Turning home boredom during the outbreak of COVID-19 into thriving at home and career self-management: the role of online leisure crafting

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper studied whether boredom at home due to social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic may motivate individuals to engage in online leisure crafting, thereby contributing to their thriving at home and career self-management. This paper aims to examine whether individuals’ growth need strength influences the impact of home boredom on online leisure crafting.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper performed a two-wave longitudinal study involving a group of employees from the hospitality industry (N = 340) in Mainland China. This paper evaluated home boredom, online leisure crafting and growth need strength at Time 1 and thriving at home and career self-management two months later at Time 2.

Findings – The respondents’ experience of home boredom had a time-lagged effect on their thriving at home and career self-management via online leisure crafting. Additionally, their growth need strength amplified the positive impact of home boredom on online leisure crafting.

Practical implications – Hospitality managers can motivate employees to engage in crafting online leisure activities at home when they experience home boredom during the outbreak of COVID-19, which may further allow them to experience thriving at home and engage in career self-management. Additionally, managers can develop managerial interventions to improve the growth need strength of employees with low growth needs, which may, in turn, render these employees less likely to tolerate home boredom, thereby increasing the positive impact of home boredom on their online leisure crafting.

Originality/value – This paper offer insights for the boredom literature regarding how individuals’ home boredom caused by social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic might lead to their thriving at home through online leisure crafting. This paper also provides insights for the leisure crafting literature regarding the role of online leisure crafting in individuals’ thriving at home. This paper reveals the role of growth need strength in the impact of home boredom on thriving at home through online leisure crafting.

Keywords Home boredom, Online leisure crafting, Career self-management, Thriving at home, Growth need strength

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Since late 2019, the world population has been suffering from a coronavirus disease known as COVID-19. To stop the spread of the disease, many countries (e.g. China, Italy and the UK) have adopted stay-at-home policies requiring both healthy and affected individuals to quarantine (socially isolate) in their homes to maintain social distance. Other quarantine methods, such as lockdowns, prohibitions of assembly, cancellations of personal and public events and travel restrictions, have also been implemented, resulting in tremendous
disruption to both countries and individuals worldwide (Usher et al., 2020). Although social isolation and distancing have been viewed as effective ways to slow transmission during pandemics (World Health Organization, 2019), many recent studies have found that social isolation induces boredom at home, which may damage physical and psychological health in the long term (Banerjee and Rai, 2020; Williams et al., 2020). However, little attention has been paid to investigating how individuals deal proactively with boredom at home due to social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Investigating this issue is important because individuals are not always passive responders to their environments; instead, they can play an active role in managing their lives in their environments. Understanding how individuals deal with boredom at home due to social isolation during the pandemic can help decision-makers improve the quality of life of individuals within a country and can help company managers promote better health and work/home behaviors among their employees while they are staying at home. To investigate this issue, we adopt the self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) and self-regulation theory (Leventhal et al., 1984).

Boredom is defined as individuals’ unwanted experience of having an unsatisfied desire to be involved in a satisfying activity that leads to feelings of being stuck in a dissatisfying and meaningless present (Fahlman et al., 2013). Individuals experience boredom when they perceive that they are unable to realize their values, passions and desires under a specific living condition (van Tilburg and Igou, 2012). Self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) specifies that people are naturally motivated to fulfill their needs (e.g. values and passions). They may attempt to do so in other domains (e.g. virtual/digital) when they cannot do so in the original domain (e.g. home or work). Studies have also revealed that individuals may be intrinsically motivated to make their lives meaningful (Petrou et al., 2017). It is, therefore, conceivable that when individuals experience home boredom due to social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, they may strive to explore and pursue online activities through which they can satisfy their unfulfilled desires and passions (i.e. online leisure crafting). This may help them experience positivity and thrive in their home life during the pandemic. In this study, we examine whether home boredom due to social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic may help individuals thrive at home by encouraging online leisure crafting.

Studies have indicated that the extent to which boredom influences an individual’s behavior may be related to the individual’s self-regulatory capacity (Fahlman et al., 2013), which is in line with self-regulation theory (Leventhal et al., 1984). According to this theory, self-regulation is an individual’s capacity to control and evaluate his or her thoughts and feelings in a specific situation and his or her subsequent behaviors to achieve a certain goal (Brown et al., 1999; Zimmerman, 2000). In other words, individuals’ self-regulatory capacity may moderate the impact of boredom at home on their subsequent behavior (e.g. online leisure crafting). Empirical studies suggest that growth need strength plays a crucial role in individuals’ ability to tolerate boredom and in their motivation, stimulated by the impact of boredom, to deal with a boring environment (Fisherl, 1993; van Hooff and van Hooft, 2017). In alignment with the self-regulation theory, we investigate the moderating role of growth need strength in the relationship between home boredom due to social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic and online leisure crafting.

