

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

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# Inspiration

- Idea began after reviewing an organizational justice article, and an interest in a remote-working spin as well as professional isolation.
- Teleworking is particularly interesting to me because, for the last 20 years, I have been that employee juggling working virtually from home while raising children.
  - Dealt with isolation and feelings of inequity

# Big Picture

- 1. *What is the Problem?*** Lack of clarity within the business community on the impact of teleworking on psychological constructs.
- 2. *What do we know?*** WFH expanded, with teleworking increasing to 44% during the pandemic, and organizations considering continuing with telework.
- 3. *What don't we know/What do we need?*** A more complete picture of teleworking and its relationship with variables such as Professional Isolation, Perceptions of Fairness, Teleworking Normativeness, and Job Satisfaction

# Big Picture

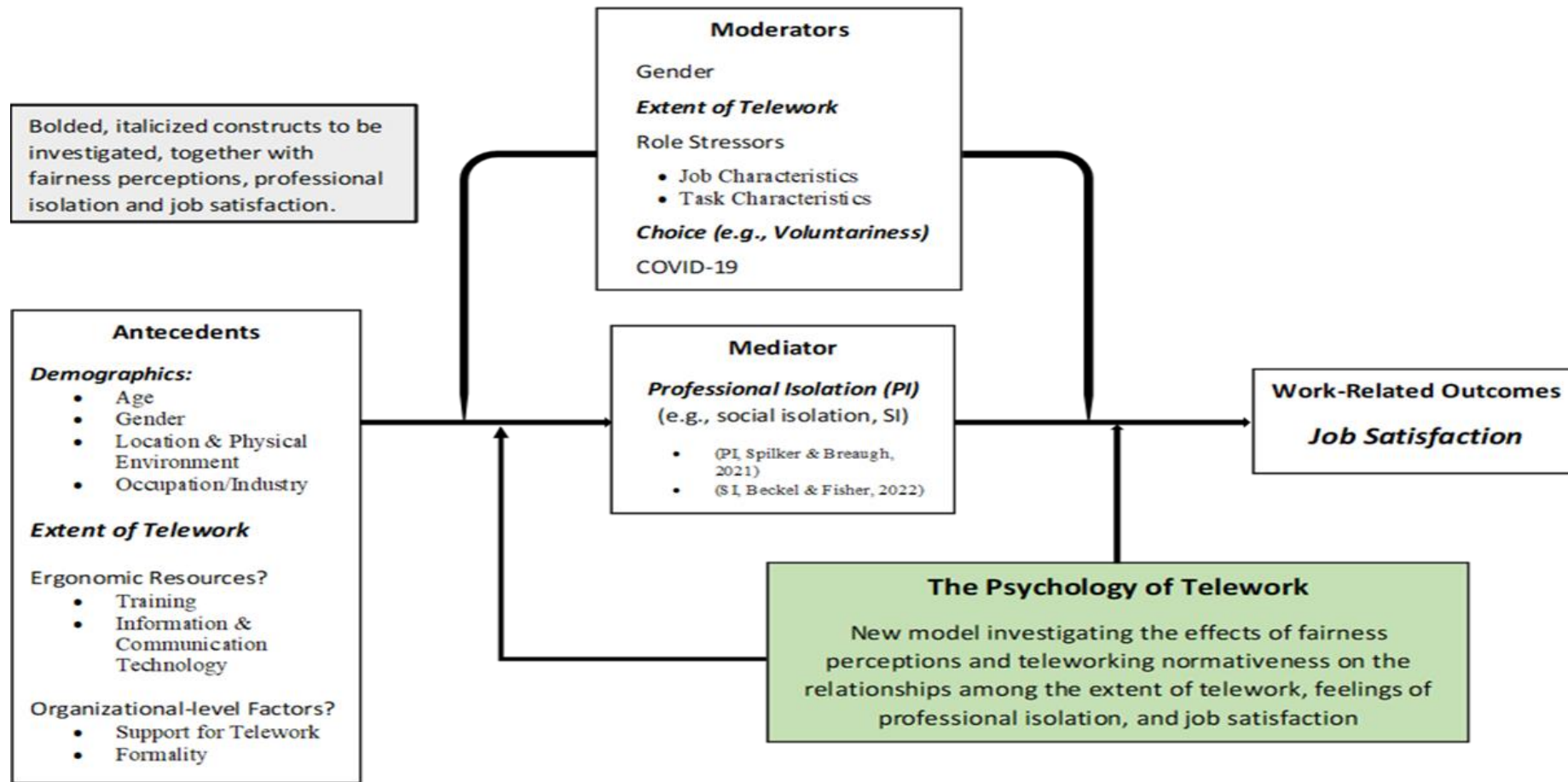
## *How will this study close the gap?*

This study uses quantitative measures to investigate the relationships among the variables to add to the literature on the psychology behind teleworking by building on and incorporating the following:

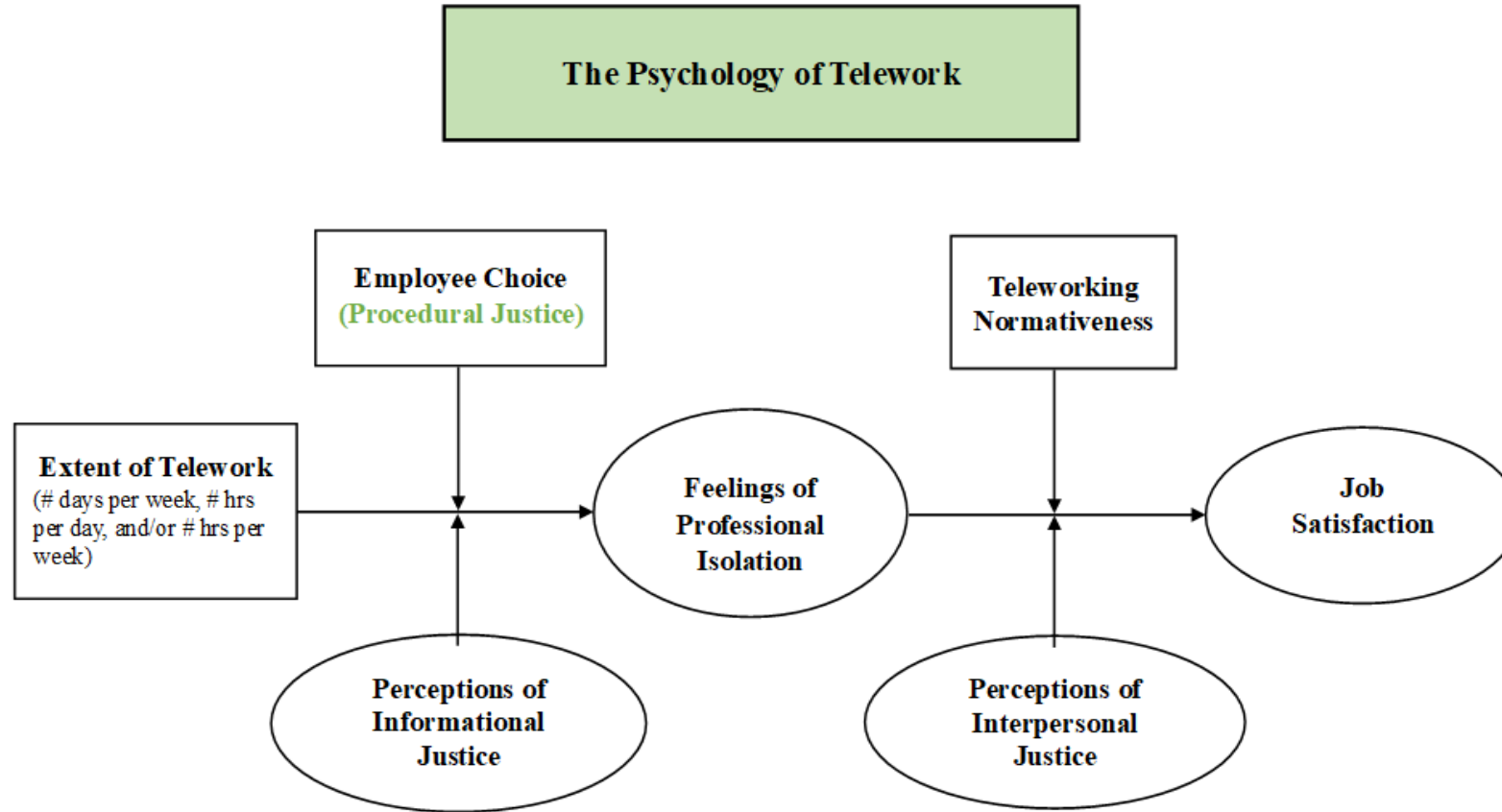
- Beckel & Fisher's (2022) Conceptual Model of Telework and Worker Health and Well-Being.
- Spilker & Breaugh's (2021) investigation of feelings of professional isolation and variables like teleworking normativeness and employee choice in work modality
- Thatcher & Bagger's (2011) qualitative research regarding organizational justice and telework

