

**UNVEILING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF TELEWORK:  
THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL ISOLATION,  
ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE AND JOB SATISFACTION**

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This conceptual paper explores the psychological impact of teleworking on employees, linking telework, professional isolation, and job satisfaction. It suggests investigating the influence of organizational justice elements—procedural, informational, and interpersonal qualities—along with teleworking normativeness and choice in work modality on these relationships. Given a decade-long expansion and the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, understanding these links is essential for designing appropriate telework policies. The proposed model shows that professional isolation mediates the relationship between teleworking and job satisfaction, with justice perceptions and teleworking normativeness moderating this link. The literature indicates that perceptions of fairness and employee autonomy are vital in mitigating professional isolation's negative effects. Emphasizing clear communication, flexible work arrangements, and inclusive procedures fosters a supportive work environment. Addressing remote work's psychological challenges can enhance job satisfaction and overall well-being. This paper advances the understanding of telework dynamics and provides a foundation for future research in this evolving field. These insights can guide the development of telework policies that improve job satisfaction and employee well-being.

*Keywords:* Teleworking, Psychological Isolation, Loneliness, Choice, Organizational Justice, Normativeness, Job Satisfaction

## OVERVIEW

In recent years, teleworking has surged, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when rates rose from 17% to 44% in three months (Holst, 2020). With twenty years of remote work experience, I have observed and experienced the benefits and challenges of balancing work and family responsibilities while working remotely. Research indicates that teleworking can improve independence, work-life balance, and job satisfaction (Golden & Viega, 2005). However, it may also lead to isolation and reduced engagement (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

The business world often underestimates teleworking's psychological effects. Thatcher and Bagger (2011) found that the lack of face-to-face interaction can negatively impact perceptions of fairness, thus harming job satisfaction. Strategies like fostering community, promoting social interactions, and setting clear communication expectations can help address professional isolation (Spilker & Breugh, 2021). Additionally, Beckel and Fisher (2022) discuss how teleworking can affect worker health, potentially influencing chronic diseases, anxiety, and job satisfaction. Future research should explore the relationships among professional isolation, teleworking norms, and fairness perceptions on job satisfaction.

Beckel and Fisher (2022) review the relationship between telework and worker health and well-being, covering physical health, mental health, and job satisfaction. They present a conceptual model categorizing three factors influencing telework's impact: individual (age, gender, health status), work-related (task variety, feedback), and non-work-related (social support, family demands). This holistic perspective highlights the interconnected physical, social, and psychological aspects of teleworking. Please see Figure 1 for a visual of the Beckel and Fisher (2022) model.

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### **Feelings of Professional Isolation**

Professional isolation, distinct from physical isolation, concentrates on the limited social and collaborative interactions in one's work environment rather than the mere separation of geographical distance or personal space. This isolation results from limited possibilities to interact with coworkers, discuss ideas, and receive feedback on work, and it can exist even in physically packed workplaces since corporate culture, communication routes, and networking opportunities primarily drive it. (Cooper & Kurland, 2002) Prolonged professional isolation can bring about loneliness, negatively impacting workers' emotional well-being and overall job happiness. (Golden et al., 2008).

While offering flexibility and convenience, teleworking may exacerbate professional isolation beyond physical separation by reducing face-to-face interactions, limiting spontaneous conversations, and posing challenges in building rapport with colleagues (Golden et al., 2008; Vega & Brennan, 2000). These elements could undermine people's sense of community, making them feel alienated from the culture and objectives of their workplace and escalating feelings of loneliness. (Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018)

Spilker and Breaugh (2021) examine ways to predict and control the psychological impacts of telecommuting, notably professional isolation sentiments. The study suggests a model comprised of individual, job, supervisor, and organizational elements to forecast and manage

teleworkers' professional isolation. Individual predictors include personal characteristics, such as age, gender, and personality traits, which may influence how telecommuters experience professional isolation. Job-related predictors include task autonomy, workload, and work meaningfulness that may contribute to feelings of professional isolation. Supervisor-related predictors include communication style, feedback, and supervisory support that may influence how telecommuters experience professional isolation. Finally, organization-related predictors include telecommuting policies, organizational culture, and social support that may influence how telecommuters experience professional isolation. Overall, the article provides insights into the potential roots of professional isolation among teleworkers, serving as a foundation for future research on the psychological ramifications of teleworking.

