



Boreout and its Relationship with the Job-Related Skills and Knowledge of Working People

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Filothei Katsoula (7844905)

First Supervisor: Dr. Toon Taris

Second supervisor: Dr. Marieke den Ouden

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Abstract

Scholars interpret boreout, a little-known psychological syndrome, in a variety of ways. In an attempt to clarify its already complex interpretations and based on extensive research, boreout is defined as a syndrome of excessive boredom, fatigue, and cynicism. The current research looked at the links of overqualification, career prospects, work characteristics (autonomy, workload, social support from coworkers) with boreout. The core assumption was that overqualification and lack of career prospects would result in boredom and high levels of stress (i.e. the core dimensions of boreout). Further, we predicted that these links would be mediated by job crafting. In the online survey which accompanied this study, 84 employees participated, all of whom were found on LinkedIn. While the findings showed that career prospects, and work characteristics were not connected to boreout, overqualification was, and other findings were also revealed. Overqualification was also a predictor of boredom, career prospects led to less cynicism, whereas autonomy and career prospects seemed to increase job crafting.

Key words: boreout, overqualification, career prospects, job characteristics, job crafting

Introduction

Many people enter a job when they possess the minimum number of skills needed to perform reasonably well and then, they gradually gain job experience and acquire new skills. However, the contents and difficulty levels of their jobs may well remain the same. On the longer run this process could lead to boredom, stress and lack of motivation (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014) and one important way to counter that is to undertake different tasks (Loukidou et al., 2009). However, this is not always possible and then overqualification becomes a problem that can have adverse consequences, such as boreout, a psychological syndrome related to work underload (Uchtmann, 2019). Khan and Morrow (1991) described overqualification as “the situation where individuals have qualifications such as education and skills that exceed job requirements”. This description reflects the employees’ constantly increasing educational levels along with reasons like the economic recession and the simultaneous layoffs, which may lead individuals to work on positions below their qualifications (Liu et al., 2015).

Below we first discuss overqualification and its consequences more extensively and secondly we examine boreout’s possible antecedents. More specifically, we highlight the effects of perceived overqualification and crisis of meaning at work, based on Person-Environment Fit Theory. Then, we explain the role of career prospects and possibility of growth based on Relative Deprivation Theory, we expand on work characteristics and finally we examine the part of job crafting against boreout.

Overqualification

Overqualification has been operationalized in different ways, ranging from perceived overqualification (Johnson & Johnson, 1996, 1997) to objectively being overqualified, meaning indeed owning more skills and experience than a job position requires (Green & McIntosh, 2007). In objective overqualification, individuals’ qualifications are compared to the requirements stated in the job vacancy (Martinez et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2016), while in perceived overqualification employees' are declaring personal perceptions regarding their underutilization. The first one is investigated in an unbiased manner by a free of external control and limitations observer, whereas the second one is intrinsically subjective (Maltarich et al., 2011). As perceptual measures

better predict attitudes of the employees (Erdogan et al., 2011), in this specific research we will focus on perceived overqualification. When employees think of themselves as overqualified, more job negative attitudes are detected, including disappointment, frustration and anger, as well as boredom (Burriss, 1983; Johnson et al., 2002; Maynard et al., 2006, Luskyte et al., 2011), a fact that adds value on searching if there is a link between overqualification and boreout. Boreout is a syndrome that is assumed to be a result of an under-demanding work environment (Rothlin & Werder, 2014). In the present thesis, we are interested in observing whether perceived overqualification has a positive relationship with boreout.

Boreout

The boreout syndrome began receiving attention after 2000 (Moris & Nedosugova, 2019). It is a psychological condition that results in physical disease, primarily caused by mental underloading at work, brought by a lack of either enough quantitative or qualitative effort (Uchtmann, 2019).

Other approaches have also been proposed; Stock (2015, 2016) construed boreout as a negative psychological state of work-related stimulation illustrated in three ways: first, employees with boreout at elevated levels think their work is meaningless (crisis of meaning at work); second, they cannot concentrate on their tasks (job boredom); and third, they are not willing to develop their personal growth (crisis of growth). Savels (2015), described that because there is less labour to perform or the tasks lack stimulus, boreout causes people to become irritable, cynical, and even unproductive. Chronic boreout syndrome keeps people in their "comfort zone" and prevents them from progressing. Özsungur (2020a) studied boreout from a social perspective, indicating that this syndrome is the consequence of employees' experiences, interactions, communication, and perception of work, while other researchers proposed a fourth dimension of boreout; guilt (Bataille, 2016; Chapelle, 2018), something that employees feel when they compare their work to the other employees'. Those who have a guilty conscience about their own work, develop a negative viewpoint of their social identity, which contributes to boreout (Özsungur, [2020a,b](#)). In the recent study of Poirier et al. (2021), where a new boreout scale was developed named WBOS, it was found out that this syndrome is ideally described by insufficient

workload, under-stimulation (with both being side-effects of boredom), work-related guilt and incongruence of personal work values.

