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Evaluating the Context-Dependent View of How and Why Ph.D. Students Experience Boredom during Their Studies

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Abstract

Maintaining mental health during study time is crucial for students, particularly those enrolled in the Ph.D. program. Boredom as one type of mental health problems is occasionally regarded as inconsequential, but in fact has a significant impact on Ph.D. students and the effectiveness of their study. Therefore, this research aims to evaluate the context-dependent view of how and why Ph.D. students experience boredom during their studies from three frameworks of context: institutional, emotional, and situational. A survey study was conducted involving 23 Ph.D. students registered at three state Indonesian universities offering English Language Education Doctoral Program in the country. The data were collected through a questionnaire containing both open-ended and closed-ended questions referring to the three contexts of boredom. The collected data were then coded based on these three contexts. The results show that 60.9% of the participants experienced intermediate, 21.7 % experienced low, and only 17.4% experienced high levels of boredom with the emotional aspect being the highest reason. Additionally, a small number of participants indicated in the open-ended responses that they did not experience boredom at all. In light of the findings, this study underscores the importance of continuing to support and maintain the favourable conditions experienced by Ph.D. students in the country.

INTRODUCTION

Many Ph.D. students, who are generally adults, pursue their doctoral degrees because they find learning interesting, important, and beneficial, and because they are motivated to invest considerable time and energy into it (Xie et al., 2022). However, many researchers have discovered that this energy can easily drop in the running of academic life due to a variety of factors and reasons depending on the backgrounds of the students (McAlpine et al., 2022; van Rooij et al., 2021). Furthermore, there are also increasing assumptions that the experiences of Ph.D. students differ from those of students at other academic levels, and that their mental health issues are the representation of their academic journey (Mackie & Bates, 2019). Hence,

it is assumed that Ph.D. students' mental health problems may adversely affect their physical health, interpersonal relationships, academic output, and work performance, which possibly lead to doctoral program attrition.

Many Ph.D. students are reported to have dropped out of their study within the first two years of the program (Wollast el al., 2018). The high attrition rates among Ph.D. students have become a big concern, with reported dropout rates ranging significantly across various international contexts. For instance, in Finland and Denmark, attrition rates have been reported to reach as high as 70% (Cornér et al., 2021). In Hungary, the dropout rate for doctoral students is approximately 20% (Szigeti, 2019). Similarly, research by Laufer and Gorup (2019) indicates that approximately 50% of international doctoral students in Western Europe discontinue their degrees. Moreover, a comprehensive analysis conducted by Satinsky et al. (2021) highlights that depending on the country and specific discipline, attrition rates for Ph.D. students can fall within the range of 30% to 50%. In Indonesia, specific data on Ph.D. student dropout rates are not currently available; however, the overall university student dropout rates have shown an increasing trend. According to Nurmalitasari et al. (2023), citing data from the Indonesian Higher Education Database, university dropout rates rose from 3% in 2018 (245.810 students) to 8% in 2019 (698.261 students). Therefore, in order to encourage the accomplishment of the Ph.D. study, it is beneficial to explore and then maintain the emotional well-being of the students (de Caux, 2019; Muniroh, 2019). One of the many issues that arise in addressing and maintaining the mental health of Ph.D. students during their academic life, yet still less researched, is boredom (Li, 2021; Pawlak et al., 2020).

Boredom is described as a combination of an objective lack of neurological excitement and a subjective psychological state of dissatisfaction, frustration, or disinterest (Putwain et al., 2018). However, most educational studies focus on the subjective psychological state of boredom due to its complexity (Kenah et al., 2018), its relevance to academic contexts (Haager et al., 2018), its potential to improve student well-being (Tam et al., 2021), and ethical concerns related to studying neurological aspects in academic settings (Locher & Bolander, 2019). As such, focusing on the subjective psychological state of boredom allows for a deeper understanding of the individual experiences and perceptions that contribute to boredom (Schwartze et al., 2021). Therefore, by examining the subjective psychological state of boredom, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the context-dependent factors contributing to boredom.

Specifically, boredom is a multidimensional emotion with five components of affective (an upsetting, negative feeling), physiological (a non-optimal level of passion), cognitive (a low level of attention, the feeling that time is dragging on), motivational (lack of willingness towards the prevailing activity/situation), and expressive (a slouched posture, sleepiness) (Finkielsztein, 2020). In addition, to clarify its distinction from closely related constructs, the importance of delimiting boredom from concepts such as weariness, fatigue, apathy, and disengagement should be acknowledged. Weariness and fatigue, often imply physical tiredness and exhaustion, while boredom primarily pertains to a mental state (Agrawal et al., 2022). Apathy typically involves a lack of motivation or emotional response, whereas boredom may encompass a temporary absence of interest (Goldberg et al., 2011). Disengagement often suggests a

withdrawal from an activity or situation, while boredom may coexist with active participation but with a sense of unfulfillment (Vekkaila et al., 2011). However, it is essential to acknowledge that these constructs can interact and overlap in complex ways, and their boundaries are not always rigid (Elpidorou, 2022). Understanding these distinctions helps to frame the discussion of boredom in the context of Ph.D. students' experiences, highlighting the specific aspects of boredom that are relevant to their academic journey.

A review of boredom studies in educational contexts such as Ph.D. experiences reveals boredom as a self-disruptive academic emotion that frequently has a detrimental effect on motivation, cognition, and overall performance. This kind of boredom introduces a new concept of what is called academic boredom. Academic boredom might be considered a relatively recent concept, yet it is nonetheless relevant and rising in educational contexts (Özerk, 2020). It has far-reaching consequences, such as larger emotional dynamic and other characteristics discovered to negatively influence the ways students learn and the quality of their universities (Sharp et al., 2021). Furthermore, in the practice of learning, academic boredom usually occurs and has an adverse effect on student performance and participation in various learning practices at various levels. As a result, academic boredom might be considered as an unexpected indicator of possible unsuccessful engagement in valuable achievement in the student's academic life (Westgate & Wilson, 2018).

Academic boredom is one of the most frequently experienced and easily observed emotions, especially in the foreign and second (L2) language classroom. However, it has received less empirical attention than other learner variables such as enjoyment (Ardi et al., 2024; Dewaele et al., 2022; Kruk et al., 2022a; Li, 2021; Zhao & Yang, 2022), interest (Daniels et al., 2015; Putwain et al., 2018; Xie et al., 2022;), or anxiety (Alrabai & Alamer, 2022; Li & Wei, 2022; Shao & Parkinson, 2021; Shen, 2022). As academic boredom can cause significant harm to student, potentially signalling more serious mental health disorders during their academic journey and even leading to negative outcomes like substance use or self-harm (Satinsky et al., 2021; Tempelaar & Niculescu, 2023), it is important to identify the causes of boredom to properly diagnose it (Westgate, 2020). Moreover, the signs of being bored are often underestimated most of the time. Even with something as basic as reading an L2 article, students might experience anxiety and irritation, be distracted, check the time and count the remaining pages, or give up and glance at the phone. In this regard, academic boredom might be in the form of being a seemingly small occurrence that results in the more profound issues of how and why one might feel this way. Therefore, it is crucial and necessary to obtain more empirical evidence on this issue.

Understanding the implications of boredom among Ph.D. students also necessitates an exploration of the sociocultural context within the country's higher education. In the Indonesian context, the pursuit of doctoral degrees has transcended a merely personal ambition, becoming more imperative for university lecturers driven by both individual aspirations and institutional mandates as many ranking policies are based on academic qualifications as well. For example, government regulations, notably those enforced by the National Accreditation Board of Higher Education (BAN-PT), underscore the pivotal role of Ph.D. qualifications in the accreditation process of a study program. The percentage of lecturers holding doctoral degrees offers

a significant possibility for a study program to achieve the esteemed Unggul (Excellent) accreditation status. Consequently, the pursuit of advanced degrees has become a compelling obligation, reshaping the sociocultural landscape of Indonesian academia. In light of these dynamics, it becomes imperative to explore phenomena such as academic boredom within this unique context, highlighting the intricate interplay between educational policies, institutional expectations, and individual experiences.