In this research, we aim to contribute to the literature in several ways. First, we investigate whether individuals’ boredom at home as a result of social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic may lead them to perform online leisure crafting that helps them thrive at home. According to self-determination theory, we investigate the mediating effect of online leisure crafting on the association between home boredom and thriving at home. Our insights into how home boredom may promote thriving at home through online leisure crafting.
crafting contribute to the boredom and leisure crafting literature. Specifically, the existing boredom literature focuses on investigating managerial interventions to reduce boredom. Less attention has been paid to whether and how individuals proactively deal with boredom in a way that benefits them, given that they are not always passively affected by their environment. We offer insights for the boredom literature regarding how individuals’ home boredom caused by social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic might lead to their thriving at home through online leisure crafting. Moreover, leisure crafting has been investigated in recent studies (Berg et al., 2010; Petrou and Bakker, 2016; Petrou et al., 2017), but it has mainly been conceptualized and studied in terms of physical leisure crafting activity rather than digital activity (Berg et al., 2010); thus, there is insufficient literature regarding the benefits of digital leisure-crafting activities (i.e. online leisure crafting) for individuals. We provide insights for the leisure crafting literature regarding the role of online leisure crafting in individuals’ thriving at home. In addition, we are unaware of existing studies that have investigated the relationship between online leisure crafting and thriving at home. Such investigations are important, as they provide insights into how crafting online leisure activities may help individuals thrive at home, especially when they experience home boredom. Hence, the mediating role of online leisure crafting that we propose plays a crucial role in understanding how individuals who experience home boredom may eventually thrive at home, which contributes to the literature on leisure crafting, home boredom and thriving.

Second, based on self-regulation theory, we test the moderating effect of growth need strength on the relationship between home boredom and online leisure crafting. Our insights into how growth need strength may influence the impact of home boredom on online leisure crafting also contribute to the boredom and leisure crafting literature. By testing the interaction effect of growth need strength and home boredom on online leisure crafting, we reveal the role of self-regulation in the impact of home boredom on thriving at home through online leisure crafting. Third, by investigating the role of home boredom in home thriving and career self-management through online leisure crafting during the COVID-19 pandemic, we extend the topical trend in the hospitality management literature and contribute to the development of knowledge in the hospitality industry (Ali et al., 2019; Jiang and Wen, 2020).

Theoretical background

The impact of home boredom

Individuals feel bored when they are unable to fulfill their desires and passions by engaging in satisfying activities, and thus, find their lives meaningless and unchallenging (Coughlan et al., 2019; Fahlman et al., 2013; van Tilburg and Igou, 2012). In line with self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000), we argue that boredom may serve as a motivator that stimulates individuals to move from a situation of dissatisfaction to a situation that can satisfy their unfulfilled desires and passions (Elpidorou, 2018). In other words, bored individuals may be intrinsically motivated to do something else and attempt to escape a boring situation when possible (Bench and Lench, 2013; Elpidorou, 2014; Fahlman et al., 2013; van Tilburg and Igou, 2012). Empirical studies have revealed that boredom motivates individuals to take goal-oriented actions and to set and pursue alternative goals (Elpidorou, 2018); to realize and practice their talents, thereby promoting personal growth (van Tilburg and Igou, 2011, 2012); and to increase the frequency with which they engage with or seek to broaden their social network (Baker, 1992; Game, 2007). These behaviors motivated by boredom fall under the conceptualization of leisure crafting. Leisure crafting refers to individuals’ proactive pursuit of leisure activities aimed at goal setting, human connection and learning and personal development (Petrou and Bakker, 2016). Leisure crafting and
leisure participation are conceptually different. While the former is an intentional and purposeful behavior, the aim of which is to fulfill the intention or purpose of the pursued leisure activities, the latter is involvement in a leisure activity. Through leisure crafting, individuals shape leisure activities in a manner that aligns with their desires (Berg et al., 2010). In this study, the context in which boredom emerges is social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, which requires individuals to stay at home; thus, bored individuals may be more likely to perform leisure crafting through the internet (i.e. online leisure crafting) during this time. Our definition of online leisure crafting is similar to that for leisure crafting. However, we propose that when performing online leisure crafting, individuals proactively pursue leisure activities through the internet. Drawing on self-determination theory, studies have found that leisure crafting allows individuals to develop a better quality of life (Petrou and Bakker, 2016; Petrou et al., 2017).

