



Boredom in the workplace and its relationship to life satisfaction among recreation and leisure professionals

Tédio no local de trabalho e sua relação com a satisfação com a vida entre os profissionais de turismo e lazer

Joohyun Lee

Eastern Mennonite University, Faculty of Business & Leadership, Harrisonburg, VA, USA, joohyun.lee@emu.edu

Zack Wetzel

Tallahassee-Leon County Geographic Information System, Tallahassee, FL, USA, wetzelt@leoncountyfl.gov

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between job boredom and life satisfaction among recreation and leisure professionals. Data was collected from 346 members of Florida Recreation and Parks Association. A set of regression analyses were used to find out if job boredom improved the prediction of life satisfaction and differences in demographic variables among recreation and leisure professionals. The findings suggest that job boredom is a negative predictor of life satisfaction. Recreational professionals who experience boredom at work were less likely to be satisfied in their lives. Age and years in the recreation profession were significantly related to job boredom of recreation and leisure professionals. Older and more experienced professionals were less likely to get bored at the workplace than younger and less experienced ones. Suggestions were made based on the results of the study. It is implied that administrators may develop appropriate decisions to reduce job boredom levels, increase job satisfaction, and improve individuals' life satisfaction by examining which employees feel boredom in the workplace.

Keywords: Job boredom, life satisfaction, recreation and leisure professionals.

Resumo

Este estudo analisou a relação entre o tédio no trabalho e a satisfação com a vida entre os profissionais de turismo e lazer. Os dados foram coletados de 346 membros da *Florida Recreation and Parks Association*. Análises de regressão foram utilizadas para aferir se o tédio no trabalho melhorou a percepção de satisfação com a vida e as diferenças nas variáveis demográficas entre os profissionais de turismo e lazer. Os resultados sugerem que o tédio no trabalho é um preditor negativo da satisfação com a vida. Os profissionais que experimentam o tédio no trabalho eram menos propensos a sentirem-se satisfeitos com as suas vidas. A idade e o número de anos na profissão apresentam uma relação significativa em relação ao tédio no trabalho. Os profissionais mais velhos e mais experientes eram menos propensos a se entediar no local de trabalho do que os mais jovens e menos experientes. As sugestões foram feitas com base nos resultados do estudo. Está implícito que os gestores podem tomar decisões apropriadas para reduzir os níveis de tédio no trabalho, aumentar a satisfação com o trabalho e melhorar a satisfação com a vida dos indivíduos, examinando quais os funcionários que sentem tédio no local de trabalho.

Palavras-chave: Tédio no trabalho, satisfação com a vida, profissionais de recreação e lazer.

1. Introduction

Many employees are wasting time at work. When they get bored, workers spend their working time for web searching, spacing out, personal online shopping, texting, socializing, or making personal phone calls (Malachowski, 2005). Work related survey shows that the average employees waste more than two hours during an eight-hour workday costing companies a lot of money (Malachowski, 2005). Boredom within the workplace has been reported to lead to negative individual and organizational outcomes. Consequences of workplace boredom include low job dissatisfaction, high absenteeism (Kass, Vodanovich, & Callender, 2001), high turnover (Mann, 2007), and low job performance (O'Hanlon, 1981). It is also associated with psychological and physical health problems such as depression, alcohol and drug use (Wiesner, Windle, & Freeman, 2005), and stress (Fisher, 1993). Even though empirical evidence shows that boredom is widespread at work and the negative effect of boredom is evident, the study of boredom in the workplace has been neglected from the focus of consideration (Guglielmi et al., 2013; Pekrun et al., 2010). Especially workplace boredom in the leisure and recreation sector has not been ever explored.

Millions of people benefit from the services and products provided by recreation and leisure agencies in many countries. One of the important roles of recreation and leisure agencies is to offer programs and facilities that promote physical exercise, fitness, and quality of life, as well as critical concepts and language to facilitate communication about them. Leisure and recreation agencies are also important economic actors (Crompton, 2010). For instance, a sports tournament often draws many non-residents into the area, which generates revenue for the local economy. Public recreation attractions such as parks, open spaces, greenways, and trails help to increase property value. These agencies are uniquely positioned to provide important health benefits to their clients and generate economic benefits for individuals and communities.

