Boredom in the Work environment as an Intermediary of Turnover Intention: A Suggested Approach

K.S. Giridharan
Assistant Professor, NITTTR, Chennai, India

Abstract:

Among employees of all levels of employment, boredom at work is widely regarded as a negative and widespread phenomenon, with an upward trend among those who are bored at work. Boredom research in eastern countries, on the other hand, has been limited in terms of number of studies. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory is employed in order to better understand the causes and consequences of workplace boredom. This leads to the hypothesis that work-related characteristics (such as job demands and job resources) as well as individual personality traits, in addition to the cultural dimension of time orientation, cause employee boredom, which may ultimately result in their desire to leave the organisation. In addition, a number of hypotheses are proposed in this research project. It is the purpose of this paper, which makes several empirical contributions, to highlight the tendency for boredom to occur in the workplace, which may result in the intention to leave the company. Workplace boredom can be reduced and turnover intention avoided in a more practical way if the antecedents are identified and dealt with appropriately.

Keywords: Boredness in the workplace, Job Demand Resources Theory, Turnover Intention, and Personality are some of the terms that were used in this research.

Introduction

Boredom in the workplace has been identified as an important, but under-researched, issue in organisational research since it was first identified four decades ago (Fisher, 1994; Loukidou et al., 2009; Krasniqiet al., 2019). Although it may appear simplistic, boredom at work has been identified by the International Labor Office (ILO) Geneva on Stress at Work Prevention Checkpoints as a problem that should be addressed by providing employees with alternative tasks. Furthermore, the Ministry of Human Resources Malaysia's Department of Occupational Safety and Health has identified boredom as one of the contributing factors to drug and alcohol abuse among employees. Thus, further research into this phenomenon is necessary because previous research has shown that boredom has a negative impact on individuals and organisations, such as job performance, attendance, wellbeing, and monetary loss. In the United Kingdom, a survey of 2,000 graduates aged 21 to 45 conducted by the Training and Development Agency for Schools in 2006 discovered that more than half were regularly bored at work. Administrative and manufacturing workers are the most bored, while healthcare workers and teachers are the least bored ("Teaching 'the least boring job,'" 2006). This finding is consistent with Fisher's (1994) claim that academicians have low occupational stress, a lower workload, and flexible working hours.bHowever, the situation is rapidly changing. Globalization and rising living costs have increased academicians' stress (Kalimo & Hakanen, 2000) due to the need to produce the "best brain" that meets market demand (Knight, 2002). Academicians claimed in a recent report that they applied high job demands such as teaching, researching, obtaining grants, publishing papers, student consulting, and administrating work (Jaschik, 2013). Simultaneously, students' uncontrollable behaviour

increased the job demands placed on academicians (Chang, 2009). Furthermore, previous works of literature on academicians show that there is a global association between profession and work exhaustion in countries such as Malaysia (Nobile & McCormick, 2007; Shuster & Finkelstein, 2006). (Makhbul & Khairuddin, 2013; Mustapha & Wee, 2013, Zakaria & Asmawi, 2015). These would almost certainly result in increased turnover and absenteeism (De Croom et al., 2004). In Malaysia, the turnover of academicians in private higher education institutions (PHEI) is at an all-time high. According to the Malaysian Ministry of Education (2015), PHEIs experienced a sudden shortage of 8,516 academicians in 2013. Since then, they have faced a constant shortage of academicians, which continues to this day (Hashim & Mahmood, 2011). This phenomenon could make it difficult for the ministry to meet its goal of increasing the number of academicians enrolled, particularly in PHEIs, by 2025, as stated in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB). As a result, the proposed study seeks to determine: 1) what causes boredom among academicians in private higher education institutions, and 2) how boredom is related to turnover intention.

