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Blurring the boundaries of work during the COVID-19 pandemic: Teleworking and gender

The boundaries of work have become blurred in many ways in modern working life, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to time and place, the study examines the blurring boundaries of work regarding emotional, social, spiritual, and aesthetic labour using data from a survey conducted in a consulting company operating in Finland (N = 87). By utilizing an intersectional perspective, the study analyses the different genders’ views on the blurring boundaries of work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Among other things, women reported doing slightly more emotional labour. The same amount of social labour was reported by all genders, but women reported experiencing a sense of inadequacy in maintaining work friendships and networks. Spiritual labour – that is, different techniques of the mind – was practiced evenly, but whereas men stated that they did not practice any technique, women experienced a bad conscience about inaction. Teleworking had changed aesthetic labour for all genders, but it had changed more radically for women, and the methods of aesthetic labour were gendered. According to the study, the blurring boundaries of work and attempts to draw those boundaries have become gendered, as gender and life situations are reflected in many ways in experts’ experiences of teleworking.