

**Employee Engagement Among Intersectional Identifying Employees: Considering  
Flexible Work Arrangements in the Era of Increased Remote and Hybrid Work**

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## Abstract

This study investigated the impact of remote and hybrid flexible work arrangements on employee engagement among intersectional-identifying employees. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining the 17-question Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) through quantitative surveys and the nine-question UWES through qualitative interviews. Results were mixed, with the quantitative results failing to establish a significant relationship between flexible work arrangements and improved employee engagement. The qualitative interviews suggest a positive change in engagement but do not demonstrate improvement in engagement. Influential factors on these results, such as inconsistent organizational policies and role ambiguity, often exclude considerations of intersectional employees' identities. Due to these conflicting organizational policies regarding flexible work arrangements and widespread role uncertainty, the study suggests that intersectional employees may experience active disengagement. The results supported the notion that overall employee engagement is experiencing a downward trend, and many intersectional employees are actively disengaged.

*Keywords:* employee engagement, intersectional employees, remote work, hybrid work, flexible work arrangements, psychological safety, mixed-method

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## **Employee Engagement Among Intersectional Identifying Employees: Considering Flexible Work Arrangements in the Era of Increased Remote and Hybrid Work**

Increased remote and hybrid work in recent years have influenced employees' relationships and engagement towards their work (Rohwer et al., 2024). The 2020 COVID-19 global pandemic dramatically changed the professional world. Organizations and workers are managing the post-pandemic repercussions, reimagining processes, and reworking work as we knew it (Pass & Ridgway, 2022). While some United States (U.S.) organizations used the pandemic as a learning experience to reengage employees, others did not. The highest engagement levels are among the six out of 10 employees who prefer a hybrid working arrangement, meaning they have the option to work in an office and work remotely (Gallup, 2024a). Of that group, a third of employees favor working remotely full-time, and less than 10% prefer to work in an office full-time (Gallup, 2024a). This study examines employee engagement in flexible work arrangements for professional employees aged 18+, possessing at least two characteristics of an intersectional identity, including race, gender identity, sexual identity, and disability.

Due to its subjective and personalized nature, employee engagement does not possess a standard definition (Bridger, 2018). Employee engagement is an employee's physical, cognitive, and emotional connection to their work (Kahn, 1990), encompassing motivation, job satisfaction, psychological safety, and good intentions for their organization. Flexible work arrangements signify hybrid and remote capability to perform one's job. The term, intersectionality, arose from Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, a Black feminist theorist, expressing the intersection of oppression people experience due to race, gender identity, socioeconomic status (SES), disability, sexual identity, age, and more (1990, as cited in Jason et al., 2023). Finally,

psychological safety is defined by Dillard and Osam (2021) as openness to being one's true self in the workplace, without worry of consequences. The authors noted, psychological safety is determined by an employee's interpersonal relationships at work and is governed by the organizational culture of which they are a part.

Psychological safety and autonomy are the highest indicators of job satisfaction; high job satisfaction leads to improved performance, and improved performance indicates elevated employee engagement (American Psychological Association, 2024; Latham, 2012; Waldrep et al., 2024). Higher engagement among employees results in greater productivity and quality performance for organizations (Roethlisberger, 1977, as cited in Latham, 2012). Organizations that resist flexible work arrangements and autonomy, suffer from fear of losing physical control over their employees (Rohwer et al., 2024). Conversely, flexible work arrangements encourage autonomy and trust in employees. Flexible work arrangements provide psychologically and physically safer environments for intersectional employees (Waldrep et al., 2024), decreasing issues with harassment and discrimination.

### **Literature Review**

The impetus for this research derived from work location disturbances due to COVID-19. Professional workers experienced an upheaval in where their work was performed during the pandemic. Many U.S. employees had never experienced a flexible work arrangement before the pandemic (Barreto et al., 2020, as cited in Waldrep et al., 2024), and during the lockdown, remote work was not considered flexible but, forced, due to stay-at-home orders (Pass & Ridgway, 2022). Once vaccinations for COVID-19 were available to workers, most organizations required their employees to return to office for part or all the work week. Some

organizations spent little time assessing employee engagement and psychological safety elements for intersectional employees (Pass & Ridgway, 2022), resulting in a haphazard reentry to offices.

### **The Past: COVID-19 Forced Remote Work**

Waldrep et al. (2024) reported that workers who received flexible work arrangements due to COVID-19 experienced higher job satisfaction and increased productivity. The authors heeded the importance of listening to employees' work preferences, especially relating to personal family elements. Despite this evidence, many organizations still required their employees to return to working in office. An important strength of the study was the researchers conducted interviews with parents who worked remotely to assess their preferences for work location and included a diverse sample.

The interviews from Waldrep et al. (2024) were conducted with caregivers having at least one child, 18 or under. The demographic makeup of the interviewees were ages 20+, racial identities were Black, Hispanic, and White, among others, and they possessed various educational backgrounds. The researchers could not find LGBTQ+ parents to interview, which was a limitation of the study. The researchers used pseudonyms and coding to protect the anonymity of their research subjects. The interview questions centered on how and when the participants worked, especially juggling childcare and remote school schedules. Some respondents expressed their enthusiasm for flexible working arrangements. The respondents noted the benefits of an improved work-life balance and higher job satisfaction, which are key factors in employee engagement. However, other respondents expressed difficulties they experienced working remotely, due to a lack of resources from the organizations they worked for.

In the Waldrep et al. (2024) study, a Black woman and mother interviewee expressed appreciation for the flexibility of remote work. This participant stated she could simply notify her supervisor she'd be working certain hours and unavailable during others, to tend to personal matters. This individual's psychological safety and employee engagement increased with the newfound autonomy and responsibility over her work schedule. The study's results maintained that flexible work arrangements increase employee engagement. Employees completed their jobs successfully when supported and were provided with necessary resources. Some participants stated that to be successful, they needed in-person work, setting aside preferences for remote work. For most, eliminating commuting and unnecessary external factors made the participants more actively engaged.

Rohwer et al. (2024) addressed the challenge of COVID-19 lockdowns. During lockdowns, managers with no previous remote work experience struggled to adjust their roles. The researchers noted management's resistance to remote work prior to the pandemic, which originated from "fearing a loss of control over employees due to the physical distance (Rohwer et al., 2024, p. 2)." A distinctive strength of the Rohwer et al. study was the observed integral role management played in employees' well-being. These managers adapted to the abrupt remote work orders, by developing affinity for their employees and themselves. It was also observed that the pandemic lockdowns were a crucial time for managers to assess the use of new resources by applying coping strategies to flourish and remain engaged.

Rohwer et al. (2024) created an interview guide, resulting in 34 semi-structured interviews. The researchers advertised the study through a local business association, email newsletter, and online networking sites. The interviews were directed over the phone or via videoconferencing. A limitation of the study was potential selection bias. Most participants were

in favor of continuing to work remotely, knowing that the study was about working remotely. The researchers concluded that due to the unique circumstances of COVID-19, managers and employees were successful if they utilized creative solutions and new resources to maintain productivity and communicate well.

The research from Waldrep et al. (2024) and Rohwer et al. (2024) each utilized succinct qualitative interview methods to convey the pivotal period of the pandemic. While COVID-19 brought about global trauma for a barrage of reasons, including being forced to stay home (Waldrep et al., 2024), the pandemic initiated the normalization of flexible work arrangements. Waldrep et al. highlighted that due to flexible work arrangements, intersectional employees experienced autonomy and psychological safety for the first time. Rohwer et al. reported the newfound empathy managers experienced for their employees, because of the pandemic. As the research suggested, the push COVID-19 created for flexible work arrangements is the most positive takeaway for professional employees. Waldrep et al. chose to research this development from the employee perspective versus the managerial perspective of the Rohwer et al. study. Organizations must normalize flexible work policies and examine its impact on employee engagement.

### **The Present: Reworking Work**

de Laat (2023) addressed the complexities intersectional working parents encountered because of historical remote work policies. The study highlighted gendered differences in remote work, such as males' perception of increased personal flexibility and females' pressure to work longer hours. de Laat noted that the pressure to work longer hours often stemmed from organizational cultural norms perpetuating extreme and unhealthy devotion to work. The research referenced a term to describe ideal work-life balance as, dual devotion. Dual devotion is



one's commitment to work and family, made possible by remote work, especially for female employees. Intersectional females of color made up roughly 50% of the research sample, a strength in measuring intersectional employees' experiences with flexible work arrangements.

de Laat (2023) interviewed 84 Information Technology employees from a large finance firm. The firm was undergoing an organizational and cultural makeover, which welcomed research on flexible working arrangements. The researcher recorded and transcribed all but two of the interviews and documented key items following each interview. de Laat's findings discovered two main points: participants either preferred to "work to live" or to "live to work (p. 8-9)." The research was centered on middle and upper management, which served as a limitation for capturing a broader sample of multiple employment levels. The study concluded that working females' professional expectations were unequal to working males' expectations. The results noted the important intersection of gender, race, and family status. These intersections hindered potential benefits of work-life balance and employee engagement from flexible work arrangements.

Fan and Moen (2023) presented the discrepancies of current working arrangements for intersectional employees. The researchers answered three research questions. For example, the research question, "How do job conditions change as those mandated to work remotely move back to working at work or else continue working at least partially from home? (Fan & Moen, p. 3)." Fan and Moen distributed a four-wave survey throughout the US to 3,017 participants aged 18+. The participants were surveyed four times, every six months. Additionally, the researchers collected qualitative data by circulating open-answer questions to respondents. The qualitative sample included 231 working professionals aged 18+. The quantitative and qualitative studies

included all genders and Hispanic, Black, White, and other racial identities, focusing specifically on the intersectionality of gender, race, and one's stage in life.

