

ABSTRACT

Perceived overqualification (POQ), defined as employees' perception that their qualifications exceed job requirements, has become increasingly prevalent worldwide. Although research on POQ has grown rapidly, several important gaps remain. First, research on the antecedents of POQ remains limited and has relied predominantly on variable-centered approaches, leaving insufficient understanding of how multiple antecedents jointly shape POQ. Second, although POQ has been recognized as having both positive and negative consequences, the literature still lacks an integrative framework that explains its double-edged effects and the asymmetry between its beneficial and detrimental pathways. Third, although scholars have called for greater attention to the boundary conditions shaping the effects of POQ, several important moderators, such as national culture and leadership, remain insufficiently examined. This dissertation addresses these gaps through three studies.

Study 1 draws on cognitive appraisal theory to examine the antecedents of POQ. From a process perspective, it investigates how objective overqualification (OOQ), personality traits, and job resources jointly shape POQ. Using multi-wave survey data from China (N = 390), this study adopts a configurational approach based on fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis. The results show that high OOQ is not a necessary condition for high POQ. Multiple configurations lead to high POQ, whereas low POQ occurs only under a more specific combination of low OOQ, low narcissism, high optimism, high job autonomy, and high social support.

Study 2 develops an integrative framework based on conservation of resources theory to explain the double-edged effects of POQ and the asymmetry between its two pathways. This framework is tested through a meta-analysis of 233 articles (257 independent samples, 547 effect sizes, N = 89,617). The results show that POQ promotes proactive and prosocial behaviors and reduces counterproductive work behavior through personal-resource sufficiency, but produces the opposite pattern through workplace-resource depletion. In addition, the workplace-resource depletion pathway is stronger than the personal-resource sufficiency pathway, and two national cultural dimensions, power distance and individualism, moderate only the relationship between POQ and personal-resource sufficiency.

Building on the theoretical framework developed in Study 2, Study 3 investigates the influence of POQ on employee voice. It tests self-efficacy and psychological contract breach as competing mechanisms and examines humble leadership as a boundary condition. A three-wave field survey (N = 429) and a scenario-based experiment (N = 320) conducted in China consistently show that POQ increases psychological contract breach, which reduces both promotive and prohibitive voice. The positive indirect effects of POQ on promotive and prohibitive voice through self-efficacy are supported only in the experimental study, and humble leadership weakens the positive relationship between POQ and self-efficacy.

Overall, this dissertation examines the antecedents, consequences, underlying mechanisms, and boundary conditions of POQ. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.