### **Teleworking Normativeness**

Teleworking normativeness, the extent to which teleworking is seen as an acceptable and regular practice inside an organization, may significantly impact the psychological outcomes of remote work. Essentially, when teleworking is the norm within an organization, employees report less stigma and more job satisfaction than when teleworking is not the norm (Golden & Eddleston, 2020; Hertal et al., 2005), suggesting that creating a teleworking culture can lead to positive psychological outcomes teleworkers. Spilker and Breugh (2021) examined teleworking normativeness and psychological isolation. The study indicated that employees felt less psychological isolation when teleworking was the norm. Therefore, we need to understand how corporate culture and attitudes about remote work impact teleworkers' well-being, necessitating the investigation of the connection between teleworker normativity, feelings of isolation, and job satisfaction.

## **Fairness Perceptions**

The study by Thatcher and Bagger (2011) examines the relationship between teleworking, sources of unfairness, and perceptions of unfairness. Using the three-component (i.e., distributive, procedural, and interactional) model of organizational justice, this study investigated how teleworking may influence perceptions of injustice and its underlying causes. Accordingly, teleworking affects justice both positively and negatively. Among teleworkers, perceptions of distributive justice (i.e., equal distribution of resources, incentives, and results within an organization to reward people equitably for their efforts as defined by Deutsch, 1975) were more prevalent. For example, a corporation adhering to the principles of distributive justice would design a clear pay structure that compensates workers equitably based on their performance and function. However, teleworkers reported poorer perceptions of procedural justice (i.e., fairness in decision-making procedures ensuring that rules are consistently applied and the opportunities are equally accessible to all members as defined by Leventhal, 1980). For instance, a company demonstrating procedural justice would have a transparent and unbiased promotion process, giving every employee an equal chance to advance based on merit. However, according to Thatcher and Bagger (2011), the teleworkers' limited visibility may contribute to perceptions of unjust decision-making.

Additionally, telework enhances feelings of interactional fairness, such as with colleagues and superiors (Thatcher & Bagger, 2011). Interactional justice includes interpersonal and informational justice and emphasizes the quality of interactions and treatment between people and those with institutional authority. (Bies & Moag, 1986). For example, a manager promoting interactional justice would openly communicate important information with their staff and have courteous, sympathetic conversations, creating a friendly and inclusive workplace. However,

research indicates that lower social involvement and supervisory communication reduced teleworkers' perceptions of interactional fairness (Thatcher & Bagger, 2011). In addition, telecommuters who felt greater unfairness had poorer work satisfaction and higher inclinations to leave their positions. Thatcher and Bagger (2011) explain how teleworking affects fairness perceptions and job views. Their research suggests that telework may limit communication and involvement with coworkers and management, leading to loneliness and isolation. Moreover, teleworking can give rise to perceptions of inequity due to limited access to the information and resources more readily available to in-office employees.

Unfortunately, this article emphasized the three-component model of organizational justice instead of the preferred four-component (Colquitt et al., 2001), which separates interactional justice into informational and interpersonal justice. Informational justice refers to the fair and unbiased distribution of information within an organization, promoting transparency and equal access to relevant knowledge (Colquitt, 2001). For example, a company practicing informational justice would ensure that all employees are informed about upcoming policy changes and given equal opportunities to ask questions or provide feedback. Interpersonal justice pertains to the respectful and considerate treatment of individuals by organizational authority figures, fostering a sense of dignity and esteem among members (Bies & Moag, 1986). For instance, a supervisor exhibiting interpersonal justice would address employees politely, listen to their concerns, and provide constructive feedback without bias or favoritism. Given that teleworking can result in perceptions of unfairness due to a lack of information and interaction from which in-office employees benefit (Thatcher & Bagger, 2011), as well as current findings indicating that during the Pandemic, there was an upsurge in perceptions of informational unfairness for teleworkers (Lane & Aplin-Houtz, 2022), future research should employ the four-

component model of organizational justice when investigating the relationship between fairness perceptions and teleworking.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Teleworking has grown in popularity in recent years. Despite its benefits—reduced travel time, improved work-life balance, and better productivity—telework can lower employee satisfaction (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). A contributing factor to this lower job satisfaction may be feelings of professional isolation. Professional isolation, the subjective perception of being disconnected from colleagues, supervisors, and the organization, can lead to loneliness due to a lack of social support, collaboration, and networking opportunities (Golden et al., 2008). In addition, the increased use of telework may exacerbate sentiments of professional isolation, potentially decreasing job satisfaction (Cooper & Kurland, 2002). Full-time remote workers may feel alienated without face-to-face interactions with coworkers and bosses.

