

Knowledge work or unreasonable tinkering? Illegitimate tasks and well-being in knowledge work

Creativity and time to think are the cornerstones of knowledge work. Nevertheless, many knowledge workers have little time to focus and create, since their work includes many distracting tasks that are unreasonable or incompatible with their occupational role. This study examined the frequency of such illegitimate tasks in knowledge workers' schedules, and the kinds of knowledge work in which these illegitimate tasks are particularly prevalent. Furthermore, the study aimed to determine whether i) the level of human resources, the organisation of work, and supervisors' behaviour are related to illegitimate work tasks, and ii) illegitimate work tasks are related to psychological wellbeing among knowledge workers. The study data, collected in 2015 (N=1,823), were drawn from the (A)Synchrony of Timelines study. Some 12% of respondents reported that they have many illegitimate work tasks. The results also show that a low level of human resources, poor work organisation, and low levels of communication with supervisors about work matters are positively associated with a high level of illegitimate work tasks. Furthermore, illegitimate work tasks are also related to low psychological well-being.