Boreout vs. Burnout

A number of authors finds many common elements between the burnout and boreout syndromes (Lovašová & Jungová, 2018; Gugová & Heretik, 2011; Tóthová & Ťiaková, 2018). It is worth mentioning that burnout is a psychological syndrome which mostly appears when employees are exposed to a stressful working environment, especially work overload (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Above, Savels (2015) related cynicism with boreout, while World Health Organisation perceives cynicism as one of the characteristics of burnout, with exhaustion and professional inefficacy (World Health Organisation, 2019). In 2007, Rothlin and Werder mentioned that similar to burnout, boreout causes negativism and exhaustion. It is worth adding that organizational cynicism is defined as a bad attitude toward one's employer (Dean, Brandes & Dharwadkar, 1998). Cynical employees disconnect themselves from their work and have bitter thoughts about the job characteristics or generally their job position (Demerouti et al., 2003). Nevertheless, while burnout is caused by high workload, boreout appears when there is underload or inadequate challenges. The study of Čopková (2021) adds that the difference observed between burnout and boreout is the source of stress leading to their developments, with overload (i.e. work with an excessive number of demands) being that source in burnout and the opposite in boreout; underload (i.e. work with insufficient demands).

Antecedents of boreout

Person-environment fit. In order for the effects of perceived overqualification to be explained, person-environment fit theory has been utilized as a core framework (Edwards et al., 1998). At first, “fit” means the compatibility of the person's characteristics and features with the characteristics and features of the environment. Holmbeck, Zukerman and Zurenda (2007) explain that this theory is related to the interrelation between characteristics of the individual and their environment. This can

have an influence on the person's behaviour, motivation, physical and mental health. When there is a high fit, it can stimulate the functioning of the person in a positive way. However, when the fit is low, the individual's functioning can be negatively affected (Holmbeck, et al., 2007). In boreout there is indeed a mismatch. A factor that has been mentioned as a possible antecedent is underload, which is "work presenting no apparent cycle and making no demands on pace, necessitating sustained attention throughout the work period, and requiring that the worker be ready to respond to certain predetermined events" (Melamed et al., 1995). So, the mismatch exists as "underload" is a worker's evaluation of a situation as being insufficiently utilizing one's capacities/ skills/ time. "Insufficient" implies a mismatch between the perceived demands of a situation and one's own opinion regarding the desirability of them.

Lack of meaning/prospects. Another possible antecedent of boreout would be crisis of meaning at work, defined as the extent to which an individual perceives their job as futile (May et al., 2004; Renn & Vandenberg, 1995) and feels that career opportunities are largely absent, on the grounds that bad work is only bearable if there are promising opportunities for career advances. Effort-Reward Imbalance Theory (Siegrist, 2002) states that an imbalance appears when demands at work are not perceived as being satisfactorily matched with rewards. Imbalance is associated with adverse outcomes, so individuals will usually strive towards good balance. One exception to this rule is that an individual might accept an imbalance between effort and reward, if they can reasonably expect this to result in a better position in time (i.e. a career advance), so an unpleasant situation is bearable if people know that this will lead to something better.

Relative Deprivation Theory. Relative Deprivation Theory explains why lack of career prospects might be detrimental for employees who consider themselves to be overqualified. When individuals desire an object and they believe they deserve to have it but eventually they do not (i.e. they are *deprived* of something they feel they are entitled to), that fact makes them feel irritated (Crosby, 1984). So, when an employee feels like he is worthy of a better job position or working conditions as he is overqualified for his current ones, but does not manage to find or get them, that will result in him/her being frustrated. To avoid misunderstandings, the definition of career prospects in Collins Dictionary describes this concept as "the probability or chance for future success in a profession" (Career Prospects, n.d.). Again, our interest

encloses how employees perceive their career prospects, for the same reason explained in the case of perceived overqualification.

Work Characteristics. For this study's purposes, we concentrate on three work characteristics; workload (job demands), autonomy (job control) and social support from colleagues. The already discussed workload is interpreted as a predictor of the burnout syndrome. Given the similarities found between burnout and boreout and the core difference- related to workload, it could be easily assumed that high workload would protect against boreout. On the other hand, the degree to which employees have control over how they perform their jobs is called job autonomy (Fried & Ferris, 1987). Several studies found that lack of job autonomy was negatively connected with burnout, because it impacted employee motivation and learning (Bakker et al., 2005; Lindblom et al., 2006; Peeters & Rutte, 2005). We believe that in the case of boreout, the situation would be analogous. Last, the exchange of intra-individual resources such as motivation, supporting, and listening, but also sentimental, instrumental, and recreational resources, is referred to as social support (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984). Social support can either come from family and friends, but also from colleagues. Past research from House (1983) and Greenglass et al. (1997) has proven the negative association between social support from colleagues and burnout, and building on this, our interest encloses on finding a positive relationship between social support and boreout as well.

Job crafting

While we assume that lack of person- environment fit, lack of career prospects and specific work characteristics like autonomy, workload and social support from colleagues are related to boreout, we will also focus on the process that could account for these associations. Specifically, we examine job crafting as a possible mediator of these association. A variety of definitions exists for job crafting. For Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), it is employees' incentive to change the shape, social environment, and purpose of their jobs in order to fit their own notion of what the job should be like. However, according to Tims et al. (2012), it is the process of employees making changes to better balance their job demands and job resources with their own needs and talents. The difference between these two definitions is that the last one also

includes the customization one's own capacities, such as developing professional skills.

