



Disentangling perceived overqualification: the relationship with proactive work behavior and openness to change¹

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Abstract. *Purpose.* This study explores how perceived overqualification predicts two essential workplace behaviors: proactive work behavior and openness to change. *Study approach.* Using a questionnaire-based approach, data was collected from a sample of 268 public sector employees in Istanbul, Türkiye. Structural equation modeling was employed for data analysis. *Findings.* The study uncovers contrasting effects of two dimensions of perceived overqualification, namely job misprision and self-righteousness, on workplace behaviors. Employees who perceive their roles as below their qualifications exhibit reduced proactive tendencies and reluctance toward organizational change. Conversely, those who perceive themselves as valued and competent in their positions display proactive behavior and a positive attitude toward organizational change. *Implications for practice.* These findings underscore the significance of recognizing and leveraging the potential of overqualified employees to enhance organizational performance and adaptability. *Value of the results.* This research contributes to the literature by investigating perceived overqualification through two distinct dimensions and highlighting their differential influences on workplace behavior, offering insights for organizational management and human resources practices.

Keywords: perceived overqualification, job-misprision, self-righteousness, proactive work behavior, openness to change.

Introduction

Organizations strive to optimize their resources for enhanced efficiency and effectiveness, seeking a competitive edge over current and potential rivals while ensuring sustained success. As employees are the central element, organizations should invest in fostering the education, skills, and qualifications of their workforce, facilitating motivation and adaptability to tasks. It is also important to mitigate any perception of incompatibility between job requirements and employee qualifications, as feelings of being overqualified or underqualified are likely to detrimentally influence job attitudes and performance.

¹ This paper represents a revised version of a thesis titled “The relationship of perceived overqualification with proactive work behavior and openness to change,” submitted to Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University.

In contemporary workplace, many individuals perceive themselves as highly qualified for their positions, attributing this belief to their educational background, work experience, or other qualifications. This perception often triggers a shift in their attitude towards jobs, emphasizing the crucial concept of “perceived overqualification.” While numerous studies in the literature have traditionally explored perceived overqualification in areas such as education, economics, and organizational behaviour, it has typically been related with negative outcomes. However, recent research has introduced positive perspectives on perceived overqualification, unveiling its regulatory roles and mediating effects.

This study examines the dynamics of perceived overqualification in relation with two pivotal positive concepts in the dynamic business environment: proactive work behaviour and openness to change. Within the study’s framework, perceived overqualification is explored along two distinct dimensions: job misprision and self-righteousness. To conduct the analysis, a questionnaire was created with scales designed to assess these three variables and implemented among individuals working in the public institutions in Istanbul, Türkiye. The data collected was examined through structural equation modelling, utilizing SPSS and AMOS software.

The empirical results highlight contrasting effects of two dimensions of perceived overqualification on proactive work behaviour and openness to change. While job misprision is associated to negative impacts on these workplace behaviours, self-righteousness has a positive influence. This underscores the significance of employees’ perceptions of their overqualification — whether they perceive their job as falling short of their qualifications or view themselves as exceeding the demands of their position — in shaping their behaviours and attitudes within organizations. When individuals feel competent and valued in their roles and organizational settings, they are more likely to engage in proactive behaviours and exhibit positive attitudes toward organizational change.

This study makes a valuable contribution to the existing literature by analysing the relationship between perceived overqualification and two positive workplace concepts: proactive work behaviour and openness to change. Moreover, the examination of perceived overqualification through two distinct dimensions and the identification of divergent impacts represent a notable and novel aspect of this research. These findings have significant policy implications, suggesting that overqualified employees could potentially be highly beneficial for companies if they are appropriately recognized and valued. Contrary to prevailing beliefs in the literature, this highlights the importance of treating overqualified employees as valuable, acknowledging their qualifications, and recognizing their significance to the institution.

Literature review

Perceived overqualification

In today’s business world, companies aim to improve their competitive advantage through effective human resource management strategies. A critical aspect of this is ensuring a proper match between employees’ capabilities and job requirements during the recruitment process. However, challenges may arise when employees view their roles to be below their potential, often resulting in difficulties in meeting job expectations and fulfilling their duties. When they perceive themselves as possessing better education, skills, or qualifications relative to their peers or job requirements, leading to a perception of overqualification for their roles, it could affect job performance, motivation, and overall efficiency positively and negatively.

The concept of overqualification was initially examined in 1976 with the Freeman’s book “The Overeducated American.” Overqualification arises when an individual possesses an excess of

education, knowledge, experience, abilities, and qualifications relative to the demands of a particular position (Freeman, 1976). Since then, this concept has found application across diverse domains like education, economics, organizational behaviour, management, and related organizational studies. L. J. Khan and P. C. Morrow are known as the pioneering scholars who initiated research on overqualification within organizational settings (Khan, Morrow, 1991).