At last, similar to the fact that diseases are defined not by their outward symptoms (e.g., flu, cold), which may be common in several diseases, but more by their unique pathogens (e.g., the influenza virus), emotions should be fundamentally dictated by their particular inputs rather than their outcomes (Barrett, 2006). However, it is difficult to explain how and why boredom can occur in one's academic life because what always happens to one's life depends on every context of one's life background and daily life. In dealing with this problem, some researchers have identified that "unique inputs" and contexts can be the causes of academic boredom. Based on the findings of the previous studies (Coşkun & Yüksel, 2022; Daniels et al., 2015; Derakhshan et al., 2021; Kruk et al., 2022a ; Li, 2021; Li et al., 2023; Nakamura et al., 2021; Pawlak et al., 2020; Sharp et al., 2021; Westgate & Wilson, 2018; Xie et al., 2022; Zhao & Yang, 2022), it can be concluded that boredom happens because of these three big reasons: instructional, emotional, and situational, even though it does not mean that the causes are limited to these three big issues. More exploration of the context-dependent view of the students is needed to investigate the growing focus on other individual factors as further research (Kruk et al., 2022b). Inspired by this concern, this current study is intended to explore more comprehensively how and why Ph.D. students specifically Indonesian experience boredom viewed from the pre-conceived categories of instructional aspect, emotional aspect, and situational aspect. Apart from these three aspects, other possible categories might emerge from the data.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The issues of boredom in higher education have been administered over class-related aspects (Coşkun & Yüksel, 2022; Derakhshan et al., 2021), environmental aspect (Westgate & Wilson, 2018), attribution theory (Xie et al., 2022), situational influence (Daniels et al., 2015), psychological factors (Li, 2021; Li et al., 2023; Zhao & Yang, 2022), learner-internal and learner-external factors (Li, 2021; Nakamura et al., 2021), disengagement, monotony, repetitiveness and lack of satisfaction and challenge (Pawlak et al., 2020), teacher, student, and activity factors (Kruk et al., 2022a), and study-related and class-related factors (Sharp et al., 2021). In the quest to develop a more context-dependent understanding of boredom, the researchers reviewed previous studies and adapted certain terms to construct an instrument that addresses the existing gaps and that aligns with the objectives of this study. As a result, the researchers have identified and categorized three distinct aspects contributing to boredom among Ph.D. students, namely instructional, emotional, and situational. These three facets, while built upon insights from prior literature, represent a novel approach to understanding and categorizing the nuanced experiences of boredom among Ph.D. students. Through an adaptation of the existing terms, the researchers have tailored these facets to provide a more

comprehensive framework to address the under-researched concerns in the current understanding of boredom in Ph.D. education.

Instructional aspect

In the multifaceted landscape of educational settings, boredom often emerges as a prevalent challenge for students. This phenomenon can be attributed to various factors within the instructional aspect, which comprises the fundamental elements of teaching and learning experiences (Amiri et al., 2022; Solhi, 2021; Qin, 2022; Yan et al., 2023; Zawodniak et al., 2023). The instructional aspect encapsulates the intricate interplay between educators, the learning materials, and the tasks and activities presented to students. An in-depth exploration of these instructional components can reveal critical factors contributing to boredom among Ph.D. students. Hence, there are three big issues that come up in the teaching and learning process that make the students feel bored namely teacher-related factors, learning material factors, and class task and activity factors.

Teacher-related factors

Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the classroom experience, and their behaviours can significantly impact students' engagement and interest (Ardi et al., 2023; Cents-Boonstra et al., 2021; Li et al., 2023; Zheng, 2021). Five dimensions of teacher-related factors have been associated with boredom among students. The first dimension is lack of engagement. The students often report experiencing boredom when teachers exhibit a lack of enthusiasm or engagement in the subject matter (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Dewaele & Li, 2021; Wang, 2023). This can manifest as teachers delivering monotonous monologues or failing to make the content engaging (Hughes, 2023). The second dimension relates to uncaring and unsupportive attitude. Teachers' attitudes and interactions with students can influence their level of interest. An uncaring or unsupportive attitude from teachers may contribute to student boredom (Kruk et al., 2017). The third is teacher-student communication. Difficulties in effective communication between teachers and students, or instances of teachers being unfriendly or impolite, have been linked to student boredom (Daschmann et al., 2014; Kruk & Zawodniak, 2018). The fourth dimension covers teacher responses. When teachers provide insufficient feedback or appear uninterested in the class themselves, students are more likely to experience boredom (Cui et al., 2022; Dumančić, 2018; Kruk & Zawodniak, 2018; Tam et al., 2020). The fifth is teacher confidence. Students may also experience boredom when they perceive that their teachers lack confidence or are not adequately prepared for lessons (Derakhshan et al., 2021).

Learning material factors

The choice and presentation of learning materials also contribute significantly to student boredom (Li et al., 2023). Key aspects include class preparation and management. Poorly organized or unprepared lessons, as well as a limited variety of teaching tools, can result in student boredom (Kruk et al., 2017; Kruk & Zawodniak, 2018). The next aspect is content relevance. Boredom can occur when students find the curriculum content uninteresting or

overly challenging, leading them to disengage from the learning process (Cui et al., 2022; Derakhshan et al., 2021). The last is subject perception. Students may label a subject as boring when they perceive the materials as dull or unengaging (Derakhshan et al., 2021).

Class task and activity factors

Tasks and activities assigned in the classroom often play a pivotal role in students' experiences of boredom. Key dimensions of class task and activity factors include, first of all, repetitiveness or lack of challenge. Tasks that are repetitive, unchallenging, or overly difficult are believed to lead students to boredom (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Kruk & Zawodniak, 2018; Li et al., 2023; Pawlak et al., 2020). The next factor refers to interest and perceived purpose: Students may become bored when working on tasks they find uninteresting or lacking a perceived purpose (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Wang, 2023). The last is task autonomy. Both low and high levels of task autonomy can contribute to boredom among students (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Kruk & Zawodniak, 2018).

Emotional aspect

The emotional aspect, also referred to as the self-conflict or subjective aspect (Nakamura et al., 2021; Ouaja et al., 2020), constitutes a significant dimension of boredom experienced by Ph.D. students. This aspect pertains to the intricate relationship between an individual's emotional well-being, mental health, and their susceptibility to boredom. Three critical factors and manifestations identified to be associated with the emotional dimension of boredom are interpersonal communication challenges, physical and psychological fatigue, and academic self-concept.

Interpersonal communication challenges

The first crucial aspect of the emotional dimension of boredom is interpersonal communication challenges. Ph.D. students may experience boredom when they lack meaningful social interactions and connections with their peers, mentors, or colleagues (Corsini, 2022; Kenah et al., 2022; Wang, 2023). This can be particularly evident in cases where Ph.D. students feel isolated or unsupported in their academic journey (Kalubi et al., 2020; Sverdlik, 2022). The lack of meaningful social interactions can contribute to a sense of detachment and disengagement, leading to increased boredom among Ph.D. students (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Jackman et al., 2023; Kruk, 2016). Additionally, difficulties in effective communication and collaboration with others can also contribute to feelings of boredom (Doumit et al., 2023). Therefore, Ph.D. students who struggle to effectively communicate their ideas or collaborate with others may feel disconnected and unstimulated (George & Hughes, 2023), resulting in boredom.