Expansive job crafting, according to van Hooff and van Hooft (2014), may be a helpful coping method for employees experiencing boredom, as it can make work more exciting, intriguing, relevant, and gratifying. The above assumption was verified by their study among Dutch employees, where the increase of job challenges and structural job resources, reduced the use of disengaged coping strategies such daydreaming or non-work related activities.

As far as overqualification is concerned, employees who are overqualified (low-moderate level) and have sufficient skills to execute their tasks (Wu et al., 2015) are more likely to engage in job crafting behaviour, according to person–job fit (Erdoğan et al., 2011). Based on additional studies, employees with more knowledge, skills, and abilities than their occupations require are more likely to be able to craft their own perfect careers (Leana et al., 2009; Tims and Bakker, 2010).

In conclusion, there are different views regarding boreout, while it is observed that its presumed antecedents tend to be included in its definition as part of the process.

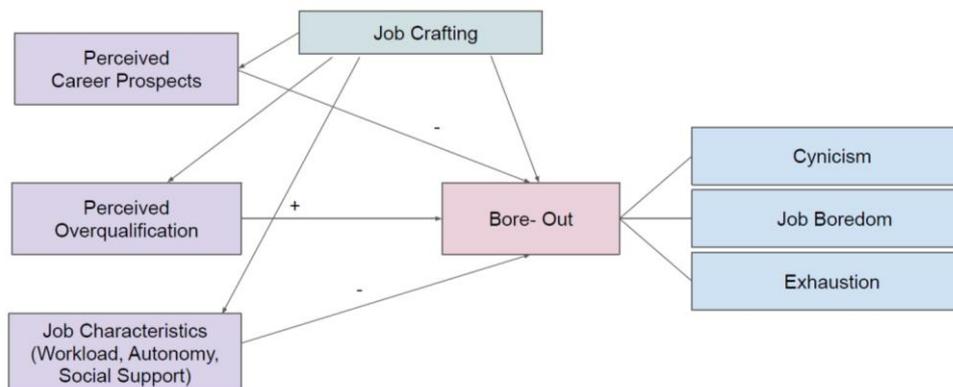
Having in mind the information described above, and in the attempt of simplifying these complicated perspectives, in this study boreout is considered to be a syndrome of high levels of stress/strain symptoms, high levels of boredom/ experienced lack of stimulation and high levels of cynicism/ negativism; that can be due to work-related factors such as underload, lack of meaning, lack of developmental opportunities, and/or lack of person-job fit.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the previous literature and the research mentioned, this study will examine the following hypotheses (Figure 1); first, there is a positive relationship between perceived overqualification and boreout (H1). Second, there is a negative relationship between perceived career prospects and boreout (H2). Third, there is a negative relationship between work characteristics [workload (job demands), autonomy (job control), social support] and boreout (H3). Fourth, job crafting mediates the relationship between perceived overqualification and boreout (H4). Fifth, job crafting mediates the relationship between perceived career prospects and boreout (H5). Last, job crafting mediates the relationship between work characteristics [workload (job demands), autonomy (job control), social support] and boreout (H6).

Figure 1.

The expected relationships between perceived career prospects, perceived overqualification, job characteristics and boreout, mediated by job crafting



Method

Design and Participants

In order to test the hypotheses above, an online survey study was conducted via the program “Qualitrics”. The study was approved by the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences of Utrecht University (number 22-0529). Employees in general were included in the target sample, as long as they also had a LinkedIn account. This platform allows job seekers to submit their CVs, employers to post jobs, and it is largely used for professional networking and career advancement (LinkedIn Corporation, 2015). The survey was distributed via LinkedIn to the potential participants, with a link which was connected directly with the start of the questionnaire and the instructions. Participation was anonymous and voluntary, participants were notified by an information letter about the purpose and the details of the study and it was mentioned that they could opt-out any time they wished to and what the approximate duration of the survey was (15 minutes). Finally, all accepted the letter of consent before proceeding to the questions.

According to a power analysis with G*Power, at least 81 individuals were required. Eventually, the sample size contained 144 participants, while only 84 of those fully answered the survey. 27 males (32.1%) and 57 females (67.9%) completed the questionnaire. The age range of the participants was from 21 to 63 years old, while the mean age was 33.71 ($SD = 10.63$). Regarding years of attendance of formal schooling, they were from 3 to 23, while the mean was 14.95 ($SD = 4.38$). There is a possibility there was a misunderstanding related to the question of formal schooling, as the youngest participants were 21 years old. Therefore, maybe they considered formal schooling as Bachelor studies and above. Finally, participants indicated working within the same (current) company for 1 month to 42 years, while the mean was 8.07 ($SD = 9.13$).