In the scholarly discussions, overqualification is often classified into two dimensions: objective and subjective overqualification (Erdogan et al., 2011). The objective dimension occurs when an employee's education exceeds job requirements (Brynin, Longhi, 2009). Conversely, the subjective dimension pertains to the individual's personal assessments of their education relative to job demands (Akbiyık, 2016). Perceived overqualification is shaped by various antecedents, including age, gender, personality, education, experience, and workplace norms (Varma, Sandhya, 2019). It tends to increase with age (Zhang et al., 2016). Managers often exhibit a lack of alignment between the career progression of female employees and organizational values (Luksyte, Spitzmueller, 2011). E. E. Karaman and N. Çetinkaya explore the relationship between personality and perceived overqualification and present that employees with higher emotional stability are more likely to see themselves as overqualified compared to their peers (Karaman, Çetinkaya, 2019).

Prior studies suggest that individuals may perceive themselves as overqualified despite lacking adequate skills for their current positions (Özkanan, 2018). This tendency often arises from the belief among employees that higher education will improve their qualifications and social status (Karacaoğlu, Arslan, 2019). Moreover, perceived overqualification tends to decrease as employees accumulate more work experience (Peiro et al., 2010). Higher salaries and increased promotion opportunities within a company are associated with a decreased perception of overqualification (Maynard et al., 2006).

Perceived overqualification has predominantly been considered as a negative phenomenon, associated with adverse consequences. Overqualification is linked to decreased organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Maynard et al., 2006; Erdogan, Bauer, 2009; Mutlu, 2013). Some researchers showed a positive relationship between perceived overqualification and turnover intentions (Harari et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2021; Vinayak et al., 2021). Moreover, perceived overqualification reduces both contextual and task performance (Akbiyık, 2016). However, recent studies begun to investigate its potential positive implications. M. J. Zhang with colleagues provide a compelling perspective in their study conducted, suggesting that perceived overqualification is related to proactive behaviour and other favourable behavioural patterns (Zhang et al., 2016). Perceived overqualification may stimulate differentiation or assimilation needs in employees, which in turn positively correlate with proactive and affiliative performance (Ma et al., 2023). A. Lee with colleagues propose opposing effects on task performance (Lee et al., 2021). They suggest that when employees perceive themselves as overqualified, they might experience feelings of resentment and demotivation; however, they are also more likely to master their job-related skills to perform at high levels. These diverse findings underscore the complexity of the relation between perceived overqualification and workplace behaviour and performance.

In this study, we employ the "Perceived Overqualification Scale," initially developed by D. C. Maynard with colleagues (Maynard et al., 2006). Originally, this scale was unidimensional and largely utilized in its original form across the literature. However, B. Yıldız with colleagues proposed a two-dimensional framework for Turkish culture, delineating the dimensions as "self-righteousness" and "job-misprision" (Yıldız et al., 2017). In alignment with this point of view, our study adopts the scale incorporating these two dimensions. We anticipate that these dimensions will have divergent effects on two positive workplace behaviour: proactive work behaviour and openness to change.

Proactive work behaviour

Proactivity is a concept with broad relevance, extending beyond professional domains. People with proactive personalities demonstrate adaptability to change and a willingness to take initiative (Bateman, Crant, 1999). A. M. Grant and S. J. Ashford elaborate on proactivity within the business world, conceptualizing it as a process that involves a comprehensive approach to actions, involving forecasting, planning, and effort to achieve effectiveness (Grant, Ashford, 2008). Proactive behaviour has largely been examined with three primary dimensions: proactive work behaviour, proactive strategic behaviour, and proactive person-environment fit behaviour (Parker, Collins, 2010). Proactive work behaviour involves initiating changes within organizational environment, emphasizing internal improvements (Parker, Collins, 2010). It is explained as self-initiated actions aimed at addressing potential workplace issues pre-emptively (Parker, Bindl, 2017). Proactive strategic behaviour, on the other hand, focuses on directing organizational strategies to adapt to the external environment, including proactive initiatives to seize opportunities and mitigate threats (Parker, Collins, 2010). Lastly, proactive person-environment fit behaviour encompasses modifying oneself or the situational context to improve the compatibility between employee qualifications and the organizational environment, reflecting efforts to align with organizational systems (Parker, Collins, 2010).

In this study, we focus on proactive work behaviour and investigate how perceived over-qualification impacts proactive work behaviour and openness to change. Proactive work behaviour includes four dimensions: taking charge, voice, individual innovation, and problem prevention (Parker, Collins, 2010). Taking charge involves the voluntary and constructive efforts of employees to achieve organizationally functional change in how operations are conducted within the organizational context (Morrison, Phelps, 1999). Voice denotes informal and voluntary communication conveying ideas, suggestions, information, or opinions about problems to employees capable of taking appropriate actions to enhance or modify the organization (Al-Awartani, Alkshali, 2021). Individual innovation aims to positively impact the work environment by recognizing opportunities and implementing new ideas (Scott, Bruce, 1994). Problem prevention is concerned with preventing the recurrence of difficulties and obstacles that may affect current or future workplace tasks (Freese, Fay, 2001).

We employ the “Proactive Work Behaviour Scale,” originally created by S. K. Parker and C. G. Collins (2010). Although the scale originally comprised four dimensions, researchers, who adapted it for Türkiye, recommended a two-dimensional analysis for the Turkish context (Yolcu, Çakmak, 2017). In line with their methodology, our study adopts a two-dimensional framework, where the first dimension emphasizes only voice, while the second dimension incorporates three dimensions from original scale: taking charge, individual innovation, and problem prevention.

