

The presumed effect of Conscientiousness on the Relationship Between Blended Working and Anticipated Stress

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Abstract

Blended work, describing the possibility to flexibly decide the work time and workplace has been gaining more attention in recent years. These type of working arrangements has been linked to positive outcomes such as increased satisfaction or lower stress levels. The person-environment fit model proposes that personal and environmental attributes together create a state of fit that promotes positive outcomes, while a misfit would result in negative outcomes such as elevated levels of stress. Previous research inquiring about the role of conscientiousness and work in general has found paradoxical results, especially regarding stress levels. That is why we want to test whether conscientiousness moderates the relationship between blended work and anticipated stress. This vignette study made use of a one factorial within- subject repeated measures design. Our sample consisted of 126 first year students, each of which were presented with two scales measuring conscientiousness and anticipated stress, as well as two vignettes describing blended and traditional working characteristics. The results supported the hypothesized negative effect of blended work on anticipated stress levels. The second hypothesis regarding the moderation effect could not be supported. Our relatively strong main effect showed support for previous findings of positive effects resulting from blended work. These findings implied that blended work could be important for interventions and positive changes regarding stress levels, as well as for the design and adaptation of occupations.

Keywords: Conscientiousness, anticipated stress, Blended working

The presumed Effect of Conscientiousness on the Relationship between Blended working and Anticipated Stress

The use of blended work and simultaneous reliance on information and communication technology (ICT) have increased in the last years (van Yperen & Wörtler, 2017). Especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, organizations were forced to change their working arrangements, resulting in the need to relocate employees and engage in working remotely. While telework usually describes a working concept that allows employees to conduct their work in another place than the office and depends on the use of ICT's, it still retains a fixed working schedule including days where work is still conducted from the office (Garrett & Danziger, 2007). A similar way of working which has been receiving more attention, is the concept of blended working. As constant stress can have detrimental effects on the employees' health, as well as on their work performance, it is important to determine who would perceive less stress while engaging in specific working arrangements like blended work. As such, the aim of this paper is to assess for whom this type of working arrangement could be beneficial. Therefore, we are going to analyze the relationship between blended working and anticipated stress, as well as the effect of conscientiousness on this relationship.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984, as cited in You et al., 2020, p.1090) described stress as a psychological state in which an individual perceives that personal or environmental demands exceed their coping resources. In line with this argumentation, Finney et al. (2013) proposed that job stress is the subjective experience of psychological distress which arises from encountering individual and job stressors. This experience of stress can lead to adverse outcomes such as reduced job satisfaction, health problems, accidents at the workplace, or diminished motivation (Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004).

Furthermore, Igarria and Guimares (1999) noted, that flexible working arrangements were shown to be related to lower work stress levels, due to the decreased possibility of encountering job stressors, such as job dissatisfaction, anxiety, or burnout (Schaufeli &

Peeters, 2000). As blended work provides employees with the possibility to construct their own work schedule, it provides them with a sense of autonomy as well as the impression that their supervisors trust them. Both factors could be utilized as job resources by the employees to cope with work life interruptions and the resulting stress response.

As described by van Yperen and Wörtler (2017), blended work combines on-site and off-site working by providing the employee with the possibility of time- and place- flexibility. When engaging in such working arrangements, employees are enabled to flexibly decide when and from where they want to complete their workload, providing them with job resources such as time, job autonomy or job variety, helping them deal with stressors (Solomon et al., 2021). Being confronted with an overwhelming number of stressors could lead to a depletion of resources, causing an individual to experience increased levels of stress (Lin et al., 2015). Research has shown that the more resources an employee has at their disposal, the easier it is for him or her to manage stressful situations, thus resulting in lower stress levels (Solomon et al., 2021). Furthermore, the possibility to exert control over their working time and place offered by blended working arrangements provides employees with an enhanced sense of autonomy. Claessens et al. (2004) noted that individuals with high autonomy also experience increased control over their situation, leading them to experience less strain as well as more satisfaction. Perceived control may additionally serve as a resource to help deal with and reduce the effects of work stressors (Vander Elst et al. 2014) Another important aspect that influences levels of stress are job demands, such as working hours, task pressure, job intensity, and time urgency (Solomon et al. 2021). High demands in combination with low control are generally regarded as work stressors, which can have negative consequences on an employee's health and stress levels (Magnussen- Hanson et al. 2014). These findings indicate that the autonomy provided by blended working arrangements could increase feelings of control, providing employees with an additional job resource, to reduce

perceived demands as well as stress levels. Evidence has shown that job stress can have detrimental effects on the health and performance of employees. As Raghuram and Wiesenfeld (2004) indicated, employees seemed to benefit from virtual work as they experienced lower job stress and lower non-work interferences. Based on the evidence provided by Raghuram and Wiesenfeld (2004), as well as the findings concerning perceived control as a resource to lessen demands (Vander Elst et al. 2014), the following hypothesis can be posed.

