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Acknowledgements

What Millennials Want: How to Optimize Their Work

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Abstract: It is known that it is quite difficult for companies to create a working environment that suits the characters of the Millennials, who are now undoubtedly make up the largest proportion of the workforce. This study aims to understand how job autonomy and boredom at work affect Millennials' work engagement. Using non-probability sampling methods, 320 Millennial employees (19–37 years old) from various organizations (private and public organization) in Indonesia agreed to participate in this study. They filled in a questionnaire that measured the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9), Work Design Questionnaire (WDQ); and Workplace Boredom Scale. Data were analyzed using mediation analysis; and the results showed that boredom at work plays a significant role in mediating the relationship between job autonomy and employee engagement in Millennial employees. To conclude, job autonomy positively affects boredom levels of Millennial employees and low levels of boredom results in a higher employee engagement level.

Keywords: millenials; job autonomy; boredom at work; work engagement

Abstrak: Dapat dipahami bahwa perusahaan kesulitan menciptakan lingkungan kerja yang sesuai bagi karyawan-karyawannya, khususnya karyawan Generasi Milenial yang merupakan pemain utama dalam dunia kerja. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk melihat peran dari variabel-variabel yang diduga dapat mempengaruhi keterikatan kerja karyawan Generasi Milenial, yaitu kemandirian kerja dan kebosanan bekerja. Menggunakan metode *non-probability sampling*, 320 karyawan Generasi Milenial (19-37 tahun) dari berbagai organisasi di Indonesia (organisasi swasta dan negeri) bersedia berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Mereka mengisi beberapa kuesioner, antara lain *The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (UWES-9) *Work Design Questionnaire* dan *Workplace Boredom Scale*. Analisis data yang digunakan adalah analisis mediasi; dan hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa kebosanan bekerja berperan signifikan dalam memediasi hubungan kemandiran kerja dan keterikatan kerja pada karyawan Generasi Milenial. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa kemandirian kerja dapat mempengaruhi kebosanan Generasi Milenial dalam bekerja dan rendahnya tingkat kebosanan dalam bekerja tersebut dapat mempengaruhi keterikatan kerja yang dimiliki.

Kata Kunci: millennials; otonomi kerja; kebosanan di tempat kerja; keterlibatan kerja

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Changes are happening in current industrial development. These not only occur in the business sector, but also in the generation that runs the business itself, from Generation X to the Millennials (Sa'aban, Ismail, & Mansor, 2013). Anitha and Aruna (2016) state that Millennials are a generation whose behavioral capabilities (attitudes, expectations, and work values) are significantly different from previous generations. These differences are caused by globalization, employment, foreign investment and digital technology that develop continuously (Anitha & Aruna, 2016; Liyanage & Gamage, 2017; Twenge & Campbell, 2008).

In this era, technological development escalates companies' efficiency, which has enabled them to cut the expenses of hiring human resources (Akram, Ali, & Hassaan, 2013). Akram *et al.* (2013) further explained this situation demands the employees to be more dedicated, enthusiastic, innovative and enhance their productivity and competitiveness to remain in the workforce. This phenomenon entails the need for companies to recognize their best resources and understand how to utilize and maximize Millennials' capabilities and job engagement.

Work engagement is the commitment that an employee has to the organization and its goals which is characterized by positive physical, cognitive, emotional, and mental expression while conducting their tasks (Kahn, 1990). It is one of the key factors that determine the success of a company and improve its functioning as a whole, as well as that of individual employees (Hoole & Bonnema, 2015). From the individual perspective, a high level of employee engagement is positively associated with a high level of efficacy; hence, they complete all work assigned (Schaufeli, Taris, & Van Rhenen, 2008). Employees who possess high levels of engagement show strong commitment to their duties due to their involvement, satisfaction and enthusiasm at work (Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2003). Conversely, those who do not have a sense of belonging to the job tend to display poor performance and low productivity (Bates, 2004; Gallup Consulting, 2008).

An organization must find a way to connect with its employees at a personal level because engagement is the key driver of remarkable work performance (Liyanage & Gamage, 2017). To optimize the employee's level of engagement, companies must pay attention to foster employee's talent and motivation in achieving the best performance (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). Therefore, companies need to provide the materials employees need to improve their performance. For example, maintaining the workload at a normal rate, giving rewards, and preserving corporate values are aspects which can make employees feel safe and connected to the company (Maslach, 1998). Employees with high levels of

engagement can improve a company's productivity, profitability, customer satisfaction, and job safety, and also reduce worker turnover (Harter *et al.*, 2003).

