

**Blended Working and Intrinsic Motivation: What is the role of Extraversion?**

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Group 05

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## Abstract

The spread of blended working has increased vastly over recent years, with the COVID-19 pandemic further enabling employees to work from home. This study aims to investigate the relationship between blended working and intrinsic motivation, specifically the anticipated intrinsic motivation to work for an organization. As such, we are able to expand on previous research that has highlighted the existence of an association between these variables. Alongside this, we investigate the moderating effect of extraversion on this relationship; providing novel insight into whether levels of extraversion impact the relationship between blended working and intrinsic motivation. 196 first-year psychology students at the University of Groningen were recruited and administered a questionnaire regarding blended working, intrinsic motivation, and extraversion in a one-factor (blended working: present vs absent) within-subject experimental design. A repeated-measures analysis of covariance (RM-ANCOVA) revealed a significant main effect of blended working on intrinsic motivation but a non-significant moderation effect of extraversion. Precisely, the analysis shows the presence of a relationship between blended working and intrinsic motivation, but no specific level of extraversion was shown to alter this association. It would be useful for subsequent research to expand on the presence of a moderation by investigating other personal characteristics, whilst focusing on a working population for better representation.

*Keywords:* blended working, intrinsic motivation, extraversion, the moderation effect

### **Blended Working and Intrinsic Motivation: What is the role of Extraversion?**

Time and location-independent working has grown vastly in recent years, with the COVID-19 pandemic being an accelerating factor regarding the spread of flexible working arrangements (Chartered Management Institute, 2020; Kniffin et al., 2020). Blended working is a form of flexible working, which incorporates both on-site and off-site working and has been shown to boost work motivation, satisfaction, and productivity (van Yperen et al., 2016; van Yperen & Wörtler, 2017). Although deviations from traditional working presents challenges, blended working proposes a new reality capable of revolutionizing work practices (Troll et al., 2021; Kramer & Kramer, 2020; Mark et al., 2022).

Blended working is classified as smooth time- and location-independent working in which employees shift between working in the office and working from another location, such as their house, at any time (van Yperen & Wörtler, 2017); it offers employees the opportunity to decide “when, where and how to work” (van Yperen & Wörtler, 2017, pp. 159). Employees are able to balance their responsibilities through spatial and/or temporal flexibility, thus facilitating management of the modern-day, changing workforce (Shockey & Allen, 2012). One of its principal elements includes the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), which enables employees to remain contactable by employers and colleagues, whilst also controlling technology use to form firm boundaries and a balance between their work and personal life (Ramos et al., 2020; Attaran et al., 2019; Beauregard et al., 2019). Blended working was found to be most successful when ensuring opportunities for face-to-face communication, support, and knowledge exchange (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012).

Although not ideal for all employees, those who engage in blended working are able to experience the favorable results it has to offer. Studies on blended working have demonstrated

that employees engaging with blended work perform better and experience lower levels of job-related stress due to flexible working hours and location, thus positively impacting overall work productivity (Beauregard et al., 2019). In line with this, the flexibility of blended working is capable of increasing job autonomy, which is fundamental in coping with the job demands present in the modern-day workforce (Beauregard et al., 2019; van Yperen et al., 2016). As such, many organizations remain eager to preserve aspects of blended working as they emerge from the pandemic (Chartered Management Institute, 2021).

This increase of blended working within organizations has enabled a better understanding of factors contributing to a successful blended working experience (Ramos et al., 2020). We aim to shed light on the relationship between blended working and intrinsic motivation. We focus on exploring the increase in motivation that can result from blended working and the benefits resulting from this, such as successfully dealing with job demands (Ahmad et al., 2013; van Yperen et al., 2016).

A limited amount of research has focused on investigating the factors moderating the relationships of blended working, therefore, we examine the moderating effect of extraversion on the relationship between blended working and intrinsic motivation. This allows us to highlight how different levels of extraversion impact blended working (Gainey & Clenney, 2006).