Statement of the Problem

For starters, it has been discovered that organisational and individual factors influence boredom (Fisher, 1994; Mercer-Lynnet al., 2014). There has never been a study that combined both organisational level (job demands and resources) and individual level (personality) in one study. In the investigation of boredom, no known research has taken cultural dimensions such as time orientation into account. As a result, in this study, personality traits such as neuroticism and extraversion are used to develop a framework for boredom. The study also considers time orientation (monochromic versus polychronic). Second, rather than boredom, Western scholars have critically emphasised work exhaustion as a factor of turnover intention. In Malaysia, high employee turnover intention is closely related to low job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Yin-Fah et al., 2010; Lew, 2011; Nor & Johari, 2011; Hassan et al., 2015; Azalea & Mei-Hua, 2015). There hasn't been much research into the possibility of boredom inducing turnover intention. According to one study, academicians who are bored face a higher risk of unproductivity and unpleasantness than those who are exhausted from work (Reijseger et al., 2013). Third, boredom has been extensively studied in the Western context, specifically the Netherlands (Reijseger et al., 2013; Van Wyk et al., 2016), Finland (Harju et al., 2014), the United States (Bruursema et al., 2006; Watt & Hargis, 2010), the United Kingdom (Game, 2007), Italy (Guglielmia et al., 2013), Canada (Tze et al There have been few studies in the Eastern countries, with the exception of Pakistan's petroleum company (Hasanudin et al., 2016). Although boredom is a universal experience, it is culture specific and culture dependent. As a result, by using Malaysia as an example, this study will provide some insights on boredom from an Eastern perspective. However, boredom from another perspective may be referred to as a relaxation or reflection session. According to Darden (1999), boredom allows employees to refocus their attention on their work. Furthermore, Belton and Priyadharshini (2007) interpreted boredom as a motivator for new ideas and actions. However, the negative effects of boredom see it as a factor in the decline of an organisation.

Employee Boredom in the Workplace

Fig1 : Natural Causes of Boredom

Boredom in the workplace is described as a widespread, contagious disease in modern society that is closely associated with both blue collar and white-collar employees (Heijden et al., 2012) and is on the rise. It is defined as the feeling that develops within employees toward their job and the working environment when they are subjected to monotonous or repetitive activities, particularly in automation and technology-assisted environments (Cummings et al., 2016). Boredom was associated with under-challenged (unpleasant) and under-stimulated (low activation) activities by Loukidou et al. (2009), and it was associated with a lack of value in getting jobs done by Pekrun et al. (2010). Reijseger et al. (2013), on the other hand, defined boredom as an employee's inability to concentrate on their jobs. Boredom is defined as an individual's state of "disconnection" in terms of cognition, emotion, and physical strength when these descriptions are combined. This person also lacks interest, passion, and attention to their job as a result of a non-stimulating working environment in which organisational outcomes are easily influenced.

What causes boredom? In order to achieve optimal performance, it is critical to recognise an employee's capability in relation to their job characteristics and working environment when answering this question. According to some authors, boredom occurs when employees' competence exceeds the organization's demands and challenges. It is possible to simply state that they are over-qualified for the organisation. Furthermore, their routine job will be made easier by their knowledge and the assistance provided by technology. Although these may result in a significant increase in employee productivity, they will become bored with challenges in their line of work that do not match their capabilities. In other words, highly educated employees who are assigned to lower-level positions at work are more likely to become bored (Leonhardt, 2009).

Boredom, on the other hand, is frequently overlooked and classified as an inconspicuous, "silent" emotion when compared to other affective conditions that do not manifest disruptiveness. There is also a lower risk of developing a mental disorder when compared to the risk of anger and anxiety. Although it may appear simplistic, boredom at work has been identified as one of the contributing factors to drug and alcohol abuse among employees by the Department of Occupational Safety and Health, Ministry of Human Resources Malaysia. Furthermore, the International Labor Office (ILO) Geneva on Stress at Work Prevention Checkpoints stated that employees should be given alternate tasks to avoid boredom. It is significant because previous research has shown that boredom has a negative impact on individuals and organisations in terms of job performance, attendance, wellbeing, and financial loss. be easily influenced (Khan et al., 2019; Sohail et al., 2012) or in the Malaysian context (for example, Krasniqi et al., 2019).

Social Support and Boredom
Social support is regarded as the availability of helping relationship between colleagues. Such relationship exists in term of encouragement towards job participation, guidance and attention (Rodriguez & Cohen, 1998). In this present study, social support refers to the availability of co-workers or superiors who are friendly and communicative in solving problems encountered by employees. As noted by Nor & Johari, the meaningful job feedback can be deemed as one of the social support element that can provided the quality of work life towards the worker. Employees are loaded researching, lecturing, marking, and recruiting as well as being administrator, invigilator, and mentor. Hence, it is believed that employees may experience lacking support in completing the tasks, which may lead to boredom.