Millennials have a different sets of views regarding organizations. They are characterized by their search for identification with the inner values of the company they work at, due to their work values are of utmost important and are superior to loyalty to the company (Anitha & Aruna, 2016). Thus, satisfying and engaging this generation is a potentially arduous task for an organization. Anitha dan Aruna (2016) further stated that Millennial employees demand a supportive working environment. Realizing this, companies must utilize all their resources to provide a comfortable working environment to improve employee engagement (Liyanage & Gamage, 2017). One way to do this is by giving freedom and high flexibility to complete tasks in accordance with the rhythm of work assigned to each individual (Martin, 2005). Providing high task autonomy may stimulate faster task completion.

Job autonomy is the freedom that employees have in determining work methods, working time, and work criteria to accomplish their tasks and responsibilities (Anitha & Aruna, 2016; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Employees with autonomy have strong control over the task completion process, including scheduling, weekly job targets, and work variation (Eisenberger, Rhoades, & Cameron, 1999). The Millennial Generation are individuals who expect freedom and work flexibility (Martin, 2005), a sense of belonging to work and tasks (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007), creativity (Lowe, Levitt, & Wilson, 2008), and respect for opinions and ideas (Anitha & Aruna, 2016; Lowe *et al.*, 2008).

Providing a degree of autonomy to employees will increase their self-efficacy, decrease personnel turnover and increase job satisfaction (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1999; Spector, 1986), it will make them more involved in acquiring new skills and more responsible for the tasks assigned (Parker, dalam Akram *et al.*, 2013). In addition, giving them high autonomy increases their levels of responsibility and elevates the possibility of them experiencing a psychological state of work meaningfulness, which is positively correlated with employee engagement (Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2005; Ersoy, Born, Derous, & Molen, 2012; Marisa, Sonia, & María, 2005; Obi-Nwosu, O, & Tochukwu, 2013).

The relationship between job autonomy and employee engagement can also be explained through the Self-Determination Theory, which explains that an individual can work optimally if their needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy are met (Deci &

Ryan, 2000). This means that Millennials who are given work autonomy will feel more appreciated and supported by the company, hence, they will be perform their jobs optimally. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate the relationship between job autonomy and employee engagement in the Millennial Generation.

Low autonomy and monotonous and unchallenging tasks have direct implications for Millennial's workplace boredom (Fisher, 1993). Boredom is a cognitive motivational state characterized by low desire and dissatisfaction resulting from unoptimized working conditions (Loukidou, Loan-Clarke, & Daniels, 2009). The phenomenon is apparently on the rise due to the development of technology and information which make work more practical and less challenging (Loukidou *et al.*, 2009). While employee engagement is associated with a positive state of mind (Whiteoak, 2014), boredom is an unpleasant state of mind linked to negative behavior at work. According to Warr & Inceoglu (2012), employee engagement is negatively correlated with boredom at work. In line with this, Reijseger, Schaufeli, Peeters, and Taris (2012) explain that the condition of boredom experienced by workers can reduce the level of engagement with their work, and vice versa.

Based on the Self-Regulation Theory, the individual's effort depends on the degree of conformity between the current and ideal states (R. Kanfer, 1990). When there is a discrepancy between the two, individuals tend to depart from optimality when performing their duties, which means they will begin to feel bored and demotivated (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014; Metin, Taris, & Peeters, 2016). Loukidou *et al.*, (2009) argue that in addition to work environment, job characteristics, task variation, work autonomy, and skill utilization (Avey, Luthans, Smith, & Palmer, 2010; Fisher, 1993; Loukidou et al., 2009) are more likely to induce boredom. Hence, we specifically argue that besides influencing work motivation directly, boredom at work mediates the relationship between Millennials' work autonomy and employee engagement. Therefore, we propose that autonomy is negatively related to work-related boredom. Low levels of boredom motivate individuals to be more engaged with their work activities (Naughton, 1998; Ohly, Sonnentag, & Pluntke, 2006; Parker & Ohly, 2006). Therefore, the role of boredom at work in mediating the relationship between job autonomy and employee engagement is examined in this study.

