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ORIGINAL PAPER

The Power of Doing: How Job Crafting Transmits the Beneficial Impact of Autonomy Among Overqualified Employees

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Abstract

Overqualified individuals have more experience, KSAs (knowledge, skills, abilities), and/or education than what is needed in their job. Prior research has identified autonomy as a work characteristic that helps individuals deal with overqualification; yet, it remains unclear as to why this is the case. The goal of the present study was to identify the mechanism through which autonomy exerts its beneficial impact. Drawing on the literatures of person-environment fit and proactivity, we first hypothesized that, in addition to autonomy, job crafting likewise moderates the relationship between overqualification and both withdrawal and turnover intention as central outcomes. Job crafting denotes a proactive type of behavior whereby individuals change the boundaries of their jobs. Next, we hypothesized that job crafting is positively related to autonomy, and that job crafting represents the key mechanism through which autonomy moderates the overqualification-outcome relationship. In a multisource sample of 226 employee-supervisor dyads, we found that overqualified employees were significantly more likely to withdraw from their work and intend to exit if (a) their job provided little autonomy or (b) if they engaged in low levels of job crafting. When individuals experienced high levels of autonomy or engaged in high levels of job crafting, the overqualification-outcome relationship was reversed (or non-significant). Moreover, autonomy was positively related to job crafting. Finally, we found evidence for mediated moderation, such that the moderating effect of autonomy on the relationship between overqualification and both withdrawal and turnover intention was transmitted through job crafting. We discuss theoretical and practical implications.

Keywords Overqualification · Job crafting · Autonomy · Job design

Many individuals nowadays find themselves in jobs that they need, but for which they are overqualified; that is, their experience, KSAs (knowledge, skills, abilities), and/or education exceed the demands of their job (e.g., Maynard et al. 2006). Current statistics reveal that overqualification is a pervasive global phenomenon, ranging from one quarter of the workforce in Luxemburg and Denmark, and up to more than three quarters of the workforce in countries such as Turkey and China (e.g., Randstad 2012). Concerning overqualification and its correlates, Person (P)-Environment (E) Fit theory suggests that excess abilities (used as a generic term that subsumes all kinds of qualifications and skills, Edwards et al. 2006) may be differentially related to central outcomes depending on how individuals can use these abilities in a given situation (e.g., Edwards 1996; Van Harrison 1978).

Thus far, several studies have highlighted the important role of the work environment in shaping reactions to overqualification. One work characteristic that has been repeatedly demonstrated to be particularly helpful in this context is autonomy which refers to the extent to which a job allows employees to take control over how they plan and execute their tasks (e.g., Morgeson and Humphrey 2006). In particular, Wu et al. (2015) demonstrated that individuals who perceived themselves to be overqualified only experienced a decrement in well-being if they encountered low autonomy at work. In another study, perceived overqualification was only negatively related to adaptive behavior when autonomy was low (Wu et al. 2017). Inherent to theoretical assumptions about the beneficial impact of autonomy is the idea that this

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job characteristic may provide employees an opportunity to actively deal with potentially suboptimal work situations, such as overqualification (Parker and Sprigg 1999; Wu et al. 2015; Wu et al. 2017). To date, however, we know relatively little about how overqualified individuals may in fact enact high levels of autonomy at their workplace. Hence, it remains unclear through which mechanism autonomy may exert its moderating impact and why exactly it is such a helpful job characteristic for overqualified employees.

In the present study, we address the above gap by drawing on P-E fit theory (e.g., Edwards 1996; French Jr. et al. 1982) and the proactivity literature (e.g., Frese et al. 2007; Parker and Sprigg 1999). In particular, and as a prerequisite to the above notion of an underlying mechanism, we first introduce job crafting as an additional moderator of the overqualification-outcome link. In contrast to autonomy which describes what a job is like, job crafting refers to a kind of behavior that a jobholder is executing. In particular, job crafting is a proactive type of behavior whereby individuals change the "task or relational boundaries of their work" (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001, p. 179). By locally redesigning their jobs, employees can better customize their work according to their needs and make it more meaningful (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001). Thus, in addition to autonomy, engaging in job crafting may likewise help employees to better manage a situation of overqualification.

Next, we build upon Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) notion that individuals are more likely to engage in job crafting if their environment provides them with the autonomy to do so—thus, suggesting that autonomy will be a predictor of job crafting (for initial evidence on the relationship between autonomy and job crafting see Leana et al. 2009). Integrating our previous arguments, we argue that a situation of mediated moderation will occur, such that the moderating effect of autonomy should be transmitted via job crafting. In terms of outcome variables, we examine turnover intention and withdrawal because they have been identified as central outcomes in overqualification research (e.g., Harari et al. 2017). Due to the fact that these outcomes can be harmful and costly, both are also particularly important from an organizational perspective. Figure 1 displays the theoretical model.

