

Is Conformist Behavior Related to Boreout?^a

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Abstract

Background. The main reason for conducting such a study is to find the answer to the question of whether the boredom they experience at work is behind these behaviors in business life, where individuals push themselves into the background rather than using their right to speak. In this context, understanding the concept of conformism, which is new in the literature, and analyzing its relationships with relevant variables will contribute to the literature.

Aim. The aim of this study is to investigate whether conformist behaviors that individuals frequently encounter and are exposed to in business life are related to boreout experienced for some reasons.

Method. In this context, through a relational model designed according to the quantitative research method, the research data obtained from the teachers' sample ($n = 325$) were subjected to statistical analyses and the findings were reported.

Findings. The independent variable boreout and its all-sub-dimensions have a significant and positive contribution to explaining conformist behaviors. 60% of the variance in conformist behaviors can be explained by boredom/boreout at work. Individuals exhibit more conformist behavior by questioning their work, development and meaning due to the boredom they experience.

Conclusion. The increase in boreout level of employees, which arises for some reasons in the work environment, will be effective in employees' ability to express their opinions, express their thoughts, and decrease their participation in decisions, in other words, to increase their conformist behaviors. Because individuals want to be comfortable in the work environment where they spend most of their days and not to encounter factors that will cause boredom in order to be able to express themselves and put forward an idea on a subject.

Keywords: Boreout at work, conformism, conformist behavior, teacher.

Konformist Davranışlar Can Sıkıntısıyla İlgili mi?

Öz

Arka plan. Böyle bir çalışmanın yapılmasının temel nedeni, bireylerin söz hakkını kullanmak yerine kendilerini geri plana ittiği iş hayatındaki uymacı davranışlarının arkasında iş yerinde yaşadıkları can sıkıntısının olup olmadığı sorusunun cevabını bulmaktır. Bu bağlamda literatürde yeni olan konformizm kavramının anlaşılması ve ilgili değişkenlerle ilişkilerinin analiz edilmesi literatüre katkı sağlayacaktır.

Amaç. Bu çalışmanın amacı bireylerin iş hayatında sıklıkla karşılaştıkları ve maruz kaldıkları konformist davranışların bazı nedenlerden dolayı yaşanan sıkılma ile ilişkili olup olmadığını araştırmaktır.

Yöntem. Bu bağlamda nicel araştırma yöntemine göre tasarlanan, ilişkisel model aracılığıyla kaleme alınan çalışmada, aktif olarak görev yapmakta olan öğretmenlerden ($n = 325$) elde edilen araştırma verisi istatistiksel analizlerle incelenmiş ve bulgular raporlanmıştır.

Bulgular. Bağımsız değişken olan iş yerinde sıkılma ve tüm alt boyutlarının konformist davranışları açıklamada anlamlı ve pozitif katkısı bulunmaktadır. Uymacı davranışlardaki farklılığın %60'ı işyerindeki can sıkıntısıyla açıklanabilmektedir. Bireyler yaşadıkları can sıkıntısı etkisiyle işini, gelişimini ve anlamını sorgulayarak daha fazla konformist davranışlar sergilemektedirler.

Sonuç. Çalışanların çalışma ortamında bazı nedenlerden dolayı ortaya çıkan sıkılma düzeyinin artması, onların fikirlerini ifade edebilmelerinde, düşüncelerini dile getirebilmelerinde ve kararlara katılımlarının azalmasında, diğer bir deyişle konformist davranışlarının artmasında etkili olacaktır. Çünkü bireyler, kendilerini ifade edebilmek ve bir konu hakkında fikir ortaya koyabilmek için günlerinin çoğunu geçirdikleri iş ortamında rahat olmak ve sıkılmalarına neden olacak faktörlerle karşılaşmamak isterler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İş yerinde can sıkıntısı, konformizm, konformist (uymacı) davranış, öğretmen.

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1. Introduction

Educational institutions are institutions responsible for socializing groups of children and young people in a society about certain skills and values. This socializing element probably contributes the most to social cohesion. “The education system has served as a catalyst when action and dynamism were required and as a balancer when necessary. This system responds to the needs of society and meets the demands of society for educated individuals, intellectual citizens and well-educated citizens” (Saldana, 2013, p. 228).

