



# Investigating the relationships between boredom proneness, paranoia, and self-consciousness

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## Abstract

The relationships among boredom proneness, paranoia, and self-consciousness were examined in the present study. Undergraduate students from a Midwestern university ( $N=107$ ) completed the Boredom Proneness Scale, the Paranoia Scale, and the Self-Consciousness Scale. Pearson correlation coefficients revealed that paranoia was significantly related to boredom proneness, public self-consciousness, private self-consciousness and self-reflectiveness. Due to the magnitude of the correlation coefficients between paranoia and boredom proneness, public self-consciousness, private self-consciousness and self-reflectiveness, a stepwise hierarchical regression analysis was performed to determine which construct was the strongest predictor of paranoia. The results of the stepwise analysis indicated that boredom proneness was the strongest overall predictor of paranoia. Additionally, boredom proneness significantly correlated with private self-consciousness, and self-reflectiveness, but not general self-consciousness nor public self-consciousness. Independent  $t$ -tests revealed that male participants had significantly higher paranoia and boredom proneness means than the female participants.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Boredom proneness and its interrelated negative personality correlates

Boredom may be described as an ephemeral mental state and previous research has revealed that boredom proneness has been associated with numerous negative personality traits and undesirable emotional states. Those prone to experiencing boredom feel estranged from society (Tolor, 1989); have a heightened sense of self-consciousness and severe negative self-awareness

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(Seib & Vodanovich, 1998); create and retain both animosity and suspicion towards family, friends, and strangers (Rupp & Vodanovich, 1997); feel self-important (Wink & Donahue, 1997); and have a clinical presentation that demonstrates the fabrication and misinterpretation of both cognitive and physical symptoms (Sommers & Vodanovich, 2000). All of these findings reveal those who continually experience boredom as people who have a possible predilection to present characteristics consistent with paranoid ideation.

Boredom proneness has previously been associated with sadness, loneliness, and other indicators of depression (Farmer & Sundberg, 1986). Tolor (1989) investigated whether those prone to boredom experienced emotional distance from others, and he reported that people high in boredom proneness felt more alienated and less assertive than those not defined as boredom prone. In addition, these results indicate those who are prone to boredom willfully believe that they are mentally and emotionally disconnected from the society in which they live. These studies suggest people with boredom prone personalities lack confidence and show boredom proneness to be associated with being passive and withdrawn from society.

Boredom proneness has also been examined in its relationship with other measures of psychological health. Sommers and Vodanovich (2000) reported that higher boredom proneness scores were associated with significantly higher ratings on the Hopkins Symptoms Checklist (HSCL; Derogatis, Lipman, Rickels, Uhlenhuth, & Covi, 1974). Specifically, those prone to boredom were found to report difficulties with obsessive-compulsiveness, somatization, anxiety, interpersonal sensitivity, and depression. Perhaps the most intriguing correlation was discovered between boredom proneness and the interpersonal sensitivity subscale. This subscale of the HSCL was designed to determine if a person holds a negative social orientation and the content of its items range from feeling extreme interpersonal sensitivity to merely harboring disdain towards others. As with the other subscales, those who scored higher on boredom proneness also received higher ratings than those who were not prone to boredom. Since those who scored higher on boredom proneness defined themselves as retaining a greater negative social orientation, it follows that they would not have as much trust and concern for others as persons who do not score as high on the measure. Because of their hypersensitivity and emotional instability they become unjustifiably distressed in neutral situations. Their tendencies to be overly temperamental and believe that people are impolite and deride them make this population one that could easily distort interpersonal relations. Furthermore, an individual with this mind-set would tend to misconstrue any vague interpersonal dialogue or action as hurtful and this may cause those prone to boredom to misrepresent themselves as innocent victims in their social interactions.

Boredom prone people endorse a varied range of maladies, and Sommers and Vodanovich (2000) posit that this may be the result of them being overly focused on their feelings. Furthermore, fixation may cause those prone to boredom to believe that imagined problems actually exist. According to the Diagnostic Statistical Manual-IV (DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 1994) somatization occurs when an individual vividly describes a continuous pattern of highly impairing complaints that cannot be explained by any existing condition. The DSM-IV asserts that the individual is not consciously aware that no real medical problem exists and that the complaints may be the physical manifestation of some underlying turmoil (APA). Therefore, due to a probable combination of self-fixation, lack of stimulation, and unconscious conflict, persons prone to boredom may have an inclination to invent problems and may make negatively incorrect assumptions about neutral events.

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