Hypothesis 1: Blended working arrangements have a negative effect on anticipated stress.

The person-environment fit theory is based on two components, namely personal attributes such as needs or values, and environmental attributes such as supplies and demands. As individuals have the innate need to fit into their environment based on their characteristics, the theory assumes that the fit between these two components predicts individual outcomes better than when considered on their own (van Vianen, 2018). Furthermore, van Vianen (2018) claims that individual outcomes and behavior will be most optimal when personal and environmental attributes are compatible irrespective of their magnitude. The same principle can be applied to the concept of misfit, meaning that if there is a perceived discrepancy between person and environment, positive outcomes will be reduced. Person-environment fit theory claims that an individual's resources and personal attributes need to be balanced with environmental attributes such as job demands, to decide who could benefit from blended working arrangements and for whom it could result in a misfit. Based on the claims proposed by the person-environment fit theory, we decided to include conscientiousness as a personality factor in addition to the dependent variable of anticipated stress. Previous research has indicated that conscientious individuals prefer flexible working arrangements when given the chance to decide on their own (Clark et al. 2012). Furthermore, conscientiousness has

been shown to be related to higher levels of perceived control (Ebstrup et al., 2011), resulting in lower levels of perceived stress. Ebstrup et al. (2011) indicated that this negative effect on stress was related to conscientious individuals being more likely to perceive events as challenges and not as threats.

The personality trait of conscientiousness was shown to be a strong predictor of job performance as well as an indicator for perseverance and thus a higher stress tolerance (Wilmot & Ones, 2019). In general, individuals who score higher on the conscientiousness dimension are perceived as achievement oriented, organized, dependable, and self-disciplined (Kaiseler et al., 2012). Highly conscientious workers report higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, as well as lower levels of perceived stress (Venkatesh et al., 2021). Conscientiousness can serve as a guide for employees on how to allocate their resources such as time or autonomy, in favor of dealing with work stressors (Lin et al., 2015). Employees high in conscientiousness appear more sensible to job stressors in that they can benefit from them, to achieve their goals of success and work accomplishment. A side effect of this sensibility is that employees are thus more susceptible to reduced opportunities to achieve their goals, which could arise through hindrance-stressors. Consequently, it is important to determine what situational and personal aspects they perceive as a hindrance.

Individuals who score higher on conscientiousness are willing to invest more personal resources such as energy and time to achieve their work-related goals (Ma et al., 2021). This willingness to invest more resources could potentially lead to positive work outcomes, but it could also lead to adverse effects on the employees' well-being and a depletion of personal resources, as they would be more prone to suffer from job stress (Lin et al., 2015). On the contrary, higher levels of conscientiousness were related to higher levels of perceived control (Kaiseler et al., 2012) which can be interpreted to lead to lower stress levels, as Karasek (1979) has shown that control can be viewed as a job resource to cope with demands and

stressors. Additionally, people who scored high on conscientiousness were reported to rely on more effective coping strategies that involved planning and making rational decisions, leading to beneficial outcomes such as lower stress levels (Kaiseler et al., 2012).

Proceeding from the previously discussed findings, we argue that a fit between an individual and blended work would lead to lower levels of stress, resulting in several positive aspects for the employee as well as for the employer. Additionally, in this context, we are interested in the effect the personal attribute of conscientiousness has on the relationship between blended work and anticipated stress levels as conscientiousness was related to the tendency to allocate more resources to reach specific organizational goals (Lin et al., 2015). Based on these findings, conscientiousness could result in lower or higher levels of anticipated stress for individuals.