If boredom is evident at workplace among recreation and leisure professionals, it will significantly affect not only the well-being of themselves but also to the quality of the services given to the participants, members, and the public whom they serve. As few researchers mentioned the significance of boredom which influences the product and services offered by recreation



and leisure professionals (Farmer & Sundberg, 1986; Lee, 1986; Ragheb & Merydith, 2001), it is critical to examine job boredom in the field of recreation and leisure.

2. Literature review

2.1 Boredom

Boredom has been an interesting concept of study in various fields such as philosophy, sociology, psychology, and management. Different disciplines suggested different approaches to comprehend the concept of boredom. Loukidou et al. (2009) summarized the concept of boredom in relation to arousal, motivation, behavior, cognition, and affect. Studies show that boredom is related to physical arousal such as blood pressure and skin responses, but provided conflict results (Bailey et al., 1976; London et al., 1972). Boredom is also associated with a sensational seeking motivation to change its boring situation (Zuckerman, 1979). Further, boredom is explained by low movement or repetitive behavior (Wallbot, 1998; Williams et al., 2007). In respect to cognition, boredom is associated with attentive difficulties (Damrad-Frye & Laird, 1989; Fisher, 1998). Boredom is also experienced as a lack of control, choice, complexity, and caring (Kanevsky & Keighley, 2003). Finally, boredom is defined as an emotion or “unpleasant, transient affective state, in which the individual feels a pervasive lack of interest in and difficulty concentrating on the current activity” (Fisher, 1993, p. 396).

Larson and Richards (1991) contextualized the previous definitions by distinguishing between a *psychophysiological* and a *constructivist* model of boredom. They defined the *psychophysiological* model “in terms of the interaction between a person’s dispositions and the task situation” (p. 421). That is, people feel bored when their work is not challengeable or did not meet their expectation. Further, people get bored when they have a feeling of dissatisfaction and low arousal resulting from insufficient stimulation from a situation (Mikulas & Vodanovich, 1993). On the other hand, boredom can be conceptualized with the *constructivist* model as the “expression of a value or a posture that students adopt toward school work and school authority” (p. 422). That is, people develop boredom as a form of resistance against routine or enmity. Taking the *constructivist* model one step further, Jarvis and Seifert (2002) found boredom to be an expression of resentment toward the authorities in response to feeling helplessness.

Even though various approaches explain boredom, there is no universally accepted definition of boredom (Farmer & Sundburg, 1986; Vodanovich & Kass, 1990; Fisher, 1993; Vodanovich, 2003). However, it is safe to mention that psychological approaches (emotion or affective state) encompass other approaches and would have been mostly accepted way to understand boredom (Loukidou et al., 2009).

2.2 Job Boredom

Employees at the workplace experience boredom for at least some time (Fisher, 1993). Job boredom is explained as “the

inevitable mismatches that must arise between task demands and resource allocation” (Dyer-Smith & Wesson, 1997, p. 520). Then why do people experience boredom at work, and what are the consequences of job boredom?

There are two factors causing job boredom: external and internal causes. External causes of job boredom are related to the environment outside person such as job suitability, nature of work, or organization. One of the external causes of job boredom is monotony. Typically, it was believed that monotonous and repetitive work leads to boredom (Hill & Perkins, 1985). Job boredom is also caused by organizational structure, which enforces formalization. Bureaucratic organizations with fixed rules and regulations may not allow employees to act creatively and are more likely to cause boredom (Gemmill & Oakley, 1992). Further, social relationship with other employees may cause job boredom. It was reported that “uninteresting, unfriendly or uncommunicative co-workers” (Fisher, 1993, p.399) induce job boredom. Lee (1986) also found a negative correlation between other people at work and boredom.

On the other hand, internal causes of job boredom are related to individual factors such as personality and individual differences. Even though monotony and repetitiveness are considered as a core factor to cause boredom to most people, some individuals may enjoy repetitive work and not get bored (Smith, 1955). That is, personal differences may influence the effect of job boredom. Several studies showed that age, intelligence, gender, and tenure are related to job boredom (Drory, 1982; Hill, 1975; Kass et al., 2001; Sohail et al., 2012). Conflict results were shown regarding relationship between age and job boredom. A study of heavy truck drivers found that younger workers were more likely to get bored than older ones (Drory, 1982). On the contrary, older workers were more likely to be bored than younger ones among university employees (Sohail et al., 2012). Related to intelligence, a few researchers found that more intelligent workers were likely to get bored when they were doing less-challenging work (Drory, 1982; London et al., 1972). Gender would be a factor to job boredom. Male were more likely than female to get bored (Hill, 1975). On the other hand, another study reported that there is no difference between male and female workers to feel job boredom (Sohail et al., 2012). Job boredom was also related to the length of tenure. Workers with a longer tenure were more likely to get bored (Drory, 1982; Kass et al., 2001).