Measures

First, the survey included demographic questions. Participants were asked about their gender, their age, the duration of their formal schooling attendance and the

years of their work experience. Afterwards, in order to answer the research questions, six scales were used:

Dutch Boredom Scale (Reijseger et al., 2013). This scale consists of eight items (e.g. “I feel bored at my job”). All items are scored on a scale ranging from 0 (“never”) to 6 (“always”). The total scale has a Cronbach alpha of $\alpha=.84$.

Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Demerouti & Nachreiner, 1996; Demerouti, 1999). This scale consists of sixteen items, eight of which measure exhaustion (e.g. “After my work, I usually feel worn out and weary”). However, we excluded 2 of those 8 items¹ as based on our analysis, they decreased the reliability of the scale. All items are scored on a scale from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). The total utilized scale has a Cronbach alpha of $\alpha= .78$.

The Organizational Cynicism Scale (Brandes, Dharwadkar and Dean, 1999). This instrument consists of thirteen items (e.g. “I believe that my company (my organization) says one thing and does another”) ranging from 1 (“never”) to 5 (“always”). Cynicism is assessed on three subscales of (OCS) items i.e. cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The total scale has a Cronbach alpha of $\alpha= .92$.

Perceived Overqualification Scale (Khan & Morrow, 1991). This instrument consists of eight items (e.g. “I have more abilities than I need in order to do my job”). All items are scored on ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). The total scale has a Cronbach alpha of $\alpha= .92$.

Organizational Career Growth Scale (Weng, 2010). It consists of fifteen items measuring career goal progress (e.g. “my present job moves me closer to my career goals”) ($\alpha= .93$), professional ability development (e.g. “My present job encourages me to accumulate richer work experiences”) ($\alpha= .90$), promotion speed (e.g. “The probability of being promoted in my present organization is high”) ($\alpha= .74$) and remuneration growth (e.g. “My salary is growing quickly in my present organization”) ($\alpha= .74$). In this study we are mostly interested in combining these variables as “career prospects” and not check them separately. All items are scored on

¹ “I can tolerate the pressure of my work very well” and “Usually, I can manage the amount of my work well”

ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). The total scale has a Cronbach alpha of $\alpha = .92$.

The Job Crafting Questionnaire (JCQ) (Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2013). It consists of fifteen items, but we will use five of them, related to task crafting only (e.g. “Change the scope or types of tasks that you complete at work”). All items are scored on ranging from 1 (“never”) to 5 (“always”). The total scale has a Cronbach alpha of $\alpha = .85$.

Questionnaire on the Experience and Evaluation of Work (VBBA) (van Veldhoven et al., 1997). Three important work characteristics are measured with seventeen items of the VBBA (Van Veldhoven et al., 1997). The first is job control- autonomy (4 items, e.g. “Do you have the freedom to solve problems at work yourself?”) ($\alpha = .80$), the second is job demands- workload (5 items, e.g. “Do you have enough time to get your work done?”) ($\alpha = .58$) and the last one is social support from colleagues (8 items, e.g. “Is there a pleasant atmosphere between you and your colleagues?”) ($\alpha = .76$). All items are scored on ranging from 1 (“never”) to 5 (“always”). The total scale has a Cronbach alpha of $\alpha = .71$.

In order to measure boreout, the creation of a new variable was executed in SPSS, done by standardizing and combining the variables *Burnout*, *Boredom* and *Cynicism*. We performed correlation tests for these three variables in order to estimate the relations between them and all aspects are at least moderately strongly correlated (Table 1).

Table 1.

Correlations of cynicism, boredom and burnout

	Cynicism	Boredom	Burnout
Cynicism	1	.429**	.445**
Boredom	.445**	1	.527**
Burnout	.432**	.527**	1

**effect is significant with $p < .01$

In order to measure career prospects, the creation of a new variable was executed in SPSS, done by standardizing and combining the variables *remuneration*, *career goals progress*, *professional ability development* and *promotion speed*. We performed correlations test for these four variables in order to estimate the relations between them (Table 2). There is a relation between remuneration- career goal progress (.468), remuneration- professional ability development (.444), remuneration- promotion speed (.721), career goal progress- professional ability development (.713), and career goal progress- promotion speed (.590).

Table 2.

Correlations of remuneration, career goals progress, professional ability development and promotion speed

	Remuneration	Career goal progress	Professional ability development	Promotion speed
Remuneration	1	.468**	.444**	.721**
Career goal progress	.468**	1	.713**	.590**
Professional ability development	.444**	.713**	1	.538**
Promotion speed	.721**	.590**	.538**	1

**effect is significant with $p < .01$

Statistical analysis

The tool used for analyzing data is IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 28. Firstly, missing values were excluded from the analysis, i.e. when participants did not answer one or more of the questions. In order to analyze the data, 2 different statistical tests were planned to be used; simple linear regression for checking the hypotheses, controlling for other possibly relevant concepts, in the same regression analysis. For example, when dependent variables are boreout, burnout,

cynicism and boredom, four models are also executed. The first model includes only the background variables (i.e. age, years of formal schooling, years of working experience and gender), the second model includes the above, plus job crafting. In the third model, job control (autonomy), job demands (workload), social support colleagues, overqualification and career prospects are added. Last, in the fourth model interactions are also included (job crafting \times career goal progress, job crafting \times job control, job crafting \times job demands, job crafting \times social support colleagues, and job crafting \times overqualification). Additionally, job crafting was used as dependent variable, with the same models, except the last one with the interactions and with boreout in the second model. The model whose R^2 change is significant and explains the most variance (the more of the difference between the participants on a particular outcome/criterion variable) is accepted as the model that signifies the results. Consequently, conclusions are provided by it. It is essential to mention that analyses will be conducted for both boreout and its constituent parts (burnout, cynicism and boredom), as preliminary analyses revealed that not all of the predictors of boreout worked very well. Subsequently, this led us to explore whether these components were better predicted by the predictors if they were analyzed separately.