### **Blended Working and Intrinsic Motivation**

Research on blended working has highlighted intrinsic motivation as one of the essential, determining factors for the success of blended working (Ramos et al., 2020). Intrinsic motivation is defined as the internal factors driving employees to work harder (Caillier, 2012). Here, the intrinsic motivation variable refers to the anticipated intrinsic motivation to work in an

organization; precisely, the intrinsic motivation each participant expects to have within different blended working and traditional working organizations.

According to Hamilton (2002), intrinsic motivation within blended working enables employees to determine their own work schedules without depending on the control of an employer; how successful this is, has been thoroughly investigated by multiple researchers. Autonomy, such as that resulting from determining one's own work schedule, is a key aspect of blended working, which has been demonstrated to generate significantly higher levels of work motivation and increased workplace productivity (Ahmad et al., 2013; Caillier, 2012; van Yperen et al., 2016; Shockley & Allen, 2012; Ramos et al., 2020). Setiyani et al. (2019) concluded that work environments are influential on employee motivation; blended working, specifically, allows employees to deal with job demands in a comfortable and less-stress inducing condition, consequently elevating the employees' motivation level (Ahmad et al. 2013). This was further explored by van Yperen et al. (2016), in which similar results were found, illustrating that a perceived opportunity for blended working increases intrinsic motivation.

In line with this theorizing, we hypothesize a positive main effect of blended working arrangements on intrinsic motivation.

*H<sub>1</sub>*. There is a positive main effect between blended working arrangements on intrinsic motivation.

### **Moderating effect of Extraversion**

Although not ideal for everyone, blended working is capable of improving work-life balance for many (van Yperen et al., 2016; Beauregard et al., 2019); employees can manage the demands of their professional and personal lives by working on their own schedules (Beauregard et al., 2019; Ahmad et al., 2013). A large body of research has investigated which type of

individuals are most likely to be receptive to blended working arrangements (Ahmadi et al., 2000; Clark et al., 2012; van Yperen et al., 2016). Wörtler et al. (2020) highlighted how when comparing blended working and traditional working arrangements, employees with different characteristics vary on their perception of how appealing blended working arrangements are.

Psychological models and theories, such as the person-environment fit theory as proposed by Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) and expanded on by Van Vianen (2018), assumes that an individual and their environment should be compatible to ensure that the characteristics complement one another. This fit can take two forms; either through similarity between the individual and the attributes of their environment, or through personal attributes complemented by their environment (Van Vianen, 2018). When there is a fit, there will be an increase in consistency, happiness, and satisfaction. In line with this, person-organization fit posits that “individuals are attracted to, selected by and stay in organizations that match their personal attributes” (Van Vianen, 2018, pp. 79). For example, those high in extraversion prefer environments that are highly stimulating and that enable social interactions (Clark et al., 2012). Therefore, when organizations provide an extraverted employee with optimal work conditions, they are able to experience the most satisfactory work environment.

Here, personality is defined as the individual differences between patterns of feelings, thought, and behavior that manifest themselves through various traits and thus differentiate individuals from one another (Cherry, 2022). Extraversion is characterized through sociability, excitability, talkativeness, and assertiveness and is highly correlated with goals of status, power, and self-enhancement (Cherry, 2022; Wilmot et al., 2019). The relationship between blended working and extraversion has previously been found to be negative; due to the characteristics associated with extraversion, working away from the office leads to decreased perceived

opportunities for interaction, which may not be desirable (Gainey & Clenney, 2006; Clark et al., 2012).

As such, we hypothesize that extraversion will have a negative moderating effect on the relationship between blended working and intrinsic motivation. We predict that the relationship between blended working arrangements and intrinsic motivation is negative when extraversion is high. Contrastingly, the relationship between blended working arrangements and intrinsic motivation is expected to be positive when extraversion is low.

*H<sub>2</sub>*. Extraversion has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between blended working arrangements and intrinsic motivation.