Furthermore, the relationships among teleworking, professional isolation, and job satisfaction may vary depending on moderating factors like employee choice in work modality. Gajendran & Harrison (2007) suggest that the negative association between teleworking and job satisfaction may be less noticeable for workers who picked their work arrangement willingly rather than required by the organization. Therefore, employees who like teleworking and have actively chosen this practice may feel less professional isolation and, as a result, increased job satisfaction. Another moderating variable is employees' perceptions of informational justice, which can act as a buffer between telework and professional isolation (Colquitt, 2001). For instance, effective and timely information about teleworking norms and expectations makes employees feel more connected and less professionally isolated. Perceptions of interpersonal justice may also impact the relationships between telework, professional isolation, and job



satisfaction. For example, when remote employees feel respected and included in team discussions, their feelings of professional isolation may decrease, leading to higher job satisfaction. Lastly, teleworking normativeness can influence the association between professional isolation sentiment and job satisfaction (Golden et al., 2008). The negative association between professional isolation and job satisfaction may be reduced in businesses where teleworking is more common than in businesses where onsite work is the norm. Employees in such settings may have evolved successful ways of sustaining social relationships and cooperation even while teleworking.

To conclude, feelings of professional isolation may mediate the link between teleworking extent and job satisfaction, with the presence of professional isolation feelings creating a bridge for the occurrence of a negative relationship between teleworking and job satisfaction. However, the strength of these relationships may be influenced by several moderating variables, such as employee choice in work modality, perceptions of informational and interpersonal justice, and teleworking normativeness. Building on Beckel and Fisher's (2022) conceptual telework model, Spilker and Breaugh's (2021) investigation of predictors of feelings of professional isolation, and Thatcher and Bagger's (2011) qualitative exploration of teleworking and unfairness perceptions, I propose a comprehensive model of the psychology of teleworking.

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This approach offers a framework for assessing the mediating role of feelings of professional isolation in the primary association between teleworking extent and job satisfaction. In addition, the model highlights secondary relationships, which involve the moderating factors of 1)

employee choice in work modality and perceptions of information justice on the connection between the amount (e.g., extent) of teleworking and professional isolation sentiment and 2) the influence of perceptions of interpersonal justice and teleworking normativeness on the relationship between professional isolation sentiment and job satisfaction. The subsequent discussion will provide a theoretical explanation and evidence supporting these proposed relationships.

### **Primary Relationship**

***Teleworking.*** Remote employment benefits both the organization and the employee by reducing overhead costs and commute time (Hill et al., 1998). Teleworking allows employees to reconcile professional and personal commitments, minimizing work-family conflict (Golden et al., 2006; Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Rau & Hyland, 2002). Work-related autonomy is increased via teleworking (Sardeshmukh et al., 2012), allowing workers to work whenever and wherever they wish (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

Although teleworking has several positives, the negatives are cause for concern. First, according to Cook (2020), remote workers need autonomy and discipline. Second, low visibility owing to decreased face-to-face engagement and social isolation may reduce employee motivation (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012; Sardeshmukh et al., 2012). Third, remote labor reduces managers' impression of employee productivity (Golden et al., 2008), which could hinder recognition and career advancement (Morganson et al., 2010).

Additional teleworking concerns revolve around communication. In general, employees' communication satisfaction has decreased with the increased use of technological communication methods like email (Byrne & LeMay, 2006). Furthermore, research findings suggest teleworking moderates the relationship between feedback, task significance, and job

satisfaction: as teleworking increases, the amount of feedback and task significance decreases, which causes a reduction in job satisfaction (Golden et al., 2006). In addition, any informal but essential information during in-person communication will likely be reduced or absent during teleworking. Furthermore, any information slow-down and increased task and role ambiguity due to teleworking will interfere with decision-making. (Azasu & Babatunde, 2020) However, these adverse outcomes of teleworking may be impacted by the level of employee work experience, organizational tenure, and the tasks, duties, and responsibilities (TDRs: functional vs. interactional) (Akkirman et al., 2005). Teleworkers with more experience and doing more functional TDRs may have higher communication satisfaction than those with less experience and performing more interactional TDRs.

Continuing the telework debate, analyzing how factors influence any benefits or drawbacks associated with the teleworking environment is critical. For example, the amount of remote to in-person work and employee choice in determining work modality should be considered when assessing telework's efficacy (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Additionally, stressors like feelings of professional isolation and low telework normativeness could intensify teleworking challenges (Golden et al., 2008; Spilker & Breugh, 2021). Investigating psychological and contextual components underlying telework may help managers understand the telework dynamics and aid in establishing an inclusive and supportive workplace for teleworkers (Beauregard et al., 2019).