Boreout at work, one of the common problems in business life today, is a problem that negatively affects important factors such as productivity (Özsungur, 2020a), creativity and quality. The quality rather than the quantity of time spent by individuals in the work environment, their level of harmony and integrity with the job, and the meaning of the job for employees are the most important factors that determine productivity criteria. The situation where employees experience boredom at work is an important issue that negatively affects their performance and motivation, and ultimately the criteria of businesses such as productivity, creativity and quality (Demir et al., 2020).

Boreout syndrome is a syndrome that results from the individual not being able to find work to do at work and finding the tasks assigned to him simple and insufficient. It emerges as a situation where individuals are dissatisfied with their work, experience boredom and feel that the job is not at a level that will challenge them (Merdan et al., 2022). An employee who is bored, unmotivated or dissatisfied in his working life may avoid conveying his feelings to other employees, communicating, expressing his opinion and taking responsibility. Conformism, which is the state of complying with the beliefs, thoughts and traditions existing in the society or organization, adapting, and always approving others rather than taking the right to speak, is a situation that harms individual and group relations in working life (Gökçen Kapusuz, 2023).

Boredom and conformist behavior in the working environments of teachers, who are the most important elements of educational institutions, are important. Because it is noteworthy that individuals who exhibit conformist behaviors are more reserved, introverted in organizational life than others, who approve of others rather than taking the right to speak, who do not express their opinions for fear of taking responsibility, and who always have an approving attitude instead of questioning right or wrong (Gökçen Kapusuz, 2023). It is important to investigate whether these individuals with conformist attitudes also experience boredom at work or whether this boredom is related to conformism.

This study, written for this purpose, is unique in that it is the first study in the literature to address boreout and conformism variables together, and is important in terms of understanding the concept of conformism, which has been introduced to the literature in the recent past, and evaluating it on a relational basis.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Boreout at Work

Boredom is a concept associated with workplace crises and employees' boredom with work. It is a psychological condition resulting in physical illness caused by a lack of sufficient quantitative or qualitative effort, mainly caused by mental underload at work. This negative psychological state negatively affects the work of employees (Özsungur, 2020b). Distressed employees lack independent

thought and action as well as excitement about their work (Stock, 2014). Such employees also find their jobs meaningless (Stock, 2016). It is emphasized that this intense boredom at work can lead to burnout syndrome for individuals in their professional lives (Gino, 2023).

Boreout syndrome at work has started to attract attention since the 2000s (Moris & Nedosugova, 2019). The term 'boredom' was also coined by Rothlin and Werder (2008) in their study titled 'Boredom! Overcoming Workplace Motivation.'

The ways in which boredom occurs at work constitute the dimensions of the relevant concept. The *crisis of meaning*, located in the first dimension, explains the situation in which employees think that work-related activities are meaningless, useless, below their abilities and unimportant. The crisis of meaning usually develops due to the standardization, simplification and monotonization of tasks and activities through various procedures and processes. The second dimension is *job boredom*, which is the situation in which the employee can easily overcome the difficulties related to his job or does not encounter significant difficulties and cannot focus on his job sufficiently, and experiences disappointment and dissatisfaction. This dimension arises as a result of the discomfort caused by the employee not being excited and stimulated enough about his job. *Developmental crisis (crisis of growth)* the third dimension, is the situation in which the employee feels that his job does not provide opportunities for individual development and learning. Development crisis usually occurs when the employee feels more and more worthless because he thinks that he cannot catch up with exciting innovations and developments (Stock, 2014, 2016; Başar, 2022).

There are many studies in the literature about boredom. In his study, Cürten (2013) examined the factors that may cause employees to be affected by boredom syndrome in the workplace. These factors include experienced employees taking on tasks below their knowledge and skills, training and courses that do not match their career development, taking on jobs other than their duties, and not being given responsibilities by managers.

Merdan et al. (2022) examined the mediating role of cyberloafing in the effect of Boreout syndrome on counterproductive work behavior. According to the findings of the study, boreout positively affects cyberloafing and counterproductive work behavior.

Kara et al. (2023) aimed to examine the levels of boredom, job burnout and social media addiction at work and to determine the predictive power of boredom on job burnout and social media addiction. The results revealed that boredom was a significant predictor of participants' job burnout and social media addiction.

Konak and Kılıç (2023) investigated whether boredom at work had a mediating role on the effect of hotel employees' career adaptability on perceived job stress. According to the findings, career adaptability negatively affects workplace boredom and perceived job stress in hotel employees, and workplace boredom positively affects perceived job stress. However, boredom at work has a partial mediating effect on the relationship between career adaptability and perceived job stress.

