as the intersection of two concepts, QWL and teleworking [14], with QoLT consisting of the promotion of well-being and mental and physical health, enabling satisfaction and the personal and professional fulfillment of teleworkers, so that they, through DICTs, produce with quality [78,83]. Thus, QoLT has provoked studies at the heart of the contemporary organizational context on the behavioral, psychosocial, and motivational aspects of (tele)workers [14].

Previous research has indicated that a lack of trust, resistance to flexible work arrangements, and excessive control by telecommuting managers [84] negatively impact QoLT. Additionally, the work–life balance can be compromised if telecommuters lack training and fail to properly adjust their home workspace, leading to family conflicts [21,84,85]. Moreover, abusive or excessive use of ICTs may be related to work addiction [86] and may require special attention from managers and telecommuters, as workload overload can affect health and well-being, leading to burnout [87]. In this regard, a study by [88] identified how telecommuters need to organize separate spaces within their homes for work and personal life. However, few can establish such boundaries daily.

Positive outcomes have also been reported in other studies discussing the effectiveness of telecommuting in terms of job satisfaction and increased productivity [22,89], suggesting that improvements in quality of life are possible with telecommuting [14,28]. In this way, [90] highlighted positive effects on the QWL of telecommuters who perceived greater professional autonomy, greater flexibility, enhanced work concentration, and a better balance between professional and personal/family life despite socio-professional isolation and challenges in time management while telecommuting.

Although studies have focused on leadership, HRM practices, and/or QWL in telecommuting, it is important to investigate how these factors relate. Ultimately, four research hypotheses are proposed and supported by the literature, and these were tested in a mediation model to investigate the possible relationships between the variables presented (leadership, HRM practices, and QoLT).

2.1. Leadership and Human Resource Management Practices

In the scientific literature, there is evidence that leadership boosts organizational performance [91], valuing the performance of the leader who inspires, motivates, and includes workers [52] in achieving shared goals [35]. The consonance between the leader's behavior and HRM practices strengthens the intention on the part of workers to deliver effective organizational results [11,12], corroborating the understanding that the leader plays a fundamental role in the development and execution of HRM practices [11,63].

Considering the premise that leadership influences the perception of HRM practices [11,15,30,63], it is worth highlighting that leadership with a focus on relationships is the leadership style that has had the greatest effect on the perception of HRM practices [30]. Furthermore, the teleworking context calls for leaders who respond to the virtual environment's challenges, prioritizing teleworker training, structuring tasks [5], and providing social exchange, reciprocity, mutual trust, relationship development, instrumental support, and organizational support for the team [3,5].

In telecommuting, leadership should utilize ICTs to implement and evaluate HRM practices, policies, and programs, as virtual leadership will increasingly demand creativity, communication skills, and solutions for unforeseen situations [49]. In this regard, a study by [92] identified how flexible work arrangements require leaders to be trained, to skill themselves in the use of digital tools with their team, to set schedules with weekly and monthly goals, and to have the ability to provide online feedback. These practical actions contributed to Chinese telecommuters knowing their leadership's expectations regarding their work, creating perceptions of increased security in telecommuting and monitoring and guidance in activities [92]. Therefore, the first research hypothesis is formulated, as follows:

H1. *Leadership is positively associated with HRM practices.*

2.2. Human Resource Management Practices and Quality of Life in Teleworking

Based on the assumption that HRM practices influence the design, implementation, and execution of teleworking programs, [89] suggests that such actions reflect QoLT, stimulating behaviors, producing experiences, and (re)designing organizational culture. In the same vein, HRM practices must prioritize development and integration with organizational objectives [57], promoting the health and well-being of workers [16], managing talents [63], strengthening teleworking programs with ethical standards, and agreeing on QoLT [89]. This is the articulation of organizational proposals executed at the end of the operation; that is that, in particular, HRM practices are effective actions inspired by organizational policies and strategies [11] that permeate the spheres of the individual–work–organization triad [14].

Given the importance of HRM practices in promoting QoLT, attention should be paid to the development of programs that provide teleworkers with the opportunity to strike a balance between personal and professional life, satisfaction, and well-being related to work, with a special focus on reducing the impacts of social isolation, mental load, and fatigue, in addition to psychosocial risks in general [7,93], which are inherent to changes in the world of work and impact QoLT.

In this sense, research by [75] identified how leaders in the technology sector used telecommuting programs as a bargaining chip to justify the intensification of work for Indian telecommuters. Thus, implementing HRM practices should consider the impacts of workload overload on QoLT, organizational culture, and telecommuter behavior [21,28]. It is important to highlight that adopting telecommuting is of increasing interest to different

workers, whether in private organizations, public sectors, or the third sector [68]. Therefore, the premise of flexibility and the use of ICTs, which presupposes telecommuting, indicates how HRM practices must also be flexible [65] and aimed at promoting QoLT. Based on these inferences, the second research hypothesis is proposed, as follows:

H2. *HRM practices are positively associated with QoLT.*

2.3. Leadership and Quality of Life in Teleworking

The exercise of responsive, proactive leadership, which guides and builds healthier working environments, has become essential for developing resilience and creativity among teleworkers, notably in the context of political–economic crises, technological innovations, and pandemics, particularly COVID-19 [4]. Furthermore, leadership actions in teleworking must pay attention to sometimes-excessive demands (in the leader–follower relationship) [13], which can result in work overload. Furthermore, organizations must adopt a more humanized management style, which places the relationship between leaders and followers at the center of strategies [11] from the perspective of QoLT, reducing the strain resulting from teleworking and transforming it into a pleasurable activity [14].