In their mixed-method study, Fan and Moen (2023) used online platforms to collect their data including Ipsos KnowledgePanel and MTurk. One survey question mentioned work interruptions and the researchers experimented with excluding the question due to its implication that interruptions were solely family-related. Fan and Moen also mentioned their support of an intervention created to uphold greater employee control over when and where an individual conducts their work, especially female/women-identifying participants. The results aligned with the hypothesis, reflecting a majority of positive experiences for hybrid and remote employees. A decrease in psychological job demands and increased autonomy is attributed to positive experiences. The researchers also noted due to the physical distance from others, flexible work arrangements allowed intersectional employees to evade the risk of various workplace biases and discrimination, "including microaggressions characterizing traditional office environments (Fan & Moen, 2023, p. 10)." The research results disrupted previous notions that employees must work from a collective office to obtain high job satisfaction and actively engage in their work.

A crucial element to employee engagement in flexible work is psychological safety, as presented by Radu et al. (2023). Radu et al. researched this topic with the belief that employee engagement or sentiment increases when psychological safety is elevated. Psychological safety is elevated in flexible work arrangements, especially for intersectional employees who have experienced a history of feeling perpetually unsafe. As the authors noted, flexible work arrangements are not a new concept, but the global pandemic permitted organizations to adopt such arrangements. In addition to increased psychological safety and employee sentiment, Radu et al. wrote that flexible work arrangements greatly reduce real estate costs and pollution

emissions from commuting. The researchers incorporated the variety of benefits flexible work offers, which strengthened their study.

Radu et al. (2023) conducted their study with all levels of employees, consisting of 857 subjects from a diverse workforce. However, the only defining identifiers listed were gender, limiting the recognition of diversity. The researchers applied a cross-sectional quantitative strategy to examine “the relationship between employees’ perceptions of remote work and psychological safety and their work performance (p. 8).” Radu et al. created a questionnaire, distributed through Lime Survey, which included three scales: Worktango employee sentiment survey using a 5-point Likert scale, Worktango psychological health survey using a 5-point Likert scale, and the Goodman and Svyantek scale using a 4-point Likert scale. The researchers found that employees’ feelings regarding remote work were positive in most fields, save for Sales. The researchers concluded psychological safety balances the connection between employee engagement and flexible work arrangements. Radu et al. encouraged organizations to provide flexible work arrangements because it will increase job satisfaction and boost employee engagement.

Sekhar and Patwardhan (2021) highlighted the importance of management supporting flexible working arrangements (FWAs), including temporal and spatial flexibility. Temporal refers to the times of day and number of hours worked, and spatial refers to the location the work is done. Both FWAs encouraged employees’ deeper commitment and sense of duty to the organization. The researchers reported that higher-income employees were more likely to access FWAs. Lower-income workers had fewer opportunities for FWAs and less control over their schedules.

Sekhar and Patwardhan's (2021) study focused on service firms, applying random sampling to reduce bias and employ an inclusive sample. Reducing bias in the research sample was a strength, whereas centering on only one industry was a limitation. The authors utilized employee lists from 46 companies and selected nine participants from varying levels of professional experience. Additionally, a questionnaire was dispersed to 414 employees, returning 256 responses regarding FWAs, employee performance, and the support of supervisors. The results displayed the need for normalizing FWAs as part of the predetermined psychological contract between managers and employees. The authors stressed the responsibility of supervisors to heed the voice of their employees, e.g., supporting FWAs, to reduce turnover and increase employee engagement.

Organizations are grappling with reworking work, examining where and when work is achieved. The authors in this section spoke to crucial factors in reworking work, such as the resounding evidence that flexible work arrangements are highly favored and increase employee engagement. The research was conducted globally and is not solely a local U.S. issue. The differing methodologies informed that there is value to both quantitative and qualitative research. Using different research methods secured a wide range of responses from diverse and intersectional employees. The research indicated, no matter the industry, time together in office and time working remotely (Grant, 2023) results in employee engagement.

### **The Future: Flexible Work for All**

Kruse et al. (2022) examined remote work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers analyzed the differences found in employees with disabilities versus those without during COVID-19. During the pandemic, intersectional people (with disabilities, gender minorities, Latinos, and Black) suffered job loss and economic hardships disproportionately

more than their counterparts. With the rise of flexible work arrangements, the pandemic recovery opened job opportunities for people with physical disabilities. A strength of the study was the focus on remote work opportunities for cancer survivors. Kruse et al. noted the historic implications of remote work as a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Amendments Act (2008) and it was not until recently that cancer survivors were considered living with a disability.

Kruse et al. utilized the Current Population Survey for quantitative data collection at the juncture of remote work and employees with disabilities. A limitation of the study was the inability to survey solely cancer survivors but people with disabilities as a broader category. The researchers concluded that remote work, because of the pandemic, was a positive outcome for people with disabilities. Kruse et al. also emphasized the importance of providing flexible working arrangements for intersectional employees living with a disability. The research revealed that intersectional employees were less likely to be promoted because they were not physically present in an office. While flexible work was helpful for cancer survivors, the lack of promotion opportunities triggered decreased psychological safety. The researchers argued that ultimately productivity grew and job satisfaction rose for remote workers, outweighing the downsides.

Hyseni et al. (2023) addressed the positive outcomes COVID-19 delivered for people with disabilities. Employment rates for people with disabilities rose in 2021 during the pandemic recovery (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022; Houtenville et al., 2021, as cited in Hyseni et al., 2023). Some organizations also leveraged employees' disability status as a diversity element under Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs. Despite these observations, the authors noted that employees with disabilities faced pay discrimination and under-employment at higher rates

than employees without disabilities. Still, flexible work arrangements had opened possibilities for employees possessing a disability intersectional identity. Hyseni et al. also noted, people who identify as LGBTQ+ experienced lower rates of employment compared to their heterosexual, cisgender, and non-disabled counterparts. Including people with disabilities and LGBTQ+ participants were strengths in this intersectional study.

Hyseni et al. (2023) explored the influence of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), which indicates employee engagement, organizational success, and an employee's desire to go above and beyond. For the study, the researchers invited almost 200,000 legal professionals to participate in their survey, concentrating on intersectional-identifying employees. The survey had quantitative and qualitative elements, with fixed and open-ended questions which returned 3,590 responses. The usable and completed surveys were limited to 1,865. The researchers centered their questions around OCB and its influence on fostering a culture of inclusion, belonging, and engagement. The results showed that intersectional employees have a negative association with OCB. The solution to positive feelings towards OCB was an increased belief in OCB, which can occur from flexible work arrangements and better work-life balances for intersectional employees.

The possibilities resulting from flexible work arrangements are numerous. Remote work especially opened the talent pool to an expansive demographic of employees. The researchers presented results from intersectional employees with disabilities, with one article spotlighting cancer survivors. Flexible work arrangements foster psychological safety and reduce personnel issues, especially those concerning harassment and discrimination of intersectional employees (Blanck et al., 2021; Dispenza et al., 2018; Medina et al., 2021; Shaw et al., 2012, as cited in Hyseni et al., 2023). Kruse et al. reported flexible work arrangements' expansive benefits for

intersectional employees, whereas Hyseni et al. focused on employee engagement and OCB implications. The current and future benefits of flexible work arrangements increase employee engagement, psychological safety, and inspire OCB.

### **Summary and Research Question**

In summary, Waldrep et al. (2024) argued that intersectional employees experienced autonomy and psychological safety because of flexible work arrangements. Rohwer et al. (2024) discussed the challenges and empathy resulting from managing during COVID-19. de Laat (2023) considered the complications intersectional working parents experienced because of forced work-from-home policies. Fan and Moen (2023) presented the conclusive benefits of flexible work arrangements presented to intersectional employees.

Next, Radu et al. (2023) examined the positive outcomes of flexible work arrangements, noting employee engagement increases when psychological safety is prominent. Sekhar and Patwardhan (2021) underlined the priority of management supporting flexible working arrangements to lessen turnover and boost employee engagement. Kruse et al. (2022) observed the rise of flexible work presented affirmative outcomes for intersectional employees with disabilities. Finally, Hyseni et al. (2023) addressed the significance of OCB in fostering employee engagement among intersectional employees.

A key element from the literature review was the drastic effects COVID-19 had on workers in the professional working world. Another main component of the research is the evidence that flexible work arrangements positively contribute to enhanced employee engagement. Lastly, flexible work arrangements have a specific impact on the intersectional community. Conversely, shortcomings in the research centered around the lack of identity detail regarding intersectional employees, such as sexual identity or race. Intersectional identities were

mentioned, but raising awareness and normalizing the issues intersectional employees face is crucial in this discussion.

This study continued the research on reworking work during this impactful time post-COVID-19. The research added value and contributed to identifying gaps in the consideration of flexible work arrangements to elevate employee engagement among intersectional employees. The research question was: How have increased remote and hybrid flexible working arrangements influenced employee engagement among intersectional-identifying employees? The hypothesis was: H<sub>1</sub>: Intersectional employees experience increased employee engagement due to flexible work arrangements and enhanced psychological safety and autonomy.

### **Methods**

The research question of the study inquired: How have increased remote and hybrid flexible working arrangements influenced employee engagement among intersectional employees? The study's independent variable was flexible work arrangements, and the dependent variable was the employee engagement of intersectional-identifying employees. The study used a mixed-method research approach, aligning quantitative survey questions with qualitative interview questions for consistency in results. The quantitative portion followed a seven-point Likert survey design. The qualitative portion used a phenomenology design, and interviews were conducted to reach data saturation.