Table 3.

Descriptive statistics for the main variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
Burnout	84	9	28	17.98	3.94
Boredom	84	9	44	25.09	7.90
Cynicism	84	13	53	28.09	9.44
Boreout	84	-4.43	6.01	.00	2.40
Overqualification	84	9	45	29.21	8.82
Job crafting	84	6	26	16.99	4.29
Job control (autonomy)	84	8	20	15.11	3.1
Job demands (workload)	84	10	24	17.7	2.97
Social support colleagues	84	11	40	30.3	4.67
Career prospects	84	-7.42	7.81	.00	11.34

Results

Regression analyses

Based on the results of the regression analysis (Table 4), R^2 change is significant in model 3 (.208, $p < .01$), indicating that perceived overqualification does predict boreout ($\beta = .321$, $p < .05$). However, perceived career prospects, workload, autonomy and social support from colleagues do not. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is confirmed and hypotheses 2 and 3 are rejected.

Table 4.

Predictors of boreout

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	.012	.033	.050	.009
Years of Formal Schooling	.261*	.269*	.206	.213
Years of Working Experience	.168	.139	.079	.134
Gender	.102	.077	.104	.048
Job crafting		-.176	.107	-.004
Job control (Autonomy)			-.085	-.067
Job demands (Workload)			.043	.006
Social Support Colleagues			-.015	-.082
Overqualification			.321*	.385*
Career Prospects			-.267	-.190
Job crafting X Career goal progress				-.118
Job crafting X Job control				-.225
Job crafting X Job demands				-.250

Job crafting X Social support colleagues				-0.015
Job crafting X Overqualification				-0.269
R square	.124	.154	.362	.438
R square change	.154	.030	.208**	.076

*effect is significant with $p < .05$ (two- tailed)

**effect is significant with $p < .01$ (two- tailed)

Burnout. In our additional results, one can observe that R^2 change is significant in model 3 (.159, $p < .05$), with no additional significant results being detected (Table 5).

Table 5.

Predictors of burnout

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	.058	.081	.078	.021
Years of Formal Schooling	.214	.222	.174	.184
Years of Working Experience	.037	.006	-.063	-.045
Gender	.193	.166	.172	.089
Job crafting		-.192	.094	-.060
Job control (Autonomy)			-.158	-.120
Job demands (Workload)			-.012	-.037
Social Support Colleagues			-.090	-.210
Overqualification			.195	.300
Career Prospects			-.278	-.163
Job crafting X Career goal progress				-.220
Job crafting X Job control				-.210

Job crafting X Job demands					-0.185
Job crafting X Social support colleagues					.119
Job crafting X Overqualification					-0.322
R square	.094	.129	.288		.383
R square change	.094	.036	.159*		.095

*effect is significant with $p < .05$ (two- tailed)

Cynicism. Table 6 depicts that R^2 change is significant in model 3 (.168, $p < .05$), which explains that career prospects are predictors of cynicism ($\beta = -.334$, $p < .05$), with a negative relationship between them.

Table 6.

Predictors of cynicism

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	.166	.199	.138	.084
Years of Formal Schooling	.183	.195	.164	.156
Years of Working Experience	.169	.126	.083	.167
Gender	-.006	-.045	-.039	-.084
Job crafting		-.268	-.049	-.137
Job control (Autonomy)			-.010	-.002
Job demands (Workload)			.179	.132
Social Support Colleagues			.029	.002
Overqualification			.169	.171
Career Prospects			-.334*	-.312
Job crafting X Career goal progress				-.129

Job crafting X Job control					-0.148
Job crafting X Job demands					-0.270*
Job crafting X Social support colleagues					-0.135
Job crafting X Overqualification					-0.188
R square	.147	.217	.385	.453	
R square change	.147*	.069*	.168*	.068	

*effect is significant with $p < .05$ (two- tailed)

Boredom. In the table below (7), R^2 change is significant in model 3 (.167, $p < .05$), which explains that perceived overqualification predicts boredom ($\beta = .421$, $p < .01$), showing a positive relationship between them.

Table 7.