Boreout can cause the individual to face anxiety and stress. In particular, managers ignoring employees, not supporting career development, problems related to human resources management, and lack of merit affect employees' problems related to their duties and their positive thoughts about the workplace. Thus, the employee becomes bored with his job and workplace and becomes disappointed with his plans (Stock, 2016).

2.2. Conformism (Conformist Behavior)

This concept, which has just been introduced to the literature as conformism, refers to the tendency to change one's perceptions, behaviors or ideas to suit the reactions of others (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). As a group-living species, much of the behavior of individuals focuses on maintaining group integrity. The tendency to change one's behavior to accommodate the reactions of others is generally adaptive (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004).

Conformism at the organizational level is related to the power and level of decisions taken to affect the interests of employees. Individuals, due to their own interests, may view all kinds of decisions and practices within the organization positively, or they may exhibit behavior of remaining silent and complying due to their lack of interest and knowledge. In business life, individuals often exhibit behaviors such as adapting to others, accepting their ideas without questioning, confirming their accuracy, and obeying, rather than expressing their feelings and thoughts and taking responsibility (Gökçen Kapusuz, 2023).

Fulfilling a clear order given by a relatively powerful person in the social and organizational structure or a person with a high social status also leads the individual to exhibit conformist behavior. Because individuals are taught to respect and obey superiors (such as teachers, parents and police) from childhood. In the social structure, obedience to triad people is common and this is a sign of maturity and good behavior (Gökçen Kapusuz, 2023).

The concept of *harmony* is observed as a phenomenon that is widely studied in the literature with different theoretical approaches (Güngör İlerler & Altın Gülova, 2020; Mutlu Bozkurt et al., 2019; Tuncer, 2022). Deutsch and Gerard (1955) argue that conformity behavior is an informational effect and a normative effect under social influences. *Informational influence* refers to individuals changing their initial ideas and values, as well as their consumption behavior, through external sources such as reviews, reputations and blogs (Suki et al., 2016). The most important concept of informational impact is *internalization*. This means that when consumers have uncertainty or do not have relevant information, they seek outside help (e.g. friends, relatives, reference groups) to change their views and values (Bearden et al., 1989), thus resulting in compliance behavior. *Normative influence* is also known as subjective norms or social influence associated with social pressures to agree or disagree with the expected behavior of others (Suki et al., 2016). Obedience means that individuals have a positive view of others and remain approving of their views in order to avoid punishment or receive rewards (Bearden et al., 1989), although individuals often disapprove in their own conscience in order to maintain a good relationship with the group and comply with the group's expectations. They even exhibit the same behavior.

3. Relationship Between the Concepts

Within the framework of all these theoretical foundations, assumptions regarding the study and research have been developed and the necessary analyzes have been made to test these assumptions and are presented in the following sections.

Based on this, in this study where the relationships between variables are tested, assuming that there may be a positive and significant relationship between boreout and conformist behaviors; It is thought that individuals may tend to conformist behavior due to the boredom they often experience for various reasons in the work environment.

H₁: There is a positive and significant relationship between boreout and conformism/conformist behaviors.

On the other hand, the 3 sub-dimensions of the boreout variable (crisis of meaning, job boredom, developmental crisis) can also form the basis for conformist behaviors, and the meaning the individual attaches to his work and the boredom he experiences at the point of individual development may lead him to isolate himself in the work environment, be hesitant about participating in decisions, and approve of others rather than expressing his opinion.

H_{1a}: There is a positive and significant relationship between crisis of meaning and conformist behaviors.

H_{1b}: There is a positive and significant relationship between job boredom and conformist behaviors.

H_{1c}: There is a positive and significant relationship between developmental crisis and conformist behaviors.

4. Methodology

In this study, which was conducted using the survey technique within the scope of the relational screening model, it was aimed to analyze quantitative data and report the results within the assumptions. The aim is to investigate whether conformist behaviors exhibited in business life are related to boredom that occurs for some reasons.

