

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORKLOAD AND STUDENTS' DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOURS WITH TURNOVER INTENTION AMONG ACADEMICIANS OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: BOREDOM AT WORKPLACE AS MEDIATOR

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ABSTRACT

Boredom is widespread contagious bacterial experienced by all occupational levels at increasing trend and that influences employees' affection, cognition, and well-being. However, limited studies are carried out to investigate the influence of boredom at workplace on turnover intention. In academia, academicians are mentally and physically overloaded due to heavy workload and student disruptive behaviour. Therefore, this study investigates the relationship between workload, student disruptive behaviour, and turnover intention among academicians. A quantitative study was conducted to obtain the data from 279 academicians working for 20 private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in Sarawak. The results showed that workload was negatively associated with turnover intention, while student disruptive behaviours were positively associated with turnover intention. A structural mediation model showed that workload was negatively associated with boredom which led to positive association with turnover intention. In contrast, student disruptive behaviour was positively associated with boredom and which resulted in turnover intention. After performing bootstrapping, the result confirmed the presence of boredom as mediator. PHEIs should establish technologies and facilities to reduce the academicians' workload. The academicians should also be provided with trainings related to class management and learning tools in order to minimize their boredom and turnover intention.

Keywords: JD-R Theory; Boredom at Workplace; Turnover Intention; Job Demands; Workload; Student Disruptive Behaviours.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the past, academic career is associated with low stress, less workload and flexible working hour (Fisher, 1994). Due to globalization, this profession has become more stressful and demanding because the academicians are required to produce the “best brain” to meet the market demand. According to Jaschik (2013), academicians exert high job demands such as teaching, research, grant sourcing, publication, student consultation and administrative works. Student disruptive behaviour also increases the job demands on these academicians (Chang, 2009). Previous literatures has highlighted that academic career involves job burnout (Shuster & Finkelstein, 2006; Nobile & McCormick, 2007) that is likely to cause higher turnover intention and absenteeism (De Croom, Sluiter, Blonk, Broersen & Frings-Dresen, 2004). Nevertheless, no known study has been carried out to investigate the relationship between boredom and turnover thoroughly. Bored academicians always feel inactive and unpleasant than those burned-out (Reijseger et al., 2013). Undoubtedly, boredom can lead to health problems (Harju, Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2014), low job performance (Watt & Hargis, 2010), low job satisfaction (Spector & Fox, 2010), negative emotions (Culp, 2006), poor attendance (Wan, Downey & Stough, 2014), negative well-beings (Loukidou, Loan-Clarke, & Daniels, 2009), frequent turnover intentions (Reijseger et al., 2013) and monetary losses (Eddy, D'Abate & Thurston Jr, 2010). In response to this issue, two questions have been proposed. The first question is: ‘What causes boredom among academicians?’ while the second question is ‘How is boredom related to turnover intention among academicians?’.

In consonance with JD-R theory, employees’ well-being is regulated by the disparity of job demands and resources at workplace that closely connected to the employees’ performance outcomes via two fairly independent psychological processes namely *health impairment and motivational process* (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Health impairment process requires employees to continuously invest high physical and psychological efforts (job demands) into their job where in long run, resulting negative outcomes (Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2003; Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006). Motivational process is a series of motivation to encourage employees to work for enjoyment, improvement and engagement (Bakker et al., 2010) via the fulfilling of intrinsic and extrinsic basic human needs (job resources) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Past studies have shown that high job demands can result in job burnout (Bakker et al., 2003; Hakanen et al., 2006; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007), in turn lead to poor organizational commitment and turnover intention (Hakanen, Schaufeli, & Ahola, 2008). Besides job burnout, some scholars have also investigated the issue of boredom in organizational context (Reijseger *et al.*, 2013; Guglielmi, Simbula, Mazzetti, Tabanelli & Bonfiglioli, 2013; Van Wyk, De Beer, Pienaar & Schaufeli, 2016). To understand the relationship between boredom and turnover intention, it is important to identify how the antecedents that affect employees’ intention to leave. Therefore, the present study examines both direct and indirect effects of workload and student disruptive behaviour on boredom and turnover intention among academicians in Malaysia (see Model 1.0), particularly in Sarawak.

The Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy (SCORE) development plan has drawn the importance of human capital development. The plan creates 1.6 million new jobs and targeted to achieve a fivefold growth in term of gross domestic product (GDP) amounting RM118 billion by year 2030. PHEIs play a crucial role to supply competent and knowledgeable pool of human capital to fill those jobs. Nevertheless, turnover intention among academicians in Malaysia is critical and it affects the quality of teaching and learning. Factors such as role ambiguity, leadership, job

characteristics had been investigated to influence turnover intention but none has examine boredom. Thus, this area is worth to be investigated.

