

**Are Evening-types More Attracted to Organization with Blended Working
Arrangements Compared to Morning-types?**

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Abstract

Blended working concerns the concept of employees determining themselves when and where they perform their work. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, during which employees were forced to work from home, blended working became a very current issue. We examined the effect of blended working on organizational attractiveness and the influence of chronotype on this effect. Our hypothesis was that blended working arrangements would have a positive effect on the attractiveness of an organization and that this effect would be even stronger for evening-types compared to morning-types. We conducted a questionnaire study among first year psychology students ($N = 126$). The study utilized a one factorial within-subjects design, using vignettes to manipulate working condition (i.e. blended working condition vs. traditional working condition). We showed that blended working conditions did increase the perceived attractiveness of an organization as compared to the traditional condition. We did not find a moderating effect of chronotype on the effect of blended working on organizational attractiveness. This study provides relevant information with regard to optimizing working arrangements to the needs of employees. More specific, the use of blended working arrangements can be recommended to organizations to make their working environment more attractive to applicants.

Keywords: blended working, morningness-eveningness, chronotype, organizational attractiveness, flexible work arrangements

Are Evening-types More Attracted to Organizations with Blended Working Arrangements Compared to Morning-types?

In recent years there have been many challenges regarding the workplace and the circumstances around working. Especially since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, when a lot of employees had to adapt to a new way of working (Kniffin et al., 2020), organizations and their employees became aware that there are other places to do your work than the traditional office environment where you sit mostly at a desk from 9am until 5 am, from Monday till Friday. Using advancements in technology, working from different places other than the office is made a lot easier these days. Along with the adaptation to where we work, the time when we work is also subject to adjustments. Especially with regard to the timing, individual differences related to chronotype might play a role. The location-independent working (where work is done) and time-independent working (when and how long work is done) has been termed blended working (Van Yperen et al., 2014), also known in more general terms as flexible working. The current study investigates the effect of blended working arrangements on the perceived attractiveness of an organization, while also taking into account the individual difference of being either a morning- or an evening-type using the theoretical framework of the person-environment fit theory (van Vianen, 2018), stating that person- and environment variables are mutually interacting.

Blended working has numerous benefits. For example, when employees work from home there will be less traffic on the roads and a reduction of needed office space and general office costs (Van Yperen et al., 2014). Blended working might not only benefit the employer, but also the employee; blended working might enhance performance, create better job satisfaction and it can facilitate the transition from employment to retirement for older employees (Wörtler et al., 2021). In addition, the flexibility that is offered by a blended working setting might also provide benefits with regard to work and non-work demands

(Mantell, 2011), potentially reducing work-non-work conflict (Thomson et al., 2015). For example, when you are able to work from home you can simultaneously take care of a child that is home because they are sick. This could be an attractive asset for employees to work for an organization offering this blended working option, which might increase the perceived attractiveness of that organization.

Highhouse et al. (2003, p. 989) define organizational attractiveness as a construct that is “reflected in individuals’ affective and attitudinal thoughts about particular companies as potential places for employment”. It is relevant for organizations to know how to be attractive for future employees and to know which types of people would fit the best in their organization. Having the knowledge of how to be attractive could be a great asset for an organization in the recruitment of new employees. Highhouse et al. (2003) also found that when an applicant found an organization to be attractive this was positively associated with the intent of the applicant to pursue a career with this organization. Thompson et al. (2015) already found an effect of flexible working arrangements on organizational attractiveness. They found that when an organization offered more flexible working arrangements as to where and when work was done, the organization was perceived as more attractive to students. This same effect was also found with using full-time employed participants in the research of Wörtler et al. (2021). In the present study we will investigate if there is indeed a relation between blended working and organizational attractiveness.

Hypothesis 1. Blended working arrangements have a positive effect on the perceived attractiveness of an organization.