To connect the assertions made by the person- environment fit theory with the research performed on stress we conclude the following: conscientiousness could affect the relationship of blended work and anticipated stress, either supporting a state of fit or possibly resulting in a state of misfit, undermining the importance to investigate the role of conscientiousness. Research performed by van Yperen and Wörtler (2017) has related blended work to positive effects such as higher perceived autonomy and thus an increased ability to cope with job demands, resulting from an increased amount of job resources. Due to the connections pointed out between lower stress levels and blended work, as well as conscientiousness in combination with the person- fit model, we decided to measure the effect of the personal attribute conscientiousness on the main relationship between the possibility of blended work and anticipated stress.

Hypothesis 2: We hypothesize that conscientiousness will have a negative moderating effect on the relationship between blended work and anticipated stress.

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

Conscientiousness

To assess the personal attribute of Conscientiousness, the participants were asked to rate the 12 Conscientiousness items, taken from the New Big Five Inventory (BFI-2) by Soto and John (2017). These 12 items had to be rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The scale had a high internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$). The scale included items such as "I am someone who is dependable" or reversed items such as "I am someone who tends to be disorganized". The reversed items were re-coded to compute an average including all items measured to obtain a scale score for conscientiousness, as well as the centered mean, which were needed for the main analysis.

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 (Appendix A). 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.

Anticipated Stress

To measure anticipated stress, we used the Work-Related Stress Scale by Cousins et al. (2004). The scale served as a template, of which we adjusted the demand and control items, in order to measure anticipated stress in both organizations. The participants were presented with 12 selected items from the Control and Demands domains of the scale, which were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

The demand items (e.g., "I would feel pressured to work long hours") and the control items (e.g., "I would have some say over the way I work") measured for the first company offering blended working arrangements had a high internal reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .86$ and a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .76$ respectively. The items measured for the second company offering traditional working arrangements also had high internal reliability scores for demands (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$), as well as control (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$). Additionally, we computed the average of all four measures to obtain the scale scores in order to compare the differences of the ratings for demands and control on both levels.

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 the individual difference variable, to measure their scores on conscientiousness. 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, anticipated intrinsic motivation, and anticipated stress. The participants finalized the study by completing the attention checks and the items checking on their self-rated response quality.

Results

Main Analysis

We tested the effect of working arrangements on stress by conducting a repeated measures Analysis of Covariance (RM- ANCOVA). The measure of working arrangements consisted of two levels, blended working arrangements being present and blended working arrangements being absent, which are described as traditional working arrangements. After a visual inspection of Q-Q plots, it can be said that the assumption of normality and the assumption of homoscedasticity appear not to be violated. The performed analysis showed that the level of blended working arrangements being present did not have a significant effect on anticipated stress compared to the level of traditional working arrangements, judging from the measure of demands $F(1, 124) = 1.213, p = .273$ as well as the small effect size of $\eta^2_p = .01$. In contrast to that, being presented with blended working arrangements did have a significant effect on the measure of control $F(1, 124) = 387.014, p < .001$, supported by a high effect size of $\eta^2_p = .75$. In accordance with these findings, the vignette describing blended working arrangements being present yielded slightly lower ratings in the demand's domain ($M = 3.44$), compared to the demand ratings for the traditional working arrangements ($M = 3.58$). In contrast to that, the scores of the control domain for blended working arrangements were higher with a mean of $M = 5.77$, while traditional working arrangements resulted in a mean score of $M = 3.47$. The results showed support for our first hypothesis that blended working arrangements would have an overall negative effect on anticipated stress, indicated by lower ratings in the demands domain in combination with higher ratings in the control domain.

Moderator Analysis

Prior to inspecting the results, we tested the assumption of linearity between our moderator conscientiousness and the dependent measures through visual observation of scatterplots. In addition to that, we computed bivariate correlations between the covariate and

the dependent measures. We found only a weak positive correlation between the measure of control for the blended work arrangements and conscientiousness ($r = .07$), while the measure of demands for blended work showed a weak negative relationship with $r = -.13$. Both, the measure of demands ($r = -.124$) and the measure of control ($r = -.053$) for traditional work showed only weak negative correlations with conscientiousness. These findings are also visible in the created scatter plots indicating that, as there are only weak correlations, there is no linear relationship (see Figure 1-4). In addition to controlling for the hypothesized negative main effect of blended working arrangements on anticipated stress, indicated by the mean scores of the demands and control items, we furthermore included the variable of conscientiousness as a covariate in the RM- ANCOVA. The resulting output indicated that there was no significant effect between levels of blended working arrangements and conscientiousness on demands $F(1,124) = .047, p = .829$., which was also confirmed through a small effect size of $\eta^2_p = .00$. Similarly, the tested interaction between blended working arrangements and conscientiousness on the measure of control did not yield a significant effect $F(1,124) = .929, p = .337$, with a correspondingly small effect size of $\eta^2_p = .01$. Judging from these results, we can conclude that there is no significant interaction effect between the personal attribute of conscientiousness and blended working arrangements, as well as traditional working arrangements on anticipated stress. However, due to the findings indicated by the correlations, as well as the scatterplots, these results should be regarded with caution.