Additionally, [39] indicated that if, on the one hand, leadership committed to the teleworking program becomes an essential factor in increasing management effectiveness and the satisfaction of teleworkers, on the other hand, the supervision status revealed is negatively associated with teleworker satisfaction with teleworking programs; that is, it was observed that a considerable number of leaders are resistant to teleworking, which can be explained by outdated teleworking agreements, difficulties in managing teams, and a lack of resources and technical support for carrying out teleworking [39]. Therefore, leaders who value and create better working conditions are vital for promoting QoLT [4].

The study by [94] demonstrates that the lack of face-to-face communication between leaders and followers leads to ambiguous and inadequate communication, resulting in abusive supervision in telecommuting. The authors suggest that organizations and leaders must implement effective measures against abusive treatment, prioritizing transparency in communication and reducing conflicts and invisible barriers in the relationship with the team. In this regard, [48] demonstrated how leadership should prioritize quality in daily communication over quantity, as burnout and performance of American telecommuters were associated with the quality of leader–follower communication. Therefore, leaders need to, for example, direct which tools will be used to perform tasks [48]. Therefore, the third hypothesis to be tested is as follows:

H3. *Leadership is positively associated with QoLT.*

2.4. Leadership, Human Resource Management Practices, and Quality of Life in Teleworking

Ref. [44] identified how senior leaders value and have personal responsibility in implementing HRM practices for teleworkers. The offer of teleworking is strengthened when its top leaders believe in the importance of work–family balance [6,44], with this increasing the positive effects of teleworking and being a critical determinant for the execution of HRM practices and the promotion of QoLT [44].

In turn, [53] showed that despite implementing HRM practices, certain effects produced in the relationship between teleworkers and work (for example, pleasure at work) are sometimes not experienced due to the need for better conditions in the work environment, which also impacts QoLT. However, trust, leadership support, and colleague support produce intrinsic motivation for work and/or pleasure at work [53]. Corroborating these findings, [3] consider the urgency in (re)thinking and (re)visiting HRM practices, with a focus on the purpose and effectiveness of teamwork, hiring resilient leaders, integrating knowledge and skills so that leaders know how to manage crises, encouraging leaders

to take care of their health and extend this idea to those they lead, and promoting the development, well-being, and performance of workers.

Research by Ref. [47] suggests that organizations should plan and evaluate telecommuting programs, promote leaders who support and develop teams, and prioritize reducing key negative impacts such as professional isolation and dissatisfaction among Dutch telecommuters. Also, the study by [70] indicates that positive emotions in the leader–follower relationship negatively predicted turnover intention and improved engagement among Chinese telecommuters. Along these lines, HRM practices in organizations need to develop a perspective that goes beyond technological innovation and explores managerial innovation [65], focusing on work and telecommuters.

It can also be seen that new flexible work arrangements are at the heart of the debate on transformations in the world of work [4,5,8,69], which calls for redesigning and performing HRM practices, especially in turbulent and unpredictable organizational environments [69]. Added to this evidence is that, on the part of workers, the search for QWL is one of the main reasons for adopting teleworking [83] and that, although teleworking offers improvements in QWL, leaders need to recognize the strategic role of HRM practices [14]. Depending on the proposal to advance and contribute to the legitimization of the strategic role of PM through more sophisticated tests of relationships between variables, such as mediation [11,18,60], the fourth and final hypothesis to be tested is as follows:

H4. *HRM practices mediate the relationship between leadership and QoLT.*

It is noteworthy that the variables researched, leadership (independent), HRM practices (mediator), and QoLT (dependent), were tested in the context of the general model based on the measurement model for each of the variables. It is worth highlighting that the aforementioned variables were investigated at the individual level based on the perception of the civil servants surveyed. In this sense, perception is a significant, coherent image learned in translating reality and phenomena [95].

3. Methods

Quantitative in nature and with explanatory purposes, this research adopted the survey method and a cross-sectional time frame [96]. The universe or population of the study included technical, administrative employees in education at an Institution of the Federal Network of Professional, Scientific, and Technological Education (FNPSTE) who had at least 1 month of experience in teleworking. The research setting was one of the Institutes of FNPSTE, which has approximately 576 technical–administrative education servers (TAEs) [97].

The sample is defined as non-probabilistic for convenience (adhesion) [96] and consists of 236 technical–administrative education servers (TAEs) working remotely. After analyzing the sociodemographic data, it was observed that 63% of the respondents were female, while 37% identified as male. Regarding age range, there was a variation between 27 and 71 years, with 54.7% representing servers aged $\geq$30 and <40, followed by 31.4% of servers aged $\geq$40 and $\leq$50. Regarding completed educational level, it was observed that 57.6% had completed specialization and 25.4% had completed a master's degree, indicating a profile of civil servants concerned with professional qualification. Regarding the duration of teleworking, 65% of participants had been working or had worked for a period of 2 to 3 years, while 35% had been working or had worked for less than 2 years.