***Feelings of Professional Isolation.*** Recently, research has delved into the prevalence of professional isolation sentiment, a manifestation of workplace loneliness, among teleworkers. According to the Evolutionary Theory of Loneliness (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018), human survival depends on cooperation and social contact. Telework modality has been linked to

professional isolation sentiment, or workplace loneliness, resulting from a lack of meaningful social interactions (Spilker & Breugh, 2021). As face-to-face work reduces and telework increases, feelings of professional isolation and workplace loneliness intensify (Golden et al., 2008). In addition, Zeidner (2020) found that 19% of research participants identified workplace loneliness as a challenging aspect of telework. Beauregard et al. (2019) further posited that teleworkers were more prone to loneliness and isolation than their in-office colleagues.

Organizations should be attentive to the impact of feelings of professional isolation and loneliness on their employees, especially teleworkers. Research has shown that as loneliness escalates, employee approachability and affective commitment to the organization decline (Golden et al., 2008). This psychological disconnection, characterized by diminished sociability and emotional investment in work and the organization, adversely affects employee job productivity (Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). Spilker and Breugh's (2021) investigation into the antecedents and consequences associated with professional isolation feelings reveals significant negative connections linking workplace loneliness, productivity, and job satisfaction.

***Job Satisfaction.*** An often-utilized outcome variable in human resource management is employees' level of job satisfaction (for a detailed review, see Judge et al., 2002, 2010; Iaffaldano & Muchinsky, 1985; Loher et al., 1985; Petty et al., 1984). Job satisfaction assesses workers' contentment with their occupations, regardless of whether they like their work or specific components, such as the work or the supervision (Spector, 1997). Specifically, Locke (1976) describes job satisfaction as a positive affective state resulting from examining one's job or work experiences. Cognitive (thinking), affective (feeling), and behavioral factors all contribute to overall job satisfaction (Hulin & Judge, 2003).

One way scholars frame job satisfaction is the Hackman & Oldham (1975) Job Characteristics Model, which states that job variables may affect psychological health, which can affect performance and job satisfaction. For example, giving workers some influence over their working environments may increase their feeling of independence (Tietze et al., 2009) and, as a result, their job satisfaction and performance (Scandura & Lankau, 1997). In addition, employees with informal work modality options appreciate their choices and feel more in control, which may increase job satisfaction (Hall & Atkinson, 2006 ). Moreover, Karasek's (1979; 1989) approach suggests that greater job choice helps employees manage higher job demands and may mitigate associated negative effects. After examining the association between perceived control and employee outcome factors in 101 research studies, Spector (1986) predicted that greater perceived control would be positively related to increased motivation and work satisfaction. Additionally, control over tasks, duties, and responsibilities has positively affected job satisfaction and performance (Kelliher & Anderson, 2008, 2010; Wood et al., 2012).

Given the above literature review on teleworking, professional isolation feelings, and job satisfaction, the following is proposed:

*Proposition 1: Feelings of professional isolation should mediate the telework-job satisfaction relationship. In the presence of professional isolation feelings, there is a negative relationship between the extent of teleworking and job satisfaction.*

### **Secondary Relationships**

***Fairness Perceptions.*** Understanding the relationship between teleworking and employee perceptions of fairness can illuminate the impact of teleworking on employees. Organizational justice literature helps explain how perceptions of fairness affect employee attitudes and behaviors (Colquitt, 2001). Positive attitudes toward organizational justice influence workplace

behaviors, including organizational citizenship, withdrawal, turnover, emotional fatigue, and job satisfaction (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, 2001).

Organizational justice theories clarify why fairness and equity perceptions are crucial for employee attitudes and behaviors. Social Exchange Theory suggests that employees engage reciprocally with their employers, exchanging their talents, time, and effort for benefits like salary and support. Unfair treatment leads to negative behaviors, such as absenteeism or turnover (Blau, 1964). Equity Theory posits that employees compare their inputs and outputs with others, striving for fairness (Adams, 1965). Employees perceive justice when their contributions are proportional to their rewards and equal to their peers' treatment. Social Identity Theory asserts that employees derive self-concept from group participation, seeking recognition within these groups. Employees perceive fairness when organizations value their contributions (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Further research on organizational justice identifies a four-component model: distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice (Colquitt et al., 2001; Bies, 2015). These components influence perceptions of organizational decisions. Studies show that fairness views impact trust, performance, job satisfaction, commitment, citizenship behaviors, counterproductive behaviors, absenteeism, turnover, and emotional exhaustion (Barsky et al., 2011; Latham & Pinder, 2005; Tabibnia et al., 2008). While distributive justice mediates the relationship between teleworking and job satisfaction (Vroom, 1964), the moderating role of procedural, informational, and interpersonal justice on teleworking, isolation, and job satisfaction is of greater interest.