Discussion

We performed this study to inquire about whether blended work would influence anticipated stress, and if this relationship would be moderated by the personality trait of conscientiousness. The goal was to determine for whom blended working arrangements would be beneficial, as our working environment is facing more and more changes due to the continuing improvements of information and communication technologies, as well as other factors such as the COVID- 19 pandemic. As our study has shown, blended work arrangements had a negative effect on anticipated stress compared to traditional working arrangements, thus providing support for our first hypothesis. While our results showed support for the first hypothesis regarding the main effect between blended work and anticipated stress, we were not able to find support for the second hypothesis.

Several studies found a connection between blended work and stress levels, due to the autonomy and perceived control that goes along with this type of working arrangement (van Yperen &Wörtler, 2017). Judging from the relatively strong main effect we found between blended work and anticipated stress levels, we are inclined to support the notion that blended work seems to result in several positive outcomes, such as satisfaction and lower stress levels.

Extensive research has been performed to assess the role of conscientiousness in relation to working environments. Although research has mostly focused on situational factors regarding flexible work, some studies concerning personality traits have found that conscientiousness was strongly related to preferring flexible working arrangements over traditional, or less flexible working arrangements (Clark et al. 2012). Similarly, conscientiousness was positively related job performance in a flexible work context (Hoffmann et al. 2021). Like Ebstrup et al. (2011) or Ma et al. (2021) discussed, many found that conscientious individuals were perceived to be achievement- striving and goal oriented, resulting in the so-called paradox of consciousness. These attributes lead to individuals

perceiving either lower or higher levels of stress due to their tendency to invest more resources to attain a goal than others.

Even though conscientiousness has often been found to influence attitudes at work, as well as consequences of work attitudes, we were not able to find a significant interaction effect regarding conscientiousness in our study. A possible explanation for not finding a significant interaction effect could be the violation of linearity between conscientiousness and anticipated stress. We found no linear relationship and only weak correlations between these measures, which implies that these results need to be regarded with caution.

Another potential explanation for the insignificance of our interaction effect could be, that the personal attribute we included was too specific. Personality is broadly faceted, consisting of connections between several traits which are influenced by the situations we encounter. Including more than one personality trait could have resulted in a greater fit and thus led to significant results, as it would have taken more variations and possible influences into account.

Study Implications

The study design including vignettes did seem to serve our purpose, especially in combination with our chosen sample, as we were able to find a significant main effect between blended work and anticipated stress levels. While the vignettes were useful to illustrate what blended working arrangements look like in comparison to traditional working arrangements, fit or possible fit might have not been as pronounced as it could have been with a different study design, such as in-field experiments. As our results have shown, offering blended working reduces anticipated stress, which could be an appealing aspect for future employees but also for currently employed individuals. This aspect could be useful in designing future job possibilities or to administer changes in already existing occupations, to facilitate favorable outcomes and to reduce negative consequences of stress. As our findings

indicated minor differences in the perception of demands between blended work being present or absent, focusing on reducing demands by offering more social as well as managerial support could be a useful starting point for interventions. Furthermore, practitioners could offer their employees more control over their situation to provide them with additional resources to cope with job demand, like increased autonomy and control (Vander Elst et al. 2014).

It is furthermore an interesting aspect that should be considered, especially regarding the current situation of COVID measurements affecting our working and learning environment. Many people had to start working from home and had to adapt to the increasing necessity of using technologies (Mouratidis & Papagiannakis, 2021). The findings of studies researching the effect of blended working could be utilized by employers and employees to administer changes to their occupations, as they indicate what measures could be utilized as potential points for alterations. Employers could furthermore use this information to decide, which employees are more amenable to adapt to a restructuring of the working environment, especially as we are often forced to make changes to accommodate to external factors, or to increase productivity and satisfaction. These possibilities strengthen our assumption that contextual factors are more inconsistent than personality traits and could be thus better suited as a basis for adaptations as well as interventions.