There is a large volume of literature showing the effect of job boredom. Job boredom causes a negative effect on job satisfaction. For example, Kass et al. (2001) found that workers who experienced boredom exhibited less satisfaction with the work itself, supervisors, colleagues, pay, and promotion as compared to workers without similar boredom experiences. Workers experiencing boredom were also more likely to exhibit absenteeism and have longer organizational tenure. Furthermore, workers struggling with job boredom are likely to suffer distraction, weak attention control and concentration



(Damrad-Frye & Laird, 1989; Farmer & Sundberg, 1986; Hamilton, 1981; Hamilton, Haier, & Buchsbaum, 1984). For instance, Fisher (1993) found that when bored, an individual “feels a pervasive lack of interest in and difficulty concentrating on the current activity” (p. 396). Similarly, Velasco (2017) investigated the role of workplace boredom among front line service employees. Employees showed less job satisfaction and lower job creativity when they were bored.

Study findings also have shown that job boredom is negatively related to life satisfaction. For example, Seckin (2018) indicated that workers who worked for public organizations where employees perceive lack of organizational support experienced boredom. As a result, work-related boredom among public sector employees caused a negative effect on life satisfaction. Similarly, another study found job boredom is highly related to employees’ well-being. Job boredom is related to depressed mood at work and consequently increases employees’ depressed mood at home. Therefore, work-related boredom is negatively related to satisfaction in other aspects of life (Van Hoof & Van Hoof, 2016).

According to Kass, Vodanovich, and Callender (2001), a worker would be likely to experience *trait boredom*, i.e. a chronic disposition or vulnerability, as different from *state boredom*, i.e. a present and temporary condition. Workers without *trait boredom* had significantly higher intrinsic motivation to work than those with a high disposition, suggesting that “those high in boredom proneness may be best suited for occupations that offer an opportunity for external, tangible rewards (whereas) low boredom prone individuals may benefit from jobs and/or organizations that emphasize intrinsic reward strategies” (Vodanovich, Weddle, & Piotrowsky, 1997, p. 262). On the other hand, workers with *state boredom* would be likely to have a desire to change a task or situation he/she perceives as repetitive and, therefore, monotonous (Lee, 1986).

The literature about job boredom recognizes two ways to measure it: Grubb’s Job Boredom Scale (GJBS, 1975) and Lee’s Job Boredom Scale (LJBS, 1986). Grubb developed the scale to measure perceptions of job boredom among male automobile assembly workers in comparison with their recreational activity levels. The scale is comprised of two subscales: a 3-item cognitive scale and an 8-item affective scale. The results showed that workers engaged in tasks requiring more complete

assembly were less likely to suffer from job boredom. Lee’s Job Boredom Scale (LJBS), on the other hand, used the one factor with 17 items arranged on a five-point Likert scale. It was used to measure the perception of boredom among clerical workers. Its validity was further supported by the five factors of the *Job Descriptive Index* correlated with LJBS scores.

2.3 Purpose of the Study

There is no research that has explored job boredom among recreation and leisure professionals. Although studies have examined leisure boredom and its relationship with life satisfaction (Spruyt et al., 2018), boredom in the workplace in the field of recreation and leisure and its relationships with life satisfaction have never been studied. Therefore, the current study examines job boredom among leisure and recreation professionals and its relationships with life satisfaction. By examining which employees feel boredom in the workplace, administrators may develop appropriate decisions to reduce job boredom levels, increase job satisfaction, and improve individuals’ life satisfaction.

3. Methods

3.1 Study sample and data collection

The sample of this study is recreation and leisure professionals who are members of the Florida Recreation and Parks Association (FRPA). It is a professional organization that provides advocacy for parks and recreation interests. The total membership of the Florida Recreation and Park Association is upwards of two thousand recreation and leisure professionals and non-practitioners. Out of the total members, 1,284 were selected as the sampling frame due to their labeling as professional members. This sampling frame excludes members who are non-practitioners, such as students, professors, and individuals outside of the practical field of recreation and leisure. An email was sent to the members of FRPA with a link to the website survey.