## Methods

### Participants and Design

The original sample consisted of 219 participants with two quality control checks to ensure that the experiment was successful. The data of 23 participants were omitted either due to insufficient responses being deemed unusable for the study or due to incompleteness of the study. This resulted in the final sample of 196 participants. The sample consisted of first-year psychology students from the international and Dutch tracks at the University of Groningen. The sample was largely female ( $n = 154$ ), followed by males ( $n = 40$ ), and lastly non-binary ( $n = 2$ ). On average, participants were between the ages of 17 and 35 ( $M = 19.74$ ,  $SD = 2.165$ ) and were mainly native Dutch speakers ( $n = 104$ ), native German speakers ( $n = 30$ ), or have other native languages ( $n = 62$ ). For the purpose of the study, participants were asked about their previous work experience; indicating that they either currently have a job ( $n = 82$ ), have had a job in the past ( $n = 80$ ), or have never had a job ( $n = 34$ ). All participants completed a voluntary questionnaire in English where an experimental survey study using a one-factorial (blended

working arrangements: present vs. absent) within-subjects design was conducted; they were compensated with course credit upon completion.

## **Procedure**

The study was conducted via an online SONA system where participants completed a questionnaire; their responses were recorded via Qualtrics, a web-based data collection tool. Participants gave their consent prior to completing the questionnaire. Subsequently, they were administered a scale measuring extraversion followed by providing socio-demographic information about their gender, age, living situation, occupation, and native language. Lastly, they were administered an experimental manipulation of blended working arrangements. Following this manipulation, intrinsic motivation was measured.

## **Materials**

### ***The Next Big Five Inventory (BFI-2)***

The second version of the Big-5 Personality Trait Inventory (BFI-2) was used to measure Extraversion (Soto & John, 2017). The subscale measuring extraversion comprises 12 items each and all items were measured on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. The item scores were averaged after recording reversed items. A higher score on the Likert scale indicates more pronounced extraversion. Our study results report good reliability for Extraversion, with a Cronbach's alpha value of  $\alpha = .87$  (Bland & Altman, 1997).

### ***Blended Working Arrangements***

Blended working arrangements (present vs. absent) were manipulated using the vignette methodology: a brief and carefully constructed description of a hypothetical situation (Anguinis & Bradley, 2014). First, the participants were instructed to imagine a situation in which they are searching for a job in their field of interest after having left university following the pandemic.



Consistent with the experimental design, the participants were administered two vignettes, each of which described a hypothetical organization: one that offered a blended working arrangement and one that did not.

Blended working arrangements were described as one where employees worked on a flexible schedule in which they can choose when and from where they worked, through which contact with coworkers and employers was achieved via online platforms. Absent blended working arrangements were described as conventional working arrangements. The organization was described as one where employees work in an office on a fixed schedule from Monday to Friday, beginning at 9 am and ending at 5 pm. In addition to the working arrangement, both organizations included information about the employee's salary and the benefits they would receive when working at the respective organization. The information and wording were kept as similar as possible to each other and the vignettes were shown to the participant in a randomized order. See Appendix for the complete vignettes.

Following each vignette, participants completed a measure of intrinsic motivation. At the end of the procedure, they were also asked to fill out attention-check questions regarding the manipulation, which analyzed their perception of the vignettes, specifically whether they identified any differences between the organizations. The specific questions were "Did the organizations differ on whether the employees could decide where they could work?" and "Did the organizations differ on whether the employees could decide when they work?". Additionally, self-evaluation questions were asked which analyzed the participants' honest evaluation of their own participation in the study. The questions included "I sometimes randomly selected a response option in this study" and "I was honest in all my responses".

### ***Intrinsic Motivation***

The work-related flow inventory (WOLF) was used to measure intrinsic motivation (Bakker, 2007). The questions were reformulated to ensure that participants were asked about their anticipated intrinsic work motivation to work in an organization. The reformulated questions were kept as similar as possible, with the word “would” being implemented into each question. For example, “I would enjoy working in this organization” and “I would be open to working in this organization, even if I had to work during my free time”. Additionally, a Likert scale between 1 and 5 where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree was used. The study results demonstrated good reliability for traditional working ( $\alpha = .71$ ) and moderate reliability for blended working ( $\alpha = .69$ ) (Bland & Altman, 1997). Upon testing the reliability with the removal of item five from the blended working arrangement, only a marginal increase was found ( $\alpha = .70$ ). Consequently, the decision was made to keep all items in the statistical analysis.