Limitations and Future directions

The present study used a sample of first year students and while the majority of participants reported to possess working experience, their ratings could have been influenced as they are currently not mainly employed and probably did not have much experience with blended working arrangements yet. At the same time, a sample consisting of students could be useful for organizations, as it shows what future employees might find attractive. Thus, the

results could be used as a guide to adapt their job offers to make the organization more interesting and attractive for prospective employees.

Another aspect that could have been a limiting factor is that we used vignettes to depict the two levels of working arrangements. This design has been a useful method to describe what blended working arrangements being present theoretically could look like compared to them being absent. Nonetheless, actively experiencing blended working arrangements in reality could have led to a better understanding and potentially to a greater fit.

Taking our results and our evaluation into consideration, future research could focus more on designing in-field experiments or even longitudinal studies. Longitudinal studies would provide researchers with the possibility of observing how several personal or contextual variables can influence the effects of blended work over different time points. Moreover, longitudinal studies could also be used to investigate which individuals profit from engaging in blended work continually and not only for a short time interval. In-field experiments would be useful to study the influence of personality traits and individual characteristics in realistic settings, possibly being able to create a greater fit as well as increasing the ecological validity of the study. Performing more extensive research including designs like these could be a useful guide on how to effectively implement more blended working arrangements. Samples including the current workforce would be especially useful for this, regardless of the study design used. Employers who do not offer blended working arrangements could utilize these studies to determine if including these job characteristics would be profitable for them, before having to administer any changes. Administering such changes comes with risks and costs, like increased dissatisfaction and turnover intentions. Thus, determining the potential benefits before implementing them would also be valuable from an economic standpoint. Nevertheless, student samples could still be used to inquire

what would be regarded as an appealing occupation, especially considering the continual changes in technologies and other contextual factors influencing our working environment, like for example societal changes in values.

Future research might find in-field experiments more fitting to investigate the relationship between blended work and anticipated, or in that case perceived, stress. Considering the insignificant effect of our moderator variable conscientiousness, future studies could more extensively study the effect of personality traits and needs on the effectiveness of specific working arrangements. Such findings could then be used to gain more information about the effectiveness and consequences of blended work in combination with different personal or contextual factors. At the same time, this could also be used to inquire about the effect of specific traits and needs on any form of working arrangement, providing the possibility of creating greater fit for employees by, for example, adapting their job to their needs.

Instead of choosing a personality trait, focusing on needs that are part of and shared by every human being, such as the need for autonomy or relatedness (van Yperen & Wörtler, 2017), may have produced more pronounced results. Needs are not as faceted as a personality trait such as conscientiousness and could thus have a bigger impact on the person-environment fit by themselves. As needs are a universal concept, taking them into account could also benefit much more people at once, than focusing on individual parts of personality.

Another possibility that needs to be regarded is, that contextual factors could potentially result in a greater impact on anticipated stress and thus lead to a significant interaction effect. As we have already indicated, contextual factors like working equipment, attitudes, or the workplace itself are more likely to change and are much more susceptible to external influences (e.g., the COVID- 19 pandemic) or deliberate changes such as hiring new employees

Conclusion

This study was performed to investigate for whom blended work could be beneficial, as well as to gain further insight into possible positive outcomes of blended working arrangements. We were able to find a significant effect of blended work on anticipated stress levels, increasing feelings of control and slightly decreasing perceived demands. These measured differences can be a useful basis in terms of designing future studies as well as intervention strategies. Blended working arrangements appear to be a useful concept if we want to adapt to the changing environment and working circumstances, especially because of the relatively strong effect blended work had on perceived control. As this study could not find support for the hypothesized interaction effect, it would be interesting to examine whether more extensive research including more than one personality trait could find an interaction effect. Additionally, instead of investigating personality traits, shifting the focus on other factors such as needs, or contextual factors could also be valuable for future research. Furthermore, designing in- field experiments would be a possible way to utilize the current findings to increase the chance of creating a greater fit and thus finding a significant interaction effect. Finally, these study's findings were in line with previous research and further provided support for the importance and benefit of implementing blended working arrangements, especially regarding continuous changes and developments at the workplace.

