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LERA Session Title: Benefits and Consequences of Alternative Work Arrangements

Paper Title: The Consequences of Telework: An Examination of Individual and Contextual Moderators

Paper Abstract:
Companies are increasingly turning to telework as a way to reduce costs, boost employee productivity, attract and retain top talent, and help employees manage non-work demands. Although much of the early growth in telework was concentrated among contract employees, a recent WorldatWork survey found that, since 2005, the growth has been driven primarily by regular (full- and part-time) employees moving to teleworking arrangements (Moore, Rhodes, & Stanley, 2011). The goal of the current study is to provide a comprehensive examination of the individual consequences of teleworking while simultaneously addressing limitations from prior literature (e.g. small sample sizes, cross-sectional designs).

Drawing on a sample of 4,315 teleworkers and 765 non-teleworkers in a large health insurance company operating almost exclusively within the United States, we develop and test a model that includes multiple proximal and distal consequences of telecommuting, including work-to-family (and family-to-work) conflict, professional isolation, career satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. In addition, we examine several individual-level (e.g., task interdependence, tenure with manager, employee family characteristics) and unit-level (e.g., teleworking density) moderators that may either augment or attenuate the consequences of teleworking. Finally, we use a two-wave research design and multi-source data to conduct a more rigorous test of the mechanisms through which teleworking influences the individual outcomes.

Our results provide support for the notion that, although teleworking has generally been found to have beneficial effects, the consequences of teleworking arrangements may depend on a number of factors related to the nature of the work arrangement, the individual, and the context in which he or she works. Our study aims to further advance our understanding of the conditions under which teleworking has more or less beneficial effects and to do so with a research design that addresses several methodological limitations that have characterized prior research in this area.