***Procedural Justice.*** Procedural justice encompasses the ethics of implicit prejudice, stakeholder representation in corporate culture, and the accuracy of correcting issues in company

processes (Leventhal, 1980). Employees evaluate organizational policies and practices through the lens of procedural fairness (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992). Four main frameworks explain how employees perceive procedural fairness: the Participation, Balancing, Outcomes, and Group Engagement Models. The Participation Model emphasizes equal opportunity for all employees to participate in organizational processes (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Earley & Lind, 1987). The Balancing Model emphasizes the fair distribution of resources and opportunities within corporate procedures (Solum, 2004). The Outcomes Model connects perceptions of fairness to employees' effort in their tasks (McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992). Based on Social Identity Theory, the Group Engagement Model explains how procedural justice within groups affects organizational identification and engagement (Tyler & Blader, 2003).

The COVID-19 outbreak compelled many workers to work remotely, altering organizational procedures and fairness perceptions (Holst, 2020). Perceptions of procedural justice significantly influence the relationship between teleworking and professional isolation. Employees who perceive fair decision-making processes feel less isolated and more committed to their organization (Patel et al., 2021; Colquitt et al., 2001). Employee choice in work modality is crucial, as it significantly impacts attitudes and behaviors (Golden et al., 2008).

Allowing workers to pick their favorite work style may enhance perceptions of procedural justice, boosting trust and commitment to organizational goals (Beauregard et al., 2019; Colquitt et al., 2001). Prioritizing employee choice in work modality fosters a supportive environment, improving job performance and organizational commitment (Spilker & Breugh, 2021). In conclusion, incorporating employee choice in work modality as an essential aspect of procedural justice helps create an inclusive work climate that encourages active participation.

***Employee Choice in Work Modality.*** Work modality, or the location where employees perform their tasks, has evolved with advances in information technology, allowing for remote, in-person, or hybrid work options (Miller, 2021). Research shows that employee choice in teleworking impacts their vocational experiences and outcomes (Kelliher & Anderson, 2008, 2010). However, the choice may not consistently yield positive or negative effects on organizational and personal results. For example, de Menezes and Kelliher (2017) found that formal telework arrangements led to lower performance and fairness perceptions but higher job satisfaction. Conversely, informal telework arrangements indirectly enhanced worker performance through job satisfaction and organizational commitment. However, the direct impact on job performance was less pronounced.

The distinction between formal and informal arrangements lies in the level of security they provide. For example, formal flexible working arrangements require a standard withdrawal procedure. In contrast, informal arrangements allow managers to revert employees to conventional hours quickly. (Hall & Atkinson, 2006) In addition, workers may strive to maintain informal agreements by performing well (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). However, informal arrangements can be compromised when a line manager or employee changes positions, possibly reducing employee dedication to the company and contentment with their employment. (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017).

On the other hand, an employee's sentiments of professional isolation may be regulated by an unsatisfied social need within an organizational setting and a craving for a more meaningful connection, the latter depending on the worker's belongingness need (Wright & Silard, 2021). Furthermore, an individual's capacity for self-compassion may moderate the connections between professional isolation sentiment, work-related depression, and feelings of



organizational citizenship (Andel et al., 2021). Finally, research shows a link between a teleworker's desire for human connection and sentiments of professional isolation. Since individuals may have differing perceptions and feelings about professional isolation, organizations should consider the impact of employee choices when establishing a work modality norm. For instance, research indicates that workers who said they had the option of working from home felt less professionally alienated than those who did not have the opportunity (Spilker & Breugh, 2021). Given individual differences regarding the level of professional isolation an employee may experience, investigating the relationship between employee choice in work modality and feelings of professional isolation is necessary. Therefore, I propose the following:

*Proposition 2: Employee choice in work modality will moderate the connection between teleworking extent and feelings of professional isolation.*

**Informational Justice.** The association between the amount of teleworking and workers' feelings of professional isolation may be moderated by their perceptions of informational justice. The perceived fairness and appropriateness of the information provided by supervisors and organizations to workers is called informational justice. Employees evaluate the information's fairness according to the informational justice dimension by examining its relevance, accuracy, and completeness (Greenberg, 1990). For example, suppose employees feel they have been provided adequate information about their work and organization. In that case, they may be less likely to experience feelings of isolation while teleworking. Conversely, teleworkers may feel more isolated if they do not get enough information or do not receive the same amount of knowledge as their in-office peers (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Therefore, providing clear and comprehensive information about decision-making processes and outcomes to employees can

improve their perceptions of fairness and encourage positive attitudes and actions (Lane & Aplin-Houtz, 2022).