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Figure 1

Scatterplot of the conscientiousness mean vs the Demand1 mean

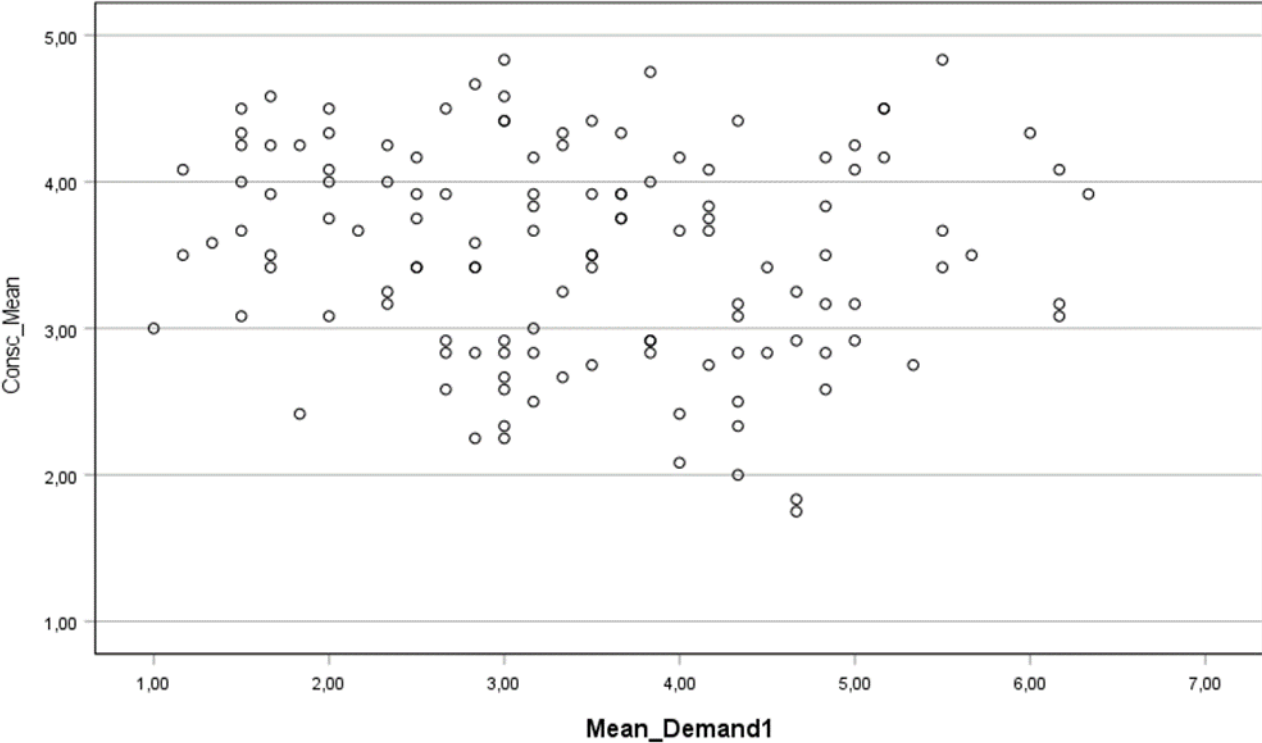


Figure 2

Scatterplot of the conscientiousness mean vs the Control1 mean

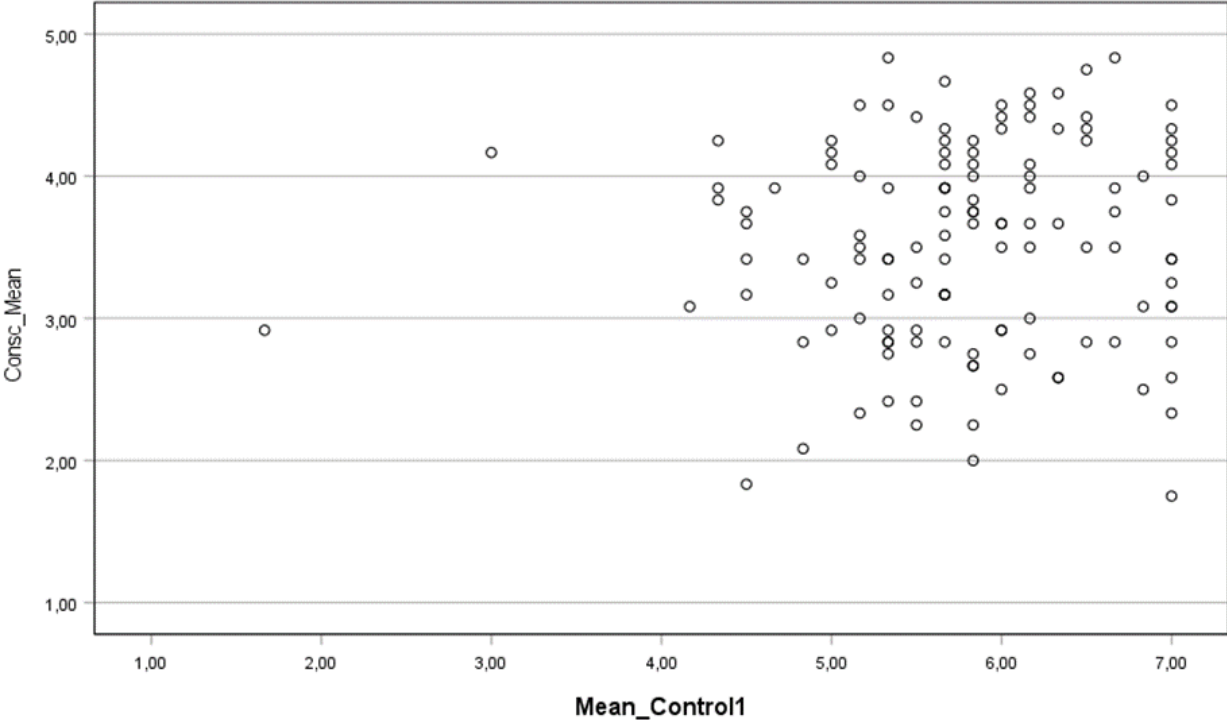


Figure 3

Scatterplot of the conscientiousness mean vs the Demand2 mean

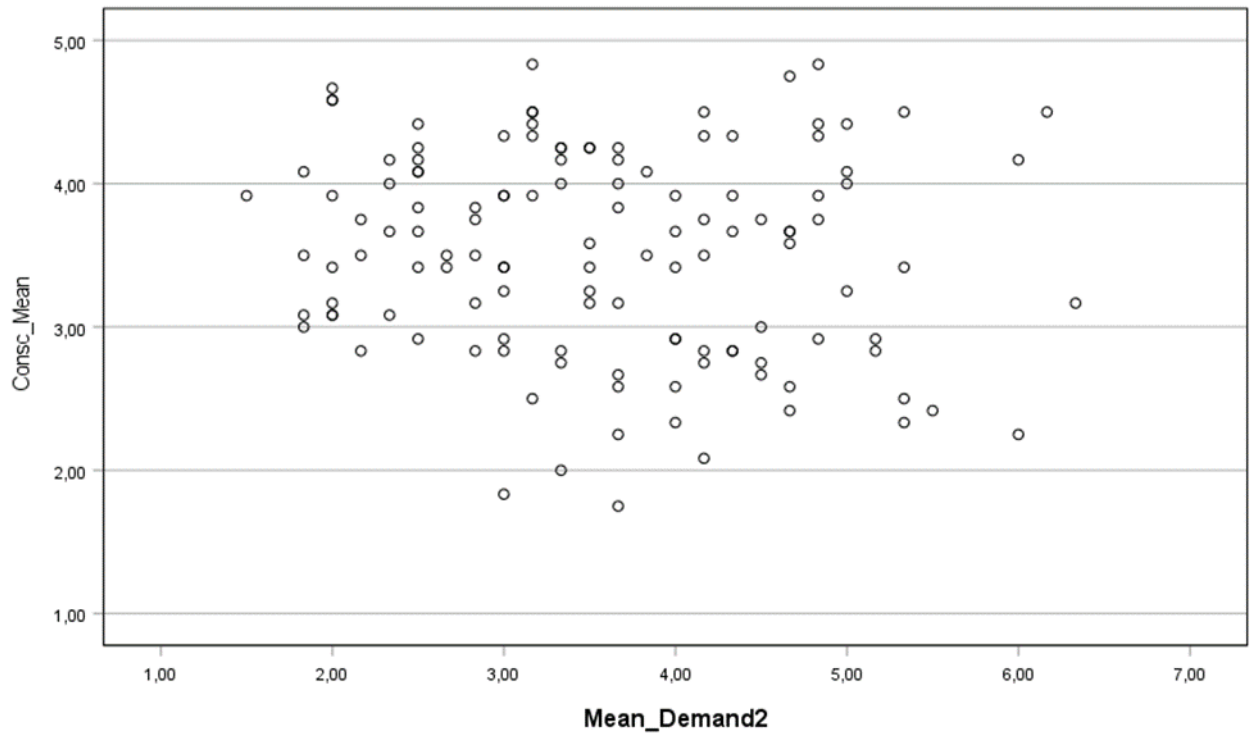
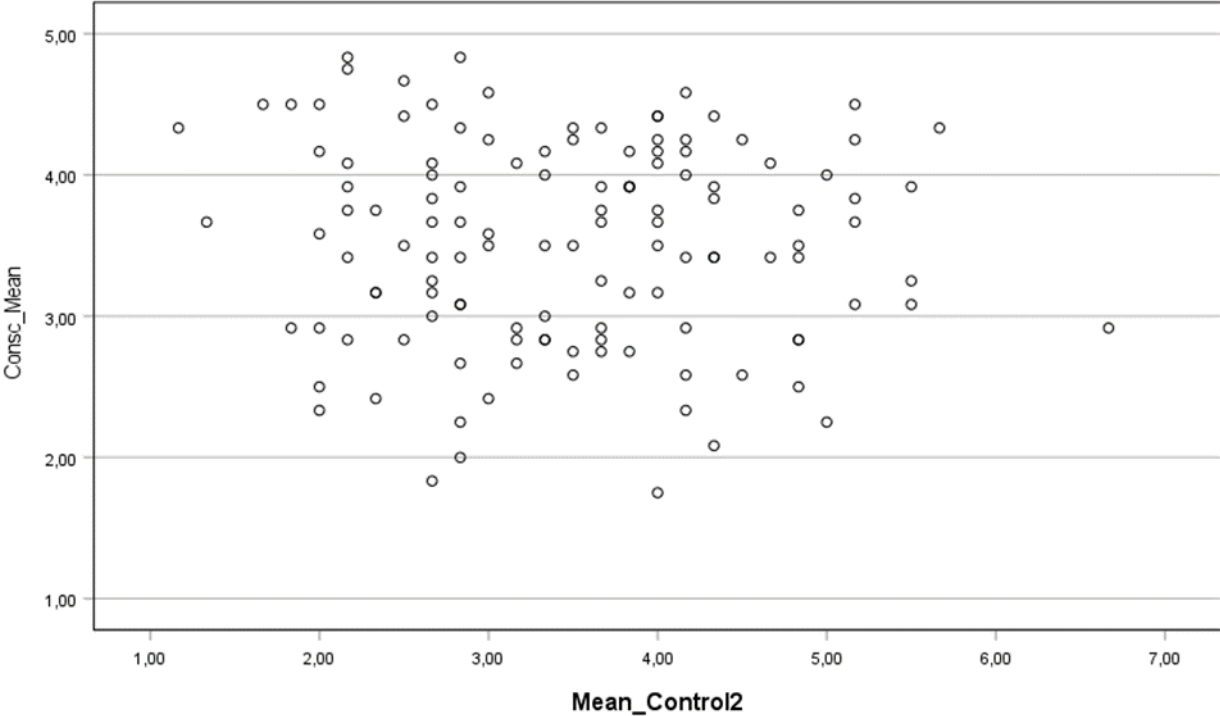


Figure 4

Scatterplot of the conscientiousness mean vs the Control2 mean



Appendix A

General Instructions given to participants:

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.

Description of the Company offering blended working arrangements:

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.

Description of the company offering traditional working arrangements:

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.

Appendix B

These were instructions participants received, in combination with the items taken from the adjusted Word Related Stress Scale by Cousins et al. (2004).

Please indicate to which extent you agree or disagree with the following questions

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = somewhat disagree
- 4 = neither agree nor disagree
- 5 = somewhat agree
- 6 = agree
- 7 = strongly agree

(Demands:)

- I would feel pressured to work long hours.
- I think the deadlines would be unachievable.
- I would have to work very fast.
- I would have to work very intensively.
- I would be unable to take sufficient breaks.
- I would feel unrealistic time pressures.

(Control:)

- I would be able to decide when to take a break.
- I would have a say in my own work speed.
- I would have a choice in deciding what I do at work.
- I would have a choice in deciding how I do my work.
- I would have some say over the way I work.
- My working time could be flexible.