

EXAMINE THE EFFECTS OF OVER-QUALIFICATION ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM SERVICE SECTOR OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The current research examines the effect of perceived over-qualification on lower-scale employee outcomes such as work alienation, deviant behavior, and psychological detachment. A cross-sectional research approach was used in the study to investigate the connection between employee outcomes and perceived over-qualification. Through convenience sampling, we collected primary data from 150 employees working in various service sectors through structured questionnaires. The hypotheses were tested using correlation and regression. The findings supported the hypothesis that alienation and deviant behavior are significantly positively correlated

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with perceived over-qualification. On the other hand, psychological detachment and perceived over-qualification are significantly correlated negatively. The study suggests that organizations recruit employees according to their qualifications which will enhance the organizational employees.

Keywords: Perceived over-qualification, work alienation, deviant behavior, psychological detachment.

Introduction

Overqualified workers have more education, experience, expertise, or abilities than are necessary for their position. As a result, they are unable to utilize their full professional potential and are likely to believe that their position is not a good fit for them (Maynard, Joseph, & Maynard, 2006). Further, Over-qualification is a part of underemployment, a more general term that includes a variety of circumstances in which an individual holds a job that is subpar by certain standards, such as inadequate compensation or working hours, employment outside of their area of expertise and training, and limited opportunities to apply their professional skills (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011). Individuals who believe they are overqualified may feel underappreciated and, as a result, be unhappy in their positions, because they believe they are entitled to a better job due of their qualifications (Wu et al., 2015).

Past research, studies have widely examined the effects of perceived over-qualification on job satisfaction and have demonstrated an adverse association (Peiró, et al., 2010; Maynard & Parfyonova, 2013; Wu et al., 2015). Maynard et al., (2015) argued that overqualified individuals may feel a dissonance between their current circumstances and their ideal profession because their current employment does not offer enough opportunity for skill development and career advancement. Similarly, Lusinski (2011) reported that a shortage of working opportunities in an economy, they fail to get skill-specified jobs which results in to mismatch between person and position. Such mismatches result in unfavorable employee outcomes. Prior research has mostly concentrated on the detrimental effects of perceived over-qualification. Research indicates that overqualified workers are more prone to information hiding, cyber loafing, and other ineffective work practices (Cheng et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2022), while showing a higher rate of turnover being (Allan et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021). On the other hand, over-qualification sentiments can sometimes benefit people

and organizations. Through extra-role behaviors, overqualified professionals' excess abilities serve their organizations in many ways (Zhang et al., 2016). The reason is that overqualified workers want to improve their circumstances (Luksyte et al., 2015) and demonstrate their positive self-perception by going above and above the call of duty to earn the organization's recognition (Erdogan et al., 2011; Hu et al., 2015).

It is reported that over-qualification exist almost in all industrialization countries, according to an estimate nearly one-quarter of workers around the world are overqualified for their work (Saul Finea & Nevo 2008). Relative deprivation theory was applied in some researches to explain perceived over-qualification, according to theory discrepancy between work expectation and experiencing inability to fully utilize abilities and talent at workplace result into perceived over-qualification (Lobene& Meade 2013). According to previous researches perceived over qualification negatively impact job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Fine, 2007; Yang, Guan, et al., 2015), and also leads to other employees' negative outcomes (Liu et al., 2015). Overqualified employee may always be stressful due to undesirable work arrangement and stress continue even after working hours which adversely affect individual personal life and results in work-family conflict (Varma&Sandya 2019).

Pervious literature shows that the outcomes of over qualification include an array of negative outcomes for both the individual and the organization. For example, over qualification has been shown to be negatively related to job attitudes and health outcomes, and positively related to turnover intentions (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011). Although researchers have done work to check perceived over-qualification and its outcomes but some areas are still uncovered, there is need to check out relationship of perceived over-qualification with employees' negative attitude, behavior and emotions (Wang, Lu, & Wang, 2019). Due to growing mismatches between today's workforce and workplace, this area needs attention. Thus, we investigate the impact of perceived over-qualification on the performance and outcomes of lower-scale employees doing job in service sectors.