4.1. Sample of the Research

In this study, relational model designed according to the quantitative research method, 325 individuals, including teachers, voluntarily participated in the survey used in this study ($n = 325$). A pilot test was conducted before the main study, and data collection continued after valid and reliable results were obtained. Of the 415 surveys distributed, 330 returns were obtained and 325 surveys were found suitable for data analysis. As a result of the data obtained from 325 teachers selected by convenience sampling method among the teachers working in both private and public educational institutions especially in Konya province, 68.6% of them were female teachers, and the remaining 31.3% were male teachers. 82.8% of these teachers are married; 17.2% are single. The average age of the majority of the participants, 63% of $n=205$, ranges between 36-45 years old. Each participant has at least a bachelor's degree; the majority have been working for 10 years or more.

4.2. Measurement Tools

A two-scale assessment tool was used in this study, including the Boreout and Conformism scales. The scale, which includes statements about Boreout, was developed by Stock (2015) and adapted to Turkish by Sürücü and Yıkılmaz (2022), and its Cronbach alpha value was found to be .89 for the first dimension named as crisis of meaning; .76 for job boredom; .85 for developmental crisis as the third dimension and 11-item and 3-dimensional measurement tool was used. Researchers have defined boredom in three dimensions as mentioned before: Crisis of meaning at work, job boredom, and developmental crisis. They found that the total Cronbach alpha value of boreout scale was found as .88.

In this study, the reliability (Cronbach's alpha) value for the first dimension of boreout scale (crisis of meaning) was found to be .92 and for the second dimension (job boredom) .90 and for the last dimension (developmental crisis) .75. In general, the reliability value for boreout scale is .70.

For the analysis and evaluations regarding conformism, a 10-item and one-dimensional scale developed by Gökçen Kapusuz (2023), whose reliability coefficient was tested as .91 was used. In this study, the Cronbach alpha value for this scale was determined as .89.

4.3. Procedure

Participants were requested to evaluate the survey statements in a 5-point Likert format (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The survey form contains 27 statements in total, including 5 demographic questions, and the answers given were tested with the help of the SPSS package program and appropriate statistical analysis.

For this research, the necessary permission was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Selçuk University, Beyşehir Ali Akkanat Faculty of Tourism, with the decision dated 30.04.2024 and numbered E-44142025-900-745747.

5. Findings

5.1. Validity and Reliability

When the reliability analysis results regarding the scales and sub-dimensions are examined, it is seen that all cronbach alpha values are above the threshold value of $\alpha \geq .60$, which is accepted in the literature (Kalaycı, 2010). The values in the table below show the internal consistency reliability of the items in the scale.

On the other hand, exploratory factor analysis was also used to determine the structural validity of the scales used. To determine whether the data set was suitable for factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (*KMO*) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity were applied. According to the applied *KMO* test, boreout was obtained as 0.843 and conformism as 0.849. The fact that these values are greater than 0.5 shows that the sample size used in this research is sufficient for factor analysis. It is stated that the Bartlett's test of sphericity value ($p < .001$) is significant for the factor analysis of the matrix formed by the relationships between variables (Kalaycı, 2010).

In the analysis of the Boreout scale, it was determined that the scale has a 3-factor structure, the factors explained 75.66% of the total variance and the factor loadings of the items were above 0.6. Crisis of meaning dimension explains 18.658% of the variance; job boredom dimension explains 17.208% of the variance and the developmental crisis dimension explains 17.752% of the variance.

Table 1

KMO and Reliability Values for the Scales

Scales and dimensions	Items	<i>KMO</i>	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Boreout	11	0.843	0.705
Crisis of meaning	4		0.922
Job boredom	4		0.904
Developmental crisis	3		0.756
Conformism	10	0.849	0.895

5.2. Correlation Analysis

In this research, Pearson Correlation Analysis was used to examine the relationship between variables. The findings obtained as a result of the analysis are presented in the table below:

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Crisis of meaning	1			
2. Job boredom	.227**	1		
3. Developmental crisis	.683**	.281**	1	
4. Conformism	.443**	.223*	-.240**	1

Not. n = 325

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

When the correlation table is examined, it is seen that the significance ratio between the variables is lower than the specified values and there is a significant and positive relationship between conformism and boreout. It is also noteworthy that only the developmental crisis sub-dimension of the boreout variable has a negative relationship with conformism. Based on this, individuals' tendency to conformist behavior in business life is related to the boreout they experience; it can be concluded that the levels increase and decrease together.