In this research, instead of investigating the direct effect of home boredom on individuals’ lives in general, we focus on behaviors that may influence specific elements of individuals’ lives. We test online leisure crafting and specific life outcomes (e.g. thriving at home and career self-management) to investigate how home boredom may lead to these outcomes through online leisure crafting. Thriving is conceptualized as an adaptive function, as it allows individuals to evaluate their forward progress, and it is defined as a psychological state characterized by vitality and learning (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Vitality is a sense of feeling mentally and physically energized (Nix et al., 1999), whereas learning is a sense of gaining and practicing new knowledge and skills. Thriving individuals experience growth and momentum through a sense of feeling energized and alive (i.e. vitality) and a sense that they are developing, growing and becoming better at what they do (i.e. learning) (Porath et al., 2012). They perceive that they are moving forward in life instead of being stuck in place (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Online leisure crafting enables individuals to learn and develop (learning and personal development) and allows them to set and commit to new goals (goal setting) through the leisure activities they pursue at home through the internet; in turn, these experiences allow them to experience thriving at home. Empirical studies have found that individuals may avail themselves of the internet to develop goals and learn new knowledge and skills that may enrich their personal life (Bonk et al., 2015). Human connection, which is another core element of online leisure crafting, provides individuals with opportunities to obtain resources, such as mental support and learning resources, that can enrich their daily life through their social networks (Haythornthwaite and De Laat, 2010; Huxhold et al., 2013), which may, in turn, enable them to experience thriving at home.

Our rationale for considering career self-management in addition to investigating thriving at home is that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many companies have collapsed or have started downsizing, including those in hospitality and other service sectors (e.g. hotels, airlines, travel agencies, restaurants and shopping malls). Self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) proposes that individuals are proactive in satisfying their innate needs in a cross-domain manner. When employees in these industries perceive a high risk of being laid off (Bagnera et al., 2020; Karim et al., 2020), they may be motivated to think about and take further actions to manage their careers during this difficult time of social isolation and boredom at home. In other words, from a work perspective, career self-management may be a way for employees to fulfill innate needs when they experience boredom at home. In this regard, investigations of career self-management during social isolation may provide important practical insights into human resource management, particularly in the hospitality or service industry. Career management refers to “attempts made to influence the career development of one or more people” (Arnold, 1997, p. 19). Career self-management is defined as “a process by which individuals develop, implement and monitor career goals
and strategies” (Greenhaus et al., 2010, p. 12). Studies have found that individuals may seek ongoing improvement in their current job, prepare themselves to move to another job or do both simultaneously to manage their career (Kossek et al., 1998). As online leisure crafting involves goal setting, human connection and learning and personal development through the internet, we claim that although individuals are socially isolated at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, they may have opportunities to access information to make plans and set goals for their career by using the internet (Robinson et al., 2000); to maintain contacts with people at their jobs or to build contacts with people in areas where they would like to work (Hooley, 2012); and to look for career-related training or qualifications (Schmeeckle, 2003), thereby contributing to their career self-management. Supporting this, recent hospitality studies revealed that hospitality employees tend to have ample control over their work (Lee and Ravichandran, 2019), which may imply that these employees are more likely to perform career self-management when they have the opportunity (e.g. through online leisure crafting). Notably, we do not assume a causal relationship between career self-management and thriving at home, as existing studies have suggested distinguishing between thriving at work and thriving at home (Spreitzer et al., 2012) and, as empirical evidence has shown that career self-management contributes to thriving at work rather than thriving at home (Porath et al., 2012; Wilhelm and Hirschi, 2019). Considering the above, we propose the following hypotheses:

**H1a.** Online leisure crafting mediates the negative relationship between home boredom and thriving at home.

**H1b.** Online leisure crafting mediates the negative relationship between home boredom and career self-management.

*The role of growth need strength*

Self-regulation theory (Leventhal et al., 1984) proposes that individuals’ capacity to control and evaluate their thoughts and feelings regarding a given situation influences the impact of the perceived situation on their subsequent behavior (Brown et al., 1999; Leventhal et al., 1984; Zimmerman, 2000). In this research, we claim that growth need strength may regulate how individuals perceive a given life situation, and thus, may affect the impact of the situation on their subsequent behavior. *Growth need strength refers to the need and desire to move forward in life (Hackman and Oldham, 1975)* and indicates individuals’ internal expectations and desires in relation to what they aim for in their life domains (Bottger and Chew, 1986; Spector, 1985). Growth need strength varies among individuals. Those with high growth need strength may be intrinsically motivated to learn, develop and become better at what they do (Das, 1991; Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Shalley et al., 2009). Therefore, these individuals seek more meaningful and challenging lives and this drive allows them to improve themselves more than those with low growth need strength (Bottger and Chew, 1986; Shalley et al., 2009; Spector, 1985). Thus, in line with self-regulation theory, we claim that individuals with high growth need strength may be less likely than those with low growth need strength to tolerate boredom at home due to social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, which strengthens the positive impact of home boredom on their online leisure crafting. Thus, individuals who strongly desire to move forward in life intend to grow and develop and would like to have a meaningful life. They are, therefore, less likely to tolerate home boredom than their counterparts. Consequently, the impact of home boredom on subsequent behavior, such as online leisure crafting, may be stronger for those with high growth need strength than for their counterparts. We examine the moderating role...
of individuals' growth need strength in the positive relationship between home boredom due to social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic and online leisure crafting. We propose the following hypothesis and present the research framework in Figure 1. To test the hypotheses, we performed a two-wave longitudinal study among a group of employees from mainland China to examine whether online leisure crafting mediates the negative relationships between home boredom and thriving at home and career self-management to examine the moderating role of growth need strength:

**H2.** Home boredom has a stronger positive relationship with online leisure crafting for individuals who have a high (vs low) growth need strength.

**Research method**

**Participants and procedure.** Using a two-wave study design, we studied a group of employees from several service sectors (e.g. travel agencies, coffee shops and hotels) in the hospitality industry in mainland China. During the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the provinces in mainland China have been on lockdown; many service sectors in the hospitality industry are unable to run their businesses as in the past, and employees have had to stay at home at all times (Pan et al., 2020). Therefore, during social isolation, employees may experience home boredom, which may, in turn, affect their online leisure crafting. Before administering the survey, we collaborated with a survey company in mainland China to contact and acquire consent to participate from employees who worked in service sectors in the hospitality industry. These employees were ensured of the anonymity of their responses and the confidentiality of the collected data. Their participation was voluntary.

A total of 704 employees were invited, and 511 agreed to participate in the survey. A total of 511 questionnaires were distributed at Time 1 and 398 usable responses were gathered (response rate of 78%). At Time 1, we evaluated all predictor variables, including home boredom, online leisure crafting, growth need strength and demographic variables. At Time 2, two months after the completion of the Time 1 survey, we conducted the final survey to measure the respondents' thriving at home and career self-management. We asked the previous 398 respondents to complete these two measures. A total of 340 usable responses were eventually collected (response rate of 85%). Among the respondents, 57.9% were male. Over
half of the respondents were within the age range of 21 to 25 years (55.9%); the next largest age
groups were 26 to 30 years (40.6%) and 31 to 35 years (3.5%). Most of the respondents (65%)
had completed their undergraduate study and received a degree; some had attended some
college (18.2%). A total of 27.9% of the respondents worked in travel agencies, 23.6% worked
in coffee/tea shops, 17.6% worked in restaurants, 17.1% worked in private hotels and 13.8% worked
in tourism parks. A total of 44.4% of respondents had worked at their job for 1–2 years,
31.5% for 1–6 months and 24.1% for 6 months–1 year. A total of 47.6% of the respondents
worked 4 to 6 h a day, 34.2% worked from 2 to 4 h and 18.2% worked from 6 to 8 h. Most of the
respondents either lived with roommates/friends (42.6%) or lived alone (38.8%); the rest lived
with their husbands/wives (11.2%) or parents (7.3%).

**Measures.** We amended the items as needed for use in this research. We used a back-
translation procedure, performed by two professional translators who were colleagues of the
author, to translate all the measurement items from English to Chinese while maintaining
the original meanings of the items (Brislin, 1980).

We evaluated home boredom by using six revised items (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.82$; $X^2$/degree
of freedom (df) = 7.382; goodness of fit index (GFI) = 0.980; adjusted goodness of fit index
(AGFI) = 0.900; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.970; root mean square residual (RMR) =
0.037) from the scale developed by Reijseger et al. (2013). The scale was originally used to
evaluate work boredom. We revised the items by replacing “work” with “home.” Sample
items are “at home, time goes by very slowly” and “at home, there is not so much to do.” All
items were scored on a seven-point scale ranging from 0 (Never) to 6 (Very often).

We evaluated online leisure crafting via nine revised items (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.86$; $X^2$/df =
2.796; GFI = 0.992; AGFI = 0.961; CFI = 0.994; RMR = 0.019) from the scale by Petrou and
Bakker (2016). We revised the original items to reflect the online context by adding “through
the internet/online” where appropriate. Sample items are “I try to build relationships
through online leisure activities” and “I try to find challenging activities online.” All items
were scored on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree).