### **Participants**

For quantitative data collection, participants were accessed through SurveyMonkey's Audience (SMA) platform, which guaranteed 250 returned survey responses. For qualitative data collection, User Interviews (UI) was utilized to find interviewees. The participants and



interviewees were 18 and older, having worked in a flexible working arrangement in the past three-10 years, and identified as intersectional employees. The study focused on at least two intersections of race, gender, sexual identity, and disability status. The study took note of participants and interviewees who do not have a flexible work arrangement and do not experience workplace marginalization. Studying intersectional employees was significant because they experience marginalization in the workplace, are often overlooked (Hall et al., 2019, as cited in Kossek et al., 2023), and can share their unique perspectives on modern working arrangements.

The participants and interviewees learned about the study through a research announcement posted on SMA's and UI's platforms and pushed out to their users. See Appendix A for the research announcements. SMA and UI provided recruiting services through their platform users. SMA and UI included demographic screening questions to consolidate participants and interviewees based on the set criteria. SMA included informed consent per their terms of use to adhere to Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. UI required that platform users obtain informed consent from their interviewees before interviewing. SMA returned completed surveys as they were finished. UI results were finalized in real time as interviews were completed.

## **Materials and Setting**

### ***Measures***

The study's independent variable was flexible work arrangements, and the dependent variable was the employee engagement of intersectional-identifying employees. The variables were measured on a seven-point Likert scale from The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). The distributed surveys employed the full UWES,

consisting of 17 questions. The interviews employed the shortened UWES, consisting of nine questions.

### ***Demographics Questionnaire***

The demographics screening questionnaire for the surveys and interviews consisted of five items. The questionnaire asked potential participants and interviewees to select their age from a list of ranges, beginning at 18 years old. Next, the questionnaire asked the participants and interviewees to choose their race from the list, including an option to self-describe. Then, the questionnaire asked participants and interviewees to select the gender they identify with, including an option to self-describe. The questionnaire subsequently asked for sexual identity clarifying questions, again with an option to self-describe. Finally, the questionnaire asked if participants and interviewees identify as living with a physical and/or cognitive disability with a comprehensive list of options, as well as an option to self-describe. The questionnaire is found in Appendix C.

### ***Measure Description and Permissions***

Employee engagement among intersectional employees was measured using the UWES (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). The full UWES was utilized for the quantitative study. The full version consists of 17 items; six items measure the Absorption dimension, five measure the Dedication dimension, and six measure the Vigor dimension. The questions were measured on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always). The shortened version of the UWES, which consists of nine questions, was used for the qualitative portion of the study. The nine questions include three items measuring Absorption, three measure Dedication, and three measure Vigor. The shortened version also used the seven-point Likert scale mentioned previously.

The full version of the UWES has high internal consistency, especially among the six-item Absorption questions and six-item Vigor questions (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). The full version has a Cronbach alpha coefficient total of .93. The shortened version of the scale exhibits high internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .93 as well. The use of confirmatory factor analysis signified standard construct validity for both versions. The stability coefficients have been unchanging over time, with an occasional difference in the Vigor measurement. See Appendix C for the UWES and permissions statement. Permission to use the UWES was free for academic use, and it was found at the following website:

<https://www.wilmarschaufeli.nl/downloads/>.

## **Procedures**

To successfully conduct this research, many detailed steps were followed. First, materials were compiled and organized, including IRB-approved consent forms, demographic screening questions for the surveys and interviews, survey and interview questions from the UWES, research notes and reminders, and participant incentives for the interviews. The informed consent forms and demographic screening questions were distributed through the online survey and interview platforms. The demographic screening questions aided in filtering participants and interviewees to the necessary research sample.

SMA was used to distribute consent forms and the UWES survey. SMA was also used to recruit participants for the survey. The platform maintains a database of participants and pushed the survey out to those who fit the demographic recognized by the screening questions. UI was utilized to distribute consent forms and demographic screening questions to find interviewees. UI was also used to recruit interviewees and required an incentive. UI has interviewee users who were informed of the study. The shortened version of the UWES, which consists of nine

questions, was used for the interviews. Both SMA and UI follow strict data protection guidelines for privacy and confidentiality.

Once paired with interviewees, interviews were scheduled through the UI platform. Interviews were conducted via videoconferencing versus over the phone to observe visual and non-verbal cues (Rohwer et al., 2024). Once at least 250 completed surveys were returned from SMA, the responses were compiled in a protected Microsoft Excel (Version 16.91) file. Stacked bar charts were used to visualize the quantitative demographic data. The mixed-method data analysis tool, MAXQDA (Version 24.6.0), was used to visualize the qualitative data. MAXQDA is General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliant. Once the interviews were completed and data saturation was reached, MAXQDA was used for the qualitative study. MAXQDA also provides AI solutions that were utilized to ease the transcribing of interviews.

### **Data Management**

To ensure the survey participants' anonymity, IP addresses were not collected in using SMA. For this study, the quantitative data was transferred from SMA into a Microsoft Excel file for analysis. The qualitative data was transferred from UI to MAXQDA for analysis. The results were presented in aggregate form to protect participants' and interviewees' identities. The data was accessed only in the form of completed surveys that were maintained on an encrypted flash drive kept in a locked safe at the researcher's home. The instructor and researcher were the only parties with access to the strong password that protected the dataset. The dataset contained no coded identifiers and was completely anonymous.

MAXQDA was used, a GDPR regulated data analysis tool for mixed-method studies. All electronic data was stored on an encrypted flash drive, not a computer hard drive. The data set and related files will be retained for at least five years after the study completion in case

questions arise about the analyses. After five years, the data will be destroyed using the current Department of Defense data destruction standards. An affordable data destruction technique will be used, such as encryption, pending technology at the time.

### **Ethical Considerations**

In this study, the researcher examined the ethical, legal, individual, and sociocultural issues involved in studying human subjects. Human Relations, Section 3 of the American Psychological Association's (APA) *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (2017), Code 3.04 discussed Avoiding Harm. Avoiding Harm was top priority in this research. For example, two intersectional identities that were studied are sexual identity and disability identity. Each of these identities are voluntary identifiers in the workplace and the researcher ensured participants and interviewees were fully aware of the confidentiality and anonymity to participate, stated in Section 4 of the APA Ethics Code (2017). Harm was also avoided by considering the stigma intersectional employees have endured (Kossek et al., 2023) and the sensitivity of voluntarily identifying themselves.

The legal considerations of the research aligned with the ethical concerns. Principle A of the APA Ethics Code covered the significance of Beneficence and Nonmaleficence, which highlighted the importance of benefitting the individuals with whom psychologists work (2017). The researcher emphasized the benefits of the study and avoided personal biases of participants and interviewees. A special legal consideration was that the employees who participated in the study are protected from workplace discrimination under the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), also known as protected classes (2002, as cited in Bauer et al., 2020) and intersectional employees.

Principle B of the APA Ethics Code suggested fidelity and responsibilities in all dealings, including considering individual and sociocultural elements in relation to human subjects (2017). Specific considerations for individuals included emphasizing their answers were safe and completely anonymous, which was specifically referenced in relation to Code 3.10, Informed Consent. Another factor in individual elements was found in Principle D of the APA Ethics Code, Justice. Principle D noted that psychologists must practice self-awareness and avoid biases that may cause injustice to befall their participants.

All previously mentioned APA Ethical guidelines were applied when considering the sociocultural elements of the study. Principle E of the APA Ethics Code, Respect for People's Rights and Dignity, advised psychologists to respect and uphold the rights of those who identify under intersectional categories (2017). Sociocultural elements in this study also refer to intersectional identities as socially and culturally sensitive identities. For example, organizational and societal systems often uphold issues for intersectional employees by intensifying job inequalities and implementing inequitable work-life balance practices (Kossek et al., 2023), which are counter to psychological safety and employee engagement.

### **Data Analysis**

This study employed a mixed methodology for data collection and analysis consisting of a quantitative survey and a qualitative interview to test the hypothesis that intersectional employees' engagement was elevated due to flexible work arrangements and enhanced psychological safety and autonomy. For the quantitative portion, the full 17-question UWES survey was administered through the SMA platform with survey participants selecting from the seven-point Likert scale for each question. For the qualitative section, the shortened 9-question

version of the UWES was used during Zoom recorded, one-on-one interviews through the UI platform. Data analysis was conducted in Microsoft Excel and MAXQDA.

The resulting survey data was downloaded from the SMA platform and was kept in a raw data encrypted Microsoft Excel file. Prior to data analysis, each participant's UWES survey data was reviewed to establish unqualified versus qualified surveys. Any surveys with incomplete responses or any surveys where the participant chose to withdraw, which was identified with a "Yes/Withdraw" field, were deemed unqualified and removed from further analysis. Qualified survey data was then cleaned by filtering and deleting fields collected by the SMA provider but not relevant to the analysis, such as time stamps and type of device utilized by the survey participant.

Microsoft Excel was utilized to provide stacked bar charts to visualize the demographic data. The bar charts displayed race, gender, sexual identity, and disability information. For each survey, the question responses were coded with the numbers 0 (never) to 6 (always) corresponding to the Likert scale responses by the survey participants. Then, each survey was scored by calculating the mean and standard deviation of total responses per participant in aggregate. Additionally, each survey question across all surveys was scored by calculating the mean of all responses to that question. The norm scores from the UWES manual were used to classify the total scores to assess engagement levels.