Openness to change

Change is an integral aspect of human existence. In the contemporary world, organizations face the challenge of keeping pace with rapid technological advancements and intense competition. Organizational change involves making purposeful adjustments to an organization’s structure, objectives, technology, or operations (Yousef, 2017). This ongoing process revolves around continuous experimentation and adaptation to align with the evolving environment (Burnes, 1996). Hence, organizational change is critical for organizational survival and success.

For an organization to smoothly transition through changes, it is crucial for employees to embrace change and demonstrate adaptability, emphasizing the crucial role of openness to change. Openness to change can be explained as the willingness to support change initiatives (Miller et al., 1994). It reflects cognitive and emotional readiness to accept the change and align their actions with organizational objectives (Holt et al., 2007). Moreover, openness to change has been largely studied across three dimensions in the literature: cognitive attitude, affective attitude, and behavioural attitude toward change (Dunham et al., 1989). Cognitive attitude entails the tendency of employees

to perceive positive outcomes of change. They evaluate the potential organizational or individual impacts of change and convey their support or scepticism to others (Bingül, 2006). An employee's openness to change is largely affected by their cognitive assessment of the change (Dunham et al., 1989). Affective attitude measures the level of employee satisfaction from change. It indicates the level of employee desire for the change, their contentment with the results, and whether they endorse the change to others (Bingül, 2006). Employees with a high affective attitude toward change are enthusiastic about it and anticipate its implementation (Dunham et al., 1989). Behavioural attitude concerns employees' active engagement and participation in the change process. It includes organizational and individual efforts to capitalize on change opportunities, endorse planned initiatives, tackle unforeseen challenges, and anticipate direct benefits for employees (Bingül, 2006).

This study also utilizes the "Openness to Change Scale," which was developed in 1989 and adapted for Turkish in 2006 (Dunham et al., 1989; Bingül, 2006). Turkish version includes three dimensions, consistent with the original scale: cognitive, affective, and behavioural attitudes toward change in the work environment.

Methodology

This research employs a well-structured questionnaire to investigate the relationship between perceived overqualification, proactive work behaviour, and openness to change. It comprises four sections: (1) demographic information, (2) perceived overqualification scale, (3) proactive work behaviour scale, and (4) openness to change scale². The questionnaire was administered from April to June 2022, employing a random sampling method. A total of 268 participants from diverse occupations within the public sector in Istanbul, Türkiye, were included in the study³.

The initial section of the questionnaire comprises six questions to collect demographic information from participants, covering gender, age, marital status, education level, current position tenure, and current institution tenure. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the sample. The data reveals a male majority of 61,9%. Participant ages are categorized into four groups, with the highest percentage (43,3%) falling within the 36-45 age range. Marital status indicates that 67,5% are married, while 32,5% are single. Regarding educational levels, the majority holds bachelor's degrees (6.1%).

Table 1. Sample descriptive statistics

Demographic characteristics	Answer categories	Percentage
Gender	Male	61.9
	Female	38.1
Age	18-25	8.2
	26-35	28.7
	36-45	43.3
	46+	19.8
Marital status	Single	32.5
	Couple	67.5
Educational level	Secondary	.7
	High school	6.0
	Associate degree	8.2
	Bachelor's degree	6.1
	Master's degree	22.0
	Doctoral degree	3.0

² The English translations for each section are available in Table 1 through Table 4.

³ Data collection was conducted through Google Forms, with participants being fully informed about the research and voluntarily choosing to complete the questionnaire online.

Current position tenure	0-1 years	11.9
	2-5 years	18.3
	6-10 years	17.5
	10+ years	52.2
Current institution tenure	0-1 years	16.0
	2-5 years	17.5
	6-10 years	2.1
	10+ years	46.3

Note: The sample includes 268 participants.

Examining employment duration, 52,2% have been in the current position for 10+ years, and 46,3% have worked in the current institution for 10+ years, representing the highest percentages. These sample statistics suggest that our sample closely aligns with the population distribution of public servants in Istanbul, Türkiye.

Table 2. The scale of perceived overqualification ($N = 268$)

Item	Statement	Mean	S.D.
POQ1 (jm)	My job requires less education than I have.	2.16	1.19
POQ2 (jm)	The work experience that I have is not necessary to be successful on this job.	1.81	.96
POQ3 (jm)	I have job skills that are not required for this job.	3.22	1.26
POQ4 (jm)	Someone with less education than myself could perform well on my job.	2.47	1.28
POQ5 (jm)	My previous training is not being fully utilized on this job.	2.92	1.24
POQ6 (sr)	I have a lot of knowledge that I do not need in order to do my job.	3.45	1.11
POQ7 (sr)	My education level is above the education level required by my job.	3.46	1.18
POQ8 (jm)	Someone with less work experience than myself could do my job just as well.	2.56	1.26
POQ9 (sr)	I have more abilities than I need in order to do my job.	3.66	1.00

Note: In the table, (jm) represents job-misprision dimension, and (sr) represents self-righteousness dimension.