A total of 346 members completed the questionnaire, which equals about a 30% response rate. Males comprised about 51% of the sample. Approximately half of the respondents were more than 45 years old and older. A majority of the sample stayed in the current position for more than 5 years (50%). Approximately 54% of the respondents have worked in the field of leisure and recreation for more than 16 years (Table 1).

Table 1 - Socio-Demographic Profile of the Sample

		N	%
Gender	Male	176	51.3
	Female	167	48.7
Age	18-24	8	2.3
	25-34	67	19.4
	35-44	100	29.0
	45-54	107	31.0
	55 and older	63	18.3



		N	%
Years in Current Position	<1	29	8.4
	1 to 3	82	23.7
	3 to 5	61	17.6
	5 to 10	70	20.2
	10 plus	104	30.1
Years in Recreation Profession	<5	37	10.7
	5 to 10	71	20.5
	11 to 15	51	14.8
	16 to 24	87	25.1
	25 or more	100	28.9

3.2 Survey Instrument and Statistical Analysis

The survey was developed based on a seventeen-item question that addressed the construct of job boredom. Questions were adapted and modified from previous research (Lee, 1986). Respondents were asked to report their level of boredom on a 5-point Likert scale. Then, life satisfaction was measured with a five-item question on a 7-point Likert scale (Diener et al., 1985). Finally, demographic questions asked the participant’s age, gender, years in current position and years in the field of recreation.

First, exploratory factor analysis was performed to validate underlying factors of job boredom. Second, a reliability test was conducted to check the internal consistency of the constructs. Third, T-test was used to examine the relationship between job boredom and gender. Fourth, regression analyses were used to find out whether significant relationships existed between

other demographics (age, years in current position, and years in recreation profession) and job boredom. Finally, regression analyses were conducted to measure the relationship between job boredom and life satisfaction.

4. Results

The exploratory factor analysis of the job boredom items generated a two-factor solution that accounted for 56% of the total variance. The first factor was composed of eight items explaining repetitiveness and monotony ($\alpha=.90$). The second factor of job boredom comprised four items related to tiresome and irritation ($\alpha=.78$). Each of the job boredom factors indicated an acceptable internal consistency of a reliability value of .90 and .78. The means for each job boredom item ranged from 1.62 to 2.76 (Table 2). The means for the second factor were a little higher than the ones for the first factor.

Table2 – Factor Loading, Reliabilities, Means, and Standard Deviation of the Job Boredom

Definition Statement*	Factor Loading		Means	SD
	1	2		
Repetitiveness and Monotony (J1)				
Do you often get bored with your work?	0.74		1.97	1.09
Is your work monotonous?	0.85		1.85	0.99
Would you like to change from one type of work to another from time to time if the pay were the same?	0.56		2.76	1.38
Do you find the job dull?	0.69		1.76	0.99
Are there any long periods of boredom on the job?	0.74		1.75	0.97
Does the job seem repetitive?	0.79		2.15	1.09
Does monotony describe your job?	0.81		1.62	0.87
Is your work pretty much the same day after day?	0.74		1.97	1.07
Tiresome and Irritation (J2)				
Do you often get tired on the job?		0.71	2.56	1.13
Do you become irritable on the job?		0.71	2.35	1.14
Do you get mentally sluggish during the day?		0.76	2.36	1.10
Do you get drowsy on the job?		0.73	2.21	1.05
Reliability Coefficient	0.90	0.78		

Note: *5-point Likert scale

A simple T-test was performed to determine if job boredom differs between male and female employees (Table 3). The first factor of job boredom (J1), repetitiveness and monotony, was not significantly different between genders. Similarly, the

second factor of job boredom (J2), tiresome and irritation, did not differ significantly between male and female. That is, there was not a significant relationship between job boredom and gender.



