Perceived Overqualification and Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Mediating Role of Job Involvement

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Abstract. In recent years, the rapid expansion of universities and the increasingly fierce competition for talents have made overqualification a common phenomenon. As a special human-post mismatch phenomenon, the performance of overqualified employees directly affects the future long-term development of the organization. The organizational citizenship behavior of employees is the source of innovation and the key to maintaining the competitive advantage of the organization. Therefore, whether overqualified employees can demonstrate the organizational citizenship behavior that managers expect, and how to fully utilize and develop the remaining qualifications of overqualified employees so that their innovation potential can be fully utilized, creating more value for the organization and bringing higher returns to innovation performance, have become important research directions in academia. Based on the above research objectives and focus, this study aims to investigate whether overqualified employees can generate positive organizational citizenship behaviors and the influence mechanisms behind them. Through the questionnaire survey, 391 samples were collected in this study and found that perceptions of overqualification negatively affect organizational citizenship behavior, and job involvement plays a partially mediating role in the effect of perceptions of overqualification on organizational citizenship behavior. In other words, the influence of perceptions of overqualification on organizational citizenship behavior is realized through the mediating role of job involvement.

Keywords. Perceived Overqualification, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Job Involvement

1. Introduction

A sense of overqualification refers to the extent to which individuals perceive that they have qualifications, such as education, skills, and work experience, that are higher than the job requirements [1]. To improve organizational performance, companies tend to select highly qualified employees in the hiring process. Managers believe that highly qualified employees have more potential to lead to organizational innovation and higher job performance, but companies must also provide a higher level of management and training services for highly qualified individuals. Overqualified employees may be dissatisfied with their jobs, have a low sense of organizational commitment, and are even more likely to ask to leave and engage in counterproductive work behavior [2].

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Affected by the new crown pneumonia epidemic, thousands of companies have closed down, and employment opportunities have been drastically reduced. At the same time, universities and research institutes continue to send a large number of talents to society. Faced with this situation, employers have recruited a large number of qualified talents by raising the entry conditions. The job that undergraduates were once able to do, now the requirements may be raised to master's degree, which indirectly caused increasingly fierce competition in the job market. Recruiters tend to choose more qualified employees in the recruitment process, believing that highly qualified employees are more capable of doing the job, will bring more performance, and will be more conducive to the future development of the organization. The probability of perceived overqualification is very high due to less consideration of the actual situation of the job and the real needs of the employee [3]. Excellent employee qualifications that are not properly allocated may have extremely negative effects on the individual, the organization, and even society. It is particularly important to help organizations recognize the impact of employee overqualification on their organizational citizenship behavior and to effectively use excess human resources to cope with the impact of market changes [4].

In summary, based on relative deprivation theory, this paper focuses on whether and how overqualification affects organizational citizenship behavior, and explores the path of relationship between them through mediating variable (job involvement). The main research method in this paper is the questionnaire method, using incumbent workers as the research target and drawing on existing well-established scales for model validation. Statistical analysis software was used to analyze the sample for reliability and validate model hypotheses. And based on the analysis to summarize the findings of the study, based on which targeted and reasonable recommendations are made.

2. Research hypothesis and theoretical model

2.1. The Relationship between Perceived Overqualification and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Overqualification refers to employees' perception that they have more qualifications than the job requirements of the existing job, and this perception is based on subjective perception [5]. Lots of studies have shown that over-qualification can negatively affect job performance, extra-role behavior and mental health [6]. Organizational citizenship behavior is considered to be a series of pro-social behaviors that employees actively do for the organization [7]. It belongs to employees' extra-role behaviors [8]. It has always been regarded by researchers and business managers as an important individual behavioral variable for evaluating the overall effectiveness of the organization [9]. The relative deprivation theory holds that an individual's response to a situation depends on subjective evaluations, specifically, frustration occurs when a person feels that he wants and deserves something but cannot get it, and the difference between them also leads to negative reactions [10]. Employees invest a lot of time and energy to improve their knowledge, skills and abilities in order to achieve greater returns in the future. When a person feels that he has excess qualifications but cannot obtain a position that matches his qualifications, he will feel that his knowledge and skills are wasted [11]. At the same time, it is often difficult for employees to obtain their ideal compensation. This gap will lead to a negative work attitude of employees, which in turn affects his willingness to
make organizational citizenship behaviors. Perceived deprivation depends on the gap between reality and expected results. The larger the gap, the deeper the sense of deprivation. As employees' sense of overqualification increases, the difference between the ideal and the actual outcome leads to a higher sense of deprivation, triggering dissatisfaction and anger among employees, who are less likely to do behaviors that are beneficial to the organization, resulting in lower organizational citizenship behavior [12]. Based on this, hypotheses:

H1: The sense of overqualification negatively affects organizational citizenship behavior.