Predictors of boredom

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	-0.202	-0.207	-0.099	-0.086
Years of Formal Schooling	.239	.237	.163	.178
Years of Working Experience	.204	.210	.176	.207
Gender	.062	.067	.122	.113
Job crafting		.038	.220	.194
Job control (Autonomy)			-0.037	-0.041
Job demands (Workload)			-0.066	-0.084
Social Support Colleagues			.026	.010
Overqualification			.421**	.471**
Career Prospects			-0.031	.019

Job crafting X Career goal progress				.066
Job crafting X Job control				-.189
Job crafting X Job demands				-.151
Job crafting X Social support colleagues				-.022
Job crafting X Overqualification				-.144
R square	.084	.086	.253	.288
R square change	.084	.001	.167*	.035

*effect is significant with $p < .05$ (two- tailed)

**effect is significant with $p < .01$ (two- tailed)

Job crafting. In Table 8, R^2 change is significant in model 3 (.355, $p < .001$), which explains that job control (autonomy) is a predictor of job crafting, with a positive relationship existing between them ($\beta = .293$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, career prospects predict job crafting, with a positive relationship existing between them ($\beta = .505$, $p < .001$).

Table 8.

Predictors of job crafting

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	.120	.122	.073
Years of Formal Schooling	.045	.095	-.005
Years of Working Experience	-.162	-.130	-.080
Gender	-.144	-.124	-.086
Boreout		-.193	.096
Job control (Autonomy)			.295**
Job demands (Workload)			.116

Social Support Colleagues				-0.071
Overqualification				-0.033
Career Prospects				.505***
R square	.039	.072		.426
R square change	.039	.033		.355***

**effect is significant with $p < .01$ (two- tailed)

***effect is significant with $p < .001$ (two- tailed)

All the above show that our main hypothesis related to the positive relationship between perceived overqualification and boreout (H1) is accepted. Additionally, the hypotheses related to the negative relationship between perceived career prospects and boreout (H2) and to the negative relationship between work characteristics and boreout (H3) are not confirmed. Subsequently, as data cannot prove that boreout is connected to perceived career prospects, work characteristics, and job crafting, and the latter is not connected either with overqualification or with boreout, mediation testing for job crafting could be avoided executing. We consider the hypotheses that job crafting mediates the relationship between perceived overqualification and boreout (H4), perceived career prospects and boreout (H5), and work characteristics and boreout (H6) to be rejected as well.

Discussion

This study focused on the relationship between boreout and perceived overqualification, assuming that the more overqualified people think they are, the more boreout they have. Also, it was believed that the more career prospects somebody perceives there are, the less boreout they get, and the less workload (job demands), autonomy (job control) and social support from colleagues they have, the more boreout they experience. Additionally, it was thought that job crafting mediates the relationship between all the above variables stated in the first three hypotheses. The data results showed that our main hypothesis, predicting the positive relationship between overqualification and boreout was confirmed.

Also, while checking additional models, other connections were found. The four most interesting findings of this thesis are related to overqualification, boreout, career prospects and job crafting.

Overqualification

Regarding perceived overqualification, our research does prove that it is a predictor of boreout. Being the main hypothesis of this study, this is an anticipated, fortunate and thought-provoking finding. Not only that, but also the data analysis demonstrates that overqualification is as well a predictor of boredom. The more overqualified employees perceive themselves as, the more boredom is predicted. Even if this connection was not part of our hypotheses, it is in line with our research. Based on the work of Burris, 1983; Johnson et al., 2002; Maynard et al., 2006, and Luskyte et al., 2011, employees who believe they are overqualified, express more job negative attitudes, boredom included. Moreover, Liu and Wang (2012) stated that people feeling overqualified may experience understimulation since their knowledge, skills, and abilities are not completely implemented in their jobs.

Boreout

Based on our analysis, no significance was found for the predictors of boreout except for the already mentioned one with overqualification. With this information, it should

be discussed whether we are ultimately more interested in career prospects and the three job characteristics included, or we should check more thoroughly the work environment and detect alternative aspects that could potentially be connected to boreout. There could be more reasons hidden in order to get boreout while working in an organization.

Career prospects

Another conclusion made from this research is that the more career prospects there are, the less cynicism is observed. This is partly explained by our research, keeping in mind the Relative Deprivation Theory, which describes that when people believe they deserve something (in our case, the presence of career prospects), and they do not get it, that may lead to more negativism (Crosby, 1984). Here, the opposite happens; there are indeed career prospects, leading to less negativism, which is in our case cynicism. In addition, the study of Erarslan et al. (2018) highlighted that the high opportunities for career and promotion help employees to commit to a company and maintain their belongingness, which logically means less cynicism (as cynicism describes a negative attitude towards an employer). Little is known regarding specifically the relationship between career prospects and cynicism, and given the fact that in the statistical results significance was detected between them, it should be further investigated.

Job crafting

Career prospects are also connected to job crafting. The more career prospects people think there are, the more job crafting employees are performing. In the study of Brucker and Sundar (2020), it is confirmed that job crafting has been linked to higher levels of career growth in the workplace. Nevertheless, no specific researches were found between career prospects and job crafting. One possible explanation to this outcome would be that employees perceive job crafting as part of career prospects. So, when there are good chances for future achievements in a profession, one of those achievements might be job crafting. Not all employees have the opportunity to job craft, and even if they have great ideas about their job position, not all working environments are open to give them the chance to do so. Other justification might be

that with career prospects present, individuals could be more devoted to work and they could be willing to express and practice their thoughts in order to create a more suitable occupation for them.