In the second section, the questionnaire integrates nine statements from the “Perceived Overqualification Scale” (Maynard et al., 2006). Although the original scale is one-dimensional, a two-dimensional approach for Turkish culture was proposed, identifying the dimensions as “job-misprision” and “self-righteousness” (Yıldız et al., 2017). This study considers the perceived overqualification scale with these two dimensions. Among nine statements, six are designated to measure job misprision, while three assess self-righteousness. The scale employs a five-point Likert-type ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). These nine statements are presented in Table 2.

The third section encompasses thirteen statements from the Turkish version of the “Proactive Work Behaviour Scale” (Parker; Collins, 2010; Yolcu, Çakmak, 2017). While the scale initially structured with four dimensions, a two-dimensional analysis for the Turkish context was recommended (Yolcu, Çakmak, 2017). In line with their approach, this study adopts a two-dimensional framework. The first includes three dimensions from the original scale: taking charge, individual innovation, and problem prevention, comprising nine statements. The second focuses on a singular dimension, voice, with four statements. This scale utilizes a five-point Likert-type structure, ranging from rarely (1) to usually (5). The scale statements are presented in Table 3.

The final section has eighteen questions from the Turkish adaptation of the “Openness to Change Scale” (Dunham et al., 1989; Bingöl, 2006). The scale is organized into three dimensions, each comprising six questions: cognitive attitude, affective attitude, and behavioural attitude. It also has a five-point Likert-type format, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The statements comprising the openness to change scale are shown in Table 4.

Table 3. The scale of proactive work behaviour ($N = 268$)

Item	Statement	Mean	S.D.
PWB1 (td)	I try to develop processes and systems that will be effective in the long term, even if it slows down work initially.	3.56	.88
PWB2 (td)	I try to find the root cause of things going wrong.	4.12	.73
PWB3 (td)	I dedicate time to planning to prevent problems from recurring.	4.06	.76
PWB4 (td)	I generate creative ideas.	3.72	1.02
PWB5 (td)	I explore newer ways of doing work.	3.63	1.03
PWB6 (td)	I communicate to spread my ideas and seek support.	3.71	1.02
PWB7 (vo)	At the workplace, I share my views on work-related matters, even if others' opinions differ.	3.70	.90
PWB8 (vo)	I speak up about matters that concern me and encourage others to do the same.	3.76	.94
PWB9 (vo)	I keep my knowledge up-to-date on issues where my views would be beneficial for the workplace.	3.94	.86
PWB10 (vo)	I suggest changes or new ideas related to the way work is done.	3.68	.87
PWB11 (td)	I try to make improvements in the way work is done.	3.91	.76
PWB12 (td)	I try to build new methods of work that are more effective.	3.59	.96
PWB13 (td)	I apply solutions for urgent organizational problems.	3.73	.91

Note: In the table, (vo) represents voice dimension, and (td) represents three-dimensions which consists of taking charge, individual innovation and problem prevention.

Table 4. The scale of openness to change ($N = 268$)

Item	Statement	Mean	S.D.
OTC1 (co)	Change usually benefits the organization.	3.88	.85
OTC2 (af)*	I don't like changes.	2.14	.98
OTC3 (af)*	Most changes at work are irritating.	2.35	.97
OTC4 (af)	I often suggest new approaches to things.	3.84	.85
OTC5 (af)*	Change frustrates me.	2.94	1.13
OTC6 (af)*	I usually hesitate to try new ideas.	2.52	1.00
OTC7 (co)	I look forward to changes at work.	3.50	.93
OTC8 (af)*	I usually resist new ideas.	2.16	.93
OTC9 (co)	Most of my co-workers benefit from change.	3.43	.88
OTC10 (co)	I am inclined to try new ideas.	3.83	.78
OTC11 (co)	I usually support new ideas.	3.78	.87
OTC12 (co)	Other people think that I support change.	3.58	.82
OTC13 (be)	Change often helps me perform better.	3.72	.83
OTC14 (be)	Changes tend to stimulate me.	3.73	.81
OTC15 (be)	Changes usually helps improve unsatisfactory situations at work.	3.71	.86
OTC16 (be)	I intend to do whatever possible to support change.	3.63	.88
OTC17 (be)	I usually benefit from change.	3.50	.83
OTC18 (be)	I find most changes to be pleasing.	3.65	.88

Note: In the table, (af) represents affective attitude, (co) represents cognitive attitude, and (be) represents behavioural attitude. Five questions with * are reverse-coded.

In the study, we utilized structural equation modelling (SEM), which is an analysis method used to examine the structural relationships between observed and latent variables. SEM typically consists of two components: the measurement model and the structural model (Anderson, Gerbing, 1988). In the initial step of the analysis, the measurement models are tested in terms of the reliability and validity of the scales; and then the structural model is formed and the connections between variables are investigated. In this analysis, we employed SPSS and AMOS statistical programs to assess the scales measuring perceived overqualification, proactive work behaviour, and openness to change, and to examine the relationship among these variables and their dimensions.