2.2. The Mediating Role of Job Involvement

Job involvement is a state of perception or belief about the job an individual is doing, reflecting the degree to which the employee recognizes the job he or she is currently doing [13]. As an employee's attitude towards work, it has a strong relationship with the degree to which an employee's personal needs are met, and the more personal needs are met, the higher the degree of job involvement, and vice versa [14]. Expectation theory suggests that employees, at the beginning of their job search, will form their own expectations about the pay they will receive for their future job, the internal and external resources provided by the organization, and the satisfaction, happiness and fulfillment generated by their job [15]. However, in practice, employees who feel overqualified due to a person-job mismatch may find it difficult to meet their expectations in their current position [16]. When the reality of the situation does not meet the individual's needs, the dissatisfaction generated by the employee reduces his or her identification with the current job, which leads to a decrease in job involvement [17]. Based on this, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: The feeling of overqualification is negatively related to job involvement.

Organizational citizenship behavior is initially caused by job involvement. As new employees, when they first enter a company or resign from another company to join a new organization, a higher level of job involvement expands their scope of work and thus exhibits organizational citizenship behavior [18]. Specifically, new employees entering an organization have a high level of job recognition and will show a high level of job involvement in order to gain the approval of their colleagues or leaders, which makes organizational citizenship behavior seen as a duty, which in effect expands the boundaries of their job scope [19]. As new employees adapt and get to know the company, the indirect and ambiguous stimuli that are released in the organization facilitate their job involvement, making them see some additional work as a duty, and thus continuously demonstrate organizational citizenship behavior.

On the other hand, as organizational citizenship behavior does contribute to organizational effectiveness, employees' performance of this behavior is approved by the organization or the leader, and even rewarded by the organization or the leader (both material and mental rewards), which will further strengthen employees' work involvement and lead to more performance of organizational citizenship behavior [20]. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: There is a positive relationship between job involvement and employee organizational citizenship behavior.

Due to the mismatch between employee qualifications and job requirements, employees with a high sense of overqualification perceive that the organization does not want to establish a long-term oriented social exchange relationship with them, which in...
turn negatively influences employees' attitudes and behaviors at work, making it difficult for them to identify with their work and thus reduce the level of job involvement and meaningful organizational citizenship behaviors towards the organization. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Job involvement mediates the relationship between perceived overqualification and organizational citizenship behavior.

3. Method

The central objective of this paper is to examine the impact of employee overqualification perceptions on organizational citizenship behaviors in the workplace, and therefore the survey respondents for this paper are active employees across the country. In the sample collection, the goal of questionnaire distribution is to ensure the validity, authenticity and actual questionnaire return rate of the collected data under the established survey cost. Based on this purpose, the author adopted the method of online questionnaire, and distributed the questionnaire link to all relatives, colleagues, etc., who then helped to spread the questionnaire, ensuring the concealment of the data, and ensuring the universality of the survey on the respondents. The data collected in this paper came from the distribution of questionnaires, mainly in Zhejiang, Guangdong, Yunnan and Hebei provinces through the online and offline joint distribution of questionnaires and recovery, in the later data collation process, the questionnaires answered by the research subjects who did not conform to this study and invalid questionnaires were eliminated, and the final valid questionnaires were 391. In terms of current positions, the highest number of general employees was 194, accounting for 49.6%, followed by 152 junior managers, accounting for 38.9%; in terms of unit nature, 169 subjects, accounting for 43.2%, were employed in private companies, and 129 subjects, accounting for 33.0%, were employed in foreign and joint venture companies. (1) The independent variable was perceived overqualification. The Scale of Perceived Overqualification developed by Maynard was used to measure the overall overqualification of individuals in terms of their education, knowledge, experience and ability levels [21]. The questions include "The level of education required for my job is lower than my current education", "Some of my job skills are not useful in my current job", "My ability is higher than what is required for my job", etc. The scale uses a Likert 5-point scale, and the questionnaire filler chooses the option that best fits his or her actual situation. Where 1=very unsuitable, 2=somewhat unsuitable, 3=average, 4=somewhat suitable, and 5=perfectly suitable. The larger the number, the more overqualified the respondent perceives himself/herself to be.