Physical and psychological fatigue

Physical and psychological fatigue is further components of the emotional aspect that can exacerbate boredom. Ph.D. students may experience exhaustion due to the demands of their rigorous academic commitments, leading to a diminished capacity to engage actively with

coursework (Furlong et al., 2021). The demanding nature of Ph.D. programs, including long hours of research and study, can lead to physical exhaustion and fatigue (Nakamura et al., 2021). This physical fatigue can manifest as a lack of energy and motivation, making it difficult for Ph.D. students to engage actively in their work and leading to decreased interest and a sense of boredom. Furthermore, the psychological toll of the Ph.D. journey can also contribute to boredom (Sharp et al., 2021). The intense pressure, self-doubt, and isolation that many Ph.D. students experience can take a toll on their mental well-being and contribute to emotional exhaustion and psychological fatigue (Friedrich et al., 2023; Sarikaya & Çağlar, 2021). Therefore, the combination of physical and psychological fatigue can lead to a decreased ability to focus and decreased interest in academic work (Wiesenthal et al., 2023), and an overall sense of boredom among Ph.D. students.

Academic self-concept

Academic self-concept is another factor that can influence boredom among Ph.D. students. The perception that one's academic abilities and achievements may not align with their own personal expectations or societal standards can contribute to feelings of boredom (Yacek & Gary, 2022). This misalignment between academic self-concept and expectations can create a sense of dissatisfaction and detachment from the academic journey (Arens et al., 2020; Guo et al., 2022), leading to increased boredom among Ph.D. students. These feelings of boredom can be magnified by the rigid structure and hierarchical nature of many Ph.D. programs, where students often feel like small cogs in a large academic machine rather than active and valued contributors to their field of study (Lau & Pretorius, 2019; Tuma et al., 2021). Therefore, the misalignment between academic self-concept and expectations, along with the hierarchical nature of Ph.D. programs, can contribute to feelings of detachment and boredom among Ph.D. students during their academic journey (Kruk, 2016; Westphal, et al., 2018). Consequently, this sense of detachment and dissatisfaction can lead to a decreased quality of academic life for Ph.D. students, as they struggle to find a sense of purpose and fulfilment within their academic pursuits (Cornér et al., 2021).

Situational aspect

The situational aspect broadens the comprehension by encompassing external factors within the institutional research environment. To better understand boredom, it is crucial to examine how these dimensions intersect and influence one another., it is crucial to examine how these dimensions intersect and influence one another. The situational aspect, often regarded as the environmental facet, elucidates how external conditions, resources, and pressures in the academic setting interact with instructional and emotional factors to shape students' experiences (Hagenauer, 2018; Hansen & Mendzheritskaya, 2017; Fuente et al., 2020). This exploration seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of how situational elements interconnect with the instructional and emotional facets, shedding light on the intricate web of context-dependent boredom within the realm of doctoral education. In this endeavour, institutional research resource accessibility, academic support structures, and career-related demand contribute to the boredom experience in Ph.D. education.

Institutional research resource accessibility

The availability and accessibility of research resources, including libraries, laboratories, and funding opportunities, significantly shape the academic experiences of Ph.D. students (D'Coutu & Rosenhan, 2017; Naylor et al., 2017), extending its influence into the realm of boredom. When these resources are constrained, whether due to budget limitations or infrastructure deficiencies, students may grapple with frustration and a waning interest in their research activities (Desmennu & Owoaje, 2018). Access to this research resources is fundamental for research progress, and limited accessibility can intensify feelings of monotony as students struggle to procure relevant materials (Wirtz et al.,2018). These institutional research resource constraints intricately intersect with instructional and emotional dimensions, adding layers of complexity to the context-dependent view of boredom in Ph.D. education.

Academic support structures

Effective mentorship programs can significantly influence Ph.D. students' engagement and satisfaction with their academic journeys (Zheng et al., 2019). In institutions where structured mentorship is lacking, students may experience a sense of aimlessness and disconnection from their research (Marx et al., 2021), increasing the risk of boredom. Conversely, institutions with robust mentorship initiatives can provide students with a sense of purpose and direction, mitigating the likelihood of boredom (Al-Makhamreh & Stockley, 2020; Gillani et al., 2023). Furthermore, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration within academia can inject diversity and intellectual stimulation into students' research experiences (Bice et al., 2022). Institutions that encourage collaboration across departments or research groups enable students to perceive the broader relevance of their work, countering the boredom that can arise from a narrow focus (Salinas-Perez et al., 2019). Additionally, institutions that prioritize work-life balance through policies like flexible working hours or family support programs can enhance overall well-being and motivation, thereby reducing susceptibility to boredom (Naylor, 2017). These academic support structures intricately intersect with the instructional, emotional, and situational dimensions, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of boredom within the context-dependent view of Ph.D. education.

Career-relared demand

Institutions may inadvertently contribute to the emergence of boredom among Ph.D. students when they fail to recognize the competing demands between students' academic responsibilities and their professional and personal roles (Haider & Dasti, 2022; Krannich et al., 2018). While robust career counselling and clear paths toward career advancement are beneficial, the inability of institutions to adequately address work-life balance and professional responsibilities can exacerbate emotional distress, leading to feelings of stagnation and disinterest (Plakhotnik et al., 2021). Many Ph.D. students experienced situational boredom due to the challenge of managing multiple roles simultaneously, such as balancing doctoral research with job commitments and family responsibilities (Hjálmsdóttir & Rafnsdóttir, 2022). For example, they noted difficulties managing their time effectively between doctoral studies and employment or dealing with heavy workloads at their workplace or home. These

additional demands significantly drain energy and attention away from academic tasks, increasing the emotional burden and risk of boredom (Haider & Dasti, 2022). Thus, institutional support should consider not only direct career preparation but also mechanisms to help students navigate and balance their various life roles to maintain motivation and prevent boredom.

METHOD

This study adopted a mixed-methods research paradigm, which combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the context-dependent aspects of boredom among Ph.D. students in English Language Education (ELE) programs. The choice of a mixed-methods paradigm is grounded in several justifications following Creswell (2009). The multifaceted nature of boredom requires a holistic examination that goes beyond the limitations of a single methodological approach. Quantitative data collection through surveys allows for the systematic assessment of the prevalence and patterns of boredom experiences among Ph.D. students. These surveys are designed to provide numerical data that can be statistically analysed to identify trends. In addition, qualitative data collection methods, open-ended questions within the surveys, are employed to delve into the underlying causes and personal experiences of boredom. Qualitative data allow participants to express their thoughts and feelings in their own words, providing richer insights into their perceptions of boredom. The mixed-methods approach also aligns with the study's objective of exploring the instructional, emotional, and situational aspects of boredom among Ph.D. students.

Participants

This research involved 23 Ph.D. candidates, 16 females and 7 males, from three Indonesian state universities offering Doctoral Programs in ELE. The involvement of these participants aimed to encompass a comprehensive spectrum of academic progression stages ranging from the third semester to beyond. The rationale behind such participant selection exclusively from these three state universities was predicated on the availability of Doctoral Programs in ELE at these institutions. It is worth noting that, according to the data accessed from the Indonesian Higher Education Database (https://pddikti.kemdikbud.go.id/), as of the odd semester in 2022, the doctoral programs in ELE in Indonesia were concentrated within three provinces: East Java Province (University A), South Sulawesi Province (University B), and West Java Province (University C).

In recognition of the practical constraints inherent to this study, a convenience sampling technique was employed. This strategic decision was underpinned by careful consideration of resource availability and the distinctive research context. More specifically, questionnaires were disseminated to potential participants, reflecting the target population encompassing ELE Doctoral Programs across the aforementioned universities. Following three weeks of awaiting responses, a total of 23 students submitted fully completed questionnaires. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that these 23 students concurrently held positions as faculty members at their respective affiliated universities, with a range of academic ranks spanning

from lecturer to associate professor. It is imperative to acknowledge that the adoption of the convenience sampling approach, though contextually justified, may introduce implications regarding the generalizability of the research outcomes (Dattalo, 2010). Consequently, the study's limitations stemming from this sampling methodology would be conscientiously taken into account during the interpretation of the findings.