Thompson et al. (2015) mention that the attractiveness of flexible working arrangements may depend on both demographic and individual differences. For example, Shockley and Allen (2010) found that people with segmented work and non-work roles would use flexible work arrangements less often than people with more integrated work and non-

work roles. Thompson et al (2015) also mention sex and anticipated caregiving demands as an individual difference that could influence the attractiveness of flexible work arrangements. Especially with regard to the above-mentioned time-independent working aspect of blended working the role of chronotype is relevant. Individuals differ with respect to the times of day when they prefer to sleep and are most productive. Morning-types go to bed early and rise early in the morning, while evening types stay up late in the evening and rise later (Natale & Cicogna, 2002). According to Pierce and Newstrom (1980) these chronotypes have a different performance curve during the day. Morning-types reach their maximum body temperature early in the morning, this causes them to perform best at this time. While evening-types have slow rising of body temperature during the day and peak later in the day, and thus perform better at the end of the day.

To explain the relationship between blended working environment (i.e. blended working arrangements vs. traditional working arrangements), perceived organizational attractiveness and chronotype within a theoretical framework, the Person-Environment fit theory is used. This theory states that a person variable and an environment variable together explain the outcome variable better than they do on their own (van Vianen, 2018). According to this theory the characteristic of the individual not only influences the environment, but the environment also influences the individual. The match between these personal and environmental factors are key to the Person-Environment fit theory. How well these two go together can influence a person's behavior, overall mental and physical health, and someone motivation (Holbeck et al., 2008). The Person-Environment fit theory also states that when there is a misfit, it causes strain on an individual (Hecht & Allen, 2005; Yang et al., 2008). In this study the person variable is chronotype and the environment variable are the working arrangements. Thus, according to the Person-Environment fit theory chronotype and working

environment would together explain perceived organizational attractiveness better than they would do on their own.

Considering blended working, the preference for when work is done could be very different for individuals that are morning-types compared to evening-types. A later start of the workday could be more favorable for evening-types, since this could reduce social jetlag. Social jetlag is the shift of sleep and activities between the work week and free days like the weekend, where in the weekend they compensate for the sleep debt that is build up during the work week (Wittmann et al., 2006). In evening-types the social jetlag is higher when working early schedules, because the shift is greater between work days and free days. This misalignment between working days and free days is correlated with for example, smoking, body mass index, and depression (Haraszti et al., 2014). These negative consequences might cause strain on an individual and therefore could, in accordance with the Person-Environment fit theory, be seen as a misfit of the person characteristic of preferring a certain time to work and the actual work demands and the working environment. Haraszti et al. (2014) indeed mention a regular suffering of evening-types working a typical nine to five job. This typical work schedule is best suited for individuals that have early wake times, as morning-types have. Given that the majority of the population are evening-types (Wittmann et al., 2006) choosing when to work might reduce the desynchrony of the circadian rhythms of an evening person and the environmental demands when work is done more traditionally like a nine to five job (Duffy et al., 2001). This reduction of the desynchrony of the circadian rhythm reduces the misfit between the evening-person and their work demands.

Next to when employees work, where they work is also an important aspect of blended working according to the Person-Environment fit theory. When evening-type students were given the choice between having face-to-face study in morning or online study at their own time, they chose the online option significantly more often (Jovanovski & Bassili, 2007).

Connecting this to working individuals, this finding could indicate that evening-types would rather work from home at their own chosen time, than starting work early at the office.

Based on the Person-Environment fit theory it is expected that chronotype has a moderating effect on blended working and perceived organizational attractiveness.

Hypothesis 2. The positive effect of blended working arrangements on perceived organizational attractiveness is stronger for evening-types.

Method

Participants and Design

The participants in our study signed up through a university's first-year psychology student pool. By participating they achieved credits for a first-year research course. From the initial sample of 140 participants, 14 were excluded because they either failed attention checks that were included in the questionnaire or they did not complete the study. Consequently, 126 participants (87 females, 38 males, and one participant who preferred not to mention their sex, $M_{age} = 19.9$, $SD_{age} = 2.3$) were included in the analysis. Most participants were Dutch (45%) and German (25%). The remaining participants reported several different nationalities (29%). Furthermore, many participants had some work experience, either indicating that they had a job in the past (49%) or currently have a job (33%). The minority never had a job (17%).

This study utilized a one factorial repeated measures design. Additionally, it made use of vignettes to manipulate the factor variable blended working. Since each participant was exposed to both factors, the study made use of a within-subjects design.