Our study extends the literature in several ways. First, we draw from two largely unexplored concepts within P-E fit theory: interference and carryover. In particular, we argue that with higher levels of autonomy or job crafting, being overqualified does not have to interfere with an individual's needs to grow and develop; instead, a transfer of abilities to alternative tasks can emerge. Thus, overqualification will be negatively related to both turnover intention and withdrawal at higher levels of both autonomy and job crafting, but will be positively related at lower levels of these constructs. In making this argument, we underscore the crucial role of boundary conditions that P-E fit scholars have urged researchers to consider (e.g., Edwards 1996; Edwards et al. 1998) and also add job crafting as an additional moderator of the overqualification-outcome link. Second, we extend the literature by revealing the mechanism through which autonomy exerts its beneficial moderating impact in the context of overqualification. In doing so, we address Wu et al.'s (2015) assertion that examining job crafting as the missing link will deepen our understanding of how autonomy is behaviorally enacted and how it can help overqualified individuals deal with such a potentially suboptimal work situation (see also Kulkarni et al. 2015; Wu et al. 2017).

Finally, our study offers a relatively unique approach to the study of overqualification and autonomy. In particular, we tested our hypotheses with multisource data among a sample

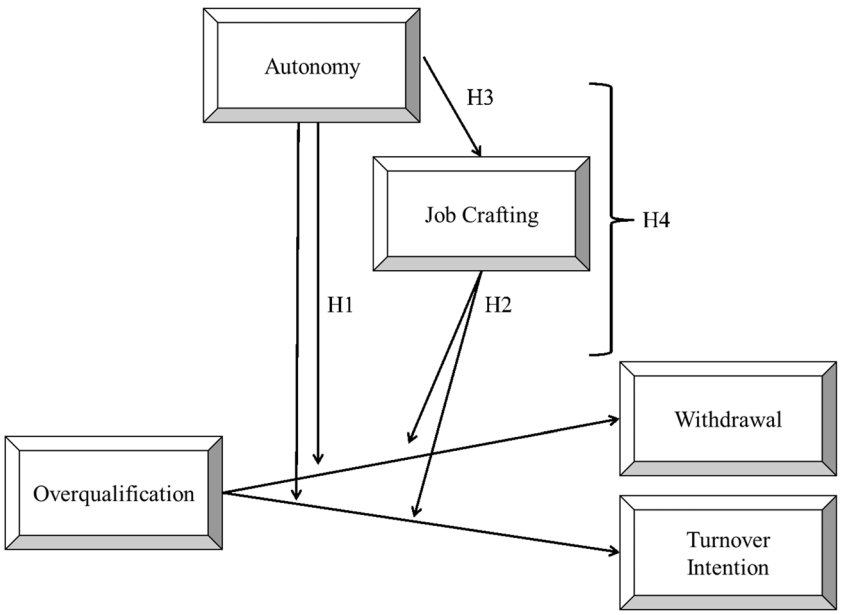

Fig. 1 Conceptual model

of 226 employee-supervisor dyads, whereby supervisors provided ratings of the respective employee's level of overqualification and their autonomy. We did so because supervisors are usually well-acquainted with their employees' job situation, making them particularly well-suited to provide information on their employees' qualification and autonomy levels (Conway and Lance 2010; Semmer et al. 2004; Spector 1992). Moreover, scholars have oftentimes cautioned researchers that incumbent self-reports of the job situation may be distorted by situational and personal characteristics, reverse causation (i.e., employees may attribute their feelings and attitudes to the job situation), as well as response styles of the respective incumbent (i.e., acquiescence, social desirability) (e.g., Semmer et al. 2004; Spector 1992). By using supervisor ratings, we may thus reduce the potential risk of overestimating relationships with self-reported withdrawal and turnover intention in the present study (e.g., Semmer et al. 2004; Spector et al. 1988).

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Explaining Overqualification Using the P-E Fit Model

The framework of P-E fit rests on the notion that fit (or match) between commensurate characteristics of the person and environment result in favorable outcomes (e.g., Edwards 2008; Edwards et al. 1998). Over the years, different conceptualizations and literatures of P-E fit have emerged, such that researchers nowadays largely differentiate between person-vocation, person-organization, person-group, person-job, and person-supervisor fit (Kristof-Brown et al. 2005). Overqualification has been repeatedly viewed as a type of person-job misfit (e.g., Erdogan et al. 2011; Luksyte and Spitzmueller 2016), whereby a person's qualifications exceed the demands of the respective job. This particular type of person-job (mis)fit has also been termed demands-abilities (mis)fit (e.g., Edwards et al. 2006).