Instruments

The instrument that was used to collect data in this study was a questionnaire. As the researchers explored the context-dependent view of boredom, drawing upon previous research on the measurement of boredom (Kruk et al., 2022b; Pawlak et al., 2020; Sharp et al., 2021), the adapted questionnaire from those studies used to collect the data was composed of 35 items representing 3 factors as mentioned in the theoretical framework. Before the questionnaire items, the researchers wrote an introduction about themselves, the purpose of the survey, instructions on how to fill in the questionnaire, and the statement that the survey was voluntarily-based and confidential.

In the first part, the researchers collected demographic data such as education level and position in the institution (non-faculty member, instructor, assistant professor, or associate professor). These demographic data then would be used if there is an indication of a correlation between the findings of boredom and the participants' background. Then, to answer the three kinds of aspects of boredom i.e Instructional, emotional, and situational, a total number of 35 items of questions were given to the participants which consist of 14 items exploring the instructional aspect of boredom, 11 items exploring the emotional aspect, and 10 items exploring the situational aspect. The data would be presented in the quantitative form of percentages. A 4-point Likert scale was used in accordance with the logical way of thinking that the bigger the number, the higher the level of agreement is; i.e. 4 stands for "strongly agree", 3 for "agree", 2 for "disagree" and 1 for "strongly disagree". In the effort to enhance the dependability of the obtained data, the questionnaire was validated by a pilot study conducted with seven ELE Ph.D. students who were not the participants of the current study but were closely similar to the target participants in terms of semester, status, and position. As a result, the Cronbach Alpha value of this stage was 0.978, proving the high reliability of the questionnaire. Based on the comments given in this stage, there were some revisions to the questionnaire. The revision was done on the wording such as ''The English class bores me'' into ''The courses during my Ph.D. journey bore me'' and other words of ''English'' were changed into ''courses''. There was also another suggestion to delete some questionnaire items since they had similar meanings to other questions. At first, there were 89 items, and then they were simplified into 35 closed-ended items.

In the second part of the data collection process, the participants were presented with four open-ended questions aimed at exploring their context-dependent views of boredom in greater detail. These questions were strategically designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the various facets of boredom experienced by the Ph.D. students in ELE programs:

1. The participants were asked to identify the aspects of boredom in language classes (instructional aspect, self-conflict aspect, or situational aspect) that they found most boring and to elaborate on their reasons for this perception.
2. The participants were prompted to reflect on whether the intensity of their boredom varied at different phases of their classes, including the beginning, middle, and end, and to provide insights into the factors influencing these fluctuations.
3. To gain a longitudinal perspective, the participants were encouraged to share their personal experiences of boredom throughout their last three years as Ph.D. students, shedding light on the evolving nature of boredom over time.
4. Finally, the participants were invited to consider additional factors beyond the theoretical framework that they believed contributed to their experiences of boredom during their Ph.D. journey.

Data collection

During the study's initial phase, the questionnaire was sent online to the participants by using a Google form. Due to the social separation induced by the COVID-19 outbreak and the great geographical dispersion of the respondents who stay across cites in Indonesia, it was not possible to collect the questions offline.

Data analysis

To summarize the sets of numerical data gained from the closed-ended questions in the questionnaire, the descriptive statistical analysis was employed. By providing the mean and the range (minimum and maximum values) of the variable, it was expected that the respondents' answers would be described more professionally. All the statistical data were done with the assistance of the statistical program of SPSS. Each of the aspects was analysed and categorized into 3 levels: low, intermediate, and high which were adapted from van Tilburg et al. (2022). The calculation is presented in Table 1 and the category description is presented in Table 2.

Table 1

Boredom category

Low	X < M-1SD
Intermediate	M-1SD ≤ X < M+1SD
High	M + 1SD ≤ X

X = Score, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Based on the definition provided by van Tilburg et al. (2022), descriptors about boredom for each category can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Category description

Low	Represents minimal levels of boredom, where individuals experience boredom to a limited extent. The participants in this category may find certain activities slightly uninteresting or tedious but are able to engage with them without significant distress or dissatisfaction
Intermediate	Signifies moderate levels of boredom, indicating a more noticeable degree of disinterest or dissatisfaction with activities. Individuals in this category may experience occasional feelings of boredom or restlessness, particularly when engaged in repetitive or monotonous tasks
High	Indicates significant levels of boredom, characterized by intense feelings of disinterest, dissatisfaction, or frustration with activities. The participants in this category may struggle to maintain focus or motivation, experiencing profound boredom that significantly impacts their emotional well-being and engagement with tasks.

The qualitative data obtained from the four open-ended questions in this study were subjected to a rigorous thematic analysis, aiming to uncover and elucidate the multifaceted dimensions of boredom experienced by the students. To comprehensively analyse this qualitative dataset, the researchers employed a thematic coding approach, identifying recurring patterns, themes, and subcategories that encapsulate the richness and complexity of the participants' responses. The coding process involved systematically categorizing the participants' narrative responses into distinct aspects and subcategories that reflect the diverse facets of academic boredom within this specific context. Drawing upon extensive discussions and considerations outlined throughout the research methodology, the researchers have devised a comprehensive coding framework comprising three overarching aspects: Instructional Context, Emotional Context, and Situational Context. Each of these aspects is further subdivided into specific subcategories or themes that were indeed foundational in systematically organizing and interpreting participants' experiences into broader thematic categories, providing a nuanced exploration of different boredom experiences.

Table 3

Closed-ended question result coding

Context	Factors	Words Describing Boredom
Instructional	Lecturer-Related	Unengaging; Repetitive; Uninspiring; Unsupportive
	Learning Material	Dull; Monotonous; Uninteresting; Unengaging; Dreary
	Class Task & Activity	Uninspired; Unstimulating; Unexciting; Old-fashioned
Emotional	Interpersonal Communication Challenges	Isolating; Frustrating; Unfulfilling; Disconnected
	Physical and Psychological Fatigue	Draining; Exhausting; Monotonous; Tiring
	Academic Self-concept	Inadequate; Self-doubt; Unfulfilled; Unconfident
Situational	Institutional Research Resource Accessibility	Limiting; Restrictive; Challenging; Unsatisfying; Obstructive
	Academic Support Structures	Ineffective; Insufficient; Unhelpful; Unresponsive
	Career Prospects	Stagnant; Unpromising; Unfulfilled; Discouraging

RESULTS

The final calculation of the data differed significantly from those of the majority of the prior studies, which made the findings unique. Overall, the intermediate category consistently emerged as the most prevalent, surpassing the incidence rates observed in the respective low and high categories. To provide a quantitative perspective, the low category had a higher prevalence at 21.7%, encompassing five participants, whereas the high category accounted for a comparatively lower proportion at 17.4%, involving four participants. Furthermore, when combining the low and intermediate categories, the cumulative percentage reached 82.6%, indicating that the vast majority of participants fell within these two levels of boredom. A comprehensive aggregation of outcomes across all aspects is detailed and presented in the ensuing section.

Table 4

Boredom category

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Low	5	21.7	21.7
Intermediate	14	60.9	82.6
High	4	17.4	100.0
Total	23	100.0	

The study's outcomes were also categorized into four distinct dimensions of boredom namely instructional, emotional, and situational. Additionally, an unexpected category, labelled as the 'boredom-free' category, emerged during the data analysis process.

Instructional boredom

The analysis of the questionnaire results revealed that the majority of respondents (65.3%) fell into the intermediate boredom level, constituting 15 participants. In contrast, the low boredom level was reported by 21.7% of participants, totalling five individuals. Conversely, the high boredom level was observed in 13% of participants, with a total of three respondents. Therefore, it can be concluded that instructional boredom was experienced by most participants, with a 78.3% of participants falling within the intermediate and high boredom categories. These findings are presented in detail in Table 5.