Neuroticism and Boredom

Neuroticism is a negative personality trait with high stress sensitivity (Suls, 2001). Employees with high neuroticism are those who are associated with negative affect, inability to cope with stress, pressure and emotionally unstable. Spector et al., (2006) reported that individual with high neuroticism perceived challenging work as threatening and tends to view the world negatively. Such characteristic has predetermined that neuroticism are correlated with negative performance outcomes such as in psychological distress, job satisfaction (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002) and health impairment (Bakker et

al., 2010). In this present study, neuroticism is referred to the tendency of an academician experiencing distress with negative affect personality. Due to low tolerance towards challenging job with negative affect, academician with neuroticism is most likely to encounter boredom at workplace.

Extroversion and Boredom

Employees with high extroversion are those who are associated with positive affect, sociability, optimism and personal energy, that demonstrate high enthusiasm and most of the time, being active resulting greater tendency to experience positive emotions. In addition, extroverts perceived challenging work positively and rewarding in due to more favourable working conditions (Bakker et al., 2010) coupled with energized and fun-loving characteristic (McCrae & Costa, 2003). Empirically, extroversion is linked to the positive performance outcomes such as job satisfaction (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002), organizational commitment (Bakker et al., 2010) and work engagement (Langelaan et al., 2006). Thus, extrovert is less likely to experience burnout and boredom (Bakker et al., 2005).

Boredom and Turnover Intention

Fig 2: Workload and Turnover Intention

Boredom is regarded as a negative state of cognition, emotion and physical strength that strike employees to be deactivated and unpleasant with of their unchallenging job. Boredom as a negative wellbeing (Whiteoak, 2014) are driving employees to perform negatively such as ill health (Harju, Hakanen, & Schaufeli, 2014), job dissatisfaction (Spector & Fox, 2006), poor job performance (Watt & Hargis, 2010), high absenteeism (Wan et al, 2014), and poor organizational commitment (Van Wyk et al., 2016). Across time, turnover intention may therefore occur as employees are constantly dissatisfied with the job and organization. The final action of turnover may happen if the situation is becoming worsen and none control, and intervention exertion took place by the managers. As boredom is a negative emotion, it is most likely to expect that employee will experience turnover intention.

Role Dissatisfaction and Boredom

Role conflict is a significant aspect of job demands. It occurs when an individual is confronted with two or more job requirements or when an individual is required to act against their own personal values (Brewer & Clippard, 2002), when an individual juggles multiple roles (Eby et al., 2005), and when there is a mismatch between job requirements and expectations. Clashes occur when the demands of superiors, subordinates, and coworkers conflict. As a result, role overlapping creates incompatible demands on individuals, resulting in negative emotion and failure to perform the job (Cooperet al., 2001).

Higher education, for example, is undergoing a paradigm shift from traditional to global education, open market economy, long life education, and learner-centered education (Venkatasubramanian, 2002), where it promotes "One World" and "Global Village," knowledge without borders. As a result, employees, such as academicians, are expected to be more responsive. Role conflict is one of the responses that could be captured. They are expected to perform the roles of administrator, researcher, consultant, invigilator, coordinator, and lecturer. Academics face role conflict when different responsibilities are structurally required to perform (Gmelch & Torelli, 1994). It increases the likelihood of role overload (Tarrant & Sabo, 2010). Furthermore, profit orientation by private universities, which put forward a large number of recruits, enriches academician's role. There is expected to be more support for the growing number of students, as well as a larger role (Ceylan & Uluturk, 2006). Employees who can perform multiple roles may be less likely to become bored. However, role conflict can lead to boredom because the employee does not know how to prioritise or where to begin.