# Big Picture

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



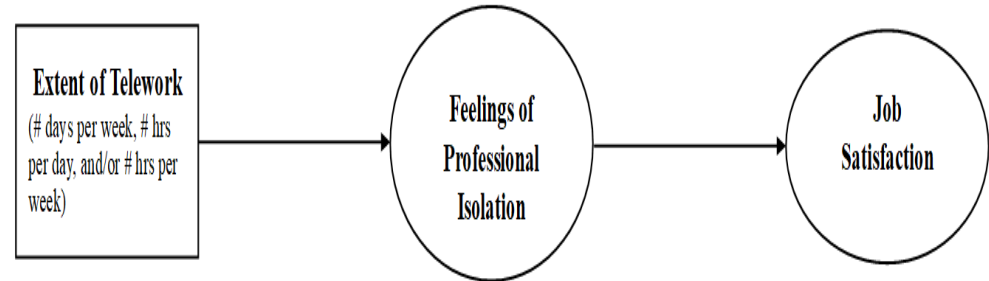
# Current Investigation



## Primary Relationship

**Hypothesis 1:** *Feelings of professional isolation should mediate the telework-job satisfaction relationship.*

- *In the presence of feelings of professional isolation, there is a negative relationship between the extent of teleworking and job satisfaction.*



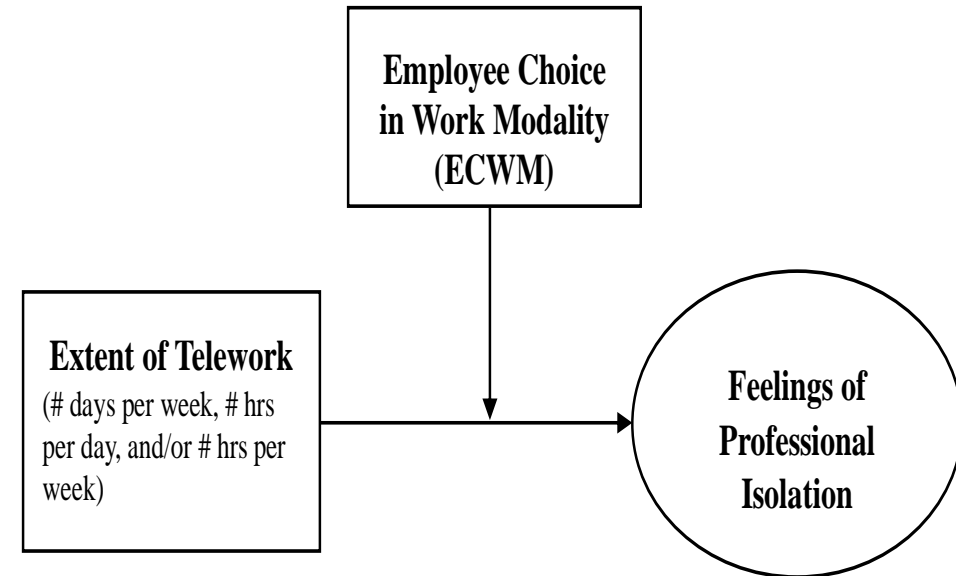
- As the *extent of telework* increases, visibility reduces, and social isolation & communication challenges increase.
- As *feelings of professional isolation* (e.g., psychological detachment and decrease in sociability and emotional investment in work and the organization) increase, employee approachability, affective organizational commitment, and job satisfaction decrease.
- *Job satisfaction* is a commonly-studied psychological outcome; negative relationship with isolation

## Secondary Relationship

- Work Modality = Remote, In-Person, or Hybrid (Miller, 2021).
- Research indicates that employee choice in teleworking directly impacts their vocational experiences and outcomes (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2017)
- Effects of choice may be affected by individual differences regarding the level of professional isolation an employee may experience
  - For example, an employee's sentiments of professional isolation may be regulated by an unsatisfied social need (i.e., belongingness need) within an organizational setting (Wright & Silard, 2021).