Table 5

Instructional boredom category

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Low	5	21.7	21.7
Intermediate	15	65.3	87.0
High	3	13.0	100.0
Total	23	100.0	

The instructional boredom category information was explored more in the open-ended questions results. The result showed that the participant had experienced each aspect of instructional boredom.

Lecturer-related factors

The participants in this study frequently shared experiences where boredom was attributed to lecturer-related factors. Their responses underscored the significant influence of instructional quality and style on student engagement. For instance, the participants reported experiencing boredom when lecturers delivered content that was perceived as foreign or overly complex without employing engaging instructional techniques. They also described instances where lectures became repetitive or uninspiring, contributing to their feelings of disinterest and detachment. These accounts emphasized the pivotal role lecturers played in shaping students' experiences of boredom within the instructional context. Two participants, for instance, vividly expressed this sentiment, saying,

> "When the teacher simply delivers content which is completely foreign to the students and the attempt at interaction was not engaging or was rather cliché, I feel bored." – P2

> "The lecturer's monotone explanation and the lecturer's personal feelings intervene the teaching of the course and when the lecturer made very scary comments to me, and then the boredom began from that point on." – P6

Interestingly, the analysis of open-ended responses revealed an intriguing context-dependent perspective. One participant articulated concerns regarding the instructional culture prevalent in Indonesia, highlighting a perceived lack of openness in student-lecturer relationships, which was contrasted with practices observed abroad. In Indonesia, there exists a deeply ingrained tradition of showing respect, particularly to lecturers who are regarded as figures of authority. This cultural context can contribute to the emergence of instructional boredom.

> "The boredom grows great when you cannot talk like in an open discussion with your supervisors about your study, just like the tradition overseas, where the supervisee-supervisor relationship is very friendly and open-minded when supervisors will not feel offended when you say different things from their opinions. Yet, this is Java and Indonesia- that will not be happened." – P6

Learning material factors

The participants also identified learning materials as a source of boredom in their educational journey. The participants mentioned that an overreliance on a single source, often the professor's articles or materials, led to monotony and disengagement. They emphasized the need for a more diverse range of learning materials to stimulate their interest and enhance their learning experiences. One participant articulated this concern by saying,

> "We must listen to friends' presentations in every meeting without having a meaningful discussion during the class and no new insight from the professor and then. We only review the professor's articles instead of different sources that beneficial for us." – P19

Upon further analysis into this participant's statement, it became evident that another instructional factor may have contributed to student boredom, specifically regarding class tasks and activities.

Class task and activity factors

Boredom during class tasks and activities emerged as a recurring theme among participants. Some expressed dissatisfactions with the prevalent practice of passively listening to peers' presentations without engaging in meaningful discussions or gaining new insights from the professor. This monotonous routine contributed to their experiences of boredom. Additionally, The participants voiced a desire for more innovative and intellectually stimulating class activities that fostered critical thinking. One participant aptly noted

> "We must listen to friends' presentations in every meeting without having a meaningful discussion during the class and no new insight from the professor and then we only review the professor's articles instead of different sources that are beneficial for us. I hope all professors have clear and innovative teaching activities that build our critical thinking." – P19

Boredom during class tasks and activities emerged as a separate but related theme to learning material. The participants expressed dissatisfaction with passive learning formats, such as listening to peers' presentations without engaging in discussions or gaining new insights. This routine contributed to their boredom, prompting a desire for more innovative and intellectually stimulating class activities. While the participant's statements touched on similar frustrations, they revealed distinct aspects of the learning experience: material selection and task engagement. Therefore, rather than overlapping, these factors complemented each other, highlighting different dimensions of the boredom experience in the educational context.

Furthermore, when considering the timing of boredom within classroom sessions, a notable trend emerged. It became apparent that students predominantly encountered boredom during the intermediate phase of their classes. One participant succinctly articulated this pattern.

> "I usually experience the boredom that sets in in the middle situation of the class. I was more alert at the beginning and was excited to end the class." – P2

Emotional boredom

The findings concerning emotional boredom revealed noteworthy trends within the dataset. A significant majority, amounting to 56.6% or 13 participants, fell within the intermediate level of emotional boredom. Furthermore, both the low and high categories exhibited similar representations, each comprising five participants and collectively constituting 21.7% of the total distribution. As a result, the combined proportion of participants experiencing intermediate and low levels of emotional boredom surpassed three-quarters, reaching 78.3%. Detailed data calculations are presented below for reference.

Table 6

Emotional boredom category

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Low	5	21.7	21.7
Intermediate	13	56.6	78.3
High	5	21.7	100.0
Total	23	100.0	

Now, shifting the focus to a more in-depth exploration of the results from the open-ended questions, specifically related to emotional boredom, the qualitative responses provided valuable insights into the triggers and nuances of emotional boredom experienced by the participants.

Interpersonal communication challenges

The result shows that Ph.D. students often experienced a shift from collaborative classroom settings to independent research phases. This transition could lead to decreased opportunities for social interaction and engagement, contributing to feelings of emotional boredom. As Participant 16 (P16) highlighted the role of interpersonal communication in mitigating boredom during theory classes. However, the transition to independent dissertation research, characterized by limited peer interactions, resulted in heightened boredom. P16's statement demonstrated the impact of reduced social engagement on emotional experiences of boredom. It also underscored the connection between interpersonal communication and emotional engagement. The contrast between collaborative theory classes and independent research highlighted the importance of peer interactions in mitigating emotional boredom.

> "During the theory class, there was no boredom because I can talk with my classmates. Boredom has just come when we finished the theory in class and starting doing our research of dissertation because the students have to work independently. After the class ended, there are rare friends to share the ideas and time discussing our dissertation progress." – P16

Another participant also noted that the absence of interaction among classmates during independent study periods contributed to feelings of boredom. The participant's statement emphasized the impact of limited social engagement on emotional well-being and provided further evidence of how the transition to independent work phases could lead to emotional boredom when social interactions are scarce. It underscored the need for continued peer engagement to prevent such emotional challenges.

> "At the end of the classes, when we have to focus on finishing the assignment by ourselves, there is no interaction among classmates; those experiences made me bored." – P23

Physical and psychological fatigue

The results indicated that the Ph.D. students often grappled with physical and psychological fatigue during their academic journey. The participants such as P11 and P22 explicitly highlighted the psychological toll of managing their academic responsibilities. P11's statement underscored the impact of poor time management on one's emotional state, which could ultimately lead to self-imposed boredom. P22's statement further emphasized the presence of psychological factors affecting the participant's doctoral progress. The notion of "keeping the spirit for oneself" suggested the need for inner motivation and resilience to combat academic fatigue, revealing the emotional toll it could take.

> "Doing the same things over and over makes me bored, and the worse is that I can't manage my time well so I get easily bored with myself." – P11

> "I have not finished my doctoral degree yet because mostly I experience the psychological factors inside me instead of the academic factors. It is like a war within myself."- P22

Additionally, P22's statement, "It's like a war within myself," poignantly illustrated the internal struggle that Ph.D. students may endured, where the battle against monotony and boredom became a part of their academic journey. This internal conflict, driven by the repetitive nature of their work, was a testament to the emotional challenges posed by prolonged academic engagement.

Furthermore, P17's perspective on the repetitive nature of their work and their acceptance of it as a process highlighted the resilience required to endure academic fatigue. This acceptance, while acknowledging the potential for boredom, demonstrated the participant's commitment to the long and demanding journey of doctoral research.

> "I think that working on the same paper over and over again, and thinking about it all time, is really boring. But it is called a process. For me, it is rather slow, but again, I accept it as a process." – P17

In summary, the participants' statements collectively depicted the emotional toll of physical and psychological fatigue within the Ph.D. journey. These sentiments underscored the significance of emotional experiences in the face of academic challenges and highlighted the need for strategies to mitigate boredom resulting from self-imposed pressures and repetitive tasks.