Building on previous research on Millennial employee engagement, cultural and geographic factors can affect employee engagement. A study conducted by AON Hewitt (Aon Empower Results, 2013) on employee engagement of Millennials in five regions (Asia

Pacific, Europe, Latin America and North America) revealed that Millennials have lower levels of engagement than their predecessors. In contrast, a study conducted by Maurer (2013) in one of the African regions indicates that the Millennial Generation, which is widely known as Generation Y, has a higher level of employee engagement than Generation X. To our knowledge, research on employee engagement of Millennium Generation workers in Indonesia is still scarce. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by examining the relationship between Millennial employee engagement and factors that may influence it.

The significance of this study lies in its novel approach to perceiving the issue of employee engagement in Millennials. We explore the relationship patterns of two variables that presumably influence Millennial engagement, namely job autonomy and boredom at work. The data from this study reveal some practical implications. First, the study provides a new understanding to companies about the cruciality of maintaining employees' engagement levels, particularly Millennials'. Second, this study provides basic knowledge on how to manage Millennials, considering factors which may enhance or lower their levels of engagement. Therefore, we hypothesize (formulated in *Figure 1*) that boredom at work plays a significant role as a mediator of the relationship between job autonomy and employee engagement.
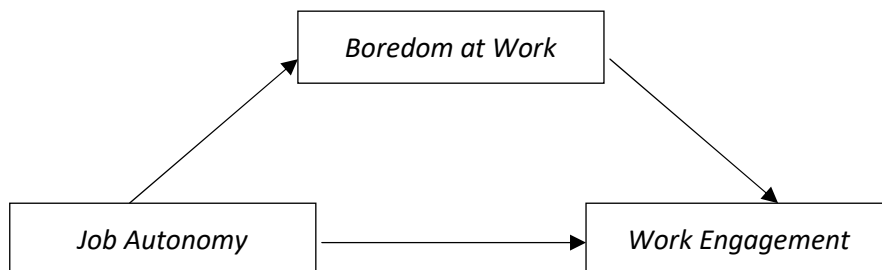
Figure 1. Research Model

Method

To examine Millennials engagement, this research studied individual workers born during the period of 1982–1999 (Twenge & Campbell, 2008), now aged 19–37 years old and specifically working in Indonesia (both private and public organization). The data collection technique used was a survey in the form of questionnaire (Sugiyono, 2009). All the questionnaires were distributed online and offline. Nonprobability (purposive) sampling was used. Purposive (or judgment) sampling is the deliberate selection of research participants by the researchers based on a quality or certain criterion met by participants (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

The questionnaire also paid attention to common method bias, one of the threats often faced by researchers (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). To overcome this issue, we tried to minimize ambiguity by making the questions simple and easy to understand, as well as maintaining the anonymity of the respondents, and also randomized the order of items on the measuring instruments used in the study. Of the 351 respondents, only 320 respondents satisfied the normality and outliers' tests. This study employs several measurements as follows:

Work engagement. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) measuring instrument by (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003) was used. This tool consists of nine questions and measures three dimensions of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Some examples of items on this gauge are: Vigor Dimension: "At my work, I feel bursting with energy"; Dedication Dimension: "I am enthusiastic about my job"; Absorption Dimension: "I feel happy when I am working intensely". The scale used on this gauge is the Likert scale with seven different answer options, starting from never (1) to always (7).

Job Autonomy. A Work Design Questionnaire (WDQ) measurement tool developed by (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006) was used to measure autonomy. The autonomy measured by this tool consists of nine items that come from three dimensions, namely autonomy in work scheduling, decision making, and work methods. Some examples of items in each dimension are: Work Scheduling Autonomy Dimension: "The job allows me to make my own decisions about how to schedule my work"; Decision Making Autonomy Dimension: "The job allows me to make a lot of decisions on my own"; Work Methods Autonomy Dimension: "The job allows me to make decisions about what methods I use to complete my work". A Likert scale was used with six different answer options from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (6). The Likert scale range used in this study is slightly different from the original measuring instrument; additional options were added to avoid central tendency bias that commonly occurs.