Literature Review

Over-qualification refers to a type of underemployed, a situation where an employee's abilities, knowledge, skills, and experience are more than required to perform his job

(Johnson 1996). Further, it can also be defined as a person and job directional misfit where one's qualification exceed job requirements (Varma et al., 2019). Whereas Perceived over-qualification is a situation where an individual perceives that his qualification is more than required to perform his job tasks (Fine 2007). Perceive over-qualification may also be caused by a lack of promotional opportunities which leads to negative employee outcomes (Johnson 1996). It is suggested in previous studies that various factors may alleviate the impact of perceived over-qualification on employee outcomes, such high level of empowerment and a healthy working environment minimizing the negative effect of perceived over-qualification (Varma et al, 2019).

Two categories of over-qualification have been focused on by scholars, subjective and objective over-qualification. Subjective over-qualification is a condition where an individual considers himself overqualified for a working position (Yang et al., 2015; Zhang, et al., 2015) whereas objective over-qualification is a condition where an individual is overqualified for his job (Johnson et al 1996, Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2015). Objective over-qualification can be measured by comparing workers' qualifications with job requirements (Zhang, et al, 2015), but measuring perceived over-qualification is a difficult task as it varies from employee to employee working at a comparable position with the same level of qualification with different personalities (Luksyte et al, 2011; Zhang, et al 2015). Moreover, many other factors also affect perceived over-qualification including individual personality, gender, and comparison with other employees (Liu & Wang, 2012; Luksyte, et al, 2011; Hu, et al, 2015).

Over-qualification refers to skill under-utilization, lack of promotional opportunities, growth, and change (Lobene et al, 2015), some organizations consider an overqualified employee a misfit for the job and often do not hire as a result on the other hand some organization prefers to hire an overqualified employee with an aim to make their human resource a competitive edge (Fine et al., 2008). Researchers have observed a range of negative outcomes of over-qualification for both workers and organizations. Perceived over-qualification is negatively related to commitment, health, and psychological outcomes but positively related to counterproductive work behavior (Lobene et al, 2015). Job dissatisfaction is a highly investigated consequence

of perceived over-qualification. Previous research shows that overqualified employees are considered to be not satisfied with their responsibilities, salaries, career advancement, and other aspects and they show greater intentions to quit. (Fine et al 2008).

Psychological detachment is defined as employees' feeling of being away from work or absence of job-related thoughts in job timing (Etzion, Eden &Lapidot, 1998). It refers to mental disengagement from work-related activities, not receiving job-related calls, not checking job-related emails forgetting about workplace conflicts and challenges (Siltaloppi, Kinnunen, &Feldt, 2009). With the increase in demand for work workers are dealing with a heavy workload, due to workload they don't get a break from the demand of work in off-timing and they consider work as a burden and lack motivation to perform well (Brummelhuis& Bakker 2012).

The absence of work-related thoughts allows an individual to gain energy and mental relaxation which is necessary for an individual to start a job again with a high level of energy and motivation (Meijman& Mulder, 1998). Relaxation is considered an important mechanism in the unwinding process. Spending off-job hours on entertainment and social activities unable individual to feel relaxed in the evening and more energetic in the following morning on the other hand spending off-job hours on work-related tasks leads to poor detachment and less relaxation as a result employees feel demotivated the following morning (Brummelhuis et al, 2012).

Psychological detachment does not only refer to being away from work physically it also considers the absence of work-related worries and tensions. According to previous research good family time, physical exercises, sports, and friends gatherings contribute toward the psychological well-being of employees (Brummelhuis et al 2012).

Work affects the effective state of the individual mind and body and it is important to regain energy to be active again at work place. Completely switching off from work, while returning home leads to employee mental peace. (Sonntag& Fritz, 2007). Continuous work-related demands and thoughts even after working hours negatively affect individual work-life balance and individuals experience high levels of family conflicts. Individuals who are busy with job-related tasks are less likely to enjoy their lives and don't give proper attention to their families which results in

damage of individual mental and loss of physical energy (Sonnetag, Binnewies and Scholl, 2008).