Theoretical propositions are relatively clear on the notion that excess demands (relative to a person's abilities) will result in detrimental outcomes because they overtax an individual's capabilities. However, with regard to the degree to which abilities exceed demands, the theory makes different predictions depending on how these excess abilities are used in a specific situation (e.g., Edwards 1996; Van Harrison 1978). Most pertinent to the context of overqualification are the concepts of *interference* and *carryover* (e.g., Edwards 1996). According to the concept of interference, detrimental outcomes will increase as abilities exceed demands if excess abilities create insufficient supplies for motives; development and growth thus will be hampered. In contrast, the concept of carryover suggests that detrimental outcomes will diminish (as abilities exceed demands), if excess abilities can be invested in other tasks and activities.

In light of these propositions, it is not surprising that oftentimes researchers have highlighted the critical role of moderator variables when predicting outcomes of overqualification (e.g., Erdogan and Bauer 2009; Luksyte and Spitzmueller 2016). Building upon P-E fit theory (e.g., Edwards 1996) and prior research (e.g., Wu et al. 2015), we argue that autonomy and job crafting constitute two ways in which overqualified individuals may satisfy some of their unmet needs and may make alternative use of their excess abilities, apart from their actual core job tasks. Thus, at higher levels of autonomy and job crafting, an interference with personal needs should be inhibited, and a carryover of abilities should emerge.

As briefly mentioned, we specifically focus on *withdrawal* and *turnover intention* (i.e., a person's conscious and deliberate willingness to leave the organization; e.g., Steel and Lounsbury 2009) as outcomes. In line with Spector et al. (2006), we conceptualize withdrawal as a form of deviant behavior that restricts the amount of working time to less than is required by the organization, thus comprising behaviors related to absenteeism and lateness. The construct constitutes a form of counterproductive work behavior by which employees try to escape the work situation; thus, it is different from other types of deviant behavior by which employees intend to do direct harm to the company and/or coworkers (e.g., sabotage or theft) (Spector et al. 2006). In fact, scholars (e.g., Hanisch and Hulin 1991) have also conceptualized withdrawal to additionally include unfavorable job behaviors (e.g., deliberately doing poor quality work). Yet, Spector et al. (2006) demonstrated that withdrawal and other deviant behaviors had differential relationships with predictors and outcomes. Most pertinent to the present study, withdrawal has a unique relationship with boredom, which has been linked to overqualification (Watt and Hargis 2010).

Both withdrawal and turnover intention are of great importance to organizations. First, because overqualified employees can be a valuable asset for organizations (e.g., Erdogan et al. 2011), organizations should be particularly keen to retain these employees and prevent them from engaging in withdrawal behaviors. Furthermore, employees who intend to leave the organization are less motivated to give their best at work, such that job performance may suffer too (Hui et al. 2007). Also, since turnover intention is the key predictor of actual turnover, companies would be tasked with starting a recruitment process, which is often time- and cost-intensive (e.g., Reh 2018). In a related vein, Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) demonstrated in their meta-analysis that person-job misfit (which we examine in the form of overqualification in the present study) has a moderate strength relationship with turnover intention ($\rho = -.46$), an effect size similar to that of person-organization fit with turnover intention ($\rho = -.47$). Hence, organizations should be particularly motivated to avoid both turnover intentions and withdrawal.

The Moderating Role of Autonomy

Job design and stress models provide two major lines of reasoning for why autonomy constitutes a beneficial job characteristic in dealing with situations of misfit, such as overqualification in the present case. First, according to the job characteristics model (Hackman and Oldham 1976), autonomy is a key job feature which increases individuals' sense of responsibility and thus contributes to higher work motivation. In a similar vein, Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) argue that jobs are enriched and more motivating if autonomy is present. In fact, research has demonstrated that overqualified individuals experience that their needs are unmet (Luksyte et al. 2011). Thus, being able to decide how to carry out their work may provide these individuals with the desired responsibility and freedom that would otherwise have occurred with a position that better matches their abilities.

Second, the job demands-control (JD-C, Karasek 1979) and the job demands-resources (JD-R, Demerouti et al. 2001) models suggest that autonomy represents a pivotal job resource that aids individuals in achieving their goals, and in dealing with potentially unfavorable job conditions. Thus, by having higher autonomy, overqualified individuals may take appropriate steps to actively manage their job situation, such that excess abilities can be channeled in a constructive way (e.g., Parker and Sprigg 1999; Wu et al. 2015).