Given that perception of informational justice can be critical in determining how teleworking affects employees' feelings of professional isolation, research should investigate the relationship among these variables. Specifically, using perceptions of informational justice as a moderator variable, researchers can better understand the complex relationship between teleworking, perceptions of informational justice, and feelings of professional isolation. The benefits of doing so include helping organizations develop strategies for increasing employee connectedness and reducing feelings of professional isolation among teleworkers. Therefore, the following is proposed:

*Proposition 3: Employees' perceptions of informational justice will moderate the relationship between the extent of teleworking and feelings of professional isolation.*

***Interpersonal Justice.*** The term "interpersonal justice" describes how fairly workers perceive how they are treated by their superiors, peers, and the company. It relates to how employees feel respected, valued, and treated equitably in their workplace interactions. Previous research indicates that the fairness of an employee's treatment, as perceived through interpersonal justice, significantly influences job satisfaction. For example, Colquitt (2001) found that job satisfaction is higher in employees who believe they are treated fairly.

On the other hand, professional isolation refers to feeling disconnected or isolated from others in the workplace. Employees who experience professional isolation may suffer a variety of unpleasant emotions, including loneliness, boredom, and apathy. These feelings can negatively impact job satisfaction and may lead to turnover intentions (Reisel et al., 2010).

Employee perceptions of interpersonal justice are likely to influence the link between feelings of professional isolation and employees' levels of job satisfaction. For example, employees who feel well treated by their colleagues are less likely to feel professionally alienated and, hence, more content with their positions. On the other hand, when employees feel treated unfairly, their feelings of professional isolation may increase, reducing job satisfaction. (Cooper & Kurland, 2002) For example, imagine an employee new to an organization who feels excluded from team meetings or social activities. As a result, this employee may feel professionally isolated, leading to decreased job satisfaction. However, suppose the employee's colleagues and supervisor try to include and treat them fairly. In that case, the employee may feel more connected to their colleagues and less isolated, increasing job satisfaction.

In summary, employees' perceptions of interpersonal justice may play a crucial role in moderating the link between feelings of professional isolation and employees' level of job satisfaction. Employees who are treated fairly and respectfully may experience less loneliness and more job satisfaction, leading to the following postulation:

*Proposition 4: Perceptions of interpersonal fairness will moderate the relationship between feelings of professional isolation and employees' levels of job satisfaction.*

**Teleworking Normativeness.** The degree to which teleworking is considered the norm in work modality should be investigated as an intermediary variable affecting the connections between teleworking, job satisfaction, and professional isolation. Regarding the proportion of the targeted teleworker's colleagues who remote work (Spilker & Breugh, 2021), teleworking normativeness correlates positively with work outcomes such as performance and career progression (Gajendran et al., 2015). Particularly, teleworkers in the workgroup with high normativeness of teleworking are more likely to be promoted than teleworkers in the workgroup

with low normativeness (Golden & Eddleson, 2020). In addition, research has investigated the predictive nature of normativeness concerning feelings of workplace loneliness (Spilker & Breugh, 2021), suggesting that there should be a negative relationship between teleworking normativeness and feelings of workplace loneliness. Earlier studies have shown that teleworkers may feel lonely because they see themselves as being cut off from frequent contact with colleagues and disassociated from the formal organization (Beauregard et al., 2019). The Spilker and Breugh (2021) results indicate a lack of support for teleworking normativeness predicting feelings of workplace loneliness. However, earlier research suggests there should be some relationship between normativeness and loneliness. For instance, according to Gajendran et al. (2015), onsite employees who cannot work from home may resent teleworkers because of perceived special treatment because they (e.g., teleworkers) can work from home. In addition, Spilker and Breugh (2021) suggest that perceived preferential treatment may lead to onsite employees purposefully excluding telecommuters from contacts and activities. Alternatively, onsite employees may unwittingly make a telecommuter feel isolated by failing to involve the individual in workplace interactions and social events ("out-of-site, out-of-mind"). However, given the lack of evidence for a predictive relationship between teleworking normativeness and workplace loneliness and, logically, why there should be a relationship (Spilker & Breugh, 2021), perhaps there is a unique connection between the two. On a positive note, Spilker and Breugh's (2021) research on what causes workplace loneliness and the related results indicates a negative effect on productivity and job satisfaction. Perhaps, instead of a predictive relationship, teleworking normativeness acts as a contextual variable tied to the work environment. Based on Beckel and Fisher's (2022) conceptual telework model, teleworking normativeness could be

interpreted as a moderator of the relationship between workplace loneliness and job satisfaction.