It is important to note that the adoption of teleworking in the research institution occurred due to implementing a Performance Management Program (PMP) in the institution, driven by compulsory teleworking since the beginning of the pandemic (COVID-19) in March 2020. From June 2022, technical–administrative education servers (TAEs) had the opportunity to join the PMP through an internal continuous flow notice, marking the transition from compulsory teleworking to voluntary teleworking in full and partial work formats [98]. Ref. [99] considers how structural mediation models can be tested via

structural equation modeling (SEM), recommending that in simple models with less than 5 variables (which applies to this study), regression analysis should be used through SEM, and that the average sample must have between 100 and 200 subjects, which was a criterion fulfilled by this research. Furthermore, [100] highlights the importance of statistical power in presupposing relationships between the variables involved in statistical inference. In this way, the calculation carried out in the software GPower version 3.1.9.7 for Windows, based on the predictor variable leadership (with 2 factors) and the mediator variable HRM practices (with 3 factors), totaling 5 factors, average ES, and a statistical power of 95%, indicated a minimum sample of 138 subjects.

The research instrument, of a questionnaire type, was composed of three measurement scales (five-point Likert model), namely the Hetero-assessment of Leadership Styles Scale—HLS Scale [101], Public HRM Practices Scale—Public HRMPS [102], and Quality of Life in Teleworking Scale—QoLT Scale [83].

These are some examples of items from the HLS scale: My boss cares about the well-being of employees; My boss monitors the results of each employee's work; My boss facilitates interpersonal relationships; and My boss emphasizes the importance of group performance. Examples from the HRM Practices scale include, as follows: The institution encourages employee participation in decision making; There is trust between employees and managers/supervisors in the institution; The institution invests in employee development, fostering their professional growth; The institution helps employees develop the necessary skills for their work activities; Performance evaluation in the institution helps develop a professional development plan for employees; and Performance evaluation results are communicated to employees in the institution. Examples from the Quality of Life in Teleworking Scale include the following: Telework provides me with a healthier lifestyle; I can control my schedule when teleworking; The institution provides support for my teleworking activities; I negotiate the scheduling of my tasks with my boss; The Internet connection meets my teleworking needs; I feel my workload has increased while teleworking; With telework, I need to work harder to be recognized; and I perform my activities in an appropriate physical space.

It is important to highlight that the chosen scales present reliable psychometric parameters and psychometric validation, in addition to their recentness in the scientific literature and adaptability to the national context (Table 1).

Table 1. Psychometric indices of the scales.

Scale	Factors	Number of Items	Reliability Index *
HLS Scale	Focus on People (FP)	07	0.90 [1]
	Focus on Results (FR)	04	0.82 [1]
	Relationship (REL)	08	0.90 [1]/0.90 [2]
Public HRMPS	Training, Development, and Education (TD & E)	03	0.81 [1]/0.81 [2]
	Performance and Skills Assessment (PSA)	03	0.77 [1]/0.76 [2]
QoLT Scale	Work Self-Management (WSM)	11	0.83 [1]
	Context of Teleworking (CT)	06	0.79 [1]
	Work Infrastructure (WI)	03	0.79 [1]
	Technological Structure (TS)	03	0.88 [1]
	Work Overload (WO)	04	0.73 [1]

Source: the authors. Note: * [1]: Cronbach's Alpha/ [2]: Jöreskog's Rho.

To collect data, an online questionnaire (Google Forms version 0.8) was used in two distinct stages to avoid the problems of common-method bias [103], with the independent variables (leadership) and mediator (HRM practices) collected in the 1st stage and the dependent variable (QoLT) collected in the 2nd stage. Two-stage collection has been increasingly recommended by HRM researchers [18].

In the 1st stage, the participant accessed the link that directed them to read and accept the informed consent form (ICF) and, subsequently, respond to parts I (leadership scale)

and II (HRM practices scale) of the questionnaire. Due to the association of responses in the two phases of the questionnaire, at the end of the 1st stage and 2nd stage, the participant was asked to fill in the e-mail field. Approximately fifteen days later, the 2nd stage began when participants in the 1st stage received a new link by email and answered part III (QoLT scale). It is important to highlight that the email address comprises registration numbers and does not identify the server by name, guaranteeing their anonymity. Collection took place between June 2022 and March 2023, totaling 270 participants (two stages).

In operationalizing the analyses, the data from the application of the questionnaires were transferred to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version 20). Next, frequency distribution analyses (mean, standard deviation, variance, minimum and maximum), listwise procedures for missing data (missing values), extreme cases (outliers), and multicollinearity/singularity analyses were performed, characterizing the data treatment [104,105].

Initially, after listwise analysis [105], missing values were not found, leaving 270 participants. Then, the Mahalanobis method was applied to identify outliers (cases that differ noticeably from the average of the data collected) [104,105]. To this end, the chi-square table was used, with $\chi^2 = 79.49$, based on the significance index, $p < 0.005$, and 52 items from the sum of the three scales applied, excluding 34 outliers.

Subsequently, a multicollinearity and singularity analysis was carried out. No inconsistencies were identified for the researched sample, given that the tolerance values and the variance inflation factor (variance inflation factor—VIF) were greater than 0.1 and less than 10.0, respectively [96]. Regarding the assumptions for performing multivariate analyses, linearity, homoscedasticity, and normality of data distribution were observed through residual graphs and normal probability graphs [96,104,105], in addition to the univariate and multivariate normality analyses, which were checked using the Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) software, from the skewness reference $|Sk| < 3$ and kurtosis reference $|ku| < 10$ for univariate normality and CR > 1.96 (critical ratio) for multivariate normality [106]. All assumptions were met, and the final sample included 236 subjects, consistent with the minimum of 138 subjects indicated in GPower version 3.1.9.7 for Windows, achieving a statistical power of 99%.