Materials

Chronotype

Chronotype was measured using one item (rMEQ-5) from the original reduced Morningness-Eveningness Questionnaire (rMEQ) (Adan & Almirall, 1991) was used to let the participants self-assess their chronotype. This single item was found to be as reliable and valid in measuring chronotype compared to when the full scale is administered (Loureiro & Garcia-Marques, 2015). The question was: “One hears about “morning-types” and “evening-types.” Which one of these types do you consider yourself to be?” (*definitely a morning-type, rather more a morning-type than an evening-type, rather more an evening-type than a morning-type, definitely an evening-type*). Included with the question a short description was given of what a morning- and evening-type is. The participants were ascribed morning-/evening-types on a continuum. Where a minimum score of 1 meant that the participant definitely was a morning-type and a maximum score of 4 meant that the participant definitely was an evening-type.

Manipulation

We used written vignettes to manipulate blended working which was the factor variable. This variable consisted of two levels with blended working either being present or absent, as in the case of a traditional working arrangement. The decision to implement vignettes was based on a previous study done by Thompson et al. (2015). The vignettes described two hypothetical companies. The participants were asked to imagine that they would apply for a job after graduating from their bachelor. The vignettes were constructed to present an attractive, yet realistic work arrangement that could appeal to the participants when starting a new job (see Appendix). Both vignettes included information about salary, promotion, benefit packages, training and working arrangement. The only difference between the two vignettes was the information about the working arrangements and the name of each company. The traditional working arrangement (company JIK) vignette consisted of information that was specific to a traditional workplace, such as having to work a fixed

schedule from 9am to 5pm and a fixed working space at the office. Whereas the vignette for the blended working (company DCE) arrangement included information specific to this work arrangement like having a flexible work time, where one could work during any hours and at a place of their choice. The wording of the description for both working arrangements was kept as similar as possible, to clearly establish that any difference scores are due to the manipulation and not wording.

Organizational Attractiveness

The measurement for organizational attractiveness was done once for each vignette using the first five items of a scale by Highhouse et al. (2003), that referred to organizational attractiveness. An example item was: “For me this company would be a good place to work”. The participants had to rate each item on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 7 = *strongly agree*), with high ratings indicating attraction to the organization. The internal reliability of the organizational attractiveness scale was high for the blended working arrangement (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .94$) as well as for the traditional working arrangement (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .93$). Additionally, we computed the average of all five items to obtain the scale score for both the blended working arrangement and the traditional working arrangement condition of organizational attractiveness.

Attention Checks

The study included an attention check consisting of four questions. These questions asked the participants about the content of the vignettes and served the purpose of assessing whether the participants noticed the differences in the vignettes. One question was: “Did the companies differ in whether they offered flexibility in when employees work?” (*yes; no*).

Self-Rated Response Quality

In the present study, the participants also had to rate their own responses via two questions. They were used to evaluate whether the answers of the participants could be used

for the further analysis. The questions asked the participants whether they answered honestly and whether they sometimes answered randomly. One question was: “I was honest in all my responses.” (*yes; no*).

Procedure

Data Collection Methods

The participants were asked to complete the survey via Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com). In the first part of the questionnaire the participants were presented with a self-report scale measuring chronotype. After this the participants were asked some questions which assessed their demographic, as well as their background information. Hereafter the vignettes were randomly presented for each participant. This was done in order to establish temporal precedence to ensure that the participants were not influenced by the order or direct comparison of the vignettes. Following each vignette, the participants were asked to evaluate the job description for each organization by completing the measure of organizational attractiveness. The participants finalized the study by completing the attention checks and the items checking on their self-rated response quality.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

The mean score of chronotype was 2.84 ($SD = .93$) indicating that there were slightly more participants that were categorized as an evening-type (i.e. definitely an evening-type or rather more an evening-type than a morning-type) than they were categorized a morning-type (i.e. definitely a morning-type or rather more a morning-type than an evening-type). Of the participants, 8.7% rated themselves to be morning-types, 26.2% were rather more morning-types than evening-types, 37.3% of the participants indicated they were rather more evening-types than morning-types, and 27.8% considered themselves evening-types.

The correlations between organizational attractiveness of the blended working organization, organizational attractiveness of the traditional working organization, and chronotype can be found in Table 1. These correlations are very low, indicating that there is no relationship or a very weak relationship between organizational attractiveness and chronotype.