Individuals show a variety of different behaviors at the workplace, these behaviors either positively or negatively affect individuals and organizations. There are always certain organizational norms that allow individuals to perform within defined limits when individuals' behavior goes out of that set of norms they deviate and negatively affect levels of organization including organizational reputation, financial cost, and productivity (Coccia, 1998). There are different names assigned to such behaviors including deviant behavior, counterproductive work behavior, and antisocial behavior (Giacolone & Greenberg 1997). Behaviors are highly deviant when an individual or group of workers violates organizational norms, policies, and regulations that affect the well-being of the organization and its employees (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Employee deviance does not include minor offence which is not harming well-being of organization and its' individual. Mostly employee violates norms due to job dissatisfaction and due to frustrating working experiences (Burris, 1983). Devious behavior varies from minor to serious deviant behavior or interpersonal versus organizational deviant behavior which ranges from deviance toward organizational workers to deviance toward organization (Robinson et al, 1995). Deviant behavior is categorized by researchers into two categories positive deviant behavior and negative deviant behavior. Positive deviant behavior refers to an intentional violation of norms of an organization in respectful ways, it helps the worker to claim their rights and gain financial goals (Galperin, 2002), whereas negative deviance includes theft, computer fraud, sabotage, and misuse of organizational resources (Robinson et al, 1995). Negative deviant behavior also includes sexual harassment, vandalism, not following the manager's instructions, arriving late, rumor spreading, and harming co-workers (Galperin, 2002).

The inability of the employee to express himself at work due to loss of control over the organizational product and process refers to work alienation (Ceylan & Sulu 2011). It is a situation where an employee considers himself an alien at the workplace. Work alienation behavior arises due to a lack of individual autonomy and recognition. If the organization doesn't consider its employees' valuable resources and treats them unfairly work alienation results (Ceylan et al., 2011). The feeling of work alienation

results due to centralized decision-making process of an organization which prevents employees from taking part in the decision-making process (Sarros, Winter, Santora & Allen 2002). We developed the following Hypothesis:

H₁: Perceived over-qualification is positively related to deviant behavior.

H₂: Perceived over-qualification has a positive impact on employees' work alienation

H₃: Perceived over-qualification is negatively related to psychological detachment

Research Methodology

Population and Sample

The study's target population is lower-scale employees working in service sector organizations, including banks, educational institutions, and health institutions. A sample of 170 employees working at managerial and non-managerial posts at respective organizations was selected using the Convenience sampling technique.

Data Collection

The proposed study is founded on quantitative hypothesis-based research. The information for the study was gathered through a quantitative research questionnaire filled by employees working in the service sector including banks (30%); educational sectors (50%) and health institutions (20%), and self-rated responses were obtained. A sample of 150 employees working at entry-level, lower, middle, and top-level management with an experience of one year to 29 years is analyzed. Amongst this sample, 40% of respondents were males while 60% of respondents were females ranging from age of 21 years to 59 years. 69.3 % of respondents were married while 30.7% of respondents were unmarried. Their educational qualification ranged from bachelors and below to masters and above.

Measurement Scale

An items scale of work alienation measure developed by Nair &Vohra (2010) with a reliability of 0.93 is selected. Sample items include "I do not feel like putting my best effort at work". All the items are measured on five five-item Likert scale ranging from 1= "Strongly Disagree" to 5 = "Strongly Agree". Khan and Morrow's (1991) 7 items were selected out of an 8-item index of subjective underemployment to define Perceived Over-qualification. Sample items include "My work experience is more than necessary to do my present job". Two questions were reverse-coded and after deleting the problematic question (question number 5) reliability of 0.76 was attained.