Given this premise, the following is proposed:

*Proposition 5: Teleworking normativeness will moderate the relationship between feelings of professional isolation and job satisfaction.*

### **PROPOSED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

To investigate the relationships posited in propositions 1 – 5, future studies applying quantitative methodology utilizing survey outreach of teleworkers can build on established literature surrounding organizational justice (Colquitt, 2001), job satisfaction (Cohen-Charash et al., 2001), and teleworking (Gajendran et al., 2007). A survey is recommended to maximize the information gathered, minimize the impact on participants, and shorten data collection time. Surveying current teleworkers with questions based on established measures of organizational justice (Colquitt et al., 2001), professional isolation (Spilker & Breugh, 2021), and job satisfaction (Spilker & Breugh, 2021), along with questions on the extent of teleworking, length of time teleworking, employee choice in work modality, and teleworking normativeness should capture the propositions which, in turn, provides support of the proposed model of the psychology of telework (see figure 2).

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Impact on Business Management Practices**

The rise of teleworking, notably during the COVID-19 epidemic, necessitates a better knowledge of how it affects employee behavior and perceptions (Holst, 2020; Beckel & Fisher, 2022). This conceptual paper presents insights into the psychological impacts of teleworking on employees, focusing on professional isolation, organizational justice, and job satisfaction, as well as

incorporating concepts such as work modality choice, teleworking normativeness, and teleworking extent into a conceptual model of telework psychology. Based on the proposed model of telework psychology, the following managerial practices may reduce any negative impact incurred via perceptions of inequity:

***Transparent Communication Channels.*** Transparent communication is critical for informing distant personnel of company changes, choices, and opportunities. Regular updates via company-wide emails, newsletters, and virtual town hall meetings can assist in closing the knowledge gap between in-office and remote personnel. Lane and Aplin-Houtz (2022) found that clear and timely communication can greatly improve informational justice perceptions, lowering feelings of professional isolation.

***Inclusive Decision-Making Processes.*** It is critical to incorporate remote personnel in decision-making processes. This incorporation may be accomplished by utilizing communication tools that enable distant employees to engage in conversations and vote on major decisions. Slack, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom allow real-time communication and feedback from all team members, ensuring distant employees have a say in decision-making (Beckel & Fisher, 2022).

***Equal Access to Opportunities.*** Organizations should ensure remote employees have equal access to career development opportunities, including promotions, training, and professional development programs. Offering virtual training sessions and webinars can provide remote employees with the same opportunities for growth as their in-office counterparts. According to McKinsey & Company (2020), equal access to development resources can significantly enhance job satisfaction and reduce perceptions of inequity.

***Recognition and Reward Systems.*** Implementing a recognition and reward system that acknowledges the contributions of both remote and in-office employees can mitigate feelings of

inequity. Public recognition through virtual ceremonies or company-wide announcements can ensure remote employees feel valued (Golden & Eddleston, 2020). Recognition is crucial for enhancing job satisfaction and reducing professional isolation.

***Enhancing Team-Building Among Hybrid Workforces.*** Team-building activities and effective hybrid communications enhance cohesiveness amongst remote, onsite, or hybrid employees. Virtual team-building activities like escape rooms, trivia games, and coffee breaks can promote camaraderie and inclusion among team members. Regular virtual team-building exercises significantly enhance cohesion and reduce isolation (Spilker & Breagh, 2021). Conducting hybrid team meetings where both remote and in-office employees participate ensures everyone feels included. Video conferencing tools with breakout room features facilitate smaller group discussions and foster connections. Hybrid meetings promote effective communication and cooperation, creating a more inclusive work climate (Miller, 2021).

Regular communication between supervisors and employees helps identify and address feelings of isolation among remote workers. These check-ins, conducted through one-on-one video calls or virtual team meetings, allow employees to share concerns and receive support, improving engagement and job satisfaction (Patel et al., 2021). Social platforms for informal interactions help build relationships among team members by allowing them to connect over common interests. Lane and Aplin-Houtz (2022) highlight that fostering informal interactions can significantly enhance team cohesion and reduce professional isolation.

Promoting an inclusive organizational culture that values diversity and inclusion can help bridge the gap between remote and in-office employees. This promotion can be achieved by implementing equity policies, such as flexible work arrangements, inclusive communication

practices, and diversity training programs. Beckel and Fisher (2022) emphasize that an inclusive culture can enhance employee engagement and reduce feelings of isolation.