Table3 – Effects of Demographics on Job Boredom

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable – Job Boredom			
	Repetitiveness and monotony		Tiresome and irritation	
	<i>b</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>F</i>
Demographics				
Gender		3.04		.96
Age	-.19**	12.24**	-.17**	9.77**
Years in current position	-.01	.03	-.03	.40
Years in recreation profession	-.16**	9.71**	-.12*	4.25*

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

A simple linear regression was calculated to predict job boredom based on age, years in current position, and years in the recreation profession (Table 3). First, a significant regression equation was found ($F=12.24, p < .01$) between job boredom (J1) and age. Recreation professionals' feeling of repetitiveness and monotony decreased when age decreases ($b = -.19$). Similarly, a significant regression equation was found ($F=9.77, p < .01$) between job boredom (J2) and age. Younger recreation professionals were more likely to be tired and irritated at work compared to older employees ($b = -.17$). Second, a regression equation was not found significantly between job boredom and year in current position. Third, a significant regression equation was found ($F=9.71, p < .01$) between job boredom (J1) and years in recreation professions. Recreation professionals' feeling of repetitiveness and monotony decreased when years in recreation professions increase ($b = -.16$). Similarly, a significant regression equation

was found ($F=4.25, p < .05$) between job boredom (J2) and years in recreation professions. The longer recreation professionals worked in this profession, the less tired and irritated at work they were ($b = -.12$).

Finally, a simple linear regression was conducted to predict the relationship between job boredom and life satisfaction (Table 4). A significant regression equation was found ($F=56.30, p < .001$) between job boredom (J1) and life satisfaction. Recreational professionals who feel repetitiveness and monotony at work were less likely to be satisfied in their lives ($b = -.36$). The Second factor of job boredom (J2) was also a significant factor in influencing the life satisfaction of recreational professionals ($F=35.09, p < .001$). Recreational professionals' life satisfaction decreased significantly when they were tired and irritated at work ($b = -.30$).

Table 4 – Relationship between Job boredom and Life Satisfaction

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable – Life satisfaction	
	<i>b</i>	<i>F</i>
Job boredom		
Repetitiveness and monotony	-.36*	56.30*
Tiresome and irritation	-.30*	35.09*

Note: * $p < .001$

4. Discussion

There are a few matters worth discussing as far as the results are concerned. First, age and years in the recreation profession were significant factors influencing job boredom. Older professionals were less likely to get bored at the workplace than younger ones. Also, more experienced professionals in the field of recreation were less likely to get bored than those who are less experienced in the field. These findings are consistent with previous research that has shown positive relationship between age and job boredom among university employees (Sohail et al., 2012) and employees of a large multinational company as well (Van Hoof & Van Hooft, 2017). One cause may be that younger professionals are eager to complete tasks and finish assignments which leaves them with little or no work during the rest of the workday. Another cause may be that younger professionals are not adjusting properly to the typically 40-hour work week. Younger recreation and leisure professionals can help lower their boredom levels by implementing time management strategies. Time management refers to the

practice of setting work priorities, personal priorities, personal goals, and effective scheduling (Mind Tools, 2006). To deal with being anxious to finish tasks as quickly as possible, these younger professionals should schedule their workday more appropriately. It is also important for professionals who are not adjusting properly to their new work schedule to use effective time management strategies in their personal lives. One strategy for recreation and leisure organizations to lower boredom for younger professionals is the use of mentorship programs. Mentorship programs acclimate new and younger employees to the organization's culture and build the employee's knowledge in a particular area (Messmer, 2005). Using these techniques and strategies may help lower boredom for young professionals. These findings also suggest that organizations in the field of recreation and leisure should concentrate on developing an appropriate work design in which younger and less experienced employees can be challenged and encouraged with sufficient skills and autonomy.



Second, job boredom was a strong predictor of life satisfaction among recreation professionals. There are numerous strategies available for recreation and leisure professionals to employ in order to avoid and reduce boredom during work. Kanchier (2006) outlines several strategies for individuals to reduce boredom levels. The employees should decide whether they are getting the required amount of challenge, autonomy, support, and feedback to feel motivated. This process will help clarify one's purpose, skills, and career goals. Another tactic is to explore ways to redesign the job. When using a redesign process, it is important to consider minimizing repetition and increasing variations of one's assignments. It may prove helpful to select duties that give a sense of purpose and accomplishment rather than duties labeled as mundane and dull. The employees also should be motivated to continue to learn. This can be done through participating in organizational training, joining professional organizations, reading professional journals, and enrolling in continuing education classes. Employing these strategies would help recreation and leisure professionals reduce boredom levels at the workplace.