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All the items are measured on a five-item Likert scale ranging From 1= “Strongly Disagree” to 5 = “Strongly Agree”. A 4-item scale developed by Sonnentag and Fritz (2007) was used using a 5-point response format ranging from 1 = I fully disagree to 5 = I fully agree. A sample item is “During my free time, I forget about work”. Reliability= 0.88. Bennett & Robinson, (2000) 12-item scale of organizational deviance and a 7-item scale of Interpersonal deviance is used. Sample items include “Falsified a receipt to get reimbursed for more money than you spent on business expenses”. All the items are measured on a items Likert scale ranging From 1= “Strongly Disagree” to 5 = “Strongly Agree. The reliability of the scale is 0.89.

Data Analysis Tools

For data coding and analysis, SPSS 15.0 software was used. At the initial level, reverse-coded items were treated, and then the means of the items were calculated for the independent variables and dependent variables. Descriptive statistics were obtained from sample descriptive and frequencies were run with mean and standard deviations. Next, reliability of scales was determined by conducting a reliability analysis. Bivariate correlation was carried out to find inter-correlation among variables. Then linear regression analysis was conducted to test the validity of proposed relationships between variables i.e. validity of hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 is tested through linear regression.

Results Analysis and Discussions

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics. The mean value of work alienation is 3.32 with a standard deviation of 0.923. Furthermore, the average value is 2.87 with a standard deviation of 0.773. Psychological Detachment has a mean value of 2.17 while the average value of Perceived over-Qualification is 3.59.

| Variables | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------------|----------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Work alienation | 170 | 3.32 | 0.923 |
| Deviant Behavior | 170 | 2.87 | 0.773 |
| Psychological Detachment | 170 | 2.17 | 0.905 |
| Perceived over- | 170 | 3.59 | 0.724 |

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|---------------|--|--|--|
| Qualification | | | |
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Table 2 represent the reliability test Cronbach's Alpha. Where all variable have greater value 0.70, that show that the scale used for the measurement of variables is reliable.

| Variable | Cronbach's Alpha |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Perceived over-qualification | 0.93 |
| Work alienation: | 0.76 |
| Psychological detachment: | 0.88 |
| Deviant behavior: | 0.89 |

Table 3 shows the Bivariate correlation analysis that indicates that perceived over-qualification has a significant positive correlation with work alienation ($r = .67$; $p > .000$), a significant positive correlation with deviant behavior ($r = .503$; $p > .000$), and a significant negative correlation with psychological detachment ($r = -.17$; $p > .03$); moreover, work alienation and deviant behavior are also positively correlated ($r = .76$; $p > .000$), psychological detachment and deviant behavior are negatively related ($r = -.105$; $p > .2$) and psychological detachment and work alienation are negatively related ($r = -.23$; $p > .03$).

| | | WA | DB | PD | POQ |
|-----|---------------------|---------|--------|--------|-----|
| WA | Pearson Correlation | | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | | | |
| DB | Pearson Correlation | .762** | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | | |
| PD | Pearson Correlation | -.238** | -.105 | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .003 | .201 | | |
| POQ | Pearson Correlation | .674** | .503** | -.172* | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .035 | |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Tables 4, 5, and 6 indicate the results of Linear regression analysis that are shown to regulate the validity of the projected hypothesis. Regression analysis of H1, H2, and H3 determined the main effect of perceived over-qualification on outcomes (work alienation, psychological detachment and deviant behavior). Hypothesis 1 predicted a positive relation between perceived over-qualification and work alienation. To check the validity of the proposed hypothesis, alienation was regressed with perceived over-qualification, rendering the results shown in Table 3 given below.

Table 4: Effects of Perceive Over-qualification on Work Alienation

| Predictor | Beta | R ² | ΔR ² |
|------------------------------|--------|----------------|-----------------|
| Perceived over-qualification | .67*** | .46*** | .46*** |

Results found from regression analysis show that there is a significant positive relation between perceived over-qualification and work alienation with ($\beta = .67$, $p < 0.000$) confirming hypothesis 1. A variance of 46% is witnessed which confirms H1 that perceived over-qualification positively affects job work alienation of employees.

Hypothesis 2 forecasts a positive relation between perceived over-qualification and the deviant behaviour of employees. To check the legality of this prediction, perceived over-qualification retreated with deviant behaviour and the results obtained are shown in Table 4, given below.