We evaluated thriving at home by using 10 revised items (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.79$; $X^2$/df =
1.194; GFI = 0.997; AGFI = 0.983; CFI = 0.998; RMR = 0.019) from the scale proposed by
Porath et al. (2012). The scale was originally developed to evaluate thriving at work. We
revised the items by replacing “work” with “home.” Sample items are “at home, I find myself
learning often” and “at home, I have energy and spirit.” All items were scored on a five-point
scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

We evaluated career self-management by using 18 revised items (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.79$;
$X^2$/df = 5.306; GFI = 0.968; AGFI = 0.903; CFI = 0.971; RMR = 0.043) from the scale by
Sturges et al. (2002). Sample items are “I have introduced myself to people who can influence
my career” and “I have taken on extra activities that will look good on my curriculum vitae.”
All items were scored on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree).

We evaluated growth need strength via six revised items (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.83$; $X^2$/df =
7.095; GFI = 0.981; AGFI = 0.906; CFI = 0.976; RMR = 0.028) from the scale by Hackman and
Oldham (1974). The scale was originally developed for the work context. We revised the items
for general use by replacing “in my job” with “in my life.” Sample items are “I would like to
have stimulating and challenging work in my life” and “I would like to have opportunities for
personal growth and development in my life.” All items were scored on a seven-point scale
ranging from 1 (I would not want this at all) to 7 (I would very much want this).

Following Bernerth and Aguinis’s (2016) suggestion, we included several demographic
variables, such as age (Haight et al., 2002), educational background (Appelbaum et al., 2002),
sector, number of hours worked per day (Sturges, 2008), gender (Edwards et al., 1999;
Results

We summarized the Pearson correlation results of the measures, as well as the measures’ mean and standard deviation in Table 1. We controlled for cohabitation ($r = -0.11$, $p < 0.05$) and age ($r = -0.14$, $p < 0.05$) in the subsequent analysis, as they were significantly associated with the outcome measures (i.e., thriving at home and/or career self-management). As all measures were self-reported, before testing the proposed hypothesis, we carried out the single-factor test proposed by Harman (Podsakoff et al., 2003) and performed a confirmatory factor analysis by entering all items into the same model (Iverson and Maguire, 2000) to examine whether common method variance might be an issue in this study. The results of Harman’s single-factor test showed that the variance explained by the main factor (18.84%) did not explain a large portion of the common variance among measurements. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis revealed poor model fit indices for the tested model ($X^2/df = 13.556$; GFI = 0.520; AGFI = 0.407; CFI = 0.319; RMR = 0.222). These results suggest that common method variance was not a detrimental issue.

Following Preacher and Hayes (2004), we tested the indirect effects of online leisure crafting on the relationships between home boredom and thriving at home and career self-management for $H1a$ and $H1b$, respectively, by performing bootstrapping analyzes with 1,000 resamples. The results, which are summarized in Table 2, showed support for the indirect effects of online leisure crafting on the relationships between home boredom and thriving at home (indirect effect = 0.10, 95% CI = [0.06, 0.14]) and between home boredom and career self-management (indirect effect = 0.04, 95% CI = [0.02, 0.06]). As the direct effects of home boredom on thriving at home (direct effect = −0.18, $p < 0.001$) and on career self-management (direct effect = −0.09, $p < 0.001$) were significant, online leisure crafting partially mediated the negative relationships between home boredom and thriving at home ($H1a$) and career self-management ($H1b$).

To examine $H2$, we conducted hierarchical regression analyzes to test the interaction effect of home boredom and growth need strength on online leisure crafting. We first centered home boredom and growth need strength and then multiplied them to acquire the interaction term (Aiken and West, 1991). The results, which are provided in Table 3 (Model 3), showed that home boredom ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$) and the interaction between home boredom and growth need strength ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$) in relation to online leisure crafting were significant, though the relationship between growth need strength and online leisure crafting was non-significant ($\beta = -0.07$, $p > 0.05$). As the interaction term was significant, we further conducted a simple slope test and identified its interaction effect. We calculated the predicted values of online leisure crafting for two groups, namely, those who scored 1 standard deviation below the mean and those who scored 1 standard deviation above the mean for home boredom and growth need strength. The interaction plot is shown in Figure 2. The relationship between home boredom and online leisure crafting was more positive for individuals with high growth need strength ($b = 0.26$, $p < 0.05$) than for those with low growth need strength ($b = 0.11$, $p < 0.05$). $H2$ was supported by the data.