## **Results**

A repeated measures analysis of covariance (RM-ANCOVA) was carried out in SPSS, a statistical analysis software program, to test our hypotheses investigating the presence of a main and moderation effect. It is important to note that the moderating variable, extraversion, was analyzed as a covariate in order to conduct the RM-ANCOVA. Prior to this, the means of extraversion were centered, this ensured no multicollinearity between independent variables.

Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics of the relevant variables in our study, namely blended working in the context of intrinsic motivation, traditional working in the context of intrinsic motivation and extraversion as a moderating variable. As seen in the table, participants scored high on extraversion. Additionally, participants found organizations more attractive when blended working arrangements were offered in comparison to when traditional working arrangements were offered.

**Table 1***Descriptive Statistics*

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Blended		3.55	.61
Working_Intrinsic Motivation			
Traditional		2.80	.67
Working_Intrinsic Motivation			
Extraversion		3.30	.75
Valid N (listwise)	196		

Furthermore, prior to conducting the analysis, the assumptions of a repeated-measures analysis of covariance (RM-ANCOVA) had to be checked. The appropriate assumptions included normality and a linear relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable at all levels of the independent variable. The assumption of sphericity does not apply to our study as we only have one within-subject variable pair, thus comparisons between pairs cannot be made. The assumption of normality is visually interpreted through quantile-quantile (Q-Q) plots; slight deviations from normality were observed. Additionally, the assumption of linear relationships is visible through scatter plots; they enable the visual interpretation of the linear relationship between extraversion and intrinsic motivation for both blended working arrangements and traditional working arrangements. Overall, the assumptions of normality and

linear relationships appear to hold to enough degree, enabling an RM-ANCOVA to be conducted to test our hypotheses.

### Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis one investigates the existence of a positive relationship between blended working arrangements and intrinsic motivation. A significant main effect is found ( $F(1, 194) = 137.36, p = .00, \eta_p^2 = 0.42$ ) (see table 2).

Hypothesis two tests whether there was a moderating effect of extraversion on the relationship between blended working arrangements and intrinsic motivation. We hypothesized that extraversion would negatively alter the association between blended working and intrinsic motivation; the results indicate no significant moderation effect for extraversion on this relationship ( $F(1, 194) = 0.25, p = .62, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ) (see table 2).

**Table 2**

*Test of Within-Subjects Effects*

Source		df	F	Sig.	Partial-Eta Squared
Work	Sphericity Assumed	1	137.36	.00	.42
Arrangement	Greenhouse-Geisser	1.0			
Work	Sphericity Assumed	1	.25	.62	.00
Arrangement*	Greenhouse-Geisser	1.0			
Extraversion					
Error (Work	Sphericity Assumed	194			
Arrangement)	Greenhouse-Geisser	194.00			

- a. Computed using  $\alpha = .05$

### **Discussion**

In the present study, we aimed to further explore the relationship between blended working arrangements and intrinsic motivation, whilst accounting for the moderating effect of extraversion. There are two key findings from this study.

Firstly, there is a significant relationship between blended working arrangements and intrinsic motivation, supporting hypothesis one. The significant effect of blended working arrangements on intrinsic motivation is consistent with the results found in van Yperen et al. (2016), which concluded that a perceived opportunity for blended working increases intrinsic motivation. Subsequent research, such as Ahmad et al. (2013) and Setiyani et al. (2019), found similar results, highlighting how work environments such as blended working, are influential on intrinsic motivation.

Secondly, regardless of levels of extraversion, no moderating effect was found; thus, not supporting hypothesis two. Although the moderation effect of extraversion had not been previously investigated, the results obtained were inconsistent with previous results from studies investigating the relationship between extraversion and blended working. For example, Gainey & Clenney (2006) found a negative relationship between extraversion and blended working. On the other hand, previous studies had found that individuals high in extraversion have been shown to be more open to working under blended working arrangements, indicating how extraversion could be beneficial for blended working (Gainey & Clenney, 2006). As such, existing literature presents ambiguous findings surrounding extraversion and its connection to blended working. Nonetheless, the person-environment fit theory provides insight into the need for an employee

and the work environment to be compatible; an extraverted employee requires a work environment that enables frequent social interactions (Clark et al., 2012).