Empirical findings

We began our analysis by evaluating the reliability and validity of our three scales — perceived overqualification, proactive work behaviour, and openness to change. The reliability analysis, employing Cronbach's Alpha method, investigate the internal consistency within the scale. A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient exceeding .70 is widely accepted as an indication of satisfactory internal consistency across the items in the scale (Cronbach, 1951; Nunnally and Bernstein, 1978).

Table 5. Statistical values for model evaluations

Statistical indicator	Good fit	Acceptable fit
χ^2/df	$0 \leq \chi^2/df \leq 2$	$2 \leq \chi^2/df \leq 3$
GFI		
AGFI		
CFI		
RMSEA		

Source: Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger, and Müller (2003).

The validity of the scales was explored through confirmatory factor analysis, wherein the goodness-of-fit of the measurement model was tested using χ^2/df (chi-square per degree of freedom), GFI (goodness of fit index), AGFI (adjustment goodness of fit index), CFI (comparative fit index), as well as RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation). The statistical values for the model goodness-of-fit indices recommended from the literature are provided in Table 5.

Perceived overqualification scale

The reliability analysis of the perceived overqualification scale reveals a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .79 for the 9 items. This value implies that the scale is reliable, as the coefficient surpasses the widely accepted threshold of .7. This calculated coefficient underscores the presence of internal consistency within the scale.

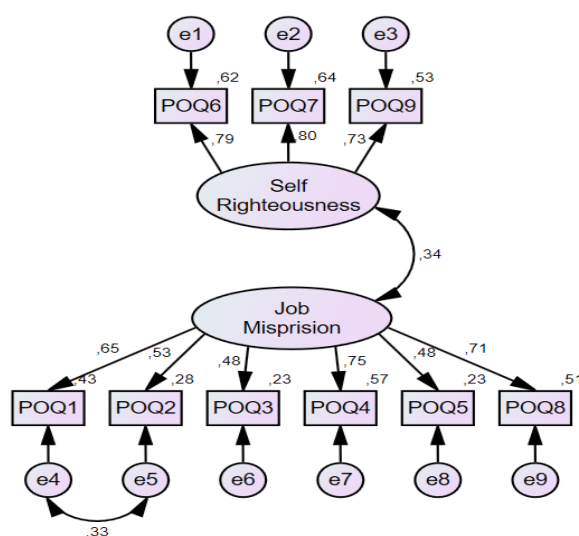


Figure 1. The measurement model of the Perceived Overqualification Scale

Following that, confirmatory factor analysis was executed by developing and testing a model with the AMOS program. The model fit indices of the model are close, but they still fall short of reaching satisfactory levels: $\chi^2/df = 3,148$; GFI = .935; AGFI = .888; CFI = .923; and RMSEA = .09. In efforts to enhance the goodness-of-fit for the model, we examined factor loadings, standardized

residuals, and modification indices, following recommendations from the literature (Awang, 2012). Modification indices from this initial model suggested covarying two error terms, e4 and e5, due to their highest covariance. Hence, these error terms were covaried, and then the model was retested. The fit indices of the modified model improved to $\chi^2/df = 2,424$; GFI = .951; AGFI = .912; CFI = .951; and RMSEA = .073. These values indicate that the new model is acceptable. Figure 1 presents the measurement model with standardized estimates.

Proactive work behaviour scale

To assess the reliability of the proactive work behaviour scale, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was computed for its 13 scale items, resulting in a value of .917. This result highlights the scale's high reliability and strong internal consistency.