Testing the Hypotheses

The first hypothesis predicted that blended working has a positive effect on the organizational attractiveness of an organization as compared to the traditional working conditions. To check for this effect a Repeated Measures Analysis of Covariance (RM-ANCOVA) was performed. Blended working arrangements turned out to have a significant effect on organizational attractiveness ($F(1, 124) = 29.40, p < .001, \eta^2 = .19$). This indicates that the mean attractiveness of the blended working organization ($M = 5.30, SD = 1.28$) was higher than the mean attractiveness of the traditional working organization ($M = 4.43, SD = 1.42$). The findings of this analysis, however, need to be regarded with caution, because after conducting a test of normality and visual inspection of scatterplots the assumption of normality seems violated.

The second hypothesis predicted that the positive effect of blended working arrangements on perceived organizational attractiveness is stronger for evening-types. The statistical analysis did not provide evidence for a relationship between chronotype and organizational attractiveness. The interaction between working arrangement and chronotype was found not to be significant ($F(1, 124) = .76, p = .384, \eta^2 = .01$), and therefore the second hypothesis was not supported.

Discussion

The general aim of our study was to investigate the effect of blended working arrangements on the perceived attractiveness of an organization. In line with the Person-Environment fit theory, we expected that environment variables explain outcome variables better if individual differences are taken into account. We therefore looked at chronotype as a moderator. Our results obtained in the current study revealed evidence for the first hypothesis stating that organizations with the blended working arrangements reported a higher level of perceived organizational attractiveness compared to the organization that did not offer blended working arrangements. This finding is in line with the research of Thompson et al. (2015) and Wörtler et al. (2021). The second hypothesis was based on the literature indicating that the reduction of the desynchrony of the circadian rhythm of an evening person and the environmental demands when work is done more traditionally, when they can choose when they can work (Duffy et al., 2001). As well as that evening-types rather work online at their own time, than doing work face-to-face in the morning (Jovanovski & Bassili, 2007). Contrary to these findings, we did not find any evidence for the interaction effect of chronotype and organizational attractiveness in this study. In other words, we did not find a higher perceived organizational attractiveness of an organization with blended working arrangements for evening-types compared to morning-types.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings with regard to our main effect of blended working on organizational attractiveness establishes more ground into generalizing the theory to other situations and individuals. Wörtler et al. (2021) used full-time employees and Thompson et al. (2015) used students from the US. In the present study students from the Netherlands, who are prospective employees, participated. This makes the evidence for this effect even stronger.

Based on this result indicating that blended working arrangements seem to be more attractive for individuals than traditional working arrangements, the use of blended working arrangements is recommended to organizations.

Not finding a moderating effect of chronotype on the relationship between blended working and organizational attractiveness does not mean that people who differ in chronotype do not need or do not desire different working arrangements. The literature states that morning- and evening-types are definitely active at a different time of the day, and that every individual's performance peak is different (Pierce & Newstrom, 1980). Next to this, reducing the desynchrony of the circadian rhythm of an evening-type individual and the environmental demands when work is done in a traditional nine am to five pm way (Duffy et al., 2001), is something that could perhaps reduce fatigue and cause a less extreme social jetlag that evening-types experience (Wittmann et al., 2006). Therefore, the general idea to accustom working arrangements to the individual could be very beneficial to get the highest performance from your employees.

Limitations

Experimental designs usually sacrifice external validity and generalizability to strengthen internal validity (Aguinis, & Bradley, 2014). With the construction of the vignettes and the within-subjects design, we were able to control the direction of the relationship between blended working and organizational attractiveness. This design also made it possible to eliminate other variables that could have an effect on the relationship between blended working and organizational attractiveness. This increased the internal validity of the study.

On the other hand, to increase the internal validity we had to sacrifice some of the external validity. In the current study we used prospective employees, namely students. While the people we ultimately want to draw conclusions about are employees. The participants in the study are also removed from a natural working environment and placed in a hypothetical

environment. This creates uncertainty with regard to the generalizability of the results of this study to the actual working environment. On the other hand, first using a more controlled experimental setting is a great way to test if there is an effect in the first place. When an effect is found, it can be converted to a non-experimental less-controllable situation with better external validity.