On top of lecturing, academicians are expected to be multi-tasking thereby enduring heavy workload. Workload is categorized as one of the physical demand on academicians. They are expected to invest effort physically in order to get complete their job such as teaching, marking, publication and many more. Past studies have demonstrated that workload is negatively related to boredom at workplace (Daniels, 2000). As workload increases, an academician is unlikely to experience boredom. Therefore;

H₁: Workload is negatively related to boredom.

Student disruptive behaviour is a common psychological demand on academicians. Unfortunately, there are limited studies on the effect of student disruptive behaviour on academicians. Although it does not physically burdening, academicians are required to deal with it to smoothen the normal education process. Chang (2009) claimed that student behaviour in the class is related to the degree of relevance and working performance. In fact, academicians are found to be fear in making correction on disruptive students and limit their interaction (surface level) to the class only. In such condition, they commit to the lower degree of relevance. By then, it becomes a meaningless where boredom emerged. Therefore;

H₂: Students' disruptive behavior is negatively related with boredom.

In this present context, boredom is a negative state of well-being that boost negative outcomes such as job performance (Watt & Hargis, 2010), satisfaction (Kass, Vodanovich, & Callender, 2001), absenteeism (Wan et al., 2014), and organizational commitment (Van Wyk et al., 2016) despite positive view on boredom such as a session for refreshment and generating new ideas (Belton & Priyadharshini, 2007). Therefore, as far as the boredom literature is concerned;

H₃: Boredom is positively related to turnover intention.

According to control-value theory, employees feel bored when they are unable to control and value their works due to unpleasant work activities (Pekrun, 2006). They will adopt a temporary relief strategy that produces negative outcomes (Whiteoak, 2014). As workload increases, academicians are probably engaged in their tasks to avoid boredom. In dull situations, they may find their competence, skills and knowledge are not applicable in their jobs. As a result, they are susceptible to experience boredom. To reiterate, the presence of boredom will initiate employees' turnover intention (Reijseger et al., 2013). Based on the review of existing literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

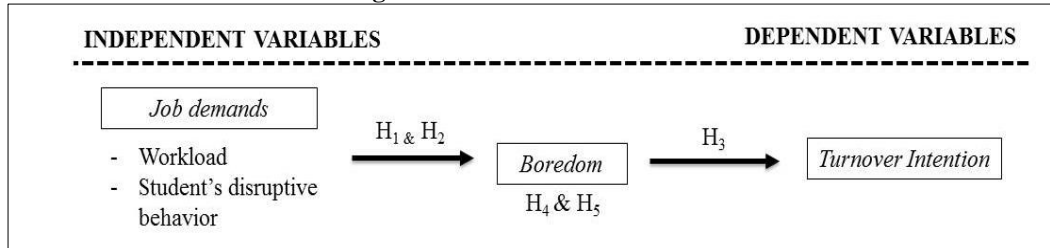
H₄: Boredom at workplace mediates the relationship between workload and turnover intention among academicians.

Based on JD-R theory, employees working performance are relying on the amount of job demands and resources. Obviously, student disruptive behaviors are physiological demand that deplete the job resources among academicians. To address this issue, they will implement a temporary relief strategy to retrieve what they have loss. In this present context, academicians opt for boredom as

the temporary relief strategy. They simply fulfil the teaching requirement instead of emphasizing knowledge sharing and impartment with the students. When this situation continues without remedial actions from the management, it eventually aggravates the issue of turnover among academicians (Liu & Onwuegbuzie, 2012). Accordingly:

H₅: Boredom at workplace mediates the relationship between students' disruptive behavior and turnover intention among academicians.

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework



2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The present study is a quantitative study and that uses the questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The adapted and adopted method was applied to build up the questionnaire from various sources that fulfilled the minimum acceptable reliability score and convergent validity. *Boredom at the workplace* was measured using Dutch Boredom Scale with eight single-factors items (e.g: "I feel bored at my job"; 1 = *never* to 7 = *always*; $\alpha = 0.83$). Seven-point Likert scale was introduced to overcome the central tendency errors (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). *Workload* was adopted from Houston, Meyer, & Paewai, (2006) and measured using five items with five-point Likert scale (e.g: "The amount of administration I am expected to do is reasonable"; 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = 0.80$). *Students' disruptive behaviour* was adopted from Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, (1978) and measured by using five items with five-point Likert scale (e.g: "I have students who produce high noise level."; 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = 0.86$). *Turnover intention* was measured by using five items with five-point Likert scale (e.g: "I am seriously thinking about quitting my job."; 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = 0.89$). This present study applied 5 items to measure a construct where (Baron & Kenny, 1986) claimed it to be the most optimum measurement ratio.