Academic self-concept

The participants often grappled with the emotional consequences of their academic achievements aligning with their personal expectations and societal standards. One of the participants (P1) vividly portrayed the frustration and emotional distress that emerged when educational objectives remained unfulfilled. This sentiment reflected the emotional toll that unmet goals had on Ph.D. students, contributing to feelings of inadequacy and, subsequently, boredom.

> "If I cannot meet the learning goal that I set, I will feel so unconfident and then day by day I will get bored to what I am doing." – P1

Similarly, another participant (P8) statement underscored the connection between productivity and emotional well-being. The participant's acknowledgment of the emotional impact of unproductive periods highlighted the role of academic self-concept in shaping feelings of boredom. When students perceived themselves as unproductive or not meeting their academic goals, boredom can intensified.

> "When I did not do something productive related to the dissertation." – P8

Furthermore, another perspective on writing the dissertation and self-imposed deadlines revealed the emotional weight associated with academic autonomy. As Ph.D. students, they often determined their project timelines and academic milestones. This autonomy could lead to heightened expectations and self-imposed pressures, which, if not met, contributed to feelings of dissatisfaction and boredom.

> "I get bored in the process of writing the dissertation, because I am the one who determines the deadline." – P13

In short, these participant statements collectively illustrated the influence of academic self-concept on the emotional experiences of Ph.D. students. The frustration stemming from unmet goals and the pressures associated with academic autonomy can significantly contributed to feelings of boredom. Acknowledging and addressing these emotional challenges was crucial in enhancing the overall well-being and satisfaction of Ph.D. students throughout their academic journey.

Situational boredom

Regarding the situational boredom category, the result showed that the majority of the participants gravitated towards the intermediate level of boredom, accounting for 69.6% with a total of 16 participants. Subsequently, the low level garnered the attention of 21.7% of participants, corresponding to five individuals. In contrast, the high level category exhibited minimal representation, comprising merely two participants, or 8.7% of the overall distribution. This distribution pattern suggested that the prevalence of high-level situational boredom was relatively low among the participants. Further insights into the results of data analysis are elucidated below.

Table 7

Situational boredom category

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Low	5	21.7	21.7
Intermediate	16	69.6	91.3
High	2	8.7	100.0
Total	23	100.0	

The interview results provided a deeper context-dependent exploration of the situations faced by participants that led to boredom. This analysis resulted in three main situational categories: institutional research resource accessibility, academic support structures, and career-related demands.

Institutional research resource accessibility

The results pertaining to the Institutional Research Resource Accessibility shed light on the impact of institutional factors on situational boredom among Ph.D. students. The statements provided by the participants highlighted key aspects of this category. Participant 10 (P10) cited administrative matters, specifically the prolonged wait times associated with the validation submission process through the faculty system, as a source of situational boredom. This observation underscored the importance of efficient administrative procedures in maintaining student engagement and satisfaction. Delays and bureaucratic hurdles contribute to a sense of stagnation and frustration, leading to boredom.

> "Waiting for administrative matters such as waiting for a very long time in the validation submission process through the faculty system." – P10

Moreover, Participant 5 (P5) discussed their experience during the early years of their Ph.D., which coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. They noted the challenges posed by full-time online classes and distant learning, which hindered their ability to access campus resources and engage with the university environment. This highlighted the significance of physical access to research materials, libraries, and campus facilities in preventing situational boredom. The constraints imposed by the pandemic underscored the importance of adaptable institutional support to address unforeseen challenges.

> "In the early years of my Ph.D., I had full-time online classes and distant learning made it me difficult to get the atmosphere of studying as a doctoral student, to access sources and information from the campus due to the covid 19 protocol during that period." – P5

In short, the statements from participants emphasized the role of institutional factors, such as administrative efficiency and access to campus resources, in shaping the situational boredom experienced by Ph.D. students. These insights highlighted the need for universities to proactively address these factors to enhance the overall academic experience and reduce the likelihood of situational boredom among their students.

Academic support structures

The results related to the Academic Support Structures category shed light on the multifaceted challenges faced by Ph.D. students in navigating their academic journey, particularly in relation to interpersonal and time-related aspects. The statements provided by the participants offered valuable insights into these challenges. The first insight came from Participant 15's (P15) statement.

> "Live away from family put me in boredom situation." – P15

P15 mentioned living away from their family, highlighting the personal sacrifices and challenges that some Ph.D. students made in pursuit of their academic goals. This separation from family members could contribute to feelings of isolation and loneliness, which might, in turn, lead to situational boredom. The need for a strong support system, both within and outside of academia, became evident in such cases. Another statement also came from Participant 6 (P6). P6 pointed to a common issue faced by Ph.D. students, which is the availability and accessibility of supervisors. The participant highlighted instances when consultations on proposals and dissertations became stuck due to supervisors' busy schedules. Moreover, the participant noted that distance relationships with supervisors during consultations could contribute to boredom. This underscored the importance of effective supervision and mentorship in reducing academic-related boredom among Ph.D. students.

> "When consultation of proposal and dissertation is stuck because supervisors are really busy, I get bored. The boredom is also coming from the distance relationship with the supervisors during the consultation." – P6

Participant 9 (P9) shared their experience of being a Ph.D. student while juggling multiple roles, including being a husband, a father, and a lecturer. This complex role balancing act could lead to conflicts in time management and scheduling. Such conflicts resulted in feelings of frustration and exhaustion, potentially contributing to situational boredom. This participant's statement highlighted the need for universities to provide adequate support structures and resources to help Ph.D. students manage their academic responsibilities alongside their personal and professional roles.

> "I get Self-conflict. Being multi roles Ph.D. student; as a husband, a father, and as a lecturer, confronts a dilemma on a time schedule." – P9

In short, the statements from the participants underscored the importance of academic support structures in addressing situational boredom among Ph.D. students. These structures should encompass not only academic guidance but also personal and emotional support to help students navigate the challenges of their academic journey effectively.

Career-related demands

The analysis of the participant statements related to the career-related demands category highlighted the significant role that professional responsibilities and competing obligations can play in the experiences of Ph.D. students, particularly in terms of emotional and situational boredom. Some participants described difficulties in balancing their doctoral studies with work and personal responsibilities, which often led to feelings of exhaustion, disengagement, and frustration. Participant 17 (P17) expressed difficulty in managing their time between their job and doctoral studies.

> "I have difficulty in managing the time between my job and my study." – P17

This statement illustrated the struggle of balancing work and academic commitments, potentially leading to situational boredom. This struggle to allocate time effectively between work and Ph.D. studies could result in emotional distress and hinder academic engagement. Similarly, workload intensity emerged as a critical factor, as Participant 15 (P15) reported experiencing heavy workload both in their office and at home.

> "Lots of work in the office and home." – P15

This workload likely left little time and energy for Ph.D. studies, potentially leading to feelings of emotional and situational boredom. The participant's statement highlighted the competing demands on their time and energy, which could negatively affect their academic engagement. Participant 16 (P16) shared that they had additional institutional duties in their affiliation campus besides working on their dissertation.

> "There are many duties to do besides doing my dissertation in my affiliation campus." – P16

These additional responsibilities could divert time and attention away from doctoral studies, potentially leading to situational boredom. The participant's statement underscored the need for Ph.D. students to have the resources and support to manage their academic and professional obligations effectively. Participant 18 (P18) noted that while taking online classes might have been efficient, it could also be boring, as expressed in the statement,

> "Taking online classes is sometimes boring yet it is very efficient for a part-time student like me." – P18

This statement highlighted the challenges associated with online learning, particularly for part-time students who already had busy work schedules. The potential monotony of online coursework could contribute to emotional boredom and impact the overall academic experience. Lastly, Participant 7 (P7) indicated that they faced an overwhelming number of duties from their workplace, which affected their time management.