(2) Job involvement and organizational citizenship behavior. This study draws on the organizational citizenship behavior scale developed by scholars such as Williams & Tsui [22]. Taiwanese scholar Farh translated this scale considering the specific context of Chinese companies, and it has been widely used and empirically studied by domestic scholars, with good applicability and validity. The scale is divided into two dimensions: individual-oriented citizenship behavior and organization-oriented citizenship behavior. The scale consists of 11 questions to measure the extent of employee-initiated organizational citizenship behavior, and higher scores indicate more employee involvement in organizational citizenship behavior.

In this study, the Kanungo one-factor scale, which was revised by Wenxia Zhou and Bo Li to fit the Chinese context, was used for measuring work involvement [23]. Both
scales also use the Likert 5-point scale, and respondents choose the option that best fits their actual situation. Where 1=very unlikely, 2=somewhat unlikely, 3=fair, 4=somewhat likely, and 5=fully likely. The larger the number, the higher the emotional commitment and work engagement of the respondent.

(3) Control variables. In this paper, six variables, namely, gender, age, education, years of work, job rank and nature of the unit, were selected as control variables for the study.

4. Results

4.1. Reliability analysis

In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to measure the reliability of the scale, and the internal consistency test was conducted by SPSS to observe and test the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each scale, and the results were as follows: the Cronbach's alpha coefficient values of the three variables of perceived overqualification, organizational citizenship behavior, and job involvement were 0.939, 0.876, and 0.875, all of which were above 0.85, so the questionnaire passed the reliability test.

4.2. Descriptive analysis

In this study, the maximum, minimum and mean values of each variable were calculated by SPSS, and the results are shown in the Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Minimum Value</th>
<th>Maximum Value</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Overqualification</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>3.1461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Citizenship Behavior</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>3.2372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Involvement</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>3.2271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3. Data analysis

In this paper, SPSS was used to conduct an empirical analysis, in which the perception of overqualification was used as the independent variable in a linear regression to analyze the effect of perception of overqualification on job involvement and organizational citizenship behavior, and the mediating role of job involvement in the process of the effect of perception of overqualification on organizational citizenship behavior. A correlation analysis was conducted prior to the regression analysis. The results are shown in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Perceived Overqualification</th>
<th>Organizational Citizenship Behavior</th>
<th>Job Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Overqualification</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Citizenship Behavior</td>
<td>-.411**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Involvement</td>
<td>-.255**</td>
<td>.424**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to further clarify the mechanism of action between the sense of overqualification, job involvement and organizational citizenship behavior, this study establishes a multivariate hierarchical regression model for validation, which consists of the following three main steps: firstly, to test whether there is a relationship between the independent and dependent variables, secondly, to test whether the independent variable has an effect on the mediating variable, and finally, to test the relationship between the independent variable, mediating variable and dependent variable. If the regression coefficient of the independent variable (X) on the dependent variable (Y) was originally significant and is no longer significant after adding the mediating variable (M), it indicates that M plays a fully mediating role in it; if X is still significant on Y after adding the mediating variable (M), but the regression coefficient decreases, it indicates that M plays a partially mediating role in it.

Table 3 shows the results of the hypothesis models tested by linear regression, where gender, age and education are considered as control variables in each model. First, the main effects were tested with the sense of overqualification as the independent variable and organizational citizenship behavior as the dependent variable. The regression results are shown in Model 4. With the control variables taken into account, there is a significant negative effect between the sense of overqualification and organizational citizenship behavior with a correlation coefficient of -0.412, which is significant at the 0.001 level, and hypothesis 1 is supported.

Next, the relationship between the independent variable (X) and the mediating variable (M) was tested with the sense of overqualification as the independent variable and job involvement as the dependent variable. The regression results are shown in Model 2, where the sense of overqualification is significantly negatively related to job involvement (β=-0.249, p<0.001) considering the control variables, and hypothesis H2 is supported.

In the third step, the relationship between the mediating variable (M) and the dependent variable (Y) was tested with job involvement as the independent variable and organizational citizenship behavior as the dependent variable. The regression results are shown in Model 5: job involvement has a significant positive effect on organizational citizenship behavior when control variables are considered (β=0.428, p<0.001), and hypothesis 3 is supported.