Boredom and Workload

Workload refers to the amount of work that must be completed in a given amount of time. There are two perceptions of workload versus boredom: overwork and underwork. For starters, boredom is inversely related to increased workload (Daniels, 2000). Employees with a higher workload are expected to do more in a shorter period of time by their employers. In such an activating environment, they may find their jobs to be reversed "passive jobs," avoiding boredom. Second, Van Wyk et al. (2016) asserted that boredom is related to work underload. Work underload is defined as having little things to do in a short period of time (Larson, 2004), and such work does not correspond to the employees' competence, skills, and knowledge. As a result, employees may find the job uninteresting and thus suffer from boredom. Such findings are consistent with control value theory, which states that boredom is an achievement emotion that arises from unpleasant and deactivating activity as a result of a loss of control and value of the work (Pekrun, 2006). As a result, as employees' workload increases, they are stimulated rather than bored.
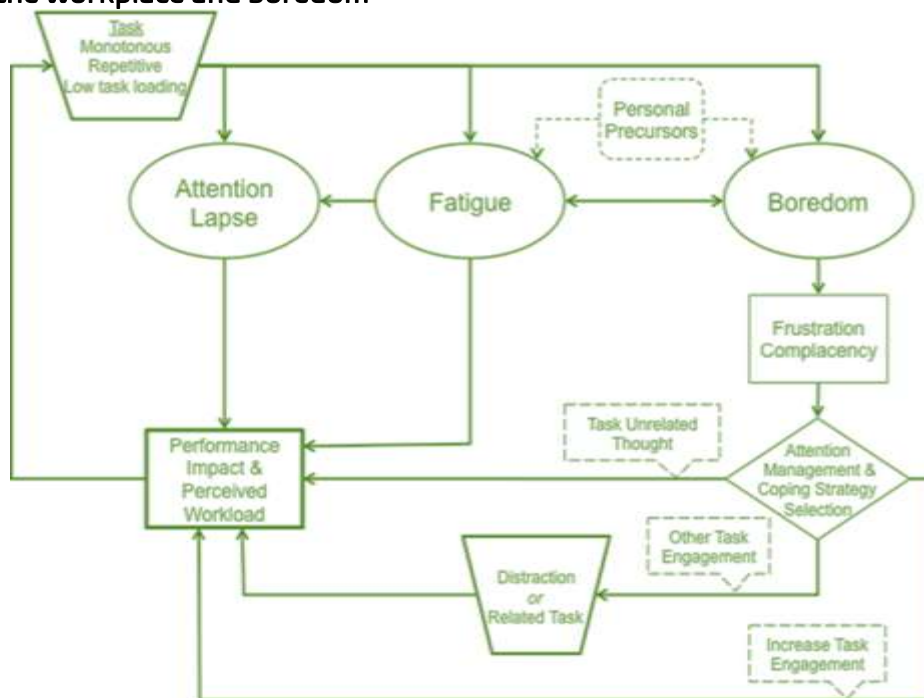
Autonomy in the workplace and boredom

Fig 3: Boredom in the workplace

Job autonomy is defined as "the degree to which the job gives the individual substantial freedom, independence, and discretion in scheduling the work and determining the procedures to be used in

carrying it out" (Hackman & Lawler, 1971) and providing employees with opportunities to learn, grow, and lead (Manz & Sims, 2001). Employees may encounter challenging jobs in such circumstances, reducing boredom. (Bashir, 2011) revealed that some people dislike job autonomy because it requires more commitment, trust, and responsibility to be deployed into the job with little support (Langfred, 2004). Employees may suffer as a result of such circumstances. Turnover Intention and Boredom.

The direct relationship between workload and job burnout has long been established in academic literature. In this study, workplace boredom will be introduced as a mediator between workload and job burnout. According to control value theory, as employees lose their ability to control and value their current activity, they will experience changes in emotion rather than directly affecting their wellbeing. Employees who view a heavy workload as a challenge, on the other hand, may be less likely to experience boredom and are less likely to experience job burnout. Employees who perceive underload as unchallenging, on the other hand, are prone to boredom and are more likely to experience job burnout.