Discussion

In this research, we aimed to study whether boredom at home due to social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic may motivate individuals to engage in online leisure crafting, thereby contributing to their thriving at home and their career self-management. We also examined whether individuals’ growth need strength may play a role in influencing the
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<td>8. Home boredom</td>
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<td>9. Online leisure crafting</td>
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<td>–0.14</td>
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<td>0.05</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–0.01</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>(0.79)</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Career self-management</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>–0.07</td>
<td>–0.02</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>–0.06</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>–0.11</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Growth need strength</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>–0.09</td>
<td>–0.08</td>
<td>–0.07</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>–0.09</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001 (N = 340 participants). Gender: 1 = female, 2 = male. Age: 1 = under 20 years, 2 = 21–25 years, 3 = 26–30 years, 4 = 31–35 years, 5 = 36–40 years, 6 = 41–45 years and above. Education: 1 = some secondary school, 2 = secondary school completed, 3 = some college, 4 = bachelor’s degree, 5 = some postgraduate studies, 6 = post-graduate degree completed. Sector: 1 = restaurant, 2 = tourism park, 3 = coffee or tea shop, 4 = private hotel, 5 = travel agency. Tenure: 1 = less than 1 month, 2 = 1–6 months, 3 = 6 months–1 year, 4 = 1–2 years, 5 = 2–5 years, 6 = more than 5 years. Working hours: 1 = less than 2 h, 2 = 2–4 h, 3 = 4–6 h, 4 = 6–8 h, 5 = over 8 h. Cohabitation: 1 = live alone, 2 = with children, 3 = with parents, 4 = with husband/wife, 5 = with siblings, 6 = with roommates/friends, 7 = with relatives, 8 = other. Parenthetical values represent reliability.
impact of home boredom on their online leisure crafting. The results supported our hypotheses. We conducted a two-wave longitudinal study of a group of employees from sectors of the hospitality industry in mainland China. Our results showed that the respondents' experience of home boredom had a time-lagged effect on their thriving at home and career self-management via their online leisure crafting. We also revealed that the respondents' growth need strength amplified the positive impact of their home boredom on their online leisure crafting.

**Theoretical implications**
These results contribute to the literature theoretically in several ways. First, they support the self-determination theory from a longitudinal perspective. Our results demonstrated that respondents' home boredom increased their online leisure crafting, which, in turn, benefitted their thriving at home and their career self-management in the long term. In addition, although boredom issues have been investigated previously (van Hooff and van Hooft, 2017), attention has been most focused on related issues in the work context (e.g. work boredom). Our study may be one of the first to investigate employees' boredom in the home domain and examine its long-term time-lagged effect in a within-domain and a cross-domain manner by focusing on respondents' thriving at home and their career self-management. We have, therefore, extended the boredom literature by providing novel insights concerning home boredom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indirect paths</th>
<th>Direct effect</th>
<th>Indirect effect</th>
<th>95% confidence interval (indirect effect)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home boredom → online leisure crafting → thriving at home</td>
<td>-0.18***</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>[0.06, 0.14]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home boredom → online leisure crafting → career self-management</td>
<td>-0.09***</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>[0.02, 0.06]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** ***p < 0.001 (N = 340 participants); Bootstrap sample size = 1,000
Furthermore, adopting the self-determination theory, we investigated the mediating role of online leisure crafting in the relationship between home boredom and thriving at home. The results provided empirical evidence that home boredom contributed to respondents' thriving at home by motivating them to engage in online leisure crafting. Hence, we have extended the literature on leisure crafting by demonstrating the effect of home boredom on online leisure crafting and subsequent thriving at home. While leisure crafting has been investigated in recent studies (Berg et al., 2010; Petrou and Bakker, 2016; Petrou et al., 2017), it has mainly been conceptualized and studied as a physical rather than a digital activity (Berg et al., 2010). There is insufficient literature on the role of online leisure crafting, which is particularly relevant to individuals who are socially isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic, in individuals' home behavior. We have provided insights for the leisure crafting literature regarding the role of online leisure crafting in individuals' thriving at home.

Second, based on self-determination theory, we provide insight into the interference effect of home boredom on individuals' work life by investigating how home boredom may motivate individuals to engage in online leisure crafting, which contributes to their career self-management. In addition to the fact that home boredom has not been studied sufficiently in the literature, we are unaware of other studies that have examined the role of home boredom in individuals' work behavior. We studied how the experience of boredom at home may motivate individuals to engage in online leisure crafting, thereby improving their career self-management. This investigation is particularly critical for extending the existing knowledge on boredom, as individuals are not simply passive responders to their environments but instead can play an active role in managing their lives in those environments, even if they are undesirable. In addition, knowledge of the impact of home boredom on individuals' work behavior is still lacking in the boredom literature. Therefore, to better understand boredom, especially home boredom caused by social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial to know whether and how individuals engage in proactive behaviors, such as online leisure crafting, to respond to their home boredom, which, in turn, enables them to engage in positive work behavior (e.g. improved career self-management).