Boredom at Work. We used a workplace boredom scale measuring tool developed by Van der Heijden, Schepers, dan Nijssen, (2012), which consists of seven items and is unidimensional. This tool is a combination of two boredom scales, namely Lee's Job boredom scale (Lee, 1986) and the Experience and Assessment of Work questionnaire presented by Veldhoven, Meijman, Broersen, dan Fortuin (1997). Examples of items on this tool are: "I feel bored at work"; "There's insufficient work to do". This measurement utilized a Likert scale with five choices of answers, namely Never (0) to Always (5). An adjustment was made to one item ("I can complete my task and work faster than I should") because it has a different meaning when translated to Bahasa

Indonesia. In Bahasa Indonesia, the item poses a positive impression rather than a negative impression and therefore, it was placed in a reverse category.

Result

Based on demographic data in Table 1, the sample of 320 Millennial Generation employees (aged 19-37 years old) consists of 64.4% female and 35.6% male respondents. The respondents who dominate the sample are working as staff (68.1%) and working in the public sector (51.2%). Most of the respondents have permanent employment (70.9%), have worked over 6 years (37.4%) and hold a bachelor's degree (73.4%).

Table 1.
Demographic Data

Variabel	Kategori	Percentage
Gender	Male	35.6
	Female	64.4
Job Level	Staff	68.1
	Supervisor	16.9
	Managerial	15.0
Employee Status	Permanent	70.9
	Outsourcing	29.1
Organization Type	National Private Sector	31.2
	Multinational Private Sector	12.5
	Public Sector	51.5
	Other	4.8
Tenure	<3 year	26.6
	3-6 years	36.0
	Over 6 years	37.4
Educational Degree	SMA/SMK	5.0
	Diploma	6.9
	Bachelor	73.4
	Master	14.7

The mean, standard deviation, average and reliability coefficients of all variables have been summarized in Table 2. As shown, the reliability test results of all measuring instruments used are considered satisfactory. The Cronbach Alphas for work engagement, job autonomy, and boredom at work variables are 0.88, 0.90, and 0.72, respectively. Based on the correlation test, the correlation value ranged between –0.62 and 0.44. The negative correlation between boredom at work and work engagement ($r = -0.62$) shows that the higher the level of boredom at work, the lower the level of work engagement, and vice versa. Similar correlations occur between boredom at work and job autonomy. In contrast, the work engagement variable is positively correlated with job autonomy.

Table 2.
Means, standard deviations, correlations, and scale reliabilities

	Mean	**SD**	**WE**	**JA**	**BAW**
WE	42.61	7.85	**0.88**		
JA	38.22	8.24	0.44**	**0.90**	
BAW	16.57	3.89	−0.62**	−0.42**	**0.72**

Note. Diagonal entries in bold are scale reliabilities (Cronbach Alpha). WE: work engagement; JA: job autonomy; BAW: boredom at work. ** indicates that correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (*two-tailed*).

Based on the mediation test results depicted in Table 2, the total effect of the job autonomy variable on work engagement shows significant and positive correlation (c = .447, SE = .501, t = 8.911, p = 0.001, LLCI = .348, ULCI = .554). In addition, job autonomy and boredom at work have a negative relationship (a = −.207, SE = .024, t = −8.601, p = .000, LLCI = −.255, ULCI = −.160). Similarly, boredom at work and work engagement variables also show a negative relationship (b = −1.131, SE = .097, t = −11.582, p = <.001, LLCI = -1.322, ULCI = −.938).

The mediation test demonstrates a significant effect of the indirect variable "boredom at work", which acts as the mediator of the relationship between job autonomy and work engagement (β = .235, SE = .035, BootLLCI = .171, BootULCI = .308). Similarly, the direct effect of this research shows a significant relationship between job autonomy and work engagement (c = .211, SE = .047, t = 4.528, p = .000, LLCI = .119, ULCI = .303). The results show that the boredom at work variable partly mediates the relationship between job autonomy and work engagement.

Table 3.
Mediation Model Coefficient

	Consequent								
	Total Effect on Y (WE)			**M (BAW)**			**Y (WE)**		
Antecedent	β	*SE*	*p*	β	*SE*	*p*	β	*SE*	*p*
Constant	25.516	1.975	< .001	24.458	.952	< .001	53.169	2.907	.000
X (JA)	.447	0.501	< .001	-.207	.024	< .001	.211	.047	.000
M (BAW)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-1.131	.097	.000
	$R^2 = .200$			$R^2 = .189$			$R^2 = .437$		
	F(1,318) = 79.400,			F(1,318) = 73.973,			F(2,317) = 123.406,		
	p = < .001			*p* = < .001			*p* = < .001		