> "Too many duties from working place and unbalanced time management." – P7

This illustrates the ongoing conflict between work demands and doctoral studies, potentially leading to emotional distress and situational boredom. In short, these participant statements directly reflected the challenges associated with professional responsibilities and career-related demands, which could contribute to emotional and situational boredom among Ph.D. students.

Boredom-free

The open-ended responses from the participants also yielded a unique finding – some Ph.D. students reported not experiencing boredom during their academic journey. These students, referred to as "boredom-free," challenged the conventional notion that boredom is a universal and intrinsic aspect of Ph.D. education. Instead, their statements suggested that the experience

of boredom was highly context-dependent and varied among individuals. Notably, these students were categorized under the low boredom group in the quantitative analysis, as their questionnaire responses indicated minimal boredom. However, their qualitative reflections suggested that they did not experience boredom at all. This distinction underscored how self-perception played a crucial role in understanding boredom and suggested that quantitative classifications alone might not fully capture the nuances of individual experiences. While their numbers were relatively small, their insights offered a valuable counterpoint, demonstrating that the presence or absence of boredom was highly context-dependent and varied significantly based on personal and academic circumstances.

> "I don't experience any boredom. I am feeling happy and really enjoying my learning journey." – P3

> "Along the lecturing, there was no problem of boredom. Almost every learning process was carried out through situation of serious on lecturing but easy going on communication." – P9

> "I very rarely feel bored, because this Ph.D. journey is a very enjoyable thing for me. I feel very motivated to learn more things in greater depth and realize that there are many things that I am good at. Thus, I am always enthusiastic in every lecture." – P10

These responses from these boredom-free participants indicated that boredom was not a uniform or obligatory experience for all Ph.D. students. Factors such as teaching methods, course content, individual disposition, and the overall learning environment played a significant role in shaping students' emotional responses. This nuanced perspective highlighted that while boredom was a genuine experience for many Ph.D. students, it was not an inherent or unavoidable feature of the academic journey. The presence or absence of boredom depended on a complex interplay of institutional, situational, emotional or personal factors. Recognizing this diversity of experiences was crucial for understanding the emotional landscape of Ph.D. education and tailoring support and interventions to meet the specific needs of students based on their unique circumstances and perspectives.

DISCUSSION

Based on the data presented, it is noteworthy that a significant proportion of ELE Ph.D. students in Indonesia experienced intermediate levels of boredom during their doctoral studies. This finding challenge prevalent portrayals in the literature, which often depict Ph.D. students as predominantly experiencing high levels of boredom and associated with negative emotions, even sometimes leading to extreme outcomes such as suicidal ideation (McAlpine et al., 2022; Pawlak et al., 2020; Satinsky et al., 2021; Sharp et al., 2021). Moreover, as noted by Xie et al. (2022), Ph.D. students, typically adults, embark on their doctoral journey propelled by a profound interest in learning, recognizing its importance and benefits. This awareness suggests that the participants consciously choose their educational path. Thus, the findings of this research challenge the idea that doctoral student experiences are universally the same,

suggesting instead that boredom varies along a spectrum rather than being consistently extreme, particularly due to context-dependent factors.

While shedding light on the prevalence of different levels of boredom, particularly highlighting the dominance of the intermediate category, this study prompts further inquiry into the context-dependent nature of these experiences. Understanding the contextual factors contributing to the higher prevalence of intermediate-level boredom among the participants is crucial (Kruk et al., 2022b). This deeper exploration holds the potential to uncover nuanced insights into the doctoral journey and inform tailored interventions to support the diverse needs of Ph.D. students. Therefore, this study not only contributes to expanding the understanding of doctoral student experiences but also underscores the importance of contextualizing and addressing boredom within the academic environment.

Furthermore, as it was explored by Mcculloch et al. (2017), there are five elements of decision-making to be Ph.D. students namely (1) autonomy, (2) relatedness, (3) competence and self-efficacy, (4) outcome expectations, and (5) goals. These five elements of decision-making can be assumed to have a strong influence on the results of the three aspects of boredom of the participants. First, the two elements, autonomy and competence and self-efficacy mean that the decision to pursue a Ph.D. was strongly influenced by the assumption that, as Ph.D. students, they would have more control over their daily activities (autonomy) than in other work or study situations. In addition, getting outstanding grades in previous programs, such as "I have enough good marks to pursue my Ph.D." and "I always do extremely well in my study courses." is also becoming a big reason for a Ph.D. decision. These kinds of elements are correlated to the aspects of emotional boredom experience. When the participants had strong reasons for these aspects, they were better equipped to cope with and diminish emotional boredom. One of the participants, P10, even mentioned that he realized that there were many things that he was good at and it made the Ph.D. journey a very enjoyable thing for him. Other studies (Amiri et al., 2022; Qin, 2022; Solhi, 2021; Yan et al., 2023; Zawodniak et al., 2023) also concluded that the institutional affordances on the development of academic identity and a sense of agency also gave impacts on a Ph.D. journey. It highlighted the main advantage of students actively reflecting on their personal experiences during doctorate training: it helps them gain a better understanding of who they are and how they fit into academia (Hoang & Pretorius, 2019).

The next three other elements (relatedness, outcome expectation, and goals) also have a strong relation to instructional and emotional boredom. First, the outcome expectation and goals elements were related to the context of the urgency of Indonesian lecturers to pursue their doctoral degree as it is a requirement for their department to be accredited as a qualified study program. Then, for relatedness, it is the elements that are highly related to situational boredom. Relatedness means identifying a personal attachment to their school or department in their decision to continue studying there. As in Indonesia, linearity in the expertise of the field is much more important, especially for lecturers. So, when deciding to pursue the study, most Ph.D. students will choose the study program that has been their expertise in undergraduate and graduate school. This then makes the situation and the people around them easily adapt and decrease situational boredom. The participants felt situational boredom not because they

did not like working with people, but because they missed having people to work with them. For example, Participant 6 said that after class, there were not many friends to share ideas with and talk about the progress of the dissertation.

The diverse narratives within this study shed light on the nuanced nature of boredom experiences among Ph.D. students. While a significant proportion of the participants expressed instances of boredom linked to various emotional, instructional, and situational factors, the accounts of "boredom-free" participants challenge the universality of boredom within academic contexts. This finding resonates with previous research highlighting the variability of emotional responses in educational settings (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Li et al., 2023). The presence or absence of boredom appears to be intricately linked to individual dispositions, the quality of instructional delivery, and the overall learning environment. These findings underscore the importance of recognizing the complex interplay of emotional, instructional, and situational factors in shaping students' experiences. Therefore, to address this variability and mitigate boredom, educators should adopt a multifaceted approach that encompasses diverse teaching styles, engaging learning materials, and supportive interpersonal relationships. Incorporating active learning strategies, fostering collaborative learning environments, and promoting open communication between supervisors and supervisees are essential pedagogical implications. By creating dynamic and inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs and preferences of students, educators can cultivate a sense of engagement and enthusiasm conducive to meaningful learning experiences and academic success.

CONCLUSIONS

This study provides a nuanced exploration of boredom among ELE Ph.D. students within the unique context of Indonesian higher education. Contrary to prevailing literature, which often portrays Ph.D. students as prone to high levels of boredom and associated negative emotions, this study revealed a more complex and reassuring picture. A significant proportion of the participants experienced intermediate levels of boredom, which, while notable, are far less detrimental than the high levels of boredom often highlighted in other studies. These intermediate levels suggest a more manageable and less harmful experience for the students, indicating that they are able to navigate their doctoral journey without the severe negative impacts associated with extreme boredom. Understanding these findings in the sociocultural context of Indonesian higher education is crucial, as it provides insights into the factors that contribute to these more moderate experiences and how they can be leveraged to support Ph.D. students effectively.