Taken together, one may thus assume that due to the motivating and satisfying role of autonomy, a potential interference effect (as suggested by the P-E fit model) would be inhibited. At the same time, the enabling and activating role of autonomy may allow overqualified individuals to apply their surplus abilities to actively manage their situation outside their prescribed role boundaries, thus suggesting a potential carryover effect. Accordingly, we propose that autonomy moderates the relationship between overqualification and both withdrawal and turnover intention, such that this relationship will be negative at higher levels of autonomy and positive at lower levels of autonomy. As mentioned earlier, the moderating role of autonomy has received preliminary support in two recent studies by Wu et al. (2015, 2017). Our study will extend these findings by examining withdrawal as a behavioral outcome and turnover intention as a behavioral intention outcome (Ajzen 1991). Thus, we will be able to generalize findings on the beneficial effects of autonomy to additional outcome variables.

> Hypothesis 1: Autonomy moderates the relationship between overqualification and both (a) withdrawal and (b) turnover intention. At higher levels of autonomy, the relationship between overqualification and both (a) withdrawal and (b) turnover intention will be negative, whereas at lower levels of autonomy this relationship will be positive.

The Moderating Role of Job Crafting

In line with our arguments above, job crafting also constitutes a way by which overqualified individuals may reduce a possible interference with their needs and desires, while at the same time increasing the possibility of using their excess abilities in alternative ways. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) introduced the concept of job crafting to the literature, describing it as a proactive and self-initiated type of behavior whereby employees re-create their jobs within the context of defined jobs. When engaging in job crafting, employees actively change the tasks and responsibilities as well as the social relationships that comprise their work. In contrast to classical top-down perspectives of job design, the perspective of job crafting "casts the employee in a more active light" (p. 188). In essence, Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) note that by engaging in job crafting, individuals modify their jobs in order to derive a higher work identity and to make their work more meaningful. Taken together, job crafting is an activity whereby individuals shape their jobs in a self-directed manner. Scholars have also suggested a slightly different conceptualization of job crafting. In particular, Tims and Bakker (2010, see also Tims et al. 2012) have conceptually integrated job crafting into the JD-R model. In this slightly modified conceptualization, employees engage in job crafting by increasing or decreasing the level of job demands and job resources. In the present study, we follow Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) original conceptualization.

Applying the above arguments to the present context, one may argue that engaging in job crafting can help overqualified individuals create a job that better aligns with their needs and expectations. Hence, a potential interference effect (suggesting a positive relationship between overqualification and both turnover intention and withdrawal) should be inhibited at higher levels of job crafting. Moreover, the literature on proactivity (e.g., Frese et al. 1997; Parker and Collins 2010) suggests that job crafting may constitute a way by which overqualified individuals are better able to deal with their situation of mismatch. Through actively customizing their work in a bottom-up manner, overqualified employees may find an alternative way to utilize their excess abilities (Tims and Bakker 2010; Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001). Hence, a potential carryover of their skills and abilities (suggesting a negative relationship between overqualification and both turnover intention and withdrawal) should emerge at higher levels of job crafting.

In sum, we propose that job crafting constitutes a beneficial proactive strategy by which overqualified employees can better deal with their work situation. We thus hypothesize a similar pattern to the one proposed for autonomy.

> Hypothesis 2: Job crafting moderates the relationship between overqualification and both (a) withdrawal and (b)

turnover intention. At higher levels of job crafting, the relationship between overqualification and both (a) withdrawal and (b) turnover intention will be negative, whereas at lower levels of job crafting this relationship will be positive.

The Relation Between Autonomy and Job Crafting

Our preceding two hypotheses proposed that both autonomy (hypothesis 1) and job crafting (hypothesis 2) would affect how employees react to the situation of overqualification in terms of turnover intention and withdrawal. Drawing from the fields of proactivity (e.g., Parker and Sprigg 1999) and job crafting (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001) allows us to suggest that both moderating variables (i.e., autonomy and job crafting) may be related—thus shedding light on the core psychological process that may underlie the moderating effect of autonomy. We develop this assumption in two steps based on the recommendations by Liu et al. (2012).