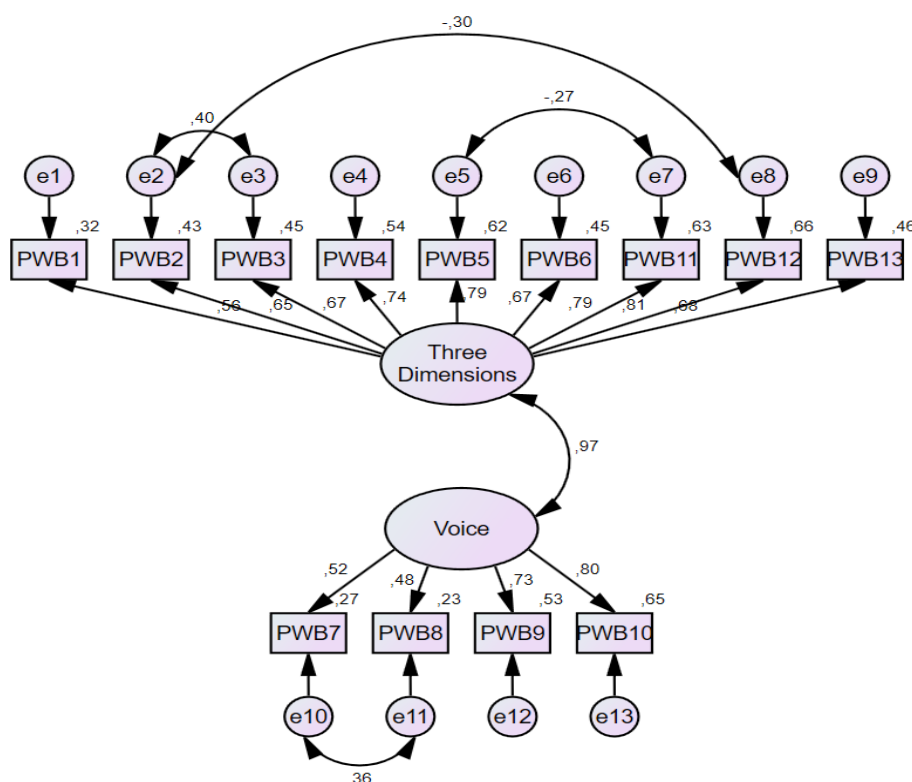


Figure 2. The measurement model of the PWB Scale

To conduct the confirmatory factor analysis, we formulated and tested a measurement model. The initial model's fit indices are as follows: $\chi^2/df = 4,137$; GFI = .866; AGFI = .810; CFI = .889; and RMSEA = .108. Given that these values do not meet satisfactory levels, we explored the possible adjustments to improve its goodness-of-fit. In line with the literature, we incrementally integrated covariance between error terms exhibiting the highest modification indices, namely, between e2 and e3, e10 and e11, e2 and e8, as well as e5 and e7. Retesting this revised model yielded improved fit indices of $\chi^2/df = 2,351$; GFI = .927; AGFI = .889; CFI = .955; and RMSEA = .071. These findings confirm the acceptability of the modified model, which is shown in Figure 2 along with standardized estimates.

Openness to change scale

The openness to change scale, comprising 18 items, exhibits a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .928. This high value suggests a strong internal consistency, affirming the reliability of the scale.

In the confirmatory factor analysis of the scale, testing of the initial measurement model revealed that while some fit indices were at an acceptable level, others deviated: $\chi^2/df = 2,722$; GFI = .868;

AGFI = .829; CFI = .922; and RMSEA = .08. Following literature suggestions, some adjustments were implemented, starting with the introduction of covariance between error terms e11 and e12, and e14 and e15, both indicating very high modification indices. Next, an item, OTC4, was excluded due to high standardized residual covariances with other items. Then, e4 and e5 were also covaried. The model fit indices after these modifications became acceptable with $\chi^2/df = 2,231$; GFI = .903; AGFI = .868; CFI = .951; RMSEA = .068. Figure 3 illustrates the modified measurement model and the associated standardized estimates.

Structural analysis

Our analysis commences with the formulation of two primary hypotheses, aiming to uncover connections among perceived overqualification, proactive work behaviour, and openness to change:

H1. Perceived overqualification has a significant effect on proactive work behaviour.

H2. Perceived overqualification has a significant effect on openness to change.

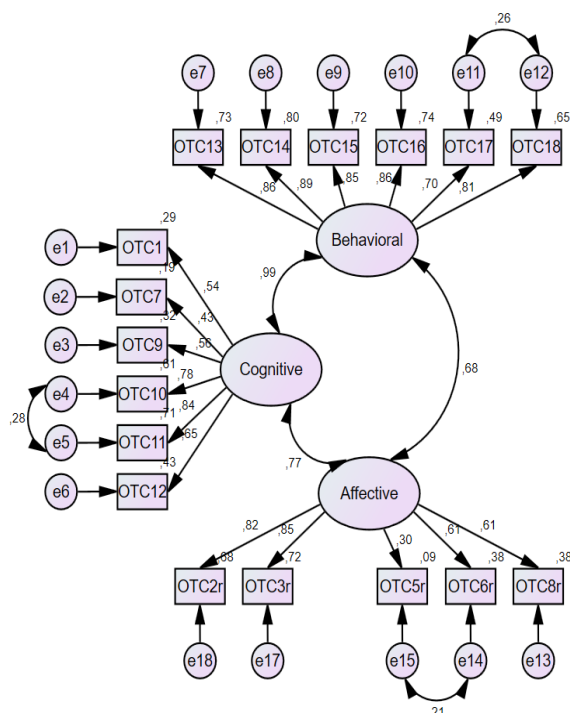


Figure 3. The measurement model of the OTC Scale

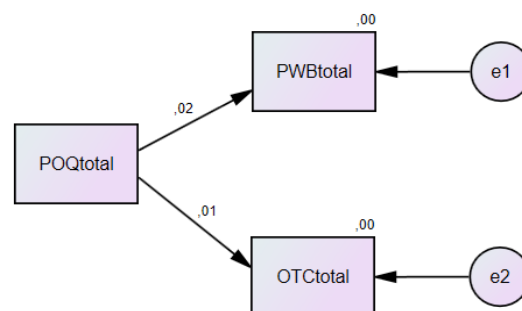


Figure 4. The structural model between POQ, PWB, and OTC

In evaluating these hypotheses, we employed a structural model through the AMOS statistical program, illustrated in Figure 4. The model involves the three variables — POQtotal, PWBtotal, and OTCTotal — constructed by adding up the relevant items from each scale. The findings, provided in Model-1 of Table 6, indicate a lack of significant relationships between perceived overqualification and both proactive work behaviour and openness to change.