## Employee Choice in Work Modality

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



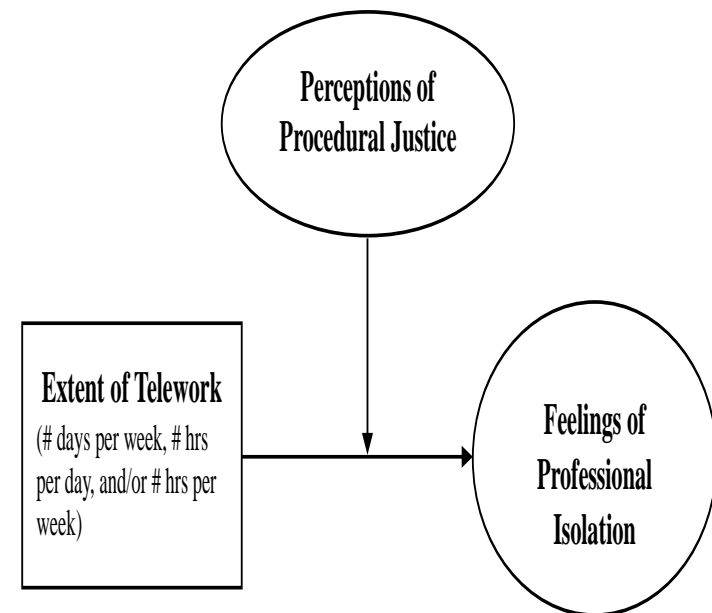


## Secondary Relationship

- The rapid change in organizational processes and policies, such as work modality, caused by the Pandemic negatively impacted employee views of fairness.
- Research has found that how people felt about procedural justice influenced the link between teleworking and professional isolation (Patel et al., 2021).
  - Employees may feel less alone at work, even teleworking, if they think the methods used to decide outcomes are fair.
    - For example, even if employees worked from home, they were less likely to feel alone if they thought the processes used to decide outcomes were fair.
- Employees' perceptions of procedural justice may influence their *feelings of control and predictability at work*, impacting their sense of isolation and alienation from the organization (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).
  - For example, employees may feel more in control of their jobs and more confident in their ability to foresee outcomes if they believe the decision-making procedures are fair.
  - So, a sense of procedural justice could reduce their feelings of isolation and enhance their commitment to the organization (Colquitt et al., 2001).

## Perceptions of Procedural Justice

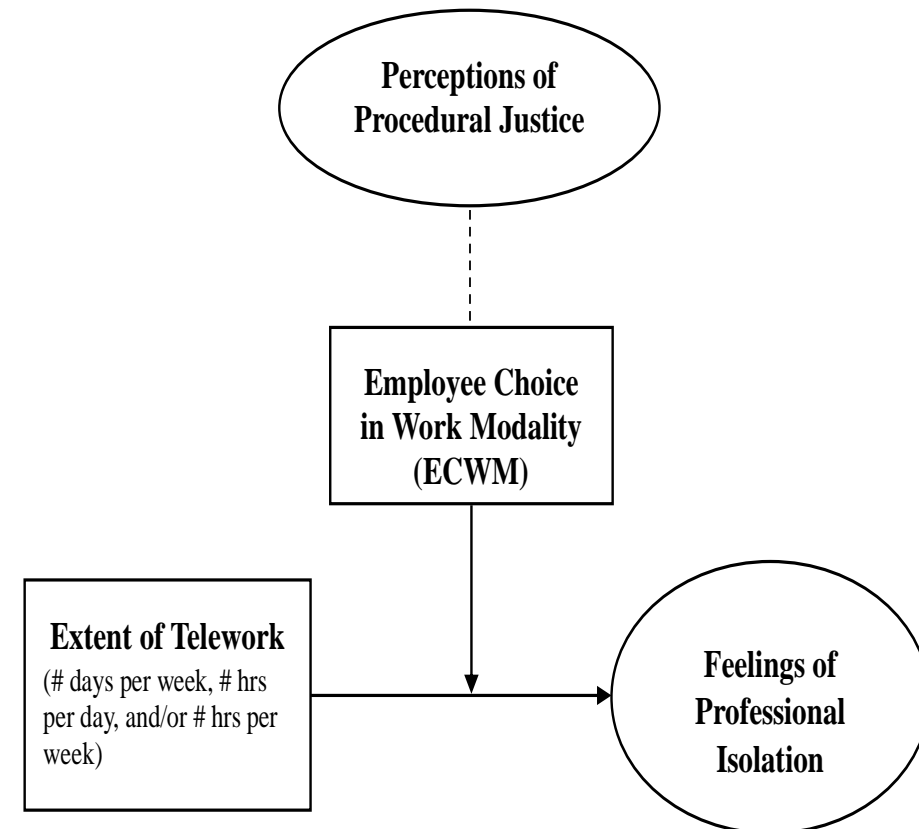
*Hypothesis 2b: Perceptions of procedural justice should moderate the connection between teleworking extent and feelings of professional isolation.*