Next, considering the data analysis procedures, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used, which is a technique that examines the structure of interrelations expressed in a series of equations, combining linear multiple regression with one or more dependent variables with confirmatory factor analysis [96,99]. It is characterized by two basic components—the measurement model, which allows for confirming the structures of a measurement scale, and the structural model, which consists of a path that relates predictor variables, mediators/moderators, and criteria. Thus, confirmatory factor analysis was performed via SEM to test the measurement models of the study variables based on a maximum likelihood criterion, as it is a technique more suitable for violations of normality and frequently applied in behavioral studies [106].

Path analysis was used via SEM to test the proposed mediation model using bootstrapping. Structural equation modeling analyses were conducted using the Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) software version 24.0. According to [96], to evaluate the quality of measurement and structural models, including mediation models, it is necessary to analyze the fit of the theoretical model to the collected empirical data. For this, the researcher must use at least one incremental index, some absolute indices, and the chi-square value and associated degrees of freedom to determine its acceptability. Thus, in this research, the values of the standardized χ^2 (CMIN/DF or NC, where CMIN is the χ^2 statistic and DF are the degrees of freedom of the model), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) were analyzed, as NC and RMSEA are absolute indices and CFI is an incremental index.

Finally, concerning the ethical aspects of this research, it is worth highlighting that no information was requested that would violate the anonymity of the participants, guaranteeing the confidentiality of the responses. Supported by the regulations provided for

in Resolution n° 510/16 of the National Health Council, which deals with the ethical specificities of research in the human and social sciences in Brazil, this study was submitted to and approved by the ethical analysis of the Research Ethics Committees and the National Research Ethics Commission, according to opinion N° 5.460.124 and CAAE: 57487722.4.0000.5540.

4. Results

4.1. Test of the General Model Composed of the Measurement Models

The analysis process using structural equation modeling comprises the way the constructs are represented (measurement models) and the way the constructs relate to each other (structural model) [99]. Therefore, the minimum use of an absolute index and an incremental index is recommended, in addition to the chi-square value and the degrees of freedom, which can determine its acceptability [96].

The reference values for a satisfactory adjustment of a structural model must meet the following criteria: NC(CMIN/DF) $\geq$ 2 and $\leq$ 3.0; CFI $\geq$ 0.9; GFI $\geq$ 0.9; and RMSEA and SRMR $\leq$ 0.08 [99,106]. Depending on the parameters indicated in the literature, Table 2 presents the values of NC, CFI, GFI, RMSEA, and SRMR for the tested model.

Table 2. Fit indices of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the constructs.

Parameters	Reference Literature	General Model Result
NC (χ^2/DF)	$\geq$2 and $\leq$3.0	2.54
CFI	$\geq$0.9	0.97
GFI	$\geq$0.9	0.96
RMSEA	$\leq$0.08	0.08
SRMR	$\leq$0.08	0.04

Source: the authors.

According to [107], to evaluate the quality of items or internal validity of measurement models, the factor loadings must be verified, respecting the following classification: <0.32—poor, $\geq$0.32 and $\leq$0.54—reasonable, $\geq$0.55 and $\leq$0.62—good, $\geq$0.63 and $\leq$0.70—very good, and $\geq$0.70—excellent. In this way, confirmatory factor analysis was carried out for each measurement model based on its scales, resulting in excellent factor loadings (all items $\geq$ 0.70), attesting to the quality of the items and, therefore, their internal validity. All variables were considered significant, based on p-value $<$ 0.01 and critical ratio (CR) $>$ |1.96|. It is worth noting that the factors TC (teleworking context) and WO (work overload) that comprise the QoLT scale were excluded from the model, as they did not present a significant relationship with the factors of leadership and HRM practices. Accordingly, the data analyses and model tests did not consider the CT (context of teleworking) and WO (work overload) factors. In other words, the QoLT variable is represented only by the factors Work Self-Management—WSM, Work Infrastructure—WI, and Technological Structure—TS. Next, Jöreskog's Rho (ρ) was used to verify the composite reliability of the research variables, as it is more suitable than Cronbach's alpha for the SEM, as it is based on the factor loadings of the variables rather than the correlations between the items [99]. Thus, the scientific literature indicates acceptability for values of $\rho > 0.6$, with values of $\rho > 0.7$ being satisfactory and values of $\rho > 0.8$ being very satisfactory [108,109]. In this sense, the variables in this study obtained Jöreskog's Rho $\rho = 0.86$ for leadership, $\rho = 0.81$ for HRM practices, and $\rho = 0.84$ for QoLT, being considered very satisfactory.

The psychometric indices of the measurement models are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Psychometric indices of measurement models.

Dimension	Factor	Charge Standardized	Standard Error	Critical Reason	Cargo Quality	R^2	Composite Reliability (Jöreskog's Rho)	Extracted Variance
Leadership	FR	0.814 **	-	-	Excellent	-	0.86	0.75
	FP	0.917 **	0.102	11,835	Excellent			
HRM Practices	TDE	0.717 **	-	-	Excellent	47.4%	0.81	0.60
	REL	0.884 **	0.099	11,209	Excellent			
	PSA	0.703 **	0.099	9850	Excellent			
QoLT	WSM	0.769 **	-	-	Excellent	9%	0.84	0.64
	TS	0.780 **	0.093	11,305	Excellent			
	WI	0.849 **	0.113	11,635	Excellent			

Source: the authors. Note: ** p-value < 0.01.