Additionally, participants' answers support the fact that the more job control (autonomy) somebody has, the more job crafting they are able to do. Those two variables are similar, therefore it is very logical they have a positive connection. Both are related to employees being permitted to change, alter, decide for their own work and tasks. The interesting point here is that job crafting is the dependent variable, so in fact job control- autonomy is the one to increase job crafting. In other words, when somebody gets the chance to have control of their job, they indeed utilize that autonomy in order to make adjustments within the work environment. Scholars in fact support this conclusion, as in the work of Leana, Appelbaum, & Shevchuk (2009) and Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Hetland (2012), it is demonstrated that high autonomy can encourage employees to alter their job demands and resources, therefore to perform job crafting.

Limitations, Future Research and Practical Implications

Limitations

As discussed above, limitations should be taken under consideration. It should be mentioned that the cross-sectional design of the study, combined with additional time limitations due to the strict University's deadlines, were an obstacle against us finding additional participants. The time available to distribute the questionnaire and to gather data was approximately one month or less. Even if, based on GPower analysis run, our sample was more than adequate, as 81 participants were required and finally 84 participated, more participants would result in stronger power.

Practical Implications

After this thesis, some noticeable thoughts are the following; should boreout be widely considered as a combination of boredom, cynicism and burnout- exhaustion? The correlation results did show that there is a strong connection between all three elements. This leads us to easily assume that boreout is closer than we thought to burnout, with the only difference between them being boredom. Of course, these results do not describe that this combination of elements is the only appropriate one, something that we need to take into consideration, but they are a sufficient indicator that it is worth investigating them more extensively.

Moreover, boreout is assumed to be a matter for the organization, but it is not yet highlighted what can individual workers do if they experience stress (or exhaustion and negativism) combined with underload. There needs to be more light shed on how they are attempting to prevent it, or how they are dealing with it by themselves.

Obviously, boreout remains to be an organizational issue. Enterprises should ensure that underload, boredom and overqualification are prevented. For instance, even during the recruitment stage, recruiters and talent acquisition specialists should be more careful when reviewing resumes and conducting interviews with candidates who have spent more than a year or so in the same job, or they have long experience and many qualifications.

Future Research

For future research, the variables burnout- exhaustion, cynicism and boredom could be the correct combination for the measure of burnout, but still it should be further investigated. Regarding the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Demerouti & Nachreiner, 1996; Demerouti, 1999), which we used in order to measure burnout's element *exhaustion*, it should be used carefully. This scale includes eight items for exhaustion and at first we included all of them in our analysis. However, after long investigation and based on factor analysis, two of the eight items seemed not to actually measure exhaustion. Specifically, the items "I can tolerate the pressure of my work very well" and "Usually, I can manage the amount of my work well" do not describe exhaustion, but how people manage their workload, a completely different aspect. Consequently, the scale should be rechecked and ideally these items should be eliminated.

Finally, our suggestion would be the conduct of a longitudinal study, in order to examine if and how answers of the same participants change during different periods within the same company or job position. That could also be helpful in order to gather more participants than in a cross- sectional study, therefore more power could be achieved.

Conclusion

Boreout, being a psychological syndrome and perceived overqualification, a more and more common state, deserve more attention from scholars. This study, while not confirming all our hypotheses, discovered a potential new combination of boreout elements, its connection to overqualification and interesting additional results. These could be a base for work environment and conditions improvement, always bearing in mind relevant limitations and practical implications.

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Appendix

Questionnaire



Dear sir, madam,

Through this letter we would like to ask your permission to participate in a study on the relationship between the job-related skills and knowledge of working people and bore-out. The study aims to develop a short questionnaire that examines whether workers experience high levels of boredom (bore-out) at work. Further, we will relate bore-out scores to other concepts (for example, the characteristics of their job, how good they are at their job, their career prospects, how people feel about their job, and what they do when they get bored at work).

This study is a student research project. Your answers will be used for scientific research only, especially this thesis project. Moreover, depending on the results of this research project, your answers may be used for a paper to be submitted to a scientific journal. The information you provide will be treated confidentially and will be stored anonymously. Your answers cannot be traced back to you personally. Your participation is voluntary, and you are allowed to stop at any time without giving reasons and without consequences. You will not receive any compensation. The retention period of the raw data will be at least 10 years. If necessary, the anonymized data can be used for follow-up research or for future research for any other purpose.

In this study we ask you to fill in a questionnaire with a number of questions regarding your background (e.g., your age and gender), and concepts like burnout, boredom, your knowledge and skills, and your career prospects. It will take approximately 15 minutes of your time.

If there is anything afterwards that you would like to discuss or express as a result of this survey, please contact Filothei Katsoula (f.katsoula@students.uu.nl). For formal complaints about this study, you can contact an independent complaints officer at Utrecht University (klachtenfunctionaris-fetcsocwet@uu.nl). For more information regarding data protection, you can contact the Data Protection Officer of the UU ("Functionaris Gegevensbescherming"): <https://www.uu.nl/en/organisation/data-protection-officer>.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please tick the box below and click "Next" to proceed to the study.