In the final step, both perceived overqualification and job involvement were included in the regression equation to test the mediating role of job involvement between perceived overqualification and organizational citizenship behavior. After controlling for variables such as age and education, the regression results are as in Model 6: there is still a significant positive effect of job involvement on organizational citizenship behavior (β=0.346, p<0.001). Comparing model 4 with model 6 shows that after adding the job involvement variable, there is still a negative effect of feeling overqualified on organizational citizenship behavior, but the negative effect is reduced and the p-value is still significant. This shows that job involvement partially mediates the relationship between overqualification and organizational citizenship behavior, and hypothesis 4 is supported.
### Table 3. Multivariate regression analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Job Involvement</th>
<th>Organizational Citizenship Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Overqualification</td>
<td>-.240***</td>
<td>-.412***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ΔR²</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2.458</td>
<td>8.366***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.4. Discussion

First, this study enriches the scope of research on the sense of overqualification in the context of localization. Foreign scholars have been studying the sense of overqualification for more than 20 years, while China started to pay attention to it relatively late. Therefore, the current academic research on the sense of overqualification mainly takes foreign employees and cultural backgrounds as the research samples, and due to certain differences in work values and organizational management patterns, it is necessary to further explore the local enterprises in China to come up with more objective and the results of the study are consistent with the Chinese context.

Secondly, this study complements the results on the performance of overqualification on individual organizational behavior. Through the literature on the relationship between overqualification and organizational citizenship behavior, it is found that scholars have relatively little research on the influence of organizational citizenship behavior, so this study further improves the research results on overqualification by constructing a theoretical model between overqualification and employee organizational citizenship behavior.

Finally, this study improves the research system on the influence mechanism related to the sense of overqualification. From the existing research results, scholars have not paid much attention to the boundary conditions and mechanisms of action between the sense of overqualification and employees' organizational citizenship behavior, and have neglected to investigate the factors that may weaken or reverse the negative effects of the sense of overqualification. By introducing job involvement as a mediating variable, this study explores whether the effect of overqualification on employees' organizational citizenship behavior will change, and improves the existing research system from multiple perspectives.

#### 4.5. Enlightenment

First, it is how companies should choose when faced with overqualified candidates in recruitment. In today's economic downturn, companies are looking to hire highly educated and qualified people, but the positions they are hiring for do not require such high levels of education and qualifications. However, corporate HR managers tend to select highly qualified candidates when recruiting talent. However, overqualified employees do not necessarily improve corporate performance in a meaningful way, but may instead show lower job satisfaction and work commitment, and even higher propensity to leave. This paper argues that companies should avoid blindly pursuing the employment of highly educated and qualified employees, and that HR managers should try to match personnel with positions, prepare job descriptions, and fully understand the job responsibilities and qualifications of the jobs. In the recruitment process, the
company should choose the most suitable employees with the highest degree of job matching, and choose the most suitable but not the most excellent applicants to ensure that the new employees can not only complete the task with high efficiency and quality, but also will not produce the perception of overqualification and reduce the losses caused by recruitment mistakes.

Second, in terms of organizational culture, when employees have the perception of overqualification, companies should actively implement employee relationship management, such as employee assistance programs to help with self-adjustment, strengthen emotional management training, psychological counseling and employee relations maintenance. In the workplace, companies should encourage an open, inclusive and fair organizational culture, create a fair organizational atmosphere, and strive to form cohesion within the organization; establish an innovative organizational culture in the workplace, and enhance the recognition of corporate values among employees within the company, so that highly qualified employees can identify with the organizational culture, control the possible brain drain of overqualified employees, and promote better innovation and creativity of outstanding employees for the company.

Besides, when there are already overqualified employees in the company, the company managers should try their best to manage them effectively and guide them to demonstrate more organizational citizenship behaviors. This paper introduces a mediating variable, job involvement, based on the relationship between perceived overqualification and organizational citizenship behavior, which reveals the internal mechanism of overqualified employees’ reluctance to engage in organizational citizenship behavior and can provide some insights into how companies manage overqualified employees. Corporate managers should give more attention to overqualified employees and take positive coaching measures to weaken their perception of overqualification and enhance their job identification. For example, managers can provide employees with targeted job-related resources (e.g., work support, job autonomy, participation in decision-making, etc.) to increase their job involvement. In addition, managers should sincerely understand the work goals and expectations of overqualified employees, provide them with more promotion opportunities to develop their talents, and guide them to use their "excess" knowledge and skills to participate in more beneficial organizational citizenship behaviors.