A total of 799 self-administered questionnaires were distributed through both online and post to academicians working for 20 private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in Sarawak. At the end of the data collection, 279 questionnaires were returned yielding a response rate of 36.2%. The sample comprised 70.7% of female and 29.3% of male. Further, 48.7% were of them married, 49.8% were singles and the remaining was divorced/separated/widowed. In term of academic qualifications, 48.7% of the respondents had a bachelor's degree whereas 38.4% had a master's degree. The rest (12.9%) had a doctorate degree (Ph.D). Lecturer made up an 82.4% of the total respondents. The rest were professors, associate professors, senior lecturers and others (tutors, instructors, junior lecturers). The majority of the respondents (54.8%) had a monthly income with less than RM 2,999. Nearly 31.5% of the respondents have been working as an academician for

more than seven years. Moreover, 30.5% of the respondents have been serving their current institutions between 1 to 3 years.

The data were analysed using Smart PLS 3.0 to perform hypotheses testing. Few rounds of iteration were conducted to check on the reliability of the indicators through composite reliability (CR) with a threshold value of 0.7 (Litwin,1995). Furthermore, the validity of the indicators was determined through convergent validity (average variance extracted, AVE) and discriminant validity (cross-loading). It is crucial to note that AVE with a value greater than 0.5 is applicable (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011) while the cross-loading value shall be higher than any other constructs (Chin, 1998). In the present study, all the indicators fell into the acceptable range.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Table 1.0, workload was found to be negatively associated with boredom at workplace. This indicated that workload was an important factor determining the boredom among academicians. Thus, the relationship between workload and boredom was significant, H_1 ($\beta=-0.190$, $p<0.025$) was supported. Moreover, student disruptive behaviour was found to be positively associated with boredom at workplace ($\beta=0.132$, $p<0.025$). It meant that academicians would experience boredom when the students behaved inappropriately in class. Hence, H_2 was rejected.

Apart from that, boredom was positively associated with turnover intention among academicians. The more frequent academicians encountered boredom at workplace, the greater their turnover intention would be. The relationship between boredom and turnover intention was significant, thereby supporting H_3 ($\beta=0.460$, $p<0.025$). In term of mediation effect, boredom was found to mediate the indirect path coefficient for the relationship between workload and turnover intention ($\beta=-0.087$, $p<0.025$), and also the relationship between student disruptive behaviour and turnover intention ($\beta=0.060$, $p<0.025$) (see Table 2.0). As shown in Table 3.0, boredom was confirmed to mediate the direct path coefficient for the relationship between workload ($\beta=-0.049$, ns) and student disruptive behaviour ($\beta=0.106$, $p<0.025$).

Table 1: Path Coefficients for Inner Model

Path	Path coefficient	Standard deviation	t-statistics
Workload --> Boredom	-0.190*	0.058	3.342
Student disruptive behaviour --> Boredom	0.132*	0.052	2.400
Boredom --> Turnover Intention	0.460*	0.059	7.869

Note: *Significant level at $p<0.025$; ns not significant.

Table 2: Indirect Effects

Path	Indirect effect (a*b)	Standard deviation	t-statistics
Workload -> Turnover intention	-0.087*	0.029	3.081
Students disruptive behaviour -> Turnover intention	0.060*	0.025	2.306

Note: *Significant level at $p<0.025$; ns not significant.

Table 3: Direct Effects

Path	Direct effect (c')	Standard deviation	t-Statistics
Workload -> Turnover intention	-0.049 ^{ns}	0.054	1.000
Students disruptive behaviour -> Turnover intention	0.106*	0.048	2.092

Note: *Significant level at $p < 0.025$; ^{ns} not significant.

4. DISCUSSION

Result indicated that workload was highly influential on boredom among academicians, which was consistent with previous studies by Daniels (2000), and Van Wyk et al., (2016). They found out that boredom stroke employees with work under-load. In other words, an increase in workload minimized the boredom of academicians.