# Employee Choice as a Proxy for Procedural Justice?

- In this setting, evaluating the significance of employee choice in determining work modality is crucial as a key factor in understanding fairness perceptions, particularly perceptions of procedural justice, since it can significantly influence employee attitudes and actions (Golden et al., 2008).
- Bridging the discussion between perceptions of procedural justice and employee choice in work modality, it becomes apparent that offering employees the autonomy to choose their work modality may constructively represent perceptions of procedural justice.
  - Given that the Participation Model of Procedural Justice states that fairness views are assessed against giving all workers an equal chance to participate in or affect organizational operations (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Earley & Lind, 1987).
    - When employees can choose their work modality, they perceive the decision-making process as fair and inclusive (Beauregard et al., 2019).
- Therefore, having the choice in work modality should act as an operationalization of procedural justice perceptions.

*Hypothesis 2c: Employee choice in work modality should be highly intercorrelated with perceptions of procedural justice*

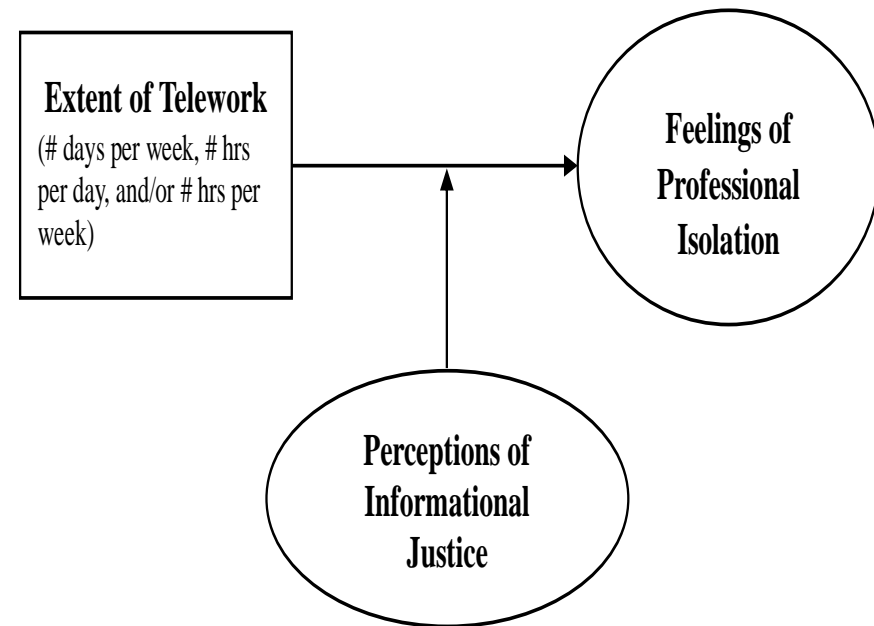


## Secondary Relationship

- The perceived fairness and appropriateness of the information provided by supervisors and organizations to workers
- Employees evaluate the information's fairness according to the informational justice dimension by examining its relevance, accuracy, and completeness (Greenberg, 1990).
  - For example, if employees feel they have been provided adequate information about their work and organization, 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).