Resulting from the confirmatory factor analysis, Figure 1 presents the test of the general research model, with its respective measurement models for each variable.

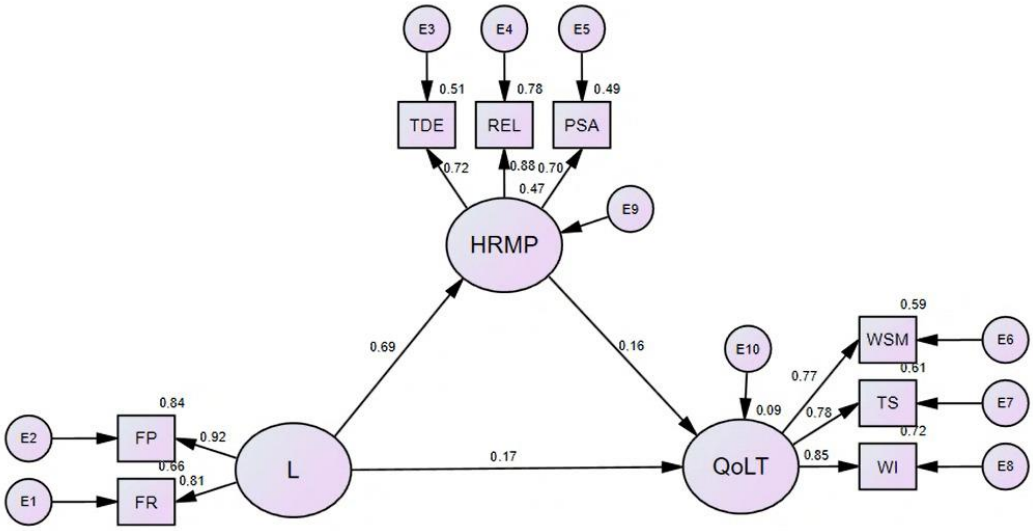

Figure 1. Test of the general research model and respective measurement models. Note: $\chi^2(17)$ = 43.09; $p < 0.001$; NC = 2.54; CFI = 0.97; GFI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.08; SRMR = 0.04. Source: the authors.

Then, to attest to the validity of the constructs, convergent, divergent, and nomological validity were evaluated [96]. Firstly, it is worth highlighting that convergent validity indicates the degree of agreement between its measures; that is, it verifies whether the items that comprise the instrument's factors can demonstrate significant correlations [96,99]. To confirm convergent validity, three criteria must be observed, namely (1) to evaluate the Jöreskog's Rho (ρ) > 0.7 for all scale factors; (2) that the factor loadings of the items must be ≥0.5; and (3) that the variance extracted from each factor must be ≥0.5 [96]. Thus, Table 3 presents data on Jöreskog's Rho, factor loadings, and extracted variance that meet the criteria, making it possible to confirm the convergent validity of the measurement models that comprise the general model.

In turn, divergent validity identifies the level of differentiation between factors; after all, they need to measure different constructs [96]. Therefore, the criterion proposed by [110] was adopted, which states that the variance extracted from each factor must be greater than the value of the square of the correlation between the other factors [96]. Thus, Table 4 confirms divergent validity, attesting that the three scales measure different constructs.

Table 4. Divergent validity of the scales.

Factor	L	HRM Practices	QoLT
Leadership	0.75 [a]		
HRM Practices	0.47	0.60 [a]	
QoLT	0.03	0.02	0.64 [a]

Source: the authors. Note: [a] extracted variance.

Finally, nomological validity seeks to identify the behavior of scales when related to other constructs, observing their conformity with the theoretical and empirical literature [96]. In this sense, this study's theoretical framework presented four hypotheses based on theoretical and empirical discussions. Additionally, in the next subtopic, hypothesis tests demonstrated the nomological validity of the measures, as they showed significant and positive correlations between them; that is, based on the tests, the constructs behaved empirically as the theory indicates. To assess the intensity of correlations, the recommendations in [100] were adopted as follows: >0 and <0.30 weak; >0.31 and <0.49 moderate; and >0.50 strong. Thus, in the relationship between leadership and HRM practices, the correlation can be considered strong (0.75), and the correlations of HRM practices with QoLT and leadership with QoLT are observed to be weak (0.13 and 0.16, respectively). Still, all are significant (see Figure 1). Finally, the results indicate the reliability and internal and construct validity of the scales (EHEL, Public EPGP, and QoLT Scale), providing opportunities for further academic applications and developing diagnoses and management practices.

4.2. Testing Hypotheses and the Mediation Model

Firstly, prediction tests corresponding to hypotheses H1–H3 were carried out based on path analysis through SEM. To this end, the significance of the model and the regression coefficient (β or Beta) was verified, with Beta indicating the module and direction of the associations established between the IVs (independent variables) and the DV (dependent variable) [105]. Regarding the regression coefficient (β) and returning to the classification in [100], it was observed that the correlation between leadership and HRM practices was strong (β = 0.542). By contrast, the correlations between HRM practices and QoLT (β = 0.248) and leadership and QoLT (β = 0.239) were weak (Table 5). However, the associations between the variables were all significant and positive.