I hereby give permission to use my (anonymous) data for scientific purposes and will now proceed to the questionnaire.



What gender do you identify as?

- Male
 Female
 Other/ third gender
 Prefer not to say

What is your age?

How many years have you attended formal schooling?

How many years of work experience do you have within your current company?



First we would like to know how you experience your work environment during the last four weeks; below you find a series of statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the scale, please indicate the degree of your agreement by selecting the option that corresponds with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I always find new and interesting aspects in my work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are days when I feel tired before I arrive at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It happens more and more often that I talk about my work in a negative way	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
After work, I tend to need more time than in the past in order to relax and feel better.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can tolerate the pressure of my work very well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lately, I tend to think less at work and do my job almost mechanically.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find my work to be a positive challenge.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
During my work, I often feel emotionally drained.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Over time, one can become disconnected from this type of work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Below you find a series of statements with which you may have experienced or not. If you have never had this feeling, choose "Never" after the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by choosing the option that best describes how frequently you feel that way.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
I believe that my company says one thing and does another.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I think about my company, I feel a sense of anxiety.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My company expects one thing of its employees, but rewards another.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I think about my company, I experience aggravation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We look at each other in a meaningful way with my colleagues when my institution and its employees are mentioned.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I think about my company, I experience tension.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I think about my company, I get angry.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I criticize the practices and policies of my company to people outside the company.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Below you find a series of statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the scale, please indicate the degree of your agreement by selecting the number that corresponds with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
My present job moves me closer to my career goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My present job is relevant to my career goals and vocational growth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My present job sets the foundation for the realization of my career goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My present job provides me with good opportunities to realize my career goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Below you find a series of statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the scale, please indicate the degree of your agreement by selecting the number that corresponds with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
My present job encourages me to continuously gain new and job-related skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

My present job encourages me to continuously gain new job-related knowledge.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My present job encourages me to accumulate richer work experiences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My present job enables me to continuously improve my professional capabilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Below you find a series of statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the scale, please indicate the degree of your agreement by selecting the number that corresponds with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
My promotion speed in the present organization is fast.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The probability of being promoted in my present organization is high.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Compared with previous organizations and attainable jobs, my position in the present one is ideal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Compared with my colleagues, I am being promoted faster.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
My salary is growing quickly in my present organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In this organization, the possibility of my current salary being increased is very large.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Compared with my colleagues, my salary has grown more quickly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Below you find a series of statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the scale, please indicate the degree of your agreement by selecting the number that corresponds with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
My job requires less education than I have.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The work experience that I have is not necessary to be successful on this job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have job skills that are not required for this job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone with less education than myself could perform well on my job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My previous training is not being fully utilized on this job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a lot of knowledge that I do not need in order to do my job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My education level is above the education level required by my job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone with less work experience than myself could do my job just as well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have more abilities than I need in order to do my job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
In my company I see very little resemblance between the events that are going to be done and the events which are done.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My company's policies, goals, and practices seem to have little in common.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I talk with others about how work is being carried out in the company.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If an application was said to be done in my company, I'd be more skeptical whether it would happen or not.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Employees are frequently presented with opportunities to make their work more engaging and fulfilling. While some jobs will provide more of these opportunities than others, there will be situations in all jobs where one can make subtle changes to make it more engaging and fulfilling. Please indicate the extent to which you engage in the following behaviours in your current job using the following scale: Never, to Always. (Note: "Always" means as often as possible in your workplace).

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Introduce new approaches to improve your work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Change the scope or types of tasks that you complete at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Introduce new work tasks that you think better suit your skills or interests.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Choose to take on additional tasks at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Give preference to work tasks that suit your skills or interests.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Below you find a series of statements with which you may have experienced or not in your job during the past four weeks. If you never had this feeling, choose "Never" after the statement. If you had this feeling, indicate how often you felt it by choosing the option that best describes how frequently you felt that way.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Can you decide for yourself how you do your work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Can you decide the order of your work yourself?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Can you decide when you perform a task?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you have the freedom to solve problems at work yourself?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Below you find a series of statements with which you may have experienced or not in your job during the past four weeks. If you never had this feeling, choose "Never" after the statement. If you had this feeling, indicate how often you felt it by choosing the option that best describes how frequently you felt that way.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Do you have to work very quickly?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you have a lot of work to do?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you need to work hard to get things done?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you have to work under high time pressure?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you have enough time to get your work done?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Below you find a series of statements with which you may have experienced or not in your job during the past four weeks. If you never had this feeling, choose "Never" after the statement. If you had this feeling, indicate how often you felt it by choosing the option that best describes how frequently you felt that way.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Can you count on your colleagues when your work gets tough?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Can you ask your colleagues for help if needed?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is your relationship with your colleagues good?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you have conflicts with your colleagues?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you feel valued by your colleagues in your work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are your colleagues friendly to you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is there a pleasant atmosphere between you and your colleagues?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are there sufficient opportunities in your organization for work consultations with colleagues during working hours?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>