### **Conclusion**

By implementing these strategies, organizations can address perceptions of inequity and enhance team-building among hybrid workforces. Transparent communication, inclusive decision-making processes, equal access to opportunities, recognition and reward systems, virtual team-building activities, hybrid team meetings, regular check-ins, social platforms for informal interaction, an inclusive organizational culture, and robust feedback mechanisms can create a supportive and inclusive work environment for all employees. These practices enhance job satisfaction, reduce professional isolation, and promote a cohesive and engaged workforce.



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**Figure 1**

Excerpt from the Beckel & Fisher (2022) Conceptual Model of Telework and Worker Health and Well-being.

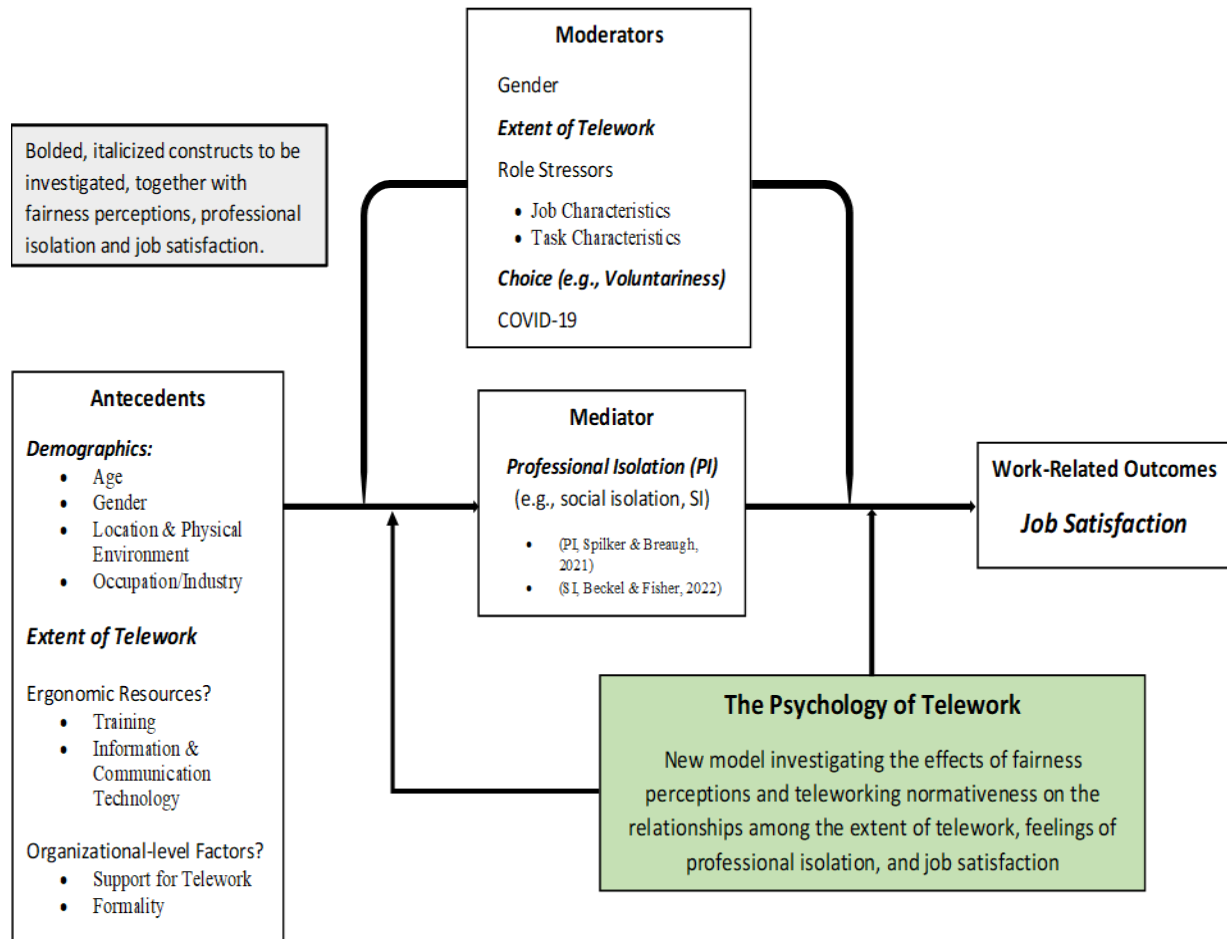


Figure 2

