

TELECOMMUTING AND CREATIVITY OF PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES IN SOFTWARE DEVELOPING INDUSTRY, SRI LANKA

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Abstract

Telecommuting as an alternative job design is gaining ground. Although a few studies provide a basic view about telework and creativity, the link is yet to be explored. Thus, we conducted two separate studies to investigate the telecommuting-creativity link. Study 1 revealed how telecommuting enhances and reduces creativity from semi-structured interviews with 17 professional software development employees. Participants revealed that telecommuting helps activate thinking new ideas but limits the avenues to develop those further. These findings suggested the need for a two-dimensional conceptualization of creativity. Guided by the insights of study 1 and the Identity Theory, study 2 was conducted to examine the effect of telework on the novelty and usefulness dimensions of creativity. We employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via AMOS (version 16.0) to test the structural and measurement models. Mediator Analysis was conducted testing hypotheses. Drawing on a survey of 246 professional employees, study 2 found two results. First, telework's extent positively impacts personal identity, which in turn positively impacted the novelty dimension of creativity. Second, the extent of telework negatively affected the usefulness dimension of creativity due to reduced team identity. Our findings inform that telework alters an individual's identity, which has a differential impact on the two dimensions of creativity. The findings inform the practitioners of the importance of balancing working in collocated and teleworking contexts to foster personal and team identities that enhance overall creativity.

Keywords: Creativity, Novelty, Personal identity, Team identity, Telecommuting, Usefulness