After scoring, the hypothesis of intersectional employees' elevated engagement due to flexible work arrangements and enhanced psychological safety and autonomy, was tested in Microsoft Excel. To test the hypothesis, correlation between the independent and dependent variables were tested. The independent variable was flexible work arrangements, and the dependent variable was employee engagement of intersectional-identifying employees. The

point-biserial correlation coefficient, a special case of the Pearson correlation coefficient test, was applied to confirm whether there was correlation between the independent variable (coded as 1 or 0) and the dependent variable (mean engagement scores).

Additionally, single-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated in Microsoft Excel to assess variance in mean UWES responses between sub-groups of survey respondents. The tested sub-groups were employees in flexible work arrangements versus employees in-office five days a week (but have worked in a flexible arrangement in the past three-10 years); intersectional employees in flexible work arrangements versus non-intersectional employees in flexible work arrangements; and intersectional employees in-office versus non-intersectional employees in-office. If the ANOVA reveals  $p > 0.05$ , then it cannot be concluded that there is a meaningful difference in the UWES means between the sub-groups: employees in flexible work arrangements versus employees in-office five days a week; intersectional employees in flexible work arrangements versus non-intersectional employees in flexible work arrangements; and intersectional employees in-office versus non-intersectional employees in-office. If  $p < 0.05$  on the ANOVA analysis, it can be concluded that there was a meaningful difference in the UWES means between the sub-groups.

For the qualitative measure, MAXQDA was used for automating transcripts from the interviews. The transcripts were manually reviewed and corrected to ensure accuracy. Then, content analysis was applied to assess the interviewees' answers. Content analysis aided in categorizing themes in the interviewees' responses. The qualitative interview responses were grouped into positive, neutral, and negative themes, determined by content analysis.

Additionally, MAXQDA was utilized to highlight recurring keywords to determine thematic



elements. MAXQDA's highlight coding tool was used to code the transcriptions to create a data word cloud for assessment.

If the surveys and interviews resulted in high mean scores and elevated engagement among intersectional employees, the hypothesis was supported based on the UWES manual's guidance that a "very high score"  $\geq 5.51$  signifies elevated employee engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 37). Conversely, if the surveys and interviews resulted in low mean scores and demoted engagement among intersectional employees, the hypothesis was not supported based on the UWES manual's guidance that a "very low score"  $\leq 1.77$  implies active employee disengagement and burnout (p. 37).

## **Results**

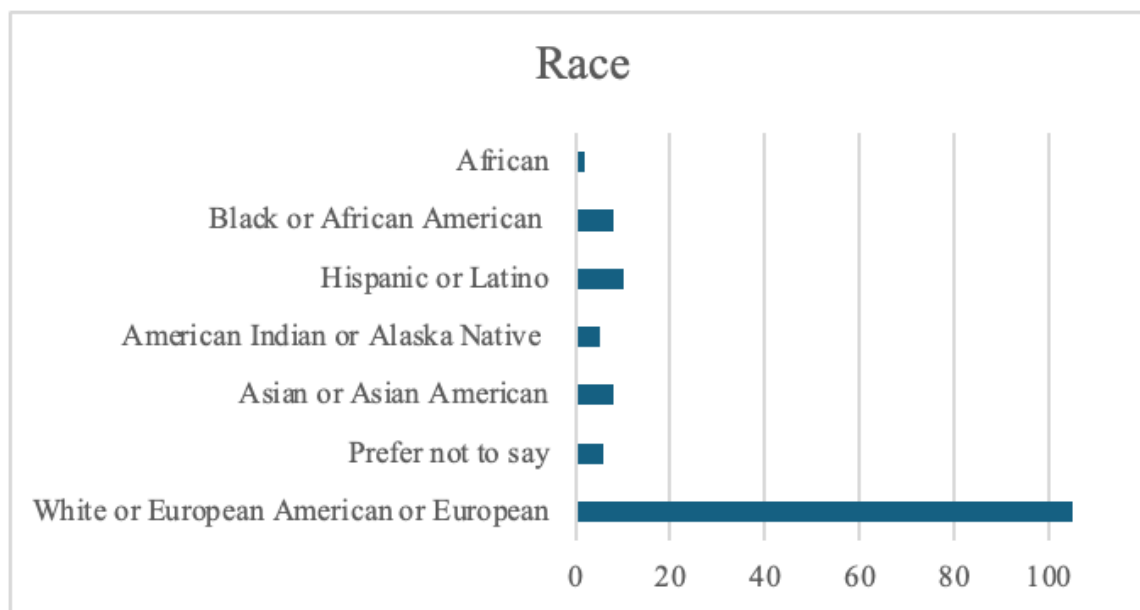
### **Participant and Demographic Characteristics**

For the quantitative portion of this study, 386 participants responded to the UWES survey through the SMA platform, of which 144 were classified as qualified based on consent, screening criteria, and survey completion. Twelve participants did not consent to the survey, with two additional participants who consented but left all answers blank. One hundred fifty consenting participants were eliminated through screening due to their current working arrangement, five days a week in-office and never having worked in a flexible arrangement. Note, that 27 participants who currently work five days a week in-office but have worked in a flexible work arrangement in the past three-10 years were included in the study. Of the 386 participants, 72 selected "Yes" to withdraw from submitting their survey responses upon completion. Six respondents selected "Prefer not to say" for one or more of their answers, triggering an incomplete survey. Of the 144 qualified participants, 51 participants were non-intersectional, and 93 met the criteria of intersectional employees.

The racial identities of the participants were White or European American or European (73%,  $n = 105$ ), Hispanic or Latino (7%,  $n = 10$ ), Black or African American (6%,  $n = 8$ ), Asian or Asian American (6%,  $n = 8$ ), American Indian or Alaska Native (3%,  $n = 5$ ), African (1%,  $n = 2$ ), and Prefer not to say (4%,  $n = 6$ ). Refer to Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Race Demographic Data*

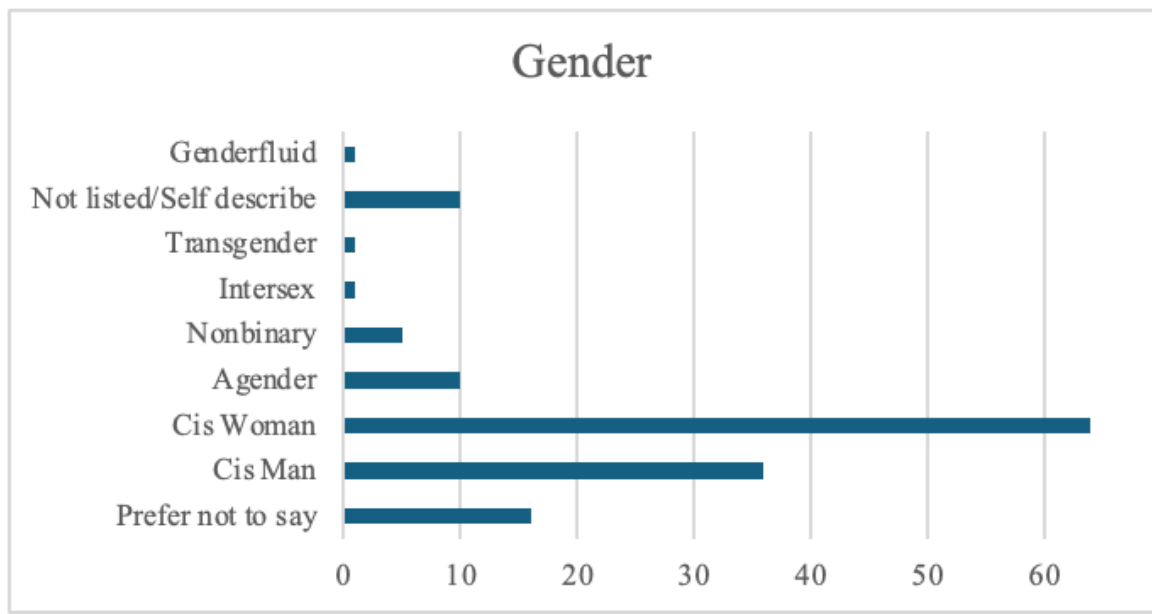


*Note.* Racial identities of survey participants, with a sizable representation of the White or European American or European group.