Vignettes also have their limitations. Vignettes describe hypothetical situations. The participant has to imagine themselves finding the organization attractive, and seeing themselves working there. This limits the generalizability of the outcome to non-experimental real-world settings as well. Also, in real-life organizational attractiveness would be based on a lot more information than just a short organizational working arrangements description. Next to that, organizational attractiveness is a passive construct. When individuals find an organization that they are attracted to, it does not necessarily mean that they will actually apply for a job in this organization or pursue anything with this organization (Highhouse et al., 2003). These limitations of the vignettes and the variable organizational attractiveness might, at least partly, be an explanation for not finding an interaction effect between organizational attractiveness and chronotype in the current study.

Future Research

Since multiple studies (Thompson et al., 2015; Wörtler et al., 2021), including this study, found that blended working arrangements elicit a greater perceived organizational attractiveness, future research could focus more on implementing this relationship in a non-experimental setting. Examining this effect in a real-world setting would increase the external validity of the relationship. When using a more real-world situation future research could look if job offers that offer blended working arrangement would actually attract more applicants. This could then also be used to look at whether employees would really pursue this particular job, and not only find the job 'attractive'.

Furthermore, a possibility for future research is to extend the present findings by examining a variable that is less passive than organizational attractiveness. For example, to measure the liking of particular working arrangements at a job, job satisfaction could be used to measure an individuals' actual current satisfaction and liking of the blended working arrangements and not the possible attractiveness of an organization. This way the setting of the arrangements is also less hypothetical. Additionally, it could be checked whether blended working arrangements have the same effect on job satisfaction as they have on organizational attractiveness.

Lastly, to accustom working arrangements to individuals with different circadian rhythms, future research could look into the performance curve of employees. Which is according to Pierce and Newstrom (1980) different for every individual. Performance curves could be a less subjective construct than chronotype but it is still very closely related as people with different chronotypes perform best at different moments of the day.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in general blended working arrangements are found to make an organization more attractive. Given the pandemic it is, however, even more important to find a solution to let blended working function at its best for every individual. The lack of evidence found for chronotype to be a moderator in the relationship between blended working and organizational attractiveness does not take away that more research into the individual characteristics and preference is necessary. Because of the pandemic it is very important to find a solution to let blended working function at its best for every individual. Either way, pandemic or not, implementing blended working arrangements in an organization seems like a good way to increase the attraction of your current employees and might also attract more applicants.

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Table 1

Correlations of Organizational Attractiveness 1 (blended working condition), Organizational Attractiveness 2 (traditional working condition), and Chronotype

	OA_1	OA_2
OA_1		
OA_2	.11	
Chronotype	.04	-.06

Appendix

Vignettes used for the organizations with different blended working arrangements

Imagine that in a few years from now, when you will be graduating from university, you will be seeking employment. You are given the information below about two companies which offer an entry-level job without leadership requirements and are deciding whether or not to pursue employment with either one. Please read the descriptions of the companies carefully and answer the questions that follow each description.

Company DCE (blended working condition):

Salary & promotion

A competitive salary and opportunities for promotion based on performance.

Benefits package

A benefits package including a retirement fund and paid time-off in the event of sickness.

Next to this, employees will receive a work phone which can be used privately.

Training

Employees will receive job-relevant training at the start of their employment.

Working arrangement

Employees are free to work at any time and day they want to, provided that they get their work done. They can also choose, at any time, where they work (e.g. work from home or any other place convenient to them).

- This implies that employees frequently interact with co-workers and supervisors through information- and communication technologies such as video and phone calls and shared online documents.

Company JIK (traditional working condition):

Salary & promotion

A competitive salary and opportunities for promotion based on performance.

Benefits package

A benefits package including a retirement fund and paid time-off in the event of sickness.

Next to this, employees will receive a work phone which can be used privately.

Training

Employees will receive job-relevant training at the start of their employment.

Working arrangement

Employees work a fixed schedule (from 9am till 5pm) from Monday to Friday. They are required to always work in their designated office, at the company's office building.

- This implies that employees typically interact with co-workers and supervisors in person such as on the work floor and during meetings at the office.