First, when theorizing about why autonomy is beneficial in dealing with potentially unfavorable job conditions, scholars have repeatedly stressed the notion that autonomy allows individuals to take action (e.g., Demerouti et al. 2001; Karasek 1979; Parker and Sprigg 1999), thus suggesting that having autonomy may stimulate job crafting. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) have also pointed to the important role of autonomy. In their conceptual job crafting model, the authors argued that autonomy is an important precursor for job crafting because it "open[s] up possibilities [for employees] to see what paths are available in how they enact their jobs" (p. 183–184). Hence, if employees find themselves in a job that gives them discretion in how to define and implement tasks, this may affect their individual choice with respect to how work is conceptualized and carried out. In contrast, if employees feel little discretion and freedom over their work, they are less likely to start shaping their jobs. In their study on childcare teachers, Leana et al. (2009) provided preliminary evidence by showing that autonomy was a significant predictor of job crafting in their regression analysis; the authors reported the bivariate, zero-order correlation between both constructs as $r = .22$ ($p < .01$). In line with the above reasoning, we thus propose:

Hypothesis 3: Autonomy is positively related to job crafting.

Second, the above reasoning detailing why autonomy is predictive of job crafting suggests that, in the present context, job crafting may represent the key mechanism through which autonomy moderates the relationship between overqualification and both, withdrawal and turnover intention. In statistical terms, we thus propose that a situation of mediated moderation takes place, such that the moderating effect of autonomy will be transmitted via job crafting (for similar conceptual models see for e.g., Grant and Berry 2011; Grant and Sumanth 2009). Although mediated moderation can take multiple forms (for an overview see Liu et al. 2012), the type that we expect occurs when the moderating effect of the original moderator (autonomy) is transmitted through a mediator (job crafting). Such a case of mediated moderation is present when (1) a first variable (autonomy) is assumed to moderate the relationship between a predictor (overqualification) and an outcome (withdrawal and turnover intention), as in hypothesis 1; when (2) a second variable (job crafting) is proposed to likewise moderate the predictor-outcome relationship, as in hypothesis 2; and when (3) the first moderating variable (autonomy) is assumed to cause the second moderator variable, as in hypothesis 3. The proximal moderator variable (job crafting) then takes the function of a mediating variable that transmits the moderating effect of the original moderator (autonomy). Taken together, we propose that job crafting represents the mechanism through which autonomy moderates the relationship between overqualification and both withdrawal and turnover intention.

Hypothesis 4: Job crafting mediates the moderating effect of autonomy on the association between overqualification and both (a) withdrawal and (b) turnover intention.

Method

Procedure

We collected data from employees and their respective supervisors among various companies in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. To be eligible for study participation, participants had to have been working in their jobs for no longer than 2.5 years. We chose this inclusion criterion because the early period in a new job constitutes a critical time during which employees define their job content and their attitude towards their organization (e.g., Bauer and Erdogan 2010). We therefore expected the onboarding context to be particularly sensitive to the proposed effects (in contrast to employees with longer tenure who might have adapted to their job situation already).

To recruit participants, we approached organizations by phone and informed them about the study. Companies and their contact information were derived from an official, publicly accessible database that lists all companies in Switzerland (www.swissfirms.ch). Due to the fact that the main language spoken in Switzerland is German (spoken by 63% of the population, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs 2017), we contacted companies from all industry types across all German-speaking cantons. Conducting the study exclusively in German further allowed us to circumvent the

potential risk of measurement invariance due to different language versions and cultural differences. After an organization had given consent, we first contacted supervisors or employees (depending on the company's preferences) via company mail. In this letter, we invited them to register for study participation with one of their subordinates (if supervisors had been approached first) or with their respective supervisor (if employees had been approached first). In cases where a supervisor had more than one subordinate who fulfilled the study criteria, we asked supervisors to register the subordinate whose surname appeared first alphabetically; thus, there was no nesting with regard to employees and their supervisors. We ensured that both supervisors and employees (in case they had a supervisor position as well) only registered for the study once. After employees and their respective supervisors had registered for study participation, we sent each of them an individualized link to an online-questionnaire. This link contained a code number which would later allow us to match the respective employee-supervisor dyads.