The gender identities of the participants were cisgender women (44%,  $n = 64$ ), cisgender men (25%,  $n = 36$ ), agender (7%,  $n = 10$ ), nonbinary (3%,  $n = 5$ ), intersex (1%,  $n = 1$ ), transgender (1%,  $n = 1$ ), genderfluid (1%,  $n = 1$ ), prefer not to say (11%,  $n = 16$ ), and not listed/self-describe (7%,  $n = 10$ ). Refer to Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Gender Demographic Data*

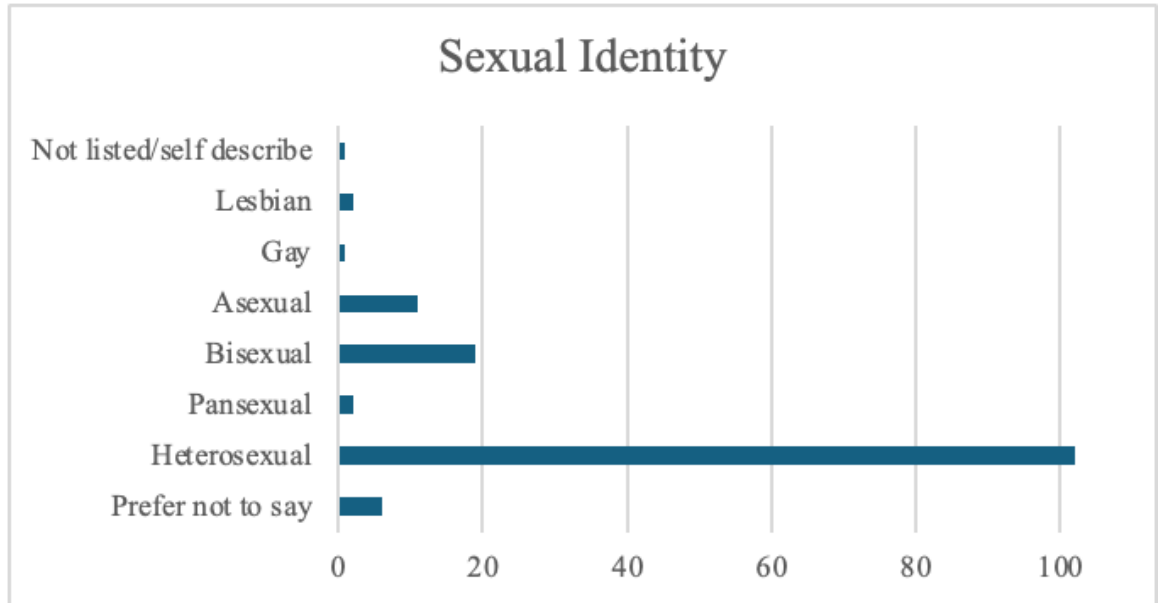


*Note.* Gender identities of survey participants, with a heavy representation of the cisgender group.

The sexual identities of the participants were heterosexual (71%,  $n = 102$ ), bisexual (13%,  $n = 19$ ), asexual (8%,  $n = 11$ ), lesbian (1%,  $n = 2$ ), pansexual (1%,  $n = 2$ ), gay (1%,  $n = 1$ ), prefer not to say (4%,  $n = 6$ ), and not listed/self-describe (1%,  $n = 1$ ). Refer to Figure 3.

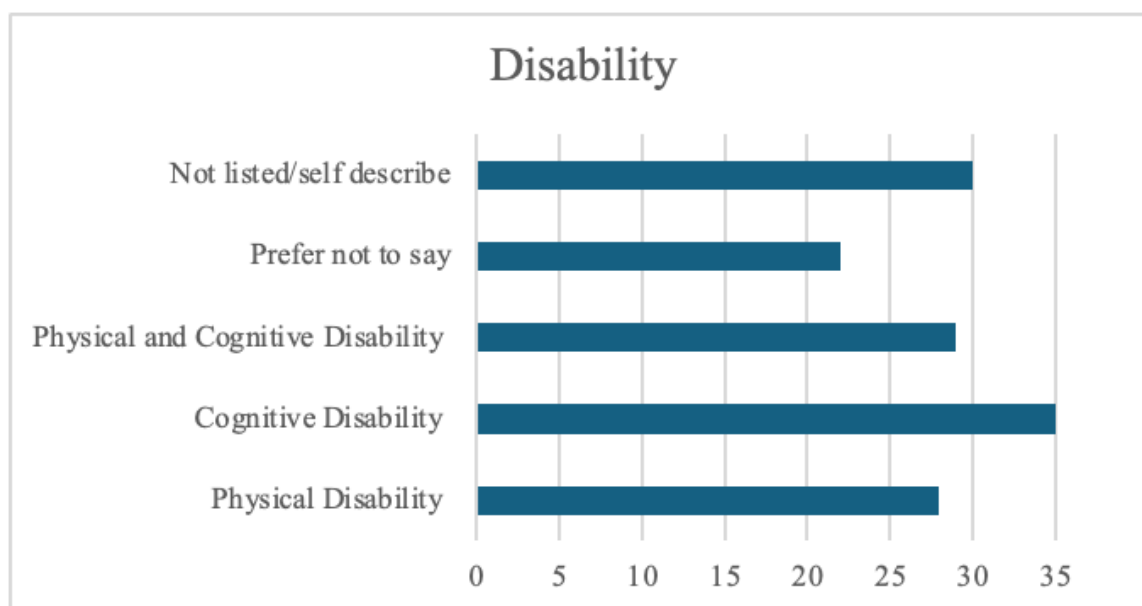
**Figure 3**

*Sexual Identity Demographic Data*



*Note.* Sexual identities of survey participants, with a high representation of the heterosexual group.

The disability identities of the participants were cognitive disability (24%,  $n = 35$ ), physical and cognitive disability (20%,  $n = 29$ ), physical disability (19%,  $n = 28$ ), prefer not to say (15%,  $n = 22$ ), and not listed/self describe (21%,  $n = 30$ ). Refer to Figure 4.

**Figure 4***Disability Demographic Data*

*Note.* Disability identities of survey participants, with a balanced representation of identities.

For demographic data as a percentage of participants, refer to Table D1 in Appendix D.

For the qualitative portion of the study, 20 interviews were conducted through the UI platform, with interviewees working in flexible arrangements. Fifteen interviewees were classified as non-intersectional. Five interviewees met the study's criteria of intersectional employees. The racial demographics of the interviewees were White (50%,  $n = 10$ ), Asian or Asian American (25%,  $n = 5$ ), Black or African American (10%,  $n = 2$ ), Hispanic or Latino (10%,  $n = 2$ ), and American Indian or Alaska Native (5%,  $n = 1$ ). The sex demographics of the interviewees were male (65%,  $n = 13$ ) and female (35%,  $n = 7$ ). The sexual identities of the interviewees were heterosexual (90%,  $n = 18$ ), asexual (5%,  $n = 1$ ), and bisexual (5%,  $n = 1$ ). The disability identities of the interviewees were no cognitive and/or physical disability (80%,  $n = 16$ ), have cognitive and/or physical disability (15%,  $n = 3$ ), and prefer not to say (5%,  $n = 1$ ).

**Key Findings**

The independent variable of this study was flexible work arrangements, and the dependent variable was employee engagement of intersectional-identifying employees. Employee engagement for all survey participants ( $n = 144$ ) was measured on a seven-point Likert scale, with  $M = 4.0$ , with a range of 0.0-6.0, and  $SD = 1.2$ . The mean of the non-intersectional participants ( $n = 51$ ) was  $M = 4.0$ , with a range of 0.0-6.0, and  $SD = 1.2$ . The mean of the intersectional participants ( $n = 93$ ) was  $M = 3.9$ , with a range of 0.0-6.0, and  $SD = 1.2$ . Mean scores fell within the normal range (2.89-4.66) for employee engagement, according to the UWES manual (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

When testing the hypothesis, the point-biserial correlation coefficient presented a correlation of  $r_{pb} = .15$  and  $p = .058$  when testing the correlation between intersectional employees working in a flexible work arrangement versus intersectional employees working five days a week in-office but have worked in a flexible work arrangement in the past three-10 years against their respective mean engagement scores. The correlation score indicates almost no correlation, skewed slightly to the negative. The point-biserial resulted in  $M = 3.9$  and  $4.3$  and  $SD = 1.2$  and  $1.0$ , respectively. The point-biserial correlation results were supported by single-factor ANOVA between employees working in a flexible arrangement versus employees working in a non-flexible arrangement with  $F = 2.31$  and  $p = .131$ . Refer to Tables D2 and D3 in Appendix D.

The qualitative interview transcription data established themes of mostly positive responses (71%), with some neutral (16%), and negative responses (13%) among intersectional employees in flexible work arrangements. The transcription data also showed a data mix of positive (67%), neutral (23%), and negative responses (10%) from non-intersectional employees in flexible work arrangements. An example of a positive theme from intersectional employees is the impact on increased autonomy and crafting their role. Interviewee 1 noted:

Sometimes...working remotely...[I'm] transitioning to doing more of what I like to do. I was so caught into the timeline of...working in...school or accomplishing these tasks, but now creating...more of my own tasks...It's like a timeline of my own now.

This is further supported by positive statements by other participants that have been coded and grouped in a word cloud.

An example of a positive theme from non-intersectional employees is the significance of creating psychologically safe spaces for all employees in flexible work arrangements.

Interviewee 2 spoke of methods to create and maintain psychological safety among their employees and teams:

The work is serious, but you can have some fun, too. And if you can poke fun at yourself, you can. I found, too, that you know, I always say this...if you make a mistake...it doesn't always become apparent...And if you don't tell anyone, you can push that mistake down the pipe...But here's the thing. That little mistake at the beginning of the pipe, by the time it can get caught way down the road. Now, it's a massive mistake. And it can't be fixed. And you always have to instill in people that they can come talk to you and tell you about a mistake, because there's nothing I can't typically fix early on. It becomes a lot harder down the road. And then if people don't feel comfortable talking to you, or if you haven't told them about the mistakes you've made over the course of your career, you know, then I feel like they don't understand or appreciate that they can come tell you about the mistakes that they've made. And then you guys can work to fix them.

### **Correlational Analyses**

In addition to the point-biserial test of the hypothesis, a point-biserial correlation test showed  $r_{pb}.04$  and  $p = .601$  between intersectional and non-intersectional participants regardless of working arrangement against their respective mean engagement scores. This point-biserial score indicates the correlation is near zero, meaning no correlation exists. The point-biserial resulted in  $M = 4.0$  and  $3.9$  and  $SD = 1.2$  and  $1.2$ , respectively. Further, a point-biserial correlation test between employees working in flexible arrangements versus employees working five days a week in-office against their respective mean engagement scores revealed  $r_{pb} -.13$  and  $p = .065$ . This point-biserial score showed a slightly negatively skewed correlation. The point-

biserial resulted in  $M = 3.9$  and  $4.3$  and  $SD = 1.2$  and  $1.0$ , respectively. Refer to Table D2, Appendix D.