## Perceptions of Informational Justice

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

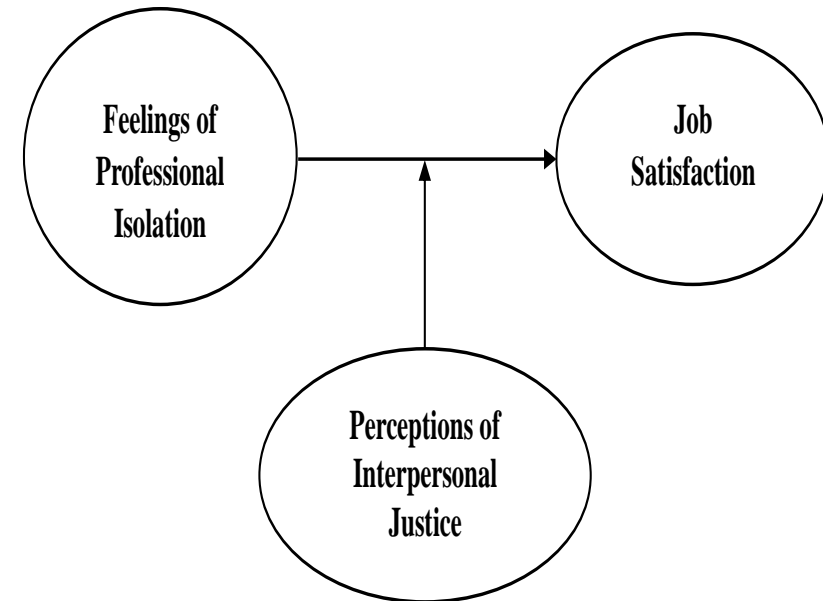


## Secondary Relationship

- How fairly workers perceive they are treated by their superiors, peers, and the company as a whole.
  - Feelings of being respected, valued, and treated equitably in workplace interactions.
- Fairness of an employee's treatment, as perceived through interpersonal justice, significantly influences job satisfaction.
  - For example, Colquitt (2001) found that employees who believe they are treated fairly are more likely to experience job satisfaction.
- Employee perceptions of interpersonal justice are likely to influence the link between feelings of professional isolation and employees' levels of job satisfaction.
  - Employees who feel well treated by their colleagues and managers are less likely to feel professionally alienated and, hence, more content with their positions.
  - When employees feel treated unfairly, their feelings of professional isolation may increase, reducing job satisfaction. (Cooper & Kurland, 2002)

## Perceptions of Interpersonal Justice

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

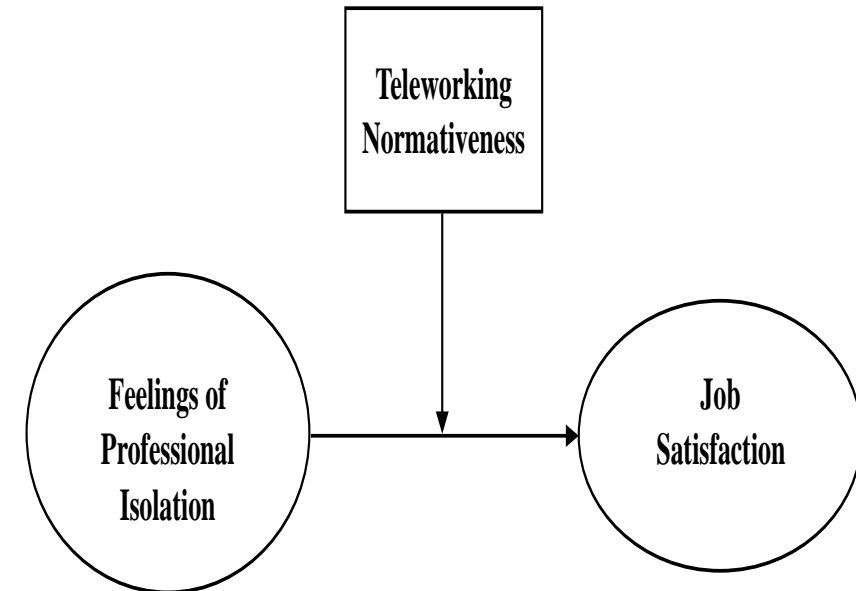


## Secondary Relationship

- Regarding the proportion of the targeted teleworker's remote colleagues, teleworking normativeness correlates positively with work outcomes (Gajendran et al., 2015; Golden & Eddleson, 2020).
- Although earlier studies indicate teleworkers may feel lonely because they see themselves as being cut off from frequent contact with colleagues and disassociated from the organization of which they are a formal part (Beauregard et al., 2019), the Spilker and Breugh (2021) results show a lack of support for teleworking normativeness predicting feelings of workplace loneliness.
- Instead of a predictive relationship, teleworking normativeness may be a contextual variable tied to the work environment.
  - Based on Beckel and Fisher's (2022) conceptual telework model, teleworking normativeness may act as a moderator between professional loneliness and job satisfaction.