Furthermore, recreation and leisure organizations should play a role in reducing the job boredom of their employees. Messmer (2005) offers strategies such as providing intellectual challenges, promoting open communication, and encouraging employee involvement in decision making to improve employee boredom levels. Providing intellectual challenges is an effective technique to reduce the job boredom levels of employees. Staff members should be encouraged to develop different approaches to everyday tasks which will keep employees interested and engaged. In addition to improving intellectual challenges, organizations can offer trainings, course enrollments, and industry-related activities to advance the knowledge of staff member.

Another strategy to reduce the boredom levels of employees is to promote open communication. This will allow employees to address their feelings towards their job and inform the organization of specific issues, such as boredom, that are affecting them. An additional tactic is to involve employees in the decisions that affect their work. Siegall and McDonald (2003) indicate that organizations benefit by taking actions to encourage employee participation. Higher employee participation in the development or the organization results in greater employee "buy-in" of the organization's values. By applying these strategies, recreation and leisure organisations benefit from their employees' lower boredom levels by improving morale and personal life satisfaction that likely leads to a more stable work force and improving outcomes for customers and participants. Consequently, it will increase recreation and leisure professionals' life satisfaction, leading to higher quality of services and products offered to the public.

Although leisure education is a valuable tool, individuals may not realize their need for ongoing leisure education. Employees may also overlook their own leisure and how it can benefit them. Organizations can improve employee life satisfaction

levels by providing leisure assessments and questionnaires. Past research has shown that life satisfaction and job satisfaction have a reciprocal relationship (Judge & Watanabe, 1993; Aydintan & Koc, 2016). It is assumed that a positive relationship exists between job satisfaction and positive work outcomes benefiting the organization. Leisure assessments and questionnaires are simple and effective ways for employees to judge their leisure behavior. Recreation and leisure organizations are especially well resourced to promote leisure education through intramural sports, company gatherings, and access to fitness centers.

5. Conclusions

Millions of people receive health and economic benefits from recreation and leisure professionals. The products and services offered in the recreation and leisure industry are controlled, managed, implemented, and designed by recreation and leisure professionals. These professionals are a major influence on the lives of the public. If boredom is apparent at workplace among recreation and leisure professionals, it will influence not only individual satisfaction but also to the quality of the services provided to the public whom they serve. Considering the importance of the profession in the field of recreation and leisure, this study investigated job boredom among recreation and leisure professionals and its relationships with age, gender, years in the position, and life satisfaction. The results showed that age and years in the recreation profession are significantly related to job boredom. Older and more experienced employees were less likely to get bored at work. The results also indicated that job boredom is apparent for recreation and leisure professionals, and it can be measured with two dimensions, repetitiveness and monotony, and tiresome and irritation. Job boredom has been shown to reduce worker effectiveness and lead to job dissatisfaction (Fisher, 1993; Farmer & Sundberg, 1986). Several impacts can cause by boredom to the recreation and leisure professional. Examples include job turnover, lower job satisfaction levels, and lower life satisfaction, affecting the professional, the organization they work for, and the public they serve.

6. Limitations and suggestions for future research

Several limitations in our study and suggestions for future research need to be noted. First, data of this study was collected from the members of a professional organization in the field of recreation. Members of associations may already have a stronger tie to the field due to their efforts to become members. By excluding non-members of the association, the generalizability of findings could be limited. Second, there are various types of occupation in the recreation field, and they may provide different results. For example, park maintenance jobs may have redundant tasks with keeping the same field, trails, and structures repeatedly; meanwhile, recreation programmers may have jobs that are both challenging and exciting. Grouping occupations in recreation and measuring job boredom among those particular groups may help better



understand job boredom and its effects. Further, it is suggested that future studies should incorporate various measurements for job boredom. Even though the boredom proneness scale is widely used to measure job boredom, the behavioral aspect of job boredom should not be neglected. For example, the intensity and frequency of job boredom may reflect a better understanding of boredom in the workplace. Future studies are also encouraged to investigate a comprehensive model in both the antecedents and consequences of job boredom. For example, stress factors are negatively related to job satisfaction and job performance (Unguren & Arslan, 2021). Further, job boredom is related to stress, job satisfaction and job performance (Harju et al., 2014; Velasco, 2017). Including job boredom in the model may help understand the dynamics of organization.

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