Table 5. Hypothesis tests.

Hypotheses	Relations	β
H1	Leadership → HRM Practices	0.542 ***
H2	HRM Practices → QoLT	0.248 ***
H3	Leadership → QoLT	0.239 ***

Source: the authors. Note: *** p-value < 0.001.

Next, to test the mediation hypothesis, H4 (HRM practices mediate the relationship between leadership and QoLT), the four assumptions of [111] were used, which were tested simultaneously (H1–H4) through SEM, as follows: (1) the independent variable (leadership) significantly predicts the mediating variable (HRM practices); (2) the mediating variable (HRM practices) predicts the dependent variable (QoLT) significantly; (3) the independent variable (leadership) significantly predicts the dependent variable (QoLT); and, (4) in the presence of the independent variable (leadership) and the mediator (HRM practices), the relationship that was established as significant between the independent variable (leadership) and the dependent variable (QoLT) decreases (partial mediation) or disappears (full mediation).

Therefore, Figure 2 presents the tested mediation model (H4), as follows: HRM practices mediate the relationship between leadership and QoLT. According to the established

hypotheses, all mediation assumptions were confirmed—H1 (β = 0.542; *p*-value < 0.001), H2 (β = 0.248; *p*-value < 0.001), and H3 (β = 0.239; *p*-value < 0.001), as already pointed out in Table 5. Furthermore, the indirect effect of leadership on QoLT was verified to test H4.

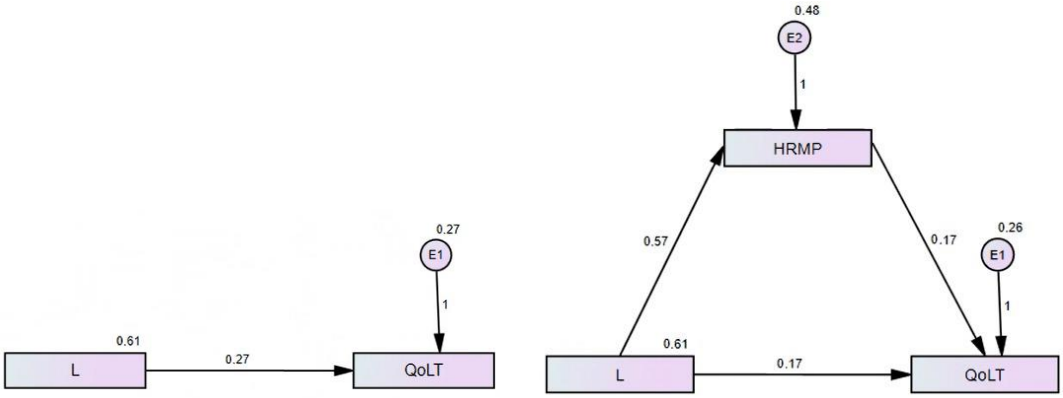

Figure 2. Mediation model: hypothesis 4 (H4). Source: the authors.

Hence, the indirect effect was significant (*p*-value < 0.001) and estimated at 0.10, confirming partial mediation. In other words, in the presence of the mediating variable (HRM practices), the β value between leadership and QoLT was reduced from 0.27 to 0.17, which confirms the partial mediation predicted in H4. It is worth noting that the coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates the percentage of variance in DV explained by IV. This is a measure of adjustment of a linear statistics model; that is, the higher the R^2, the more the IV and MV can explain the DV in the linear model presented [105]. For [100], R^2 < 13% signals a small effect, R^2 > 13% signals a medium effect, and R^2 > 26% signals a large effect.

Thus, it is observed that the regression coefficient R^2 from IV to DV was 18.3%; that is, leadership (IV) explains 18.3% of QoLT (DV), which can be considered a medium-effect prediction [100]. HRM practices (MV) explain 29.4% of QoLT (VD), which, according to [100], can be considered a prediction of large effect. It was also observed that 47.4% (R^2) of the mediating variable (HRM practices) is explained by the independent variable (leadership); that is, it is a very strong prediction with a large effect in behavioral sciences [100].

It is important to highlight that the factor loadings of the scales were excellent (all items ≥ 0.70) [107], attesting to their internal validity, as well as the variables leadership, HRM practices, and QoLT, and they obtained a very satisfactory composite reliability score (ρ = 0.86; ρ = 0.81; and ρ = 0.84, respectively) [109].

Therefore, it can be stated that all the relationships assumed in the analyses of the tested mediation model were significant at the 0.001 level, confirming all the hypotheses (H1–H4) researched. As shown in Table 6, the results indicate that all values were significant.

Table 6. Mediation model: hypothesis 4 (H4).

Effect	Standardized Estimation	*p*-Value	Result
Total	0.27	0.003	Significant Impact
Direct	0.17	0.003	Significant Impact
Indirect	0.10	0.009	Significant Impact

Source: the authors.

In summary, the results generated confirm the last condition proposed by [111]; in the presence of the independent variable (leadership) and the mediator (HRM practices), the relationship that was established as significant between the independent variable (leadership) and the dependent variable (QoLT) decreased (partial mediation). That is, H4 was confirmed (Figure 2).