## Teleworking Normativeness

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



# Methods

## *Survey*

- Established survey questions related to current variables will be used or appropriately modified when possible.
- Pilot Testing will be used to wordsmith the survey questions and identify roadblocks in surveying participants (e.g., ages 18+ who telework).
- Prolific will be used to gather participant data (500 given the number of variables: latent variables, demographics, industry, etc.).
- Additional variables and related questions will be added as needed
- Data gathering will be a times-two collection to reduce Common Method Bias.

## *Participants*

- Participants must have teleworked for at least six months during the last 12 months of the same/consistent employment. (Please note: the amount of teleworking is not required for participants to participate.)
- Specific demographic characteristics: Minimum teleworking experience required.
  - Ideally, there should be an approximately equitable breakdown of men, women, and other-identification and an approximately equitable breakdown among races.
  - In addition, other demographic characteristics will be collected, including age, employment status (above the minimum requirements for study participation), educational level, work-related industry, and any other attributes of interest.

# Measure

## 1) *Online survey will be used for data collection.*

- As utilized in Spilker and Breaugh's (2021) research, variable questions will come from existing sources.
- Some variables, like the Extent of Teleworking, have been designed using a content validity/SME methodology.

## 2) *Reducing Bias:*

- **Central Tendency Bias:** Adjust existing scales (5-point and 7-point) to utilize a 6-point Likert scale.
- **Common Method Bias:**
  - Data gathering is times-two data collection
  - Participants randomly split into two groups
  - Group A's first survey is Group B's second, and vice versa.
  - One week between 2 surveys
  - Flipping which variables are in the first and second surveys for each group
  - Random order of variables' questions within each survey

## Extent of Teleworking

This question determines how much teleworking participants do in their work. The wording format for this item could be one of the following:

- As used in the Spilker and Breugh (2021) research, the item used was "What percentage of an average week does this employee telecommute? (0 – 100%)" (p. 8). To better fit this research, item wording should be adjusted to "What percentage of an average week do you telework?"

*And*

- Three categories (Mostly Teleworking, Split, Mostly Face-to-Face) or (Less than 50%, 50/50%, and More than 50%) of work are in the teleworking modality. Participants will indicate which category best represents their work modality.



## Feelings of Professional Isolation

As used in Spilker and Breaugh's (2021) research, "the seven-item scale created by Golden et al. (2008) reports the frequency with which telecommuters experience professional isolation.

- A sample item from this scale is: 'I feel isolated.'
- The coefficient alpha for the telecommuters' response was 0.91.

## Job Satisfaction

As used in Spilker and Breugh's (2021) research,  
"Cammann et al.'s (1979) three-item measure to assess job  
satisfaction

- For example, "All in all, I am satisfied with my job."
- Coefficient alphas of 0.82 and 0.90 in the two-time data collection were found in the Spilker and Breugh (2021) research.

## Employee Choice in Work Modality

- As used in Spilker and Breugh's (2021) research, we will use the same format to measure this variable: "To assess whether telecommuting was a choice made by the telecommuters, the Time 1 survey asked: *"How did you start telecommuting in your current job?"*
- The response options were:
  - (1) "I applied for a job that involved telecommuting part- or full-time;"
  - (2) "In my current job, I asked for the option to telecommute;"
  - (3) "In my current job, I was offered the option to telecommute;"
  - (4) "My supervisor decided that I would telecommute;" and
  - (5) "My company decided that I would telecommute."
- Responses 1, 2, and 3 were collapsed (coded as 2) to determine whether telecommuting was a choice. Responses 4 and 5 combined represent involuntary (i.e., no choice) telecommuting (coded as 1). (Spilker & Breugh, 2021, p. 7)

## Perceptions of Procedural Justice

- The following questions gauge procedural justice perceptions from Colquitt's (2001) Organizational Justice Measure:
  - The following items refer to the procedures used to arrive at your (outcome). To what extent:
    1. Have you been able to express your views and feelings during those procedures?
    2. Have you had influence over the (outcome) arrived at by those procedures?
    3. Have those procedures been applied consistently?
    4. Have those procedures been free of bias?
    5. Have those procedures been based on accurate information?
    6. Have you been able to appeal the (outcome) arrived at by those procedures?
    7. Have those procedures upheld ethical and moral standards?
  - In Judge and Colquitt's (2004) study, the procedural justice measure's  $\alpha = .84$ .

## Perceptions of Informational Justice

The following questions gauge perceptions of informational justice from Colquitt's (2001) Organizational Justice Measure.