Sample

We contacted a total of 757 companies; from these, 330 employee-supervisor dyads (660 individuals) registered for study participation. Of these, we had to exclude five dyads because employees had been working for the respective company for more than 2.5 years. Moreover, we excluded 26 dyads due to missing data on the side of the employee, 37 dyads due to missing data for both the employee and the supervisor, and 36 dyads due to missing data on the side of the supervisor. The final sample consisted of 226 dyads (452 individuals) who provided complete questionnaires (response rate = 69.5%). Of these, 103 were male-male dyads, 43 were female-female dyads; the remaining dyads were mixed-gender. In total, there were 55 different organizations with one dyad each and 34 organizations with 2–58 dyads each. There were no differences with regard to gender and age between the full sample and the 26 dyads with missing employee data as well as the 36 dyads with missing supervisor data. Supervisors and employees in the final sample had somewhat lower levels of education compared to supervisors with missing employee data, $p < .01$, or employees with missing supervisor data, $p < .001$, respectively. We classified industry types according to the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC). The ISIC differentiates between 21 different industry types, 15 (i.e., 71%) of which were represented by the companies in our sample. Moreover, employees worked in a variety of different jobs, including managerial, bank, and insurance-related jobs (47.8%); jobs related to sales and trading (18.1%); technics and IT (17.3%); health, education, culture and research (6.6%); manufacturing jobs (6.2%); and jobs related to tourism and services (0.4%), 3.5% did not indicate their job. In sum, our sample yielded high heterogeneity in terms of industry types and occupations.

On average, employees (50.4% women) were 32.26 years old ($SD = 8.64$) and average tenure was 12.04 months ($SD = 6.20$). Supervisors (23.9% women) were on average 42.00 years old ($SD = 9.30$). In total, 69.5% of employee-supervisor dyads worked in the private (vs. the public) sector, with an average company size of 3550 employees ($SD = 1275$). Among employees, 52 (23.0%) had a university degree, 44 (19.5%) had specialized vocational training (i.e., advanced certificates obtained during further professional training), 41 (18.1%) had a polytechnic degree, 18 (8.0%) had a high school degree, 69 (30.5%) had vocational training, and two (0.9%) had a primary school degree. Among supervisors, 75 (33.2%) had a university degree, 58 (25.7%) had specialized vocational training, 58 (25.7%) had a polytechnic degree, three (1.3%) had a high school degree, and 32 (14.2%) had vocational training.

Measures

All variables, unless indicated otherwise below, were measured on a 7-point rating scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (7) *strongly agree*.

Employee Ratings

Job crafting was assessed with the 11-item scale obtained from Wrzesniewski et al. (in preparation).[1] In line with Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) definition of job crafting, this scale captures self-initiated changes that employees make to their work tasks and their social relationships at work. Sample items are "I have redefined the scope of my job responsibilities at this organization", and "I have changed the way I work with others in order to more effectively achieve my work goals". Cronbach's alpha was .80.

Because the job crafting scale had not yet been used in a German-speaking country, we (a) worked with two professional, bilingual translators who translated (and back-translated) the respective items, and (b) assessed its convergent validity by comparing the scale to a number of theoretically-related constructs. In an independent sample of 250 employees from similar occupations, we found support for the construct validity of the job crafting measure relative to three other measures of proactive behavior (i.e., personal initiative, Frese et al. 1997; taking charge, Morrison and Phelps 1999; and

[1] We thank Amy Wrzesniewski for providing us with access to this scale. The complete list of items can be directly obtained from her.

voice, Van Dyne and LePine 1998). A four-factor model in which all proactive constructs loaded onto separate factors provided the best fit to the data. Detailed results are available from the authors.[2]

Turnover intention was assessed using the following two items: "I frequently think of quitting this job" and "I am seriously considering leaving this organization within the next months". We chose this scale because of its validity, brevity, and availability in German, and successful use in previous studies (Baillod and Semmer 1994; Debus and Unger 2017; Staufenbiel and König 2010, 2011). Cronbach's alpha was .87.[3]

Withdrawal was assessed by using the four-item withdrawal subscale of the Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (Spector et al. 2006). These items were "I took a longer break than I was allowed to take", "I came to work late without permission", "I stayed home from work and said I was sick when I wasn't", and "I left work earlier than I was allowed to". Participants responded on a 5-point rating scale ranging from (1) *never* to (5) *every day.* Cronbach's alpha was .62, similar to previous findings by Spector et al. (2006).

Supervisor Ratings

Overqualification was assessed by adapting the four-item perceived mismatch scale by Johnson and Johnson (1996) to gauge the supervisor perspective. These adapted items were "His/her formal education overqualifies him/her for his/her current job", "His/her talents are not fully utilized on his/her job", "His/her work experience is more than necessary to do his/her present job", and "Based on his/her skills, he/she is overqualified for the job he/she holds". Cronbach's alpha was .82.