5.3. Regression Analysis

The results of simple linear regression analyzes showing the explanatory status of employees' boreout levels at work on their conformist behaviors are shown in table 3 below:

Table 3

Regression Analysis Results

Independent variable	Dependent variable	β	t	p	R^2	$Adj. R^2$	F
Crisis of meaning	Conformism	.291	1.062	.000	.623	.603	12.007
Job boredom		.267	1.326	.001			
Developmental crisis		.385	1.006	.001			

When the regression analysis results regarding the variables are examined in order to test the H_1 hypothesis, which was created with the assumption that 'employees' boreout levels at work will have a positive impact on their conformist behaviors', appears to be confirmed.

Since the F value measuring the validity of the model is outside the range of ± 1.96 and the p value measuring the significance of the model is less than 0.05 in the model, it can be concluded that the model is a significant and valid model ($F = 12.007$; $p < .01$). *Adjusted R²* value was found to be .60; this value shows that 60% of the variance in conformist behaviors can be explained by boredom/boreout at work. When the beta coefficients in the table are examined, the independent variable boreout and its all sub-dimensions have a significant and positive contribution to explaining conformist behaviors ($p < .01$).

In the light of these findings, it can be said that the assumptions expressed as the starting point of the study have been confirmed; Hypotheses H_1 , H_{1a} , H_{1b} and H_{1c} were all supported.

Therefore, the increase in boreout level of employees, which arises for some reasons in the work environment, will be effective in employees' ability to express their opinions, express their thoughts, and decrease their participation in decisions, in other words, to increase their conformist behaviors.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

Nowadays, workplace boredom is a very common and encountered problem experienced by employees in business life, and it is a problem that negatively affects important parameters such as productivity, creativity and quality. Employees' boredom at work becomes an important problem that negatively affects their own performance and motivation and the business's criteria such as productivity, creativity and quality. However, conformist behaviors, as a concept that reflects some characteristic features of identifying with and imitating others at work, surrendering to others to avoid conflicts, and being a follower rather than a vocal leader, can positively or negatively affect employees' performance at work. In this sense, it is important to investigate whether individuals who exhibit conformist behaviors also experience boredom at work or whether this boredom is related to conformism. Individuals may exhibit conformist behavior in business life for different reasons. Therefore, the analyzes carried out in this study, which was written based on the assumption that this behavioral tendency may also be related to boredom at work, confirmed this assumption. Because individuals who exhibit conformist behaviors are reluctant to be at the forefront and take responsibility in business life. The underlying reason for this may generally be reasons such as adapting to others, approving others' opinions, and not being excluded from work and friend circles.

These individuals do not want to be the person who primarily does the desired and expected job. They are afraid that if he expresses his opinion, the blame will fall on him. They do not want to take on too much workload by taking on responsibilities. There may be different reasons for doing all these. Boredom at work is just one of these reasons. Because the individual who is faced with boredom also questions his job, the meaning and importance of his job, and the responsibility that the job imposes on him. Therefore, they may show conformist tendencies when it comes to finding the answer to the question 'why should it be me?'

The aim of this study is to investigate whether conformist behaviors that individuals frequently encounter and are exposed to in business life are related to boredom experienced for some reasons. The research results also supported the assumption; it was concluded that increasing boreout level of employees (especially teachers in this research) will also increase conformist behaviors. Association of the conformism scale, which has been newly introduced to the related literature, with such important and effective organizational behavior variables adds unique value to this study.

The research has some limitations as well. Among these, the study sample was limited to teachers. Future research can generalize the results by obtaining broader data across different sectors. It is seen that there are very limited studies on the premises and consequences of conformism in the domestic and foreign literature.

Considering the importance of the concept for employees in organizations, it is recommended to conduct multidimensional research. In future studies, it is also recommended to conduct comparative analyzes and interpret the results in the context of different sectors and samples. On the other hand, suggestions can be made on a sectoral basis by looking at the relationship between conformism and different and various variables that are thought to be related to the subject in the organizational behavior literature. It is also important to interpret employee attitudes in the context of these two

variables and to make suggestions that will provide both theoretical and practical contributions. In business life, managers who listen to their employees and enable them to participate in decisions, rather than making them approve his own opinions, will play a leading role in creating more moderate and acceptable working environments. An individual who does not experience boreout in the work environment will not question his job and its meaning and will exhibit a more participatory and responsibilities-free attitude. In addition, these individuals will express their own opinions freely and will not hesitate to take on extra roles, instead of constantly approving others and fearing exclusion.

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