- The following items refer to (the authority figure who enacted the procedure). To what extent:
  - 1) Has (he/she/they) been candid in (his/her/their) communications with you?
  - 2) Has (he/she/they) explained the procedures thoroughly?
  - 3) Were (his/her/they) explanations regarding the procedures reasonable?
  - 4) Has (he/she/they) communicated details in a timely manner?
  - 5) Has (he/she/they) seemed to tailor (his/her/them) communications to individuals' specific needs?
  
- In Judge and Colquitt's (2004) study, the informational justice measure's  $\alpha = .90$ .

## Perceptions of Interpersonal Justice

The following questions will gauge perceptions of interpersonal justice from Colquitt's (2001) Organizational Justice Measure.

- The following items refer to (the authority figure who enacted the procedure).  
To what extent:
  - 1) Has (he/she/they) treated you in a polite manner?
  - 2) Has (he/she/they) treated you with dignity?
  - 3) Has (he/she/they) treated you with respect?
  - 4) Has (he/she/they) refrained from improper remarks or comments?
- In Judge and Colquitt's (2004) study, the interpersonal justice measure's  $\alpha = .96$ .

## Teleworking Normativeness

Based on the Spilker and Breaugh (2021) item format, the following item:

- “What percentage of your employees telecommute at least part-time? (0 – 100%)” will be changed to the following:
- What portion of your colleagues telecommute at least part of the time? From 0% to 100%.

## Analysis

The planned analysis will utilize the following:

- 1) Item Analysis utilizing Chronbach's Alpha to establish correlations among survey items.
- 2) Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is used to confirm the item representation of latent variables.
- 3) Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test hypotheses regarding paths
- 4) Plus, any additional analyses as needed (i.e., linear regression analysis of individual paths).



## Results

**COMING SOON**

## Discussion

### Impact on Business Management Practices

- 1) First, the “*cat is out of the bag.*” Telework or Remote Work is not going away.
- 2) To better understand and plan for managerial challenges around telework and, ultimately, a hybrid workforce, we need to understand the psychological impact of teleworking on employees as well as the following
  - Professional isolation,
  - Organizational justice
  - Job satisfaction,
  - Work modality choice
  - Teleworking normativeness
  - Extent of teleworking

# Mitigating Perceptions of Inequity

## 1) *Transparent communication channels.*

- Company-wide emails, newsletters, and virtual town hall meetings may bridge the knowledge gap between remote and in-office workers.
- Clear, timely communication may boost informational justice and prevent professional isolation. (Lane & Aplin-Houtz, 2022)

## 2) *Inclusive decision-making processes.*

- Remote workers must be involved in decision-making. Communication technologies allowing real-time team communication and feedback may ensure remote workers have a voice in decisions. (Beckel & Fisher, 2022)

## 3) *Equal access to career growth opportunities.*

- Provide remote workers with equal career growth opportunities, including promotions, training, and professional development.
- Virtual training and webinars offer remote workers the same development possibilities as in-office workers.
- Equal access to development resources may significantly enhance job satisfaction and reduce perceptions of inequity.

## Mitigating Perceptions of Inequity cont.

### **4) *Recognition and reward systems of both remote and in-office workforce to mitigate feelings of inequity.***

- Public recognition through virtual ceremonies or company-wide announcements can ensure remote employees feel valued.
- Recognition enhances job satisfaction and reduces professional isolation (Golden & Eddleston, 2020).

### **5) *Team-building and effective hybrid communications among hybrid workforces.***

- Foster informal interactions may enhance cohesiveness and reduce professional isolation (Spilker & Breagh, 2021; Lane & Aplin-Houtz, 2022).

### **6) *Promote an inclusive organizational culture that values diversity and inclusion.***

- Implement equity policies, such as flexible work arrangements, inclusive communication practices, and diversity training programs.
- Enhances employee engagement and reduces feelings of isolation (Beckel and Fisher, 2022).

# Conclusion

## ***1) Organizations must address inequity perceptions and enhance team-building among hybrid workforces.***

- 1) Open communication, inclusive decision-making, 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 strong feedback mechanisms can create a supportive and inclusive workplace for all employees.
- 2) These practices enhance job satisfaction, reduce professional isolation, and promote a cohesive and engaged workforce.

## ***2) And...if we understand theories that explain the psychology underlying human behavior in the workforce, we can better handle the apparent fluid nature of work modality.***

- Think about this...How are we to handle a multi-generational, multi-level technological workforce?
  - By understanding the core competencies underlying work-related human behavior, we can adjust to future work environments.

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