5. Discussion, Implications, Limitations, and Agenda

Based on the results, it is possible to infer that leadership exerts a strong influence on HRM practices, which corroborates the findings of [11] and reaffirms the fundamental role of leadership regarding the perception of HRM practices [11,63,67] of teleworkers, reinforcing Hypothesis 1 (H1) of this study, which states, "leadership is positively associated with HRM practices".

In addition, the scientific literature points to the importance of valuing teleworkers' performance to achieve better organizational results [1], thus referring to a leader who monitors the performance of their subordinates and recognizes their individual work [112]. However, [21] argue that the role of a leader is not limited to checking the goals and deadlines achieved by the team, which corroborates the understanding of [1] about the importance of a leadership that promotes healthier and more favorable environments for teleworkers. Thus, priority should be given to actions aimed at improving communication [2] and the relationship of trust between leader and subordinate, generating more autonomy in work performance [21].

Likewise, leadership also significantly influences the quality of life in teleworking, which increases through the perception of HRM practices. Consequently, the influence exerted by the leader must pay attention to the path that the implementation and execution of HRM practices tend to take since the promotion of QoLT is impacted by them [20].

Thus, Hypothesis 2 (H2), "HRM practices are positively associated with QoLT", reiterates the need for HRM practices focused on guiding and supporting teleworkers, whether concerning benefits, opportunities [23], or new proposals for better teleworking conditions [2].

Leadership support, a relationship of trust, and support from co-workers are fundamental for teleworkers to feel motivation, pleasure, and well-being at work [6,38], and these aim to strengthen communication between leaders and followers and reduce worker burnout, strengthen professional engagement, and improve work–family balance [8]. In this way, Hypothesis 3 (H3), "leadership is positively associated with QoLT", is strengthened, understanding that the institution must consider the competencies, profile, and behaviors required for teleworking, both by leaders [21] and by subordinates. Another point of paramount importance regarding H3 is the caution that leaders must exercise regarding the excessive monitoring of remote activities, in addition to the expectation of constant availability on the part of the team, which can negatively impact the work–life balance of teleworkers, with the effects of stress and burnout at work [113]. In addition to these results, worker adherence to teleworking is strongly justified by the expectation of having QoLT and (re)designing a scenario of urgent recognition of the strategic role of HRM practices by leaders [14], which aligns with Hypothesis 4 (H4), "HRM practices mediate the relationship between leadership and QoLT" (partially confirmed), especially in the context of technological, social, and cultural transformations driven by the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic scenarios.

Further elaborating on the findings related to Hypothesis 4, it is important to consider how HRM practices such as training, development, and education (TD&E) can positively impact the performance of teleworkers [23]. (Re)qualification becomes essential for improving the development of skills and competencies [23,114]. In this perspective, leaders play a crucial role in fairly evaluating teleworkers' individual and group performances, especially when there is an expectation of recognition of efforts [112] and the applicability of knowledge acquired through TD&E in practice. In this way, another HRM practice is referenced—for example, the performance and skills assessment (PSA) of the worker that was carried out by the leadership—which will present effects [21] that may influence the perception of teleworkers about their quality of life in telework.

Notably, the novelty of the tested mediation model is the greatest contribution of this work, demonstrating the crucial role that HRM practices play in the relationship between leadership and QoLT. Considering the fact that HRM practices partially mediate the relationship between leadership and QoLT, we suggest a holistic view of (i) HRM practices and

leadership for the individual–telework–organization triad [14]; (ii) the actions of leaders who understand the importance of effective structured and integrated HRM practices [11]; (iii) teleworkers' perceptions of the meaning attributed to the work performed, impacting attitudes and behavior in the work context [14]; and (iv) how work activities are carried out, and how these cannot disregard new psychosocial risks, increased working hours, increased stress levels among teleworkers, the feeling of not being able to disconnect from work, and other possible causes of occupational diseases [93], confirming the premises of Positive Organizational Studies.

Thus, this study contributes theoretically to advances in human resource management and positive organizational behavior, especially by testing hypotheses on the relationship between leadership, HRM practices, and QoLT (using the measure in its entirety) in public services. Therefore, it can be said that it is a model that is still unexplored in the scientific literature. Its contribution to other areas of study is also evident, particularly to organizational studies focusing on models of antecedents and consequences of the variables analyzed, encouraging national studies to discuss teleworking, whether in public services or the private sector. Furthermore, the use of advanced statistical techniques that revealed evidence of the validity and reliability of the tested measurement and mediation models is a methodological contribution of this work.

As practical and managerial implications, the results constitute a diagnosis for public managers regarding leadership, HRM practices, and how they influence the quality of life in teleworking, which can generate insights for decision making as concerns increasingly strategic human resource management. The findings suggest that leadership strongly impacts HRM practices, underscoring the pivotal role of leadership in shaping teleworkers' perceptions of HRM practices. Additionally, leadership significantly affects the quality of life in teleworking, magnifying this impact through the perception of HRM practices. Hence, leaders must be mindful of how HRM practices of relationship, training and development, and performance and skills assessment are implemented and executed, as they profoundly influence the promotion of quality of life, considering the complex and challenging environment of teleworking, including workload, social distancing, and work–family conflict.

Especially in public administration, social implications are important, as citizens and society are the ultimate beneficiaries of public service delivery. Thus, our study also brings a social contribution, considering how promoting healthier, positive, and productive work environments, which prioritize well-being and the quality of life, can offer higher-quality customer service and service provision to clients, citizens, and society in general. Therefore, it is expected that the findings of this study, which, for now, are more indicative than conclusive due to their exploratory nature, can inspire evidence-based organizational management to be increasingly effective and humanized, which is a constant challenge in public administration, where some organizational practices have less management flexibility due to being governed by the law.