Finally, HR managers should also improve the compensation and welfare system and reward and punishment system of the company, and give appropriate rewards to employees who can make outstanding contributions to the company, so as to encourage overqualified employees to invest more resources in the company, improve the overall performance of the company, and achieve the ultimate goal of a win-win situation for both the employees and the company.

4.6. Prospect

This paper mainly discusses the relationship between three variables: perception of overqualification, organizational citizenship behavior, and work involvement. The proposed hypotheses are basically verified and have some significance for management practice. However, there are still some limitations in this study due to the limitations of human resources, time, and resources. Due to the limited capacity and resources of the researcher, the sample of this study has certain limitations, which are mainly reflected in the small sample size of the study, so that the results of this study only reflect the influence of employees' perception of overqualification on work behavior in some
regions. Secondly, this paper only partially interprets the relationship between perceptions of overqualification and organizational citizenship behavior from the theories, and it may be possible to explain the relationship between the two variables from other perspectives. Finally, this paper only uses the questionnaire method to conduct the study, and the data collection method is relatively single.

In summary, the researcher believes that there are still many aspects of this field that are worth exploring and that future research can be conducted or improved in the following ways.

1. With the increasing popularity of higher education in China, overqualification will become a common phenomenon. This paper mainly studies overqualification at the level of individual employees, which is a kind of subjective perception of employees. In the future, overqualification can be studied at multiple levels, such as team level, unit level and organization level. To some extent, the perception of employee overqualification comes from a comparison with colleagues of the same level, and if there are a large number of overqualified employees in the organization, it’s hard to say whether there are still many negative effects as described above. It would be meaningful for future research to examine the impact of overqualification on the team or organizational level, and the possible interaction mechanisms of overqualification at different levels.

2. This paper mainly focuses on the overall concept of perceived overqualification, but overqualification is actually a rather complex concept, including different aspects of overqualification such as overeducation, over-experience and over-skill, etc. The influence mechanisms of different aspects of overqualification on employees' work attitudes and behaviors may also be different, and managers' management methods for them should also be different. Therefore, in the future, a dimensional study on the excess of qualification can be conducted to explore the influence mechanism of the excess of resources in different aspects of employees on their psychological and behavioral aspects, which is of great significance to the enterprise management practice.

3. In this paper, the research is mainly conducted at the level of individual employees, and the mediating variables are also from the level of individual employees. However, the individual behavior of employees is influenced by their own conditions, but also by objective factors such as the nature of work, work environment and job level, for example, whether the influence of overqualification on employees' work behavior is different in service-oriented enterprises and technology-oriented enterprises; whether the level of job autonomy and leadership style of employees affect the work behavior of overqualified employees; whether the impact of overqualification on the work behavior of junior employees and senior employees is the same, etc. Therefore, in the future, different moderating variables can be selected for the study of overqualification to further understand the impact of overqualification on employees' work behavior, which is important for the company to stimulate the maximum potential of employees.

4. Regarding the selection of scales, although the scales used in this study are all foreign scales with mature and frequently used variables, and their high reliability and validity have been confirmed in several studies, the logic of these scales lacks Chinese characteristics, which may exert an influence on the questionnaire results. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the localized variable scales in China in the future.
5. Conclusion

This paper explored the relationship between perceptions of overqualification, job involvement, and organizational citizenship behavior, and concluded that: perceptions of overqualification negatively affect organizational citizenship behavior, and job involvement plays a mediating role in the influence of perceptions of overqualification on organizational citizenship behavior.

According to the empirical findings, individuals with higher perceptions of overqualification are less likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors, indicating that individuals will exhibit less organizational citizenship behaviors when they perceive that they have more qualifications than the job position itself requires. If managers perceive that employees are overqualified, they should pay attention to it and, in order to retain talent, they can redeploy staff within the organization to work in more suitable jobs so that they can feel the challenge of their jobs and their job development prospects. As for employees, they should do good career planning when they make career choices, choose their favorite and suitable jobs, and try to avoid the emergence of overqualification. If you perceive overqualification, you should adjust the status quo in time by communicating with your supervisor to show that you are capable of taking on more responsibilities, accepting new tasks and challenges in your job, and focusing on your work.

The data results also show that employees demonstrate more organizational citizenship behaviors when their job involvement is higher, indicating that positive behaviors at work are more likely to occur when individuals have a greater degree of job recognition. Organizational managers can enhance employees’ identification with their work through humane management, focusing on the development of organizational culture and values, skills training, promotion mechanisms, and welfare benefits to enhance employees’ identification with their work and promote their maximum personal effectiveness and create benefits for the organization.

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