Autonomy was assessed with the five-item autonomy scale by Semmer (1984), which has been used in a multitude of studies (e.g., Debus et al. 2014; Kühnel et al. 2016; Sonnentag and Grant 2012). Items were adapted to gauge the supervisor perspective. These adapted items were "Considering his/her workplace in general, how much can he/she change the sequence of the different steps him-/herself?", "How much influence does he/she have on the work which is assigned to him/her?", "Considering his/her work activity in general, how much opportunity is there for him/her to make his/her own decisions?", "Can he/she decide him-/herself on which way to carry out his/her work?", and "To what extent is he/she the only one responsible to check his/her work?". Responses were made on a 5-point rating scale ranging from (1) *very little* to (5) *a lot.* Cronbach's alpha was .77.

Control Variables

We controlled for *age*, *gender*, *education* (continuously measured), and *negative affectivity (NA)* because these variables are likely to affect our outcome variables (thus potentially adding independent incremental variance to the regression equation, Spector and Brannick 2011). In particular, it has been shown that older employees demonstrate lower levels of turnover intention (Knudsen et al. 2007) and lower levels of deviant behavior at work (Gruys and Sackett 2003). We controlled for gender, because women have been demonstrated to show less deviant behavior at work (Berry et al. 2007; Semmer et al. 2010). Likewise, employees with higher levels of education have been demonstrated to show less deviant behavior at work (Gruys and Sackett 2003). Finally, we controlled for NA, because individuals high in NA have been shown to display higher levels of turnover intention (e.g., Bouckenooghe et al. 2013). NA was measured with the ten negative affectivity items of the PANAS scale (Watson et al. 1988). Cronbach's alpha was .82. To estimate the impact of these control variables, we followed recommendations by Spector and Brannick (2011). In particular, we also computed semi-partial correlations between our focal variables (i.e., removed the effects of the control variables from the two outcome variables). Moreover, we also conducted our analyses with and without control variables (Becker 2005; Spector and Brannick 2011). In the analysis section, we contrast both sets of analyses.

Analytic Strategy

To test our hypotheses, we applied multivariate path modeling using the Mplus software. To test hypothesis 1, we regressed turnover intention and withdrawal on the control variables, on overqualification and autonomy (i.e., the main effects of the predictor and the moderator variable, Cohen et al. 2003), and their respective interaction term (i.e., the overqualification × autonomy product); predictor and moderator variables were centered. To test hypothesis 2, we regressed turnover intention and withdrawal on the control variables, on overqualification and job crafting, and their respective interaction term. To test hypothesis 3 (autonomy as a predictor of job crafting) and hypothesis 4, we conducted a multivariate mediated moderation analysis according to Liu et al. (2012, further details are explained below).

[2] We calculated a global job crafting score to capture the job crafting construct in its wholeness according to the definition by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001). Yet, we also conducted CFAs to examine the dimensionality of the job crafting scale in both datasets (main study and validation study). A two-factor model in which the task and relational items loaded onto different factors fitted only slightly better than a one-factor model; moreover, the two latent factors correlated at $r = .76$ and $r = .81$, respectively—thus justifying that all items can be combined into a total score (for the same approach in the case of work engagement see Schaufeli et al. 2006).

[3] We examined whether turnover intention levels differed between the three dyad types (male-male vs. female-female vs. mixed-gender dyads), which was not the case, $F(2,223) = .093$, *ns*.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations are displayed in Table 1. Unstandardized coefficient estimates for the estimated path models are displayed in Table 2. This table also shows the amounts of variance explained (i.e., R^2) in both outcome variables.

Hypothesis 1: the Moderating Effect of Autonomy

As seen in Table 2 (model 1), the overqualification × autonomy interaction term significantly predicted both withdrawal ($\gamma = -.10$, $p < .01$) and turnover intention ($\gamma = -.27$, $p < .01$). To examine the pattern of these interactions in more detail, we graphed the interactions (see Fig. 2 for withdrawal and Fig. 3 for turnover intention) and computed simple slopes for *low* (i.e., one *SD* below the mean) and *high* levels (one *SD* above the mean) of the moderator (Preacher et al. 2006). When autonomy was low, overqualification was positively related to both outcome variables (for withdrawal: $\gamma = .05$, $SE = .02$, $t = 2.20$, $p < .05$; for turnover intention: $\gamma = .17$, $SE = .08$, $t = 2.01$, $p < .05$). When autonomy was high, overqualification was negatively related to withdrawal ($\gamma = -.05$, $SE = .02$, $t = -2.12$, $p < .05$) and not related to turnover intention ($\gamma = -.13$, $SE = .08$, $t = -1.53$, *ns*). In line with our hypotheses, the results implied that overqualification and the outcomes were significantly positively related among lower levels of autonomy; at higher levels of autonomy, overqualification was significantly negatively related to withdrawal, and unrelated to turnover intention. Thus, hypothesis 1 was largely supported.