Table 6. The influence of perceived overqualification on proactive work behaviour and openness to change

	Model-1	S. Estimate	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p
PWBtotal	<--- POQtotal	.024	.031	.079	.392	.695
OTCTotal	<--- POQtotal	.011	.017	.099	.175	.861
	Model-2	S. Estimate	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p
PWBtotal	<--- POQjm	-.286	-.477	.097	-4.891	***
OTCTotal	<--- POQjm	-.197	-.411	.129	-3.183	***
PWBtotal	<--- POQsr	.416	1.224	.172	7.131	***
OTCTotal	<--- POQsr	.278	1.024	.227	4.503	***
POQjm	<--> POQsr	.316	4.386	.892	4.917	***

	Model-3	S. Estimate	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p
PWBvo	<--- POQjm	-.180	-.100	.034	-2.913	***
PWBtd	<--- POQjm	-.310	-.377	.070	-5.389	***
PWBvo	<--- POQsr	.294	.288	.061	4.761	***
PWBtd	<--- POQsr	.438	.935	.123	7.603	***
OTCaf	<--- POQjm	-.202	-.148	.046	-3.255	***
OTCbe	<--- POQjm	-.162	-.143	.055	-2.596	***
OTCco	<--- POQjm	-.161	-.120	.046	-2.580	***
OTCaf	<--- POQsr	.246	.317	.080	3.950	***
OTCbe	<--- POQsr	.246	.382	.097	3.942	***
OTCco	<--- POQsr	.248	.325	.082	3.973	***
POQjm	<--> POQsr	.316	4.386	.892	4.917	***

Note: The sample includes 268 participants. *** — shows significance at 1 percent.

As we expected an opposite influence of two dimensions of perceived overqualification — job-misprision (POQjm) and self-righteousness (POQsr) — on proactive work behaviour and openness to change, this result is not particularly surprising. Therefore, we moved forward to develop a structural model incorporating these two dimensions, as displayed in Figure 5, to examine the following four sub-hypotheses:

H1.1. Job-misprision has a negative significant influence on proactive work behaviour.

H1.2. Self-righteousness has a positive significant influence on proactive work behaviour.

H2.1. Job-misprision has a negative significant influence on openness to change.

H2.2. Self-righteousness has a positive significant influence on openness to change.

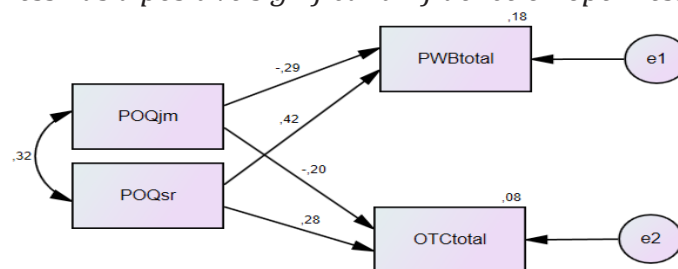


Figure 5. The structural model between perceived overqualification dimensions, proactive work behaviour and openness to change

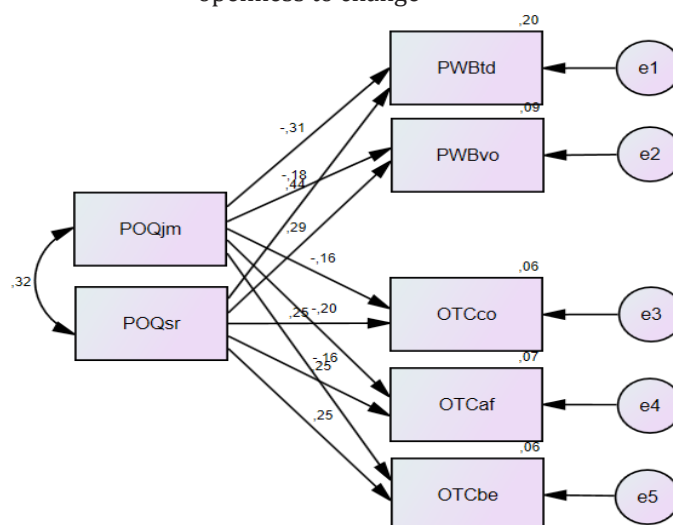


Figure 6. The structural model between the dimensions of perceived overqualification, proactive work behaviour and openness to change

Model-2 of Table 6 provides evidence confirming our hypotheses. The results imply that job misprision dimension demonstrates negative impacts on both proactive work behaviour and openness to change, with standardized estimates of $-.286$ and $-.197$, having statistical significance at the 1 percent level. Conversely, self-righteousness dimension exerts positive effects, exhibiting larger standardized estimates of $.416$ and $.278$, respectively.

We proceed with our analysis by exploring the associations among the dimensions of our three variables. We construct a structural model, depicted in Figure 6, which integrates two dimensions of perceived overqualification — job misprision and self-righteousness — alongside two dimensions of proactive work behaviour — voice (PWBvo) and three-dimensions (PWBtd) which encompasses individual innovation, taking charge, and problem prevention — and three dimensions of openness to change — affective attitude (OTCaf), behavioural attitude (OTCbe), and cognitive attitude (OTCco).