### **Study Implications, Strengths, and Limitations**

The study itself contributes significantly to the general field of industrial and organizational psychology as it enables us to identify the employee characteristics that help a blended working organization to function optimally. Accordingly, the use of the person-environment fit theory was insightful as it provides a theoretical understanding of the types of individuals who form ideal employees for a blended working organization; it is a useful theory to explain how individuals may differ in whether they should or should not work in a blended working organization.

The present study represents a first attempt to address the moderating role of extraversion in relation to blended working; therefore, novel insight is gained into the role extraversion plays in a blended working organization. Additionally, use of the vignette methodology allows us to remove the possible influence of confounding variables that are present in real-world situations. Similarly, it makes the situation as comparable to a real-world situation as possible when no access to individuals who work in a blended working organization is provided.

However, several limitations must be mentioned concerning the study's experimental conditions. One of the main limitations is the sample of participants chosen. Namely, only first-year psychology students from the University of Groningen were used and the age range of participants was quite large. Similarly, the participant pool used does not have adequate and fundamental experience working in an organization. As a result, they may be unable to provide appropriate results as they must use their imagination when thinking about working in a blended working environment. This restricted pool of participants inhibits generalizability to other

populations, therefore resulting in a low external validity. Had the sample consisted of participants who work for a blended working organization, it is likely that the results could have reflected higher generalizability.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Prior to conducting our research, no studies investigated the moderating effect of extraversion on blended working. Therefore, it would be of value for future research to investigate whether there is a moderating effect of extraversion in the workplace. This moderation could be further investigated in an organization that implements both blended and traditional working; this could generate consistency between conditions and higher external validity. In this way, the findings could be more generalizable to real-world contexts.

Additionally, it would be of value to investigate other individual difference variables, such as openness to experience and need for relatedness, and contrast the results to identify how other personal characteristics may moderate the relationship of blended working. In line with this, other dependent variables, such as job satisfaction and autonomy, could be further analyzed. Blended working has been found to improve overall organizational performance, which can in turn positively impact an employees' satisfaction (van Yperen & Wörtler, 2017; Golden, 2006). Similarly, it has been found to be most suitable for individuals with a high need for autonomy as it enables them to deal with job demands (van Yperen & Wörtler, 2017; van Yperen et al., 2016). Investigating other dependent variables could enhance the understanding of blended working, explore the positive and negative effects it can have on employees within an organization, and thus provide insight into how it can impact the organization as a whole.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, despite the non-significant moderating effect found, the study itself is not insignificant. The significant main effect provides supporting evidence towards a relationship between blended working and intrinsic motivation. If this study is to be replicated for supplementary research, the limitations and implications mentioned above should undoubtedly be considered. Overall, future research could be of substantial value to investigate and provide further evidence for the research topic at hand.



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## Appendix

### Working Arrangement Vignettes

#### Organization DCE

##### Salary:

- A competitive salary is offered, with opportunities for bonuses based on performance

##### Benefits package:

- A work phone and a laptop are provided for work and private use
- 30 vacation days per year

##### Work arrangement:

- Employees can choose when they do their work provided that they get it done, and they may, at any time, determine their work location, for example work from home, in a café, or in the office
- This work arrangement implies that meetings, collaborations, and general contact with coworkers and supervisors will frequently be achieved through information and communication technology / online platforms

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the statements below, with regard to organization DCE.

#### Organization JIK

##### Salary:

- A competitive salary is offered, with opportunities for bonuses based on performance

##### Benefits package:

- A work phone and a laptop are provided for work and private use
- 30 vacation days per year

Work arrangement:

- Employees work a fixed / regular schedule from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, and they are required to work at their office in the organization
- This work arrangement implies that meetings, collaborations, and general contact with coworkers and supervisors will usually be in person at the organization's site

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the statements below, with regard to organization JIK.