Since the respondents endured heavy workload regularly, there was a negative relationship between workload and boredom. Employees who were under loaded might find their jobs dull when the jobs could be completed easily. As a result, they were prone to get bored with their jobs. In contrast, employees who were constantly loaded were engaged in their jobs. They were motivated to finish their jobs within the stipulated time by utilizing their energy to generate productivity, thus reducing boredom. When academicians were overloaded for a certain period of time without recovery, there were likely to experience exhaustion and develop negative attitudes (cynicism). This situation is known as job burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The common student disruptive behaviors found in class are sleeping, talking, messaging, playing video games and cell phones in the class (Hubbell & Hubbell, 2010). Academicians can get bored easily when there are students demonstrating disruptive behaviours in class. This finding supports Seidman's (2005) study which stressed that academicians are expert in their own specialization instead of class management. When academicians failed to control class, it had reduced a high degree of relevance and interaction with students. Although they could perform their job activities as usual, the working environment was no longer appealing to them that eventually caused boredom.

Furthermore, the results also revealed a positive relationship between boredom at workplace and turnover intention. This indicated that highly bored academicians possessed greater turnover intention. This finding further supported other past studies by Kass et al. (2001) and Reijseger et al. (2013). The main reason was those bored academicians were demotivated to invest effort in their work as they lost their passion. When the job became more demanding and they remain bored, they failed to cope with the changes and chose to leave their profession instead of struggling. It was concluded that boredom could lead to turnover intention.

The current findings also showed that boredom fully mediated the direct relationship between workload and turnover intention. As suggested by COR theory, employees always rely on various resources to achieve work pleasure and success. However, stress will definitely exist when certain situations cause resources loss or threat of resources loss. This indicates that job demands can produce negative outcomes through job burnout. It is proven by some scholars that academicians who had heavy workload usually experienced job burnout (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In fact, job burnout will lead to turnover intention among academicians.

According to control value theory, emotions determine employees' well-being directly. They would be engaged and less likely to experience boredom when they regarded heavy workload as a challenge. When academicians were work under-load, they would experience boredom and lead to turnover intention. However, the findings of this study were valid to certain extent where academicians could get bored and leave the job when they were burdened with many responsibilities especially when they had to deal with time-consuming administrative work. As a consequence, boredom strokes those academicians due to their incompetency that might possibly result in turnover. Moreover, boredom was found to partially mediate the direct relationship between student disruptive behaviour and turnover intention. Teaching is a challenging task that requires academicians to impart knowledge to the students. The academicians are expected to invest effort in their profession intellectually and emotionally. Knowledge can be transferred effectively when academicians build a strong rapport with their students (Liljestrom, Roulston, & deMarrais, 2007). However, student disruptive behaviours can inhibit the intimacy between academicians and students. The presence of disruptive students is merely for the sake of final examination that allows academicians to interact with them at the surface level only. Hence, it is crucial for academicians to take greater psychology and emotional effort to change the disruptive students' perspective instead of ignoring them in the class. Sooner and later, academicians will get bored with teaching them because lecturing becomes a mundane daily routine that encourages their turnover intention.

5. IMPLICATION

This study demonstrated that workload was one of the factors that influence boredom at workplace and turnover intention among academicians in Malaysia. To address this issue, PHEIs should manage their workloads – reasonably by making proper adjustment in teaching hours, amount of administrative work and student supervision. Moreover, PHEIs are suggested to incorporate advanced technologies and facilities such as E-learning, mobile application and dashboard to facilitate both teaching and learning. They are also expected to lighten the burden of academicians, at the same time, create meaningful and stimulating learning platform for students. With the aid of these technologies and facilities, academicians are unlikely to encounter boredom and turnover intention. Last but not least, student disruptive behaviour was found to be an antecedent of boredom at workplace which could give rise to turnover intention. PHEIs should provide training for academicians about class management as affirmed by Seidman (2005). This was because they were not skilful in managing class. Besides that, PHEIs should also provide relevant training for the learning tools such as E-Book, Pretzi, and E-learning. When academicians have mastered these skills, they will be able to improve their interaction and relationship with disruptive students that make knowledge impartment possible.

6. CONCLUSION

In summary, both workload and student disruptive behaviour were determinants of boredom at workplace which was associated with turnover intention among academicians. The present study suggested that reasonable amount of workload and strategies to tackle students' disruptive behaviours through effective trainings. Although the issue of boredom remains unresolved in

Malaysia, PHEIs should identify the effect of boredom before the turnover issues of academicians become severe.

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