In Indonesia, the institutional demand for Ph.D. qualifications, driven by accreditation criteria established by the National Accreditation Board, has transformed doctoral education into a professional necessity. This shift has significant implications for understanding the experiences of Ph.D. students. The findings of this study suggest that the intermediate levels of boredom observed among the participants may be influenced by this professional pressure, which provides a structured sense of purpose and direction. Recognizing the unique motivational landscape, educators and policymakers can develop targeted strategies to support Ph.D.

students. By fostering an environment that enhances autonomy, competence, and self-efficacy, while aligning with institutional goals and expectations, academic institutions can help mitigate boredom and promote a more engaging and fulfilling doctoral experience. These insights highlight the need for a holistic approach that considers both personal and professional factors in doctoral education.

The sociocultural context and decision-making factors create a distinctive environment for ELE Ph.D. students in Indonesia, leading to varied boredom experiences. Instructional boredom often arose from monotonous or poorly delivered content, emphasizing the need for dynamic and engaging teaching methods. Emotional boredom was linked to personal motivations and a sense of competence; students with strong intrinsic motivations and self-efficacy experienced less emotional boredom. Situational boredom was influenced by the academic environment and interpersonal relationships; those who felt connected to their academic community and had collaborative opportunities reported lower levels of situational boredom. These findings underscore the importance of tailored interventions that address instructional quality, foster personal competence, and enhance social connectedness within academic settings. By recognizing and addressing the specific factors contributing to different types of boredom, educational institutions can create supportive and stimulating environments that cater to the diverse needs of Ph.D. students. This study contributes to the broader discourse on doctoral education by shedding light on the variations in Ph.D. student experiences and offering insights into effective boredom mitigation strategies.

At last, within this complex landscape, the study also introduces the intriguing concept of "boredom-free" situations. Some Ph.D. students reported not experiencing boredom during their academic journey, challenging the conventional notion that boredom is a universal and intrinsic aspect of Ph.D. education. Instead, their statements suggest that the experience of boredom is highly context-dependent and varies among individuals. Factors such as teaching methods, course content, individual disposition, and the overall learning environment play a significant role in shaping students' emotional responses. This "boredom-free" situation highlights that while boredom is a genuine experience for many Ph.D. students, it is not an inherent or unavoidable feature of the academic journey. The presence or absence of boredom depends on a complex interplay of situational and personal factors. Therefore, recognizing this diversity of experiences is crucial for understanding the emotional landscape of Ph.D. education and tailoring support and interventions to meet the specific needs of students based on their unique circumstances and perspectives.

LIMITATIONS

While this study provides valuable insights into the experiences of ELE Ph.D. students in Indonesia, several limitations must be considered. These limitations help contextualize the scope and generalizability of the findings, ensuring a nuanced understanding of the research outcomes. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge the sample size of 23 participants, which may appear relatively small in isolation. However, the specific focus of this study on English Language Education at the doctoral level in Indonesia, coupled with constraints related to available

resources and time, guided the decision to employ this sample size. Within this specialized research area, the sample size was deemed representative for the purposes of a survey study. Nevertheless, it is imperative to recognize that the findings should primarily be interpreted within the context of this specific sample.

Secondly, the study's findings are specifically tailored to the unique characteristics of the ELE Ph.D. students in Indonesia. This group is distinct due to several factors, including the professional pressures faced by Indonesian educators to obtain Ph.D. qualifications, the specific motivations driving these students (such as career advancement and institutional requirements), and the cultural emphasis on academic achievement. This contextual focus provided detailed insights into the nuances of boredom experiences within this particular group. However, the categorization approach used to analyse the data was designed to reflect these unique characteristics and may not be applicable to broader populations. This means that the insights gained might not fully capture the experiences of Ph.D. students in different contexts. Additionally, the geographical focus on Indonesia means that the findings are influenced by the specific cultural, educational, and institutional factors present in the Indonesian higher education system. As such, the generalizability of the results to Ph.D. programs in other countries is limited. The experiences and perceptions of Ph.D. students can vary significantly across different cultural and educational settings, and while this study provides valuable insights into the Indonesian context, caution should be exercised when attempting to apply these conclusions to other national or international contexts.

These limitations, while essential to acknowledge, also present opportunities for future research. Future studies can expand the sample size and scope of investigation to include a more diverse range of institutions and cultural contexts. Comparative analyses between countries or regions could provide valuable insights into the universal and context-specific aspects of Ph.D. student experiences. Additionally, exploring how various support structures and interventions impact Ph.D. students' experiences of boredom and well-being could guide the development of more effective strategies for promoting student success in doctoral programs.

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Appendix

Dear fellow PhD candidate students,

Thanks for clicking on our survey link. We hope you are doing well. We are from a research team, currently pursuing a doctoral degree at Universitas Negeri Malang.

We are conducting a study on Evaluating the Context-Dependent View of How and Why Ph.D. Candidates Experience Boredom during Their Studies. In this survey, we would like to invite you as volunteers in this research. If you are not pleased to participate, you are allowed to withdraw.

The survey is in a Likert Scale and will require approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. Your responses are completely anonymous, and the results of the data will remain confidential and only for research use. If you have any questions about the survey, please email us at **********@gmail.com or through WhatsApp number +62********** (N******).

Thank you for allocating your time to assist us with this research. We appreciate your participation!

No	Statement	Answer			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The courses during my PhD journey bore me.				
2	Assignments that do not have a clear purpose make me bored.				
3	When I cannot find meaning in learning, I get bored.				
4	Mismatch in the aims of an activity and my proficiency level makes me bored.				
5	So many similar types of exercises make me lose interest.				
6	I believe an analysis of articles is really dreary.				
7	PPT slides filled up with sole script but without interactions make me bored.				
8	I get bored of too many assignments get bored of too many assignments.				
9	I am bored in the class because the lecturer isn't likable (e.g., tone, pitch, or facial appearance).				
10	I feel bored because the lecturer spends too much time saying things that are irrelevant to the teaching material.				
11	An unfriendly lecturer makes me bored.				
12	Too fast or too slow the pace of the lecturer's talk makes me bored.				
13	The lecturer who does not provide challenges in the class makes me bored.				
14	The lecturer who uses old-fashioned teaching techniques makes me bored.				
15	I get restless and cannot wait for the courses to end.				

No	Statement	Answer			
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16	It takes more stimulation to get me going on the courses than most students from my group.				
17	I often do not feel like doing anything in the courses.				
18	I start yawning in the courses because I am so bored.				
19	I feel that I am working below my abilities most of the time in my courses.				
20	Just thinking of assignments makes me feel bored.				
21	I am forced to learn all the subjects and it makes me bored				
22	Seeing no progress during my PhD journey makes me bored.				
23	Experiencing anxiety in the courses leads to my experiencing boredom in the class.				
24	A low level of mental energy in the class makes me bored.				
25	I feel stuck in the room and unable to escape.				
26	During the courses, I often think about unrelated things.				
27	In situations where I have to wait (e.g. for everyone to finish their task), I get very restless.				
28	I often have to do meaningless things in my courses.				
29	I always think about what else I might be doing to kill the time rather than sitting in these courses.				
30	If I cannot understand classmates' presentations, I become really bored.				
31	I would rather put the work off until later and do something completely different instead.				
32	I really struggle to stop my mind wandering on to other things.				
33	I find most of what we do really tedious, I'd rather be doing something far more useful somewhere else instead.				
34	I have real problems staying focused and alert, particularly if there is no way to make a contribution.				
35	The threatening environment of the class makes me bored.				

Open-ended questions

1. Which aspects of boredom in language class (instructional aspect, self-conflict aspect, or situational aspect) do you consider the most boring? Why?
2. Is the experience of boredom more intense at the beginning, in the middle, and/or at the end of the classes? Why?
3. What is your personal experience of boredom for your last 3 years of life as Ph.D. students?
4. What other factors do you think lead to the experience of boredom during the Ph.D. journey?