

Too Good for Your Job? An Agentic and Resource-Oriented Perspective on Overqualification

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Overqualification—where individuals possess more qualifications, skills, or experience than their jobs require—has become a widespread phenomenon in the labor market. In Switzerland, approximately 18% of employees with a tertiary degree work in jobs that do not require one, with similar figures reported in other industrialized countries. To date, research has primarily adopted a stress-oriented perspective, portraying overqualification as a work stressor linked to various negative behavioral, cognitive, and affective outcomes, such as lower job satisfaction, higher turnover intentions, and increased counterproductive work behaviors. In contrast, my research takes an adaptive and resource-oriented perspective, complementing and shifting the traditional stressor-based view. Specifically, I examine overqualification through an agentic lens and within the framework of resource theories. In this talk, I will present studies demonstrating when and how overqualified individuals engage in job crafting as a proactive job redesign strategy. I will also explore how perceiving one's job as societally useful can mitigate the negative effects of overqualification. Furthermore, I will illustrate how overqualification can serve as a resource, helping individuals better manage daily workplace interruptions and facilitating women's re-entry into organizations after maternity leave. Taken together, my research highlights the need for an agentic, resource-oriented perspective to develop a more nuanced understanding of overqualification. From a practical standpoint, my findings suggest that (a) overqualification can offer advantages in certain contexts and (b) overqualified employees, if properly managed, can be valuable assets to organizations.