The point-biserial correlation was further interrogated with ANOVA across varying subgroups. An ANOVA conducted on employee engagement and flexible versus non-flexible work arrangement groups demonstrated no statistical significance, with  $F = 2.31$  and  $p = .131$ . Refer to Table D3 in Appendix D. The second ANOVA between intersectional employees in flexible working arrangements, non-intersectional employees in flexible working arrangements, intersectional employees in non-flexible arrangements, and non-intersectional employees in non-flexible working arrangements also concluded no statistical significance, with  $F = .92$  and  $p = .434$ . Refer to Table D4 in Appendix D.

### **Discussion**

The study's results did not support the hypothesis that employee engagement is elevated among intersectional employees in flexible work arrangements. The quantitative research results indicated no correlation between elevated employee engagement among intersectional employees and their working arrangements. Additionally, the quantitative research mean score suggested that employee engagement is average amongst intersectional employees in flexible work arrangements. The quantitative mean scores also reflected no significant difference between the various subgroups. The qualitative research results signified that employee engagement is positive, but not elevated, for intersectional employees in flexible work arrangements. The research results concluded that increased remote and hybrid work has not improved employee engagement for intersectional-identifying employees.

### **Implications**



The research results indicated that elevated employee engagement is not necessarily linked to providing intersectional employees with flexible work arrangements. To the researchers' surprise, the quantitative data showed that employee engagement for intersectional employees in flexible work arrangements is average, with no correlation between the two variables. This may be due to intersectional employees feeling psychologically unsafe in their work environments. Interestingly, the qualitative results revealed that when intersectional employees work in more psychologically safe settings, they reported higher levels of engagement. According to the UWES manual and the study's criteria, "high" engagement is a step below "very high" (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 37) and was not classified as elevated for the study.

These mixed-method results suggest both practical and theoretical implications. A practical implication applied to the current downward trend in engagement indicates that participants and interviewees are experiencing active disengagement and low psychological safety. The introduction section of this study referenced Gallup's (2024a) poll results, which revealed that employee engagement is currently higher among remote and hybrid workers compared to those working in an office. However, as of early 2024, employee engagement is at an 11-year low. The 11-year low is likely influenced by the "quiet quitting" trend of 2022, which has evolved into "loud quitting" or active disengagement. This active disengagement stems from a lack of clarity regarding employee roles (Gallup, 2023) and as Kossek et al. (2023) discussed, conflicting organizational policies around flexible work arrangements.

The study's results also reflected a lack of elevated engagement and as noted by Dillard and Osam (2021), this supports a practical implication of insufficient inclusive leadership and poor organizational communication. As de Laat (2023) discussed, organizations must

communicate role expectations and policies regarding flexible work arrangements to intersectional employees, to eliminate ongoing active disengagement. Hyseni et al. (2023) wrote, organizational decisions to implement flexible work arrangements often overlook employees' intersectional identities, indicating an inadequate engagement strategy. This absence of an effective engagement strategy can be attributed to managerial resistance to valid engagement data (Hirsch, 2024) and the fear of losing physical control over employees, as proposed by Rohwer et al. (2024).

The theoretical implications of this study relate to those discussed by Radu et al. (2023), which highlighted the positive impact of flexible work arrangements on employee engagement resulting from heightened psychological safety. Radu et al. emphasized that psychological safety is the connection between employee engagement and flexible work arrangements. The current study's findings are affected by uncertain workplace policies that foster psychologically unsafe environments, leading to a lack of correlation between elevated engagement levels of intersectional employees and flexible work arrangements. With employee engagement in the U.S. at an 11-year low (Gallup, 2024a), the study's results reinforced the notion that cohesion around psychological safety is lacking in the professional landscape. As Radu et al. (2023) concluded, organizations must proactively teach and uphold psychological safety to create its bond with employee engagement.

This study also examined ethical, legal, individual, and sociocultural implications. Avoiding Harm, Code 3.04 from the APA (2017) Ethics Code, was a key consideration in conducting this study. Avoiding Harm was addressed through awareness of sensitivities to workplace trauma and ensuring Privacy and Confidentiality, as specified in Section 4 of the APA Ethics Code. A notable legal implication is that intersectional participants are protected from

workplace discrimination under the EEOC (2002, as cited in Bauer et al., 2020). Consequently, the participants and interviewees should not have felt apprehensive about facing discrimination when participating in the survey.

On an individual level, the study implied that each employee has a nuanced definition of employee engagement, which may not be fully captured through surveys or interviews.

Sociocultural implications were addressed by adhering to Principle E of the APA Ethics Code, which emphasizes Respect for People's Rights and Dignity (2017). Sociocultural considerations were upheld by avoiding biases and judgments throughout the research process. In addition to these implications, the SMA and UI platforms required informed consent and respect for privacy and confidentiality, allowing the participants and interviewees to withdraw at any time.

### **Similarities and Differences**

The study discovered various similarities and differences in employee engagement during and post-COVID-19 compared to other studies. At the beginning of the COVID-19 global pandemic, flexible work arrangements became a forced novelty. Although flexible work was not a new concept, as noted by Radu et al. (2023), COVID-19 necessitated its widespread implementation. The study's average engagement scores reflected the uncertainty of the future of flexible work arrangements. To improve the current version of flexible work arrangements, organizations must heed the research of Rohwer et al. (2024) that highlighted the effort management exerted to acclimatize to a new world of work during the pandemic. In this case, the difference in adaptation is towards flexible work arrangements in a post-COVID-19 professional context.

Sekhar and Patwardhan (2021) emphasized the crucial role of leadership in supporting flexible work arrangements. The implications of this study advised that part of today's low

employee engagement (Gallup, 2024b) is due to a lack of management support, a symptom of psychologically unsafe work environments. Sekhar and Patwardhan (2021) also touched on the importance of flexible work arrangements, such as temporal and spatial. Sekhar and Patwardhan's (2021) research on temporal flexible work arrangements is consistent with an interviewee from this study, who expressed a desire to have temporal flexibility. The interviewee noted that their answer to the UWES survey question, "When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work, (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 48)" would have been different if the question shifted the language from "morning" to "afternoon." While this study focused primarily on spatial flexibility, the need for temporal flexibility may be just as valuable.

Two intersectional interviewees from the study expressed sentiments in alignment with an intersectional interviewee from the Waldrep et al. study (2024). The interviewee from the Waldrep et al. study conveyed their high employee engagement and psychological safety in a flexible work arrangement due to the ability to tend to family and personal matters during the workday and enjoy the work they were doing. An intersectional interviewee from this study expressed positively the benefits of remote work, such as being surrounded by those they love throughout their workday. Another intersectional interviewee in a flexible work arrangement commented that they are doing the work that they love.

### **Limitations**

There were at least four potential limitations concerning this study. The first limitation concerned instrumentation restrictions due to the time and language of the UWES. A second limitation concerned demographic restrictions, including the sample size of intersectional employees and the recruitment platform used. A third limitation concerns internal validity. A fourth limitation concerns external validity restrictions.

The UWES instrument (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) was used in this study because of its existing validity and reliability in measuring employee engagement. The instrumentation limitations derived from the time, language, and demographic framework in which the UWES was written. The UWES was last updated twenty years ago, in 2004. Twenty years ago, flexible work arrangements were not common and not included in the instrument's considerations. Twenty years ago, the professional world also had reduced access to today's 24/7 connectivity and instant communication mechanisms such as video and chat platforms.

Another instrumentation limitation was the 17-question UWES and nine-question UWES used for the quantitative and qualitative studies were translated by its authors from Dutch to English. The language limitation was apparent during the qualitative study when interviewees paused and/or asked for definitions of terms such as "vigorous," "immersed," and "carried away" (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 48). Additionally, the demographics of modern North America differ greatly from the demographics of The Netherlands (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020; StatLine, 2021).

Supplementary demographic limitations of the study were reflected in the quantitative and qualitative samples. The representation of intersectional employees could have been greater given that the quantitative sample was 64%, and the qualitative sample was 25%. Further, the intersectionality of the quantitative sample was largely cisgender, heterosexual white women with a cognitive and/or physical disability, lacking racial and sexual identity diversity. Racial diversity is particularly significant due to it being physically evident in the workplace. A limitation specific to the UI platform was that it does not allow for multiple gender identity options. Additionally, the SMA and UI platforms used for recruitment did not cater specifically to intersectional individuals.

The internal validity limitations were related to a potential confounding variable. The confounding variable is the influence organizational policies have on flexible work arrangements and employee engagement of intersectional employees. Although organizational policies did not play an intentional role in the study, organizations influence employees beyond the workday. This organizational influence likely infiltrated into the survey and interview responses.

Another internal validity concern was regarding the screening questions for the survey and interviews, which could have been more specific to analyze the data more easily upon collection. Additionally, the screening questions automatically disqualified survey participants who have never worked in a flexible arrangement and currently work five days a week in office, which was an oversight in gathering a range of participants. Furthermore, SMA required an option to withdraw one's survey upon completion. Interestingly, 72 survey participants chose to withdraw their completed survey, possibly from misunderstanding the statement.

The external validity limitations in this study were related to the methodology utilized. Employee engagement was defined in this study as individualized to each employee. If the study had focused solely on qualitative research, it may have provided clarity on the nuances and subtleties of individual employee engagement. Another possible external validity limitation was the use of incentives for the qualitative portion of the study. The interviewees were given a \$5 USD gift card to participate in the study. Being that the incentive was low, it cannot be determined that the incentive influenced the behavior or answers of the interviewees.