Regarding the methodological limitations of this study, the first derives from its exclusively quantitative nature. Therefore, the first agenda for future investigations is to conduct multi-method studies and apply triangulation strategies. Therefore, longitudinal and time series studies are also welcome, as this study was limited to adopting a cross-sectional and convenience sample. Therefore, the analyses and results produced strictly correspond to the researched sample, making any generalizations and causal inferences impossible. It is worth noting that the QoLT scale, as a new and little-tested instrument, will require further refinement and review of the factors. However, the testing of the measurement model carried out here has already advanced in this direction.

In a complementary way, future studies that value multilevel investigations can create an opportunity to listen to teleworkers, managers, and their peers, encouraging other discussions of the variables in question. In short, it confirms the importance of further studies that, based on the tested model, can add other variables of HRM and organizational behavior in the context of teleworkers, such as mental health, organizational diversity,

resilience, well-being, being, culture, professional isolation, organizational virtues, identity, commitment, satisfaction, psychosocial risks, justice in the workplace, and professional–personal balance, investigating the different relationships of prediction, mediation, and moderation that may arise from this.

6. Conclusions

The objective of this study was achieved by proposing a model to identify the relationships between leadership, HRM practices, and quality of life in civil servant telework and confirming the four research hypotheses. Supported by investigating the relationships between variables, which are still unexplored, this work is a seminal effort to test these relationships. Our results represent an initial effort to test the proposed model, contributing to the progressive theoretical–empirical advancement of studies on elements of positive organizational behavior and its interface with strategic HRM in remote working. This reality is increasingly present for many workers.

This study aligns with the findings of [115], regarding the desire of public sector teleworkers to continue working remotely. However, as highlighted in the literature [11,12,30,63], effective implementation and execution of HRM practices by leadership are crucial for successful telework programs. This study contributes to strengthening and improving these programs.

Furthermore, by testing the four research hypotheses and presenting the results' analysis and discussion, this study contributes to the existing body of research. For instance, the study by [116] demonstrated how leadership plays a crucial role in organizational policies aimed at disconnection. This aligns with the finding that HRM practices can be vital for promoting QoLT, considering how the intensification of Digital Information and Communication Technology (DICT) use can harm teleworkers' health and well-being [86]. In this vein, [29] identified how organizational support, including leadership support, influences teleworkers' QoLT and their intention to remain in flexible work arrangements. Similarly, [27] argues that HRM practices are necessary and should allow for a reflective, flexible, holistic, and teleworker-centered approach that prioritizes their QoLT. Likewise, [112] suggest that HRM practices should be aligned with telework.

Organizations should restructure operations and business management, leadership responsibilities, and the online work environment to promote QoLT [112]. This aligns with the need to meet the needs of teleworkers and contribute to better organizational outcomes [22]. Furthermore, teleworking is a flexible work practice. Consequently, the individual–teleworking–organization triad must (re)invent itself based on leadership styles and HRM practices that are also flexible in favor of effective, real, and livable quality of life outcomes. In addition to this, work fronts can be organized in organizational fields to develop practices, policies, and programs that promote healthy work environments with and for (tele)workers and other organizational actors.

In conclusion, the findings and discussions presented here converge with the poetic license that inspired the title of this article, "Sweet Home? The Mediating Role of Human Resource Management Practices in the Relationship between Leadership and Quality of Life in Public Sector Telework". Firstly, we wish that the homes of teleworkers be filled with the healthiest, safest, most productive, and innovative aspects of organizations. Secondly, we understand that despite all the challenges and opportunities that telework presents, we envision a sweet home that is not intoxicated by the sweetness of telework to the point of sickening teleworkers and/or their families and that telework does not become accustomed to leader-led relationships that demand 24/7 (twenty-four hours a week) availability.

Thirdly, HRM practices are effective mediators in the relationship between leadership and QoLT, allowing for the balancing of different flavors as concerns being a teleworker within the sweet home. Fourthly, through DICTs, the variables researched here strengthen the meaning of the worker's return home without them feeling it is impossible to have and live a sweet home in the same workspace. Finally, may it be sweet enough not to be cloying, may it be sweet enough not to become complacent, and may it be a sweet home!

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, G.D. and T.A.d.M.; methodology, G.D. and T.A.d.M.; software, T.A.d.M.; validation, G.D. and T.A.d.M.; formal analysis, G.D. and T.A.d.M.; investigation, T.A.d.M.; resources, T.A.d.M.; data curation, T.A.d.M.; writing—original draft preparation, T.A.d.M.; writing—review and editing, G.D.; visualization, G.D. and T.A.d.M.; supervision, G.D.; project administration, G.D. and T.A.d.M.; funding acquisition, G.D. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This study was conducted in accordance with the rules set out in Resolution 510/16 of the National Health Council, which deals with the ethical specificities of research in the humanities and social sciences in Brazil. Consequently, this study was submitted to and approved by the Research Ethics Committees and the National Research Ethics Commission, according to opinion N° 5.460.124 and CAAE: 57487722.4.0000.5540.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in this study.

Data Availability Statement: Data are contained within the article.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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