ABSTRACT

Although telework—a flexible work arrangement in which employees work from a remote location at least some of the time—has been increasing in practice, little research has investigated its implications for employee behaviors and performance. The main focus of this study was to identify the mediating processes that explain the relationship between telework frequency and OCB performance, and to determine whether personality moderates the psychological consequences of teleworking. Survey data were collected from 286 teleworkers and 62 of their coworkers across organizations from a range of industries, jobs, and locations. Coworkers were recruited in order to assess teleworkers’ OCBs, but OCBs were also measured via teleworkers’ self-reports, as coworker ratings were more difficult to obtain. Two mediational processes were investigated: teleworkers’ perceptions of professional isolation, and their identification with their work group and their organization. Individual differences in proactive personality and need to belong were also assessed. Hypotheses positioning professional isolation and identification as partial mediators of the telework-OCB link were not supported. Also contrary to predictions, the personality variables of proactive personality and need to belong did not moderate the relationship between telework and these proposed mediators. However, a serial mediator model provided a better fit to the data. In this revised model, telework frequency was positively related to professional isolation, which was negatively related to both organizational and work group identification, which were subsequently positively related to self-rated OCBs. Telework frequency also bore a direct, positive relationship to identification when controlling for the effects of professional isolation. Lastly, there was a negative direct effect of telework frequency on self-rated OCBs, suggesting that the more frequently individuals teleworked, the fewer OCBs they tended to perform, even after controlling for the mediational roles of professional isolation and social identification. Theoretical and practical implications of the findings are discussed.