## **Conclusion**

Much work remains to be done before a full understanding of the extent of employee engagement among intersectional employees in flexible work arrangements is established. A recommendation for future research is to develop an engagement instrument for academic use

that enhances the UWES. The instrument should reflect the current state and ongoing evolution of work. The instrument will factor in flexible work arrangements and the complexities of employee engagement in a post-COVID-19 professional world. It should be designed for seamless use in both quantitative and qualitative studies. While the instrument will be used for different types of research, it is recommended that qualitative studies be conducted to extract the distinct experiences of intersectional employees.

It is also recommended that future research should capture a broader demographic criterion for intersectional employees to include factors beyond race, gender, sexual identity, and disability. Intersectional identities such as immigration status, age, SES, and others should be included to deepen the research findings. The current study could have benefitted from a larger sample size which could provide more comprehensive data and insights. Additionally, the use of diverse recruitment platforms would aid in a larger and broader sample.

Future research should also focus on improving internal and external validity. Internal validity can be improved by including the confounding variable, the influence of organizational policies on employee engagement of intersectional employees in flexible work arrangements. The confounding variable could provide clarity when testing correlation between the independent and dependent variables. External validity can be improved by conducting only qualitative studies to achieve a deeper understanding of intersectional employees' experiences.

The current study had a limited scope and only briefly addressed the experiences of intersectional employees. Future research should dedicate more time to expanding this scope and thoroughly studying their experiences. Future research should also aim to conduct more inclusive, relevant, and holistic studies of the employee engagement of intersectional employees.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Research Announcement**

#### **SurveyMonkey Audience Survey**

Hello, my name is Emily Proctor. I am conducting research through Purdue University Global to obtain a Master of Science in Organizational Psychology. The purpose of the research is to measure employee engagement among intersectional-identifying employees who have a flexible work arrangement. I value your feedback on this beneficial emerging topic. If you are interested in taking the survey, please see below for more information. The survey will take less than 5 minutes of your time. This study is anonymous and confidential, so your personal information will be protected securely according to all applicable laws and regulations.

Please select “Yes” to participate!

#### **Interviews through User Interviews**

Hello, my name is Emily Proctor. I am conducting research through Purdue University Global to obtain a Master of Science in Organizational Psychology. The purpose of the research is to measure employee engagement among intersectional-identifying employees who have a flexible work arrangement. I value your feedback on this beneficial emerging topic. If you are interested in being interviewed, please read the data consent notice for more information. This study is anonymous and confidential, so your personal information will be protected securely according to all applicable laws and regulations.

## Appendix B

### Purdue University Global Consent for Participation in Research

#### Employee Engagement Among Intersectional Identifying Employees: Considering Flexible Work Arrangements in the Era of Increased Remote and Hybrid Work

##### CONCISE SUMMARY

This study will measure employee engagement among intersectional employees due to flexible work arrangements. Employee engagement is one's connection and commitment to their work. Intersectional-identifying employees are those who experience marginalization and oppression due to at least two personal identifying factors. High employee engagement in the workplace results in happier employees and better performance results for the organization.

The survey should take less than five minutes to complete. The interview should take less than 30 minutes to complete. Participants must be 18 years or older, have worked in a flexible work arrangement, and possess an intersectional identity. The research will aid in future discussions and policy changes within organizations to allow for more flexible work arrangements, to boost employee wellbeing, and increase employee engagement. Participating in the study may be difficult to address workplace feelings if participants have endured traumatic and/or unpleasant workplace experiences.

##### Why am I being asked?

You are being asked to be a participant in a research study about the impact flexible work arrangements have on employee engagement among intersectional-identifying employees. This research study is being conducted by Emily Proctor, a Master of Science in Organizational Psychology student at Purdue University Global. You have been asked to participate in the research because you meet the demographic requirements and may be eligible to participate. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the research.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Purdue University Global. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

##### What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to examine how increased remote and hybrid flexible working arrangements influenced employee engagement among intersectional employees. Employee engagement is one's connection and commitment to their work. Intersectional-identifying employees are those who experience marginalization and oppression due to at least two personal identifying factors. This study will focus on the intersections of race, gender, sexual identity, and disability identity.

**What procedures are involved?**

If you agree to be in this research, we ask you to do the following things:

Please complete the survey in its entirety and submit it. Please schedule and complete an interview with Emily Proctor.

Approximately 300 participants may be involved in this research at Purdue University Global.

**What are the potential risks and discomforts?**

The research may be uncomfortable to answer questions regarding workplace engagement as an intersectional employee. We recognize it may be especially difficult if one's workplace has mistreated you or fosters a toxic environment.

**Are there benefits to taking part in the research?**

Many organizations respond to requests for policy changes with the evidence of scientific data. The research will aid in future discussions and policy changes within organizations to allow for more flexible work arrangements, to boost employee wellbeing and increase employee engagement. Increased employee engagement results in better performance and results for organizations.

**What about privacy and confidentiality?**

For the survey portion: No one will know that you are a research subject because this research is totally anonymous. No information about you, or provided by you during the research, can ever be disclosed to others because no information that can possibly identify you as an individual will be collected. When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that could ever reveal your identity.

For the interview portion: The only people who will know that you are a research subject are members of the research team. No information about you, or provided by you during the research, will be disclosed to others without your written permission. When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

If you are being interviewed for this study, the interview will be recorded via videoconference. You can remain off-video for the interview, if you prefer. You can answer questions verbally or through the chat function. Following the interview, you have the right to review the recording. Only Emily Proctor and her Instructor, Dr. Jonna van Thiel will have access to the recordings for academic data analysis purposes. The recordings will be erased after five years, in keeping with the US Department of Defense data destruction standards.

Any personal information, research data, and related records will be coded and stored on an encrypted flash drive and not on a computer hard drive to prevent access by unauthorized personnel.

**Will I be reimbursed for any of my expenses or paid for my participation in this research?**

At this time, no reimbursement is available for participation in this research.

**Can I withdraw from the study?**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and remain in the study.

**Whom should I contact if I have questions?**

The researcher conducting this study is Emily Proctor. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact the researcher at: emilyproctor1@student.purdueglobal.edu. You may also contact the researcher's instructor, Dr. Jonna van Thiel at jonna.vanthiel@purdueglobal.edu.

**What are my rights as a research subject?**

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Purdue University Global through the following representative:

Susan Pettine, IRB Chair  
Email: spettine@purdueglobal.edu

Remember: Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Purdue University Global. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

You may keep a copy of this form for your information and your records.

**Signature of Subject**

I have read (or someone has read to me) the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research. I have been given a copy of this form.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Signature of Researcher

Date (must be same as subject's)

## Appendix C

### Measures

#### Demographics Questionnaire

1. Please select your age from the following ranges:
  - a. 18-24
  - b. 25-34
  - c. 35-44
  - d. 45-54
  - e. 55-64
  - f. 65-74
  - g. 75-up
  
2. Please select your race:
  - a. African
  - b. American Indian or Alaska Native
  - c. Asian or Asian American
  - d. Black or African American
  - e. First Nation or Indigenous
  - f. Hispanic or Latino
  - g. Middle Eastern
  - h. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - i. White or European American or European
  - j. Not listed/Self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_
  - k. Prefer not to say
  
3. Please select your gender:
  - a. Agender
  - b. Androgynous
  - c. Bigender
  - d. Cis man
  - e. Cis woman
  - f. Demigender
  - g. Gender-expansive
  - h. Genderfluid
  - i. Genderqueer
  - j. Intersex
  - k. Nonbinary
  - l. Transgender
  - m. Two-Spirit
  - n. Not listed/Self describe: \_\_\_\_\_
  - o. Prefer not to say
  
4. Please select your sexual identity:



- a. Asexual
- b. Bisexual
- c. Gay
- d. Heterosexual
- e. Lesbian
- f. Pansexual
- g. Queer
- h. Not listed/Self describe: \_\_\_\_\_
- i. Prefer not to say

5. Please select your disability identity (select all that apply):

- a. n/a
- b. I have a physical disability:
  - i. Amputation
  - ii. Arthritis
  - iii. Asthma
  - iv. Cancer
  - v. Cancer survivor
  - vi. Cardiovascular disease
  - vii. Cerebral Palsy
  - viii. Cystic fibrosis
  - ix. Diabetes
  - x. Epilepsy
  - xi. Fibromyalgia
  - xii. Hearing loss
  - xiii. Hematologic disease
  - xiv. Immune disorder
  - xv. Mobility impairment
  - xvi. Multiple sclerosis
  - xvii. Muscular dystrophy
  - xviii. Musculoskeletal disorder
  - xix. Spina bifida
  - xx. Spinal cord injury
  - xxi. Traumatic brain injury
  - xxii. Vision impairment
  - xxiii. Not listed/Self describe: \_\_\_\_\_
  - xxiv. Prefer not to say
- c. I have a cognitive disability:
  - i. Anxiety
  - ii. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
  - iii. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASM)
  - iv. Bipolar Disorder
  - v. Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)
  - vi. Depression
  - vii. Disruptive or dissocial disorder
  - viii. Dyscalculia

- ix. Dyslexia
- x. Eating disorder
- xi. Learning disorder
- xii. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- xiii. Paranoia
- xiv. Phobia
- xv. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- xvi. Schizophrenia
- xvii. Not listed/Self describe: \_\_\_\_\_
- xviii. Prefer not to say

## Survey and Interview Instrument

### Work & Well-being Survey (UWES) ©

The following 17 statements are about how you feel at work. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, cross the '0' (zero) in the space after the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by crossing the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way.