Job autonomy, boredom, and intention to leave

Job autonomy has frequently been identified as a determinant of intrinsic motivation, which is strongly related to work engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001). Employee empowerment fosters greater responsibility and trust in the execution of work, allowing employees to learn, grow, and lead (Manz & Sims, 2001) through difficult tasks. However, some employees prefer to be followers rather than authorised because it requires more commitment, trust, and responsibility to be deployed into the job with little support (Bashir, 2011). (Langfred, 2004). Boredom at work will be introduced as a mediator in this study, mediating the positive direct relationship between job autonomy and turnover intention. Guglielmi et al. (2013) present two perspectives on employee job autonomy. On the plus side, job autonomy expands learning opportunities and fosters employees' enthusiasm and motivation to put forth effort in completing their tasks. As a result, employees are less likely to be bored at work and are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs, which may reduce their intention to leave. On the negative side, employees may perceive job autonomy as "extra work," which increases their responsibilities and commitment, reducing their learning opportunities and making the job unchallenging and boring. Furthermore, Nor and Johari (2011) emphasised that the lack of meaningful job autonomy opportunities contributes to the proclivity to leave. Different job autonomy settings will give the individual a different impression and adaptation. As a result, employees are more dissatisfied with their jobs. In such a case, it may initiate the turnover intention.

Turnover Intention, Social Support, and Boredom

Social support is an important component of job resources and has been identified as a key determinant of employees' intention to leave. Employees who have strong social support are more likely to be eager to work and may find their work interesting rather than boring, resulting in a lower intention to leave (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Alzyoud et al., 2015). In this study, workplace boredom will act as a mediator between social support and turnover intention. Because the employees are overburdened, it is possible that they will receive inadequate social support. Employees who require assistance are more likely to be demotivated and bored because they are working alone and without assistance. It may initiate turnover intention over time. Greater social support, on the other hand, generates challenging tasks that motivate employees to progress and invest effort by seeking assistance from coworkers or superiors. They are more motivated and engaged in their work over time, and they have a lower intention of leaving.

Turnover Intention, Neuroticism, and Boredom

Previous research has found that employees with neuroticism are more likely to experience negative outcomes such as psychological distress, job dissatisfaction (Judge et al., 2002), and health impairment (Bakker et al., 2010). According to these findings, neuroticism personality is

more prone to boredom at work. Emotion, according to Pekrun (2006), is a reaction displayed by employees after assessing an event and situation in terms of control and value. Employees with neuroticism tend to interpret events negatively and have a lower tolerance for stressful situations (Spector et al., 2006). As a result, employees with such personalities are more likely to be bored at work than others. High turnover intention may be influenced by high boredom.

Extroversion, Boredom, and Intention to Turnover

Extroverted employees have been linked to positive outcomes such as job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2002) and organisational commitment in previous studies (Bakker et al., 2010). Indeed, Langelaan et al. (2006) discovered that extroversion is positively related to work engagement, particularly in terms of vigour (Brief & Weiss, 2002). According to these findings, an extroverted personality is less prone to boredom at work. Emotion, according to Pekrun (2006), is a reaction displayed by employees after assessing an event and situation in terms of control and value. Employees with extroversion personalities are upbeat, energised, active, and enjoy themselves (McCrae & Costa, 2003). It promotes optimal positive wellbeing (Keyes et al., 2002) when dealing with difficult tasks. Boredom is unlikely to occur as a result of such personality. This is supported by O'Hanlon (1981), who found that extroverts are less bored at work than introverts. Less boredom may result in a lower intention to turnover.
Observation of Time

There are two types of time orientation: monochronic and polychronic. M-time sees time as a linear entity that can be saved, spent, or lost (Manrai & Manrai, 1995). As a result, people with monochronic time orientation (monochrons) prefer to focus on one task at a time and stick to a strict schedule. While promptness is important, the social context of interactions is undervalued (Manrai & Manrai, 1995). M-time is more prevalent in Western developed countries like the United States and Western Europe.

P-time, on the other hand, considers time to be fluid and flexible, and polychrons prefer to work on multiple tasks before completing one (Bluedorn et al., 1992). Punctuality is negotiable, and interruptions are tolerated on a regular basis (Storz, 1999). Employees in polychronic) exhibit a high level of interaction because they are more relationship oriented. P-time is more prevalent in developing countries such as Asia (with the exception of Japan), Latin America, and the Middle East (Manrai & Manrai, 1995).
Malaysia has a predominantly polychronic time orientation because it is still classified as a developing country with collectivist values. Malaysian businesspeople, according to Storz (1999), regard time as subjective. According to the Malaysian concept of 'rubber time,' time is changeable and stretchable, so punctuality, deadlines, forecasting, and planning are all movable.

