

Impact of Telework on Employee Engagement: A Study on Women Employees Working in Travel Agencies in Colombo District

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Abstract

The emergence of telework as a mainstream work arrangement has significantly transformed modern travel and tourism organisations, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Sri Lanka, however, telework is still at a primitive stage, with limited empirical evidence on its impact, especially concerning women working in travel agencies. This study aims to examine the impact of telework on employee engagement among women employees in Colombo District travel agencies, using the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model as the theoretical foundation. Specifically, it investigates how the key dimensions of telework – social support, job autonomy and feedback – affect employee engagement. Adopting a positivist philosophy and a quantitative research design, data were collected through structured questionnaires from 183 women employees across ten selected travel agencies. Given the difficulty of directly accessing women teleworkers in the tourism sector, the snowball sampling technique was employed, a method previously validated in quantitative studies where hard-to-reach populations are involved. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, correlation and multiple regression in SPSS. The findings reveal strong positive relationships between telework dimensions and employee engagement, with feedback exerting the greatest influence, followed by job autonomy and social support. Collectively, these predictors accounted for 85.5% of the variance in employee engagement, underscoring their significant explanatory power. The study highlights the need for well-structured telework policies that promote effective communication, supportive work environments and autonomy to strengthen remote employee engagement. By offering localised evidence, this research contributes to the limited literature on telework in Sri Lanka’s tourism research and provides practical insights for managers and policymakers to optimise teleworking frameworks that enhance women employees’ motivation and productivity.

Keywords: employee engagement, Job Demands–Resources Model, telework, travel agencies, women employees