Note. JA: job autonomy; BAW: boredom at work; WE; work engagement

Discussion

This research aims to prove the significant role of boredom at work in mediating the relationship between job autonomy and work engagement in Millennial employees. As shown in Table 2, the findings fully support the hypothesis formed in the early stage of this study. The results of the mediation test show that there were significant effects of job autonomy on level of work engagement of Millennial employees. Moreover, the results show a significant direct effect between job autonomy and work engagement. In addition, the mediation test demonstrates the significant indirect effect of boredom at work on the relationship between job autonomy and work engagement. Thus, it can be concluded that through partial mediation, boredom at work plays a significant role in mediating the relationship between job autonomy and work engagement in Millennials.

The findings further prove the significant role of boredom at work as a significant variable that mediates the relationship between job autonomy and work engagement. In line with this, previous studies maintain that self-reliance, characterized by freedom and flexibility in work, affects the level of boredom, which ultimately affects the individual's employee engagement and achievement at work (Naughton, 1998; Ohly et al., 2006; Parker & Ohly, 2006).

The findings support previous arguments and theories elaborated at the beginning of the paper showing that job autonomy has a significant role in improving work engagement of Millennials. Individuals who possess a high level of independence at work tend to have a higher level of engagement (Bakker et al., 2005; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Marisa et al., 2005; Martin, 2005), which is associated with greater dedication to their work (Ersoy et al., 2012). In this study, the engagement experienced by Millennial employees who have high levels of autonomy is shown in their efforts in doing their duties. Individuals working in a supportive environment that gives them work autonomy tend to show more energy and dedication to their work (Van Den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, & Lens, 2008). This is in accordance with the theory of (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), which explains that improving the function of work characteristics, such as job autonomy, will lead to improvement of the individual's psychological state of effectiveness in work. Hence, it affects their whole function.

The number of studies that examine the relationship of these three variables is still scanty. Therefore, this research is expected to provide theoretical benefits in the field of

industrial and organizational research, especially related on the topics of job autonomy, boredom at work and work engagement. The research findings are expected to become new knowledge for companies in Indonesia to better understand and maximize the potential of their employees, who are currently mostly Millennials.

This research could also become a frame of reference for companies dominated by the Millennials on how to maintain their work satisfaction and employee engagement. The Millennials need a work environment that enables them to utilize all their potential. Several ways to realize it are by giving freedom to determine their work schedules, decision making and task completions. This is proven to reduce boredom at work and increase employee engagement.

Conclusion

There are important insights to be drawn from this study about work autonomy and employee engagement. Chronic boredom at work plays a significant role as a mediator of the relationship between job autonomy and work engagement. The findings also confirm and strengthen previous research and theories used to explain the relationship between these variables. It is important to note that job autonomy directly affects work engagement, regardless of the presence of boredom at work variable.

Despite several attempts to avoid common errors or mistakes, several limitations were encountered during the research period. This is a cross-sectional study that examines the dynamics of correlation or relationship at one time or in a short period of time. Thus, there is the possibility of bias; the results may be different when done at different times (Levin, 2006). To overcome this issue, data from a longer time period could be used (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Likewise, the self-report questionnaire employed in this study is open to bias. To obtain more valid and complete data, future studies may combine the questionnaires with other research methods such as interviews.

In a theoretical context, this study focuses only on one part of the characteristics of job autonomy, in view of its relation to boredom at work and work engagement. Future researchers are encouraged to examine other variables which could explain the correlation between boredom at work and work engagement (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). These variables include task identity, skill variety, task significance, and feedback. Moreover, future studies can also perform a comparison test between job

autonomy level, boredom at work, and work engagement from different generations, namely Generations X and Y, in various companies in Indonesia.

It is important to note that providing a supportive work environment does not necessarily link to high job autonomy and better employee performance. Lu, Brockner, Vardi, dan Weitz (2017) maintain that job autonomy is a "double-edged sword" for the company. Although some research proves that job autonomy can improve employees' motivation, performance, job satisfaction, and creativity (Hoskins, 2014), it could trigger unethical behavior, which could badly harm the company. According to Lu *et al.*, (2017) high self-reliance triggers amoral attitudes such as making decisions which jeopardize the company. Therefore, there is a need for further research to study the effect of this variable on the company and how to minimize unethical behavior.[]

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Bibliography

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