Boredom's Consequences

Boredom in the workplace clearly has more negative effects on health (Harju et al., 2014), job performance (Watt & Hargis, 2010), job satisfaction (Spector & Fox, 2006), employees' emotion (Culp, 2006), attendance (Wan et al., 2014), and well-being (Loukidou et al., 2009) across various countries. Furthermore, it results in monetary loss at the organisational level. To demonstrate this point, Malachowski (2005) discovered that one-third of 10,000 US employees spend two hours of their working hours on personal matters, resulting in a $750 billion annual loss. Furthermore, Eddy et al., (2010) conducted a study on various occupations and found that employees who are bored spend nearly five hours per week on personal activities such as using the Internet, emailing, making phone calls, or conversing with coworkers.
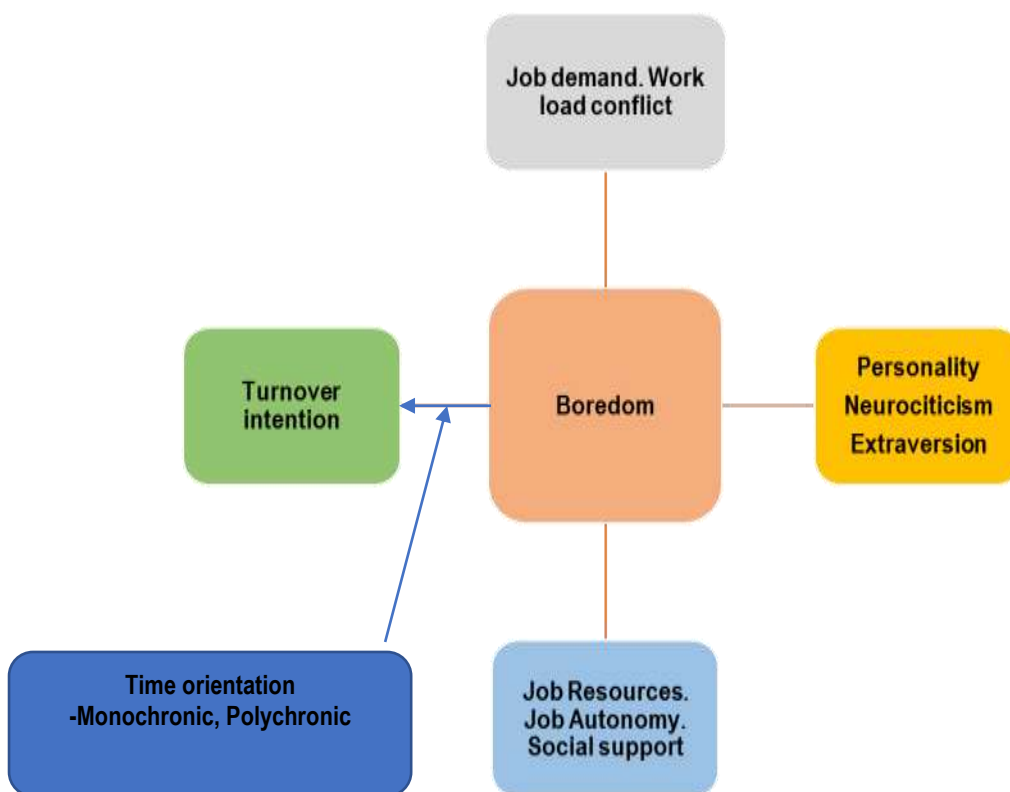
Figure 4: Conceptual Framework

Conclusions

The important but understudied issue of boredom in the workplace presents numerous opportunities for further investigation into this topic. As depicted in Figure 1, the boredom framework is developed by investigating the causes, consequences, and mediating as well as moderating effects of boredom on employees' intention to leave their current position. Although boredom is a universal experience, it can be expected to differ from culture to culture and to be more or less dependent on culture. This study proposes to investigate a cultural factor, time orientation (monochronic and polychronic), as a moderator of the relationship between antecedents and boredom, as well as boredom with regard to consequences. Thus, by identifying the root causes of workplace boredom, human resource practitioners will be better equipped to reduce the occurrence of workplace boredom in more practical ways, such as job redesigning and training employees. After a while, the intention to turnover will be decreased.

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