Table 5: Effects of perceived Over-qualification on deviant behaviour

| Predictors | B | R ² | ΔR ² |
|-----------------------------|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| Perceived overqualification | .503*** | .25*** | .25*** |

Results attained from regression analysis indicate that there is a significant positive relation between perceived over-qualification and deviant behaviour with ($\beta = .503$, $p < 0.000$) confirming hypothesis 1. A variance of 25% is seen which confirms H2 that perceived over-qualification positively affects the deviant behavior of employees.

Hypothesis 3 forecasts a negative relation between perceived over-qualification and psychological detachment of employees. To check the legality of this prediction, perceived over-qualification was retreated with psychological detachment, and the results obtained are shown in Table 6, given below.

Table 5: Effects of Perceived Over-qualification on Psychological Detachment:

| Predictors | B | R ² | ΔR ² |
|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Perceive qualification | over -.172* | .03* | .03 * |

*Note=170 *P<.05, **P<0.01, ***P<0.001*

Results attained from regression analysis indicate that there is a significant negative relation between perceived over-qualification and deviant behaviour with ($\beta = -.172, p < 0.03$) confirming hypothesis 3. A variance of 3% is seen which confirms H3 that perceived over-qualification negatively affects the psychological detachment of employees.

Conclusion

This study provides knowledge about the impact of perceived over-qualification on employee outcomes and tells us how feelings of overqualified employees lead to negative workplace behaviour and adversely affect individual psychological well-being. Although of some limitations, this study proves that perceived over-qualification positively affects work alienation and deviant behaviour and negatively affects psychological detachment. The data is collected from Islamabad Pakistan, so future research could be done in some other countries and cities to simplify the results. This study highlights the significant positive impact of perceived over-qualification on work alienation such that employees facing high levels of perceived over-qualification will show a high level of work alienation behaviour. The second research question was whether perceived over-qualification leads to deviant behaviour. The current study found that perceived over-qualification is positively related to employee's deviant behaviour. The last and third research question was whether

perceived over-qualification affects employees' psychological detachment of employee. According to the result of the current study perceived over-qualification is negatively related to psychological detachment, more the employee feel he is overqualified for his job less likely he will psychologically detach from work related thoughts.

Overall this study makes a number of important contributions, but there are some limitations that should not be unnoticed. Due to shortage of time and resources, data from only few organizations in service sector is collected, which questions the generalizability of results. For more reliable results data from maximum number of organizations belonging to each sector should be collected and analysed. Moreover, the current study adopted convenience sampling, which is not a good strategy for sample selection and limits the representation of whole population. Also, the data is collected on cross-sectional research design, which does not warrant the cause and effect relationships, thus future studies should take into account longitudinal research design, collecting data after long intervals will help in getting more reliable results. Conducting research only for the city and not covering most service sector organizations is another limitation that can be overcome by conducting research in other major cities of Pakistan.

Future Research Directions

A number of future research directions are highlighted in this study. First of all, perceived over-qualification acts as an independent variable in this study whereas some other variables like frustration, and anxiety can be taken as independent variables and its impact on outcomes can be assessed. Secondly, the current study only examined the direct effects of perceived over-qualification on outcomes, future studies should look into the probable mediators and moderators between perceived over-qualification and outcomes such as employee empowerment, recognition, and a friendly working environment.

The questionnaire used in this research is self-reported data collected may be biased to collect more accurate data peer to self and peer review questionnaires can be used in future research.

Implications for Managers

This research will provide more information to managers striving to manage overqualified employees. Reasons behind employees' deviant behavior, work alienation, and poor psychological detachment of overqualified employees will be clearer and managers will be able to use the information to identify negative outcomes of overqualified employees and to make necessary arrangements to overcome negative consequences. Managers can use different strategies to minimize the impact of perceived over-qualification on employee outcomes as managers may nominate their overqualified subordinates to serve as mentors for less experienced coworkers and newly hired workers.

Empowerment and recognition can also minimize the negative deviant behavior of overqualified employees. A friendly working environment may also lead psychological well-being of overqualified employees.

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