Never	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

1. \_\_\_\_\_ At my work, I feel bursting with energy\* (VI1)
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I find the work that I do is full of meaning and purpose (DE1)
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Time flies when I'm working (AB1)
4. \_\_\_\_\_ At my job, I feel strong and vigorous (VI2)\*
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I am enthusiastic about my job (DE2)\*
6. \_\_\_\_\_ When I am working, I forget everything else around me (AB2)
7. \_\_\_\_\_ My job inspires me (DE3)\*
8. \_\_\_\_\_ When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work (VI3)\*
9. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel happy when I am working intensely (AB3)\*
10. \_\_\_\_\_ I am proud of the work that I do (DE4)\*
11. \_\_\_\_\_ I am immersed in my work (AB4)\*
12. \_\_\_\_\_ I can continue working for very long periods at a time (VI4)
13. \_\_\_\_\_ To me, my job is challenging (DE5)
14. \_\_\_\_\_ I get carried away when I'm working (AB5)\*
15. \_\_\_\_\_ At my job, I am very resilient, mentally (VI5)
16. \_\_\_\_\_ It is difficult to detach myself from my job (AB6)

17. \_\_\_\_\_ At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well (VI6)

\* Shortened version (UWES-9); VI= vigor; DE = dedication; AB = absorption

© Schaufeli & Bakker (2003). The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale is free for use for non-commercial scientific research. Commercial and/or non-scientific use is prohibited, unless previous written permission is granted by the authors

Permissions statement:

Notice for potential users of the UWES and the DUWAS. You are welcomed to use both tests provided that you agree to the following two conditions: 1. The use is free for academic purposes only, such as PhD theses and scientific papers. For all other purposes, a contract should be drafted. Please email [info@3ihc.nl](mailto:info@3ihc.nl). 2. You agree to share some of your data, detailed below, with the authors. We will add these data to our international database and use them only for the purpose of further validating the UWES (e.g., updating norms, assessing cross-national equivalence). Data to be shared: For each sample, the raw test-scores, age, gender, and (if available) occupation. Please adhere to the original answering format and sequential order of the items. For each sample a brief narrative description of its size, occupation(s) covered, language, and country. Please send data to: [w.schaufeli@uu.nl](mailto:w.schaufeli@uu.nl). Preferably the raw data file should be in SPSS or EXCEL format. (Schaufeli, 2003, paras. 1-5.)

## Appendix D

**Table D1**

*Demographics of the 17-Question UWES Survey Quantitative Analysis*

Demographic Category	Percentage of Sample
<b>Race</b>	
White or European American or European	73%
Hispanic or Latino	7%
Black or African American	6%
Asian or Asian American	6%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3%
African	1%
Prefer not to say	4%
<b>Gender</b>	
Cisgender woman	44%
Cisgender man	25%
Agender	7%
Nonbinary	3%
Intersex	1%
Transgender	1%
Genderfluid	1%
Not listed/self-describe	7%
Prefer not to say	11%
<b>Sexual Identity</b>	
Heterosexual	71%
Bisexual	13%
Asexual	8%
Lesbian	1%
Pansexual	1%
Gay	1%
Not listed/self-describe	1%
Prefer not to say	4%
<b>Disability</b>	
Cognitive Disability	24%
Cognitive and Physical Disability	20%
Physical Disability	19%
Not listed/self-describe	21%
Prefer not to say	15%

**Table D2***Point-biserial Correlation Coefficient Results*

Sample Group	$r_{pb}$	$p$	$M$	$SD$
Intersectional Flexible (1)	-.15	.058	3.9	1.2
Intersectional Non-flexible (0)			4.3	1.0
Intersectional (1)	.04	.601	4.0	1.2
Non-intersectional (0)			3.9	1.2
Flexible (1)	-.13	.065	3.9	1.2
Non-flexible (0)			4.3	1.0

**Table D3***Means, Standard Deviations, and Source of Variation Among Employees in Flexible and Non-flexible Work Arrangements*

Measure	$M$	$SD$				
Flexible	3.9	1.2				
Non-flexible	4.3	1.0				
Source of Variation	$SS$	$df$	$MS$	$F$	$p$	$F$ crit
Between Groups	3.17	1.00	3.17	2.31	.131	3.91
Within Groups	195.22	142.00	1.37			
Total	198.39	143.00				

**Table D4***Means, Standard Deviations, and Source of Variation Among Intersectional Employees in Flexible Work Arrangements, Non-intersectional Employees in Flexible Work Arrangements, Intersectional Employees in Non-flexible Work Arrangements, and Non-Intersectional Employees in Non-flexible Work Arrangements*

Measure	$M$	$SD$				
Intersectional Flexible	3.9	1.2				
Non-intersectional Flexible	3.8	1.3				
Intersectional Non-flexible	4.3	1.0				
Non-intersectional Non-flexible	4.0	0.9				
Source of Variation	$SS$	$df$	$MS$	$F$	$p$	$F$ crit
Between Groups	3.83	3.00	1.28	.92	.434	2.67
Within Groups	194.62	140.00	1.39			
Total	198.45	143.00				

## Appendix E

### Response to Feedback

The researcher received helpful and constructive feedback from their advisors, committee, and peers throughout the process of writing this thesis. The researcher addressed the feedback by carefully reviewing each item, asking clarifying questions, using Purdue University resources, and implementing thoughtful edits. The response to feedback of the draft Results section, draft Discussion section, and APA style regarding spelling, grammar, and citations were meticulously resolved.

For the draft Results section, the researcher carefully reviewed and applied each item requiring attention. The advisor was supportive and beneficent in providing multiple rounds of feedback when items were unclear to the researcher. The advisor provided detailed feedback such as ensuring the  $p$  values were included in the narrative, which were added by the researcher. The committee's suggestions on reorganizing charts within the narrative were crucial to the success of the section. The researcher utilized the assistance of the writing and math centers at Purdue University to ensure succinctness and correctly report the statistical material. The researcher also received support from their life partner who has a professional background in analyzing statistical data. The APA guide was vital in referencing the correct ways to report statistical numbers and letters.

For the draft Discussion section, the advisor and committee's feedback was integrated in its entirety. The researcher scrupulously revised the section per the advisor's and committee's suggestions. In particular, the subsections were reworked to center around themes and the Conclusion was edited to improve connections with the Limitations section. The researcher also added information to the Limitations sections about disqualifying participants who have never

worked in a flexible arrangement and currently work five days a week in office, which was an oversight in data collection. Additionally, the researcher received help from the writing center at Purdue University to address sentence structure and overall flow of the section.

To address spelling, grammar, paragraph structure, and passive voice issues, the researcher used several resources. The researcher received help from the advisor and committee, the Purdue University writing center, their life partner, spelling and grammar check with Microsoft Word and Google Docs, The Purdue OWL, and referencing the APA Style Guide. The researcher also used AI assistance to help with suggestions on improving the conciseness of the paper and as a tool to hear the paper read aloud. The research refrained from using passive language. Finally, the researcher proofread the paper several times to catch errors.

## Appendix F

### IRB Approvals

11/14/24, 12:05 PM

Purdue University Global Mail - IRB-2024-0000128 Application Approved



Emily Proctor <emilyproctor1@student.purdueglobal.edu>

#### IRB-2024-0000128 Application Approved

1 message

Smartsheet Automation <automation@app.smartsheet.com>  
Reply-To: Purdue Global Academic Administration <harold.ballard@purdueglobal.edu>  
To: emilyproctor1 <emilyproctor1@student.purdueglobal.edu>

Thu, Sep 19, 2024 at 7:01 PM



#### IRB-2024-0000128 Application Approved

Hello, Emily Proctor -

Congratulations, your IRB Application IRB-2024-0000128 has received final approval, and you are cleared to move forward with your research.

Jonna Van Thiel has been informed of your IRB Status; please do not forward this message.

If you have any questions pertaining to your submission or the IRB process, please reach out to our IRB team at [pgirb@purdueglobal.edu](mailto:pgirb@purdueglobal.edu).

- IRB Team

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11/14/24, 12:06 PM

Purdue University Global Mail - Approval to proceed with recent request to amend IRB-approved research



Emily Proctor &lt;emilyproctor1@student.purdueglobal.edu&gt;

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**Approval to proceed with recent request to amend IRB-approved research**

2 messages

**PG IRB** <pgirb@purdueglobal.edu>

Tue, Oct 1, 2024 at 1:10 PM

To: Emily Proctor &lt;emilyproctor1@student.purdueglobal.edu&gt;

Cc: Susan Zukowski &lt;susan.zukowski@purdueglobal.edu&gt;

Hi Emily,

Dr. Zukowski reached out to the PG IRB on your behalf with your request to make an amendment to your proposed research (approved under IRB-2024-0000128).

I have been able to administratively review this for you, and I have approved this.

You may use this email as your approval to move forward as you have requested.

I wish you the best going forward.

Best,  
Dr. Sue

**Susan B. Pettine, Ph.D., CBM**

Pronouns: she, her, hers

Professor

Institutional Review Board Chair

School of Business and Information Technology

Purdue University Global

---

**Emily Proctor** <emilyproctor1@student.purdueglobal.edu>

Tue, Oct 1, 2024 at 1:24 PM

To: PG IRB &lt;pgirb@purdueglobal.edu&gt;

Cc: Susan Zukowski &lt;susan.zukowski@purdueglobal.edu&gt;

Thank you, Dr. Sue!

[Quoted text hidden]