Third, we contribute to the leisure crafting and human resource management literature by investigating career self-management as a work outcome. Since the outbreak of COVID-
The impact of the pandemic on individuals’ work-related behaviors has been an important area of concern in organizational and human resource management research, as the pandemic has caused a considerable number of companies, including those in the hospitality and other service industries (e.g. hotels, airlines, travel agencies, restaurants and shopping malls), to collapse or downsize; many of these employees face the risk of losing their jobs in addition to the potential difficulties of working at home due to social isolation (Bagnera et al., 2020; Karim et al., 2020). The consideration of career self-management is, therefore, crucial for adding new insights to the human resource management literature regarding how individuals may take action to manage their careers during this difficult time of social isolation. Therefore, it is also important to recognize factors that may positively influence employees’ career self-management during the COVID-19 pandemic. In our research, we found that individuals’ home boredom may result in improved career self-management through online leisure crafting. Specifically, we suggest that home boredom may motivate individuals to engage in online leisure crafting, thereby enriching their career self-management. Our findings also contribute to the leisure crafting literature by providing insights into the role of online leisure crafting in employees’ work-related behaviors at home.

Fourth, with the self-regulation theory as a part of our theoretical underpinning, we investigated the moderating role of growth need strength in the relationship between home boredom and online leisure crafting. We discovered that growth need strength amplified the positive impact of home boredom on online leisure crafting. Our results are, thus, supported by the self-regulation theory. In other words, growth need strength regulates how individuals perceive their home domain in terms of the level of boredom they can tolerate, thereby affecting the impact of their perceived home boredom on their subsequent behaviors, such as online leisure crafting. Our results suggest that individuals with high growth need strength may be less likely than those with low growth need strength to tolerate home boredom due to social isolation during COVID-19; this low tolerance for boredom thereby strengthens the positive effect of boredom at home on their online leisure crafting, as online leisure crafting enables them to set and reach new goals, connect with people and learn and grow. Our findings echo existing studies’ findings that individuals with high growth need strength may be intrinsically motivated to learn, develop and pursue a better self (Das, 1991; Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Shalley et al., 2009) and may seek stimulating, challenging and meaningful lives (Bottger and Chew, 1986; Shalley et al., 2009; Spector, 1985).

Practical implications
In this research, we show that home boredom due to social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic may lead to thriving at home and career self-management through online leisure crafting. Our results demonstrated the positive effect of home boredom on individuals’ home and work life through their online leisure crafting. It is not our intention to encourage home boredom. Rather, we claim that it is crucial for managers, especially those in the hospitality industry, to encourage their employees to engage in healthy behaviors, such as online leisure crafting, when they experience boredom during social isolation at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. This may be done by simply reminding employees to take actions (e.g. online leisure crafting) that help them to thrive at home and to engage in career management when they feel bored. It is also crucial for managers to reinforce such behavior by providing managerial interventions that enable employees to engage in online leisure crafting effectively. This may be done by encouraging employees to pursue online leisure activities oriented toward setting and pursuing personal life goals through relevant online apps, to get in touch with people in their social networks through online communication tools (e.g. Skype.
and WeChat), and to learn non-work skills and knowledge that may be useful at both home and work through existing learning platforms (e.g. Masterclass and Udemy) when they experience boredom at home while being socially isolated during the pandemic. Such reinforcement may help employees engage in effective online leisure crafting when they experience home boredom, which may, in turn, contribute to both thriving at home and career self-management.

We also found that growth need strength amplifies the positive relationship between home boredom and online leisure crafting. Our results suggest that individuals with high growth need strength may be more likely than their counterparts with low growth need strength to turn home boredom into thriving at home and career self-management through online leisure crafting. Therefore, we suggest that managers develop managerial interventions to increase the growth need strength of employees with low levels of it. This may, in turn, make those employees less likely to tolerate home boredom, thereby increasing the positive impact of home boredom on their online leisure crafting. Such interventions may include informing employees about the harmful impact of home boredom on their home life and of the urgent need to prepare for work in the post-COVID-19 workplace after social isolation mandates are lifted by engaging in continuous development and growth while at home. It is conceivable that increasing a sense of urgency and the need to move forward in life at home and at work may improve employees’ growth need strength (Bottger and Chew, 1986; Hackman and Oldham, 1975; Spector, 1985), thereby improving the impact of home boredom on their online leisure crafting. This may consequently help them thrive at home and improve their career self-management.

**Conclusion**

Based on self-determination theory and self-regulation theory, we demonstrated that home boredom benefits employees’ thriving at home and career self-management by motivating them to engage in online leisure crafting. We also showed that growth need strength plays a moderating role in the relationship between home boredom and online leisure crafting. Future research may adopt our proposed model as a blueprint for investigating the role of home boredom in employees’ work and home behaviors across industries and countries. Organizations in the hospitality industry, such as those studied in this research, and interested practitioners may use our results and findings as a crucial reference for further managerial interventions to promote better home and work behaviors among employees staying at home due to social isolation mandates during the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope to promote attitude and behavior changes among hospitality employees in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been strongly encouraged by recent studies in contemporary hospitality management (Baum and Hai, 2020; Baum et al., 2020).