Model-3 of Table 6 shows that job misprision significantly and adversely influences each dimension of proactive work behaviour and openness to change, whereas self-righteousness positively influences each of their dimensions. Notably, the effects of self-righteousness on these dimensions appear to be slightly more pronounced.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study investigates the dynamics between perceived overqualification, proactive work behaviour, and openness to change, utilizing a questionnaire distributed to public sector employees in Istanbul, Turkiye. The questionnaire encompasses scales measuring perceived overqualification, proactive work behaviour, and openness to change. Our empirical analysis, employing structural equation modelling, unravels the connections between these variables.

The findings demonstrate that perceived overqualification does not exhibit a significant relationship with proactive work behaviour and openness to change overall. However, upon closer examination, it becomes evident that the two dimensions of perceived overqualification, namely “job-misprision” and “self-righteousness,” exert divergent influences. The job-misprision dimension negatively influences proactive work behaviour and openness to change, whereas the self-righteousness dimension yields positive influences. These opposing relationships persist across the dimensions of proactive work behaviour and openness to change.

This suggests that when employees perceive their jobs as below their qualifications, their proactive engagement within the organization, such as taking initiative, problem-solving, or proposing innovative ideas, tends to diminish. They could refrain to express their opinions beneficial to the organization. Job misprision also adversely predicts employees’ cognitive, affective, and behavioural attitudes toward change at work, leading to anticipation of negative outcomes, feelings of dissatisfaction, and reluctance to involve in change process. In contrast, when employees perceive themselves as more qualified than their job requirements, they tend to show higher levels of proactivity within their organization. This is evident in various ways, including addressing potential challenges to prevent their recurrence, sharing their suggestions on organizational issues, and actively seeking opportunities for improvement. Self-righteous employees also exhibit positive attitudes toward change, being more open to it, experiencing greater satisfaction, and being more willing to engage in organizational change initiatives.

Based on the empirical findings of this study, we propose several recommendations for organizations encountering overqualified employees or individuals who perceive themselves as such. It is essential for organizations to cultivate an environment where these employees feel esteemed and appreciated, rather than undervalued in their roles. To achieve this, organizations might assign

additional responsibilities or offer specialized developmental opportunities that align with their skill sets, thus reinforce their sense of worth and value within the organizational context.

Furthermore, building a culture centred around open communication and idea-sharing can be crucial in leveraging the potential of overqualified staff members. Organizations should create inclusive environment where their employees feel confident in sharing their thoughts and suggestions. They may provide platforms for collaborative discussions to foster innovation and creativity. Moreover, empowering these overqualified employees to take on leadership roles and drive innovative projects can enhance their sense of belonging and dedication to organizational goals.

When organizations succeed in fostering a sense of self-worth, appreciation, and value among overqualified employees, they are more inclined to embrace change, drive innovation, and exhibit proactive behaviour. This environment cultivates a mutually beneficial relationship wherein overqualified employees feel motivated to contribute their expertise and creativity, ultimately driving organizational success.

This study is limited to public sector employees in Istanbul, Turkiye. While this specific context offers valuable insights, the findings may not fully reflect the experiences of employees in other sectors, cultures, or countries. Future research could broaden the scope by including private sector employees, exploring diverse industries, and conducting international studies to enhance the generalizability of the results and uncover potential contextual differences.

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Воспринимаемая избыточная квалификация: взаимосвязь с проактивным рабочим поведением и открытостью к изменениям

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Аннотация. *Цель.* В данном исследовании рассматривается взаимосвязь между воспринимаемой избыточной квалификацией (*perceived overqualification*) и двумя важными аспектами рабочего поведения: проактивным рабочим поведением (*proactive work behavior*) и открытостью к изменениям (*openness to change*). *Исследовательский подход.* Данные были собраны с помощью анкеты на выборке из 268 сотрудников государственного сектора в Стамбуле, Турция. Собранные данные были проанализированы с помощью моделирования структурными уравнениями. *Результаты.* Эмпирические результаты обнаруживают различные связи с этими аспектами двух измерений воспринимаемой избыточной квалификации, а именно: недооценённости на работе (*job misprision*) и самодовольства (*self-righteousness*). Когда сотрудники считают, что их работа не соответствует их квалификации, это негативно сказывается на их проактивных действиях на рабочем месте и на их готовности принимать организационные изменения. Напротив, сотрудники, которые воспринимают себя как компетентных и ценных для своей роли, демонстрируют проактивное поведение и положительное отношение к изменениям в рабочей среде. Эти выводы подчёркивают важность признания и использования потенциала сотрудников с избыточной квалификацией для повышения производительности и адаптируемости организации. *Ценность результатов.* Данное исследование вносит вклад в научную литературу, благодаря изучению двух различных измерений воспринимаемой избыточной квалификации и их связи с рабочим поведением, а также предлагая новые идеи для управления организацией в целом и совершенствования практик управления персоналом.

Ключевые слова: воспринимаемая избыточная квалификация, недооценённость на работе, самодовольство, проактивное рабочее поведение, открытость к изменениям.