**Limitations and future research**

Some research limitations and directions for future research are presented. First, the respondents in our research were from the hospitality industry in mainland China. Our results may not be effectively generalizable to other industries and countries. However, this issue is common to existing studies, and there is no evidence in the literature that Chinese employees are more likely to either underreport or overreport their home boredom, online leisure crafting, thriving at home, career self-management or growth need strength than employees of other nationalities. However, we still encourage future research to test our model by studying employees from other industries and countries to improve the generalizability of our results.
Second, the survey was based on self-reports, which may raise concerns related to common method bias. However, all focal measures in this research were related to the individuals' mental state and their own behaviors at home due to social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, information suitable for self-report. In addition, we adopted a two-month time interval for data collection to reduce bias and allow a more rigorous examination of the proposed hypotheses. We also performed the analyzes suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003) and Iverson and Maguire (2000) to provide empirical evidence that common method bias was not a significant issue. Additionally, existing studies have suggested that correlated errors should not produce spurious interactions but should reduce true interactions (Schmitt, 1994). In this light, our results regarding the interaction may not be affected by common method bias. However, we still encourage future research to retest our model by adopting variables that can be objectively measured (e.g. the frequency/hours/types of online leisure crafting in a specific period).

Third, we suggest that future research examine different variables that may affect the relationship between home boredom and online leisure crafting to extend our study results. For example, studies have found that individuals who are open to experience tend to engage in different activities (Jackson et al., 2012) and that extraverts tend to seek social attention (Ashton et al., 2002), which they may be less likely to obtain while being socially isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic. These individuals may be more likely to experience a high level of home boredom than their counterparts. Therefore, future research might investigate the role of openness to experience and extraversion in the relationship between home boredom and online leisure crafting.

Similarly, we suggest that future studies investigate different outcomes to better understand the role of online leisure crafting in the hospitality industry to identify additional practical implications. Recent studies have revealed that job satisfaction and career mobility play an important role in hospitality (Kong et al., 2018; Tolkach and Tung, 2019). Online leisure crafting allows individuals to learn and grow professionally, which may improve their satisfaction at work. In addition, as online leisure crafting benefits career self-management, it may be that online leisure crafting affects career mobility. Similarly, studies have shown that a decrease in career commitment predicts employee turnover (Gebbels et al., 2020). Given that online leisure crafting allows individuals to manage their careers, whether it may help improve their career commitment and even retention is worthy of further investigation (Chang and Busser, 2020; Gupta, 2019). Given the above, future research may investigate the role of online leisure crafting in these outcomes to further extend our model.

Fourth, the boundary of our model can be extended further. In our study, we did not consider the role of managers and organizations in the model. It is likely that employees may interact with managers online as a work alternative to maintain social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the hospitality industry, leadership has been a crucial issue in recent years (Baum, 2019). It could be valuable to investigate how leadership may play a role in our model to provide additional theoretical implications and practical implications for the hospitality industry.

Fifth, home boredom may be caused by contexts other than social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, we may not be able to generalize our results or broaden the discussion to contexts that induce home boredom other than the one we studied without further theoretical and empirical examination. Therefore, future research should reexamine our model by adapting it for other contexts that induce home boredom to strengthen the generalizability of our results. We also suggest that future research investigate the antecedents of home boredom in the context of social isolation during the COVID-19
pandemic, as well as in other contexts and should further examine the role of those antecedents in different aspects of online leisure crafting (e.g. goal setting, human connection and development and growth) to better understand why home boredom may benefit online leisure crafting.

Finally, during social isolation, individuals may work from home. Working from home may have an impact on individuals’ experience of home boredom, as their work may interfere with their home life. It is likely that those who must work more at home may experience less or have less opportunity to experience home boredom than their counterparts. In this light, future research may extend our model by examining the moderating role of working from home. Furthermore, individuals who work in different industries, different sectors within the same industry (e.g. hospitality) or different positions within the same sector may experience different levels of home boredom while working from home due to differences in their job characteristics (Koekemoer and Mostert, 2006). Koekemoer and Mostert (2006) claim that job characteristics are unique within different occupations across industries and may affect individuals’ psychological state in different ways. We, therefore, suggest that future research be conducted with heterogeneous populations to improve the generalizability of our results or to reexamine our model by controlling for these work-related elements to minimize potential biases that may have had an impact on our results.

References


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