Hypothesis 2: the Moderating Effect of Job Crafting

As seen in Table 2 (model 2), the overqualification × job crafting interaction term significantly predicted both withdrawal ($\gamma = -.08$, $p < .001$) and turnover intention ($\gamma = -.25$, $p < .001$). The respective interaction patterns are displayed in Fig. 4 for withdrawal and Fig. 5 for turnover intention. Simple slopes analyses revealed that the relationship between overqualification and both outcome variables was positive when job crafting was low (for withdrawal: $\gamma = .07$, $SE = .03$, $t = 2.92$, $p < .01$; for turnover intention: $\gamma = .24$, $SE = .09$, $t = 2.71$, $p < .01$) and negative when job crafting was high (for withdrawal: $\gamma = -.07$, $SE = .03$, $t = -2.61$, $p < .05$; for turnover intention: $\gamma = -.21$, $SE = .09$, $t = -2.37$, $p < .05$). In line with our hypotheses, the results implied that overqualification and the outcomes were significantly positively related among lower levels of job crafting; at higher levels of job crafting, both relationships flipped and became significantly negative. Thus, hypothesis 2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3 and 4: Autonomy as a Predictor of Job Crafting and the Mediated Moderation

To test hypotheses 3 and 4, we followed the approach by Liu et al. (2012); for a similar approach see Liu et al. 2017). To do so, we constructed a final multivariate path model that simultaneously included both interaction terms (i.e., the overqualification × autonomy and the overqualification × job crafting products; see right two columns of model 3 in Table 2) when predicting withdrawal and turnover intention, as well as the direct effect of autonomy on job crafting, which provides the test for hypothesis 3. As can be seen in the left column of model 3, autonomy significantly predicted job crafting ($\gamma = .33$, $p < .05$). Thus, hypothesis 3 was supported. To test for mediated moderation, the respective indirect effects (a × b) were calculated as the product of the path from autonomy to job crafting (a) and the path for the overqualification × job crafting interaction in predicting each outcome (b). We constructed bias-

Table 1 Means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations

Variables		*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Age	32.26	8.64								
2.	Gender[a]	–	–	− .16*							
3.	Education[b]	3.94	1.58	.10	− .18**						
4.	Negative affectivity	1.51	0.46	− .12	− .01	− .07					
5.	Overqualification	2.78	1.09	− .03	.15*	− .12	− .04				
6.	Autonomy	3.80	0.54	.11	− .12	.20**	− .04	− .22***			
7.	Job crafting	4.06	0.91	.02	− .08	.11	− .01	− .01	.20**		
8.	Withdrawal	1.19	0.30	− .16*	− .03	− .09	.07	.03	− .10	.00	
9.	Turnover intention	1.81	1.09	− .09	.02	− .01	.34***	.01	.00	.10	.19**

[a] 1 = *male*, 2 = *female*; [b] 1 = *primary school degree*, 2 = *vocational training*, 3 = *high school degree*, 4 = *polytechnic degree*, 5 = *specialized vocational training*, 6 = *university degree*. $N = 226$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

Table 2 Unstandardized coefficients of the path models

	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3					
	Withdrawal		Turnover intention		Withdrawal		Turnover intention		Job crafting		Withdrawal		Turnover intention	
Variables	Estimate	*SE*	Estimate	*SE*	Estimate	*SE*	Estimate	*SE*	Estimate	*SE*	Estimate	*SE*	Estimate	*SE*
Intercept	1.18***	.02	1.77***	.07	1.19***	.02	1.81***	.07	4.07***	.06	1.18***	.02	1.78***	.07
Age	−.01*	.00	−.01	.01	−.01**	.00	−.01	.01	.00	.01	−.01*	.00	−.01	.01
Gender	−.06	.04	−.01	.14	−.04	.04	.05	.14	−.10	.12	−.05	.04	.02	.15
Education	−.01	.01	.01	.04	−.01	.01	.03	.04	.04	.04	−.01	.01	.02	.04
Negative affectivity	.03	.04	.81***	.15	.04	.04	.85***	.14	−.01	.16	.04	.05	.85***	.22
Overqualification	.00	.02	.02	.06	.00	.02	.02	.06	.04	.05	.00	.02	.02	.07
Autonomy	−.01	.04	.11	.13					.33*	.13	−.01	.04	.11	.13
Overqualification × Autonomy	−.10**	.03	−.27**	.10							−.07	.05	−.19	.13
Job crafting					.00	.02	.10	.07			.00	.01	.05	.04
Overqualification × Job crafting					−.08***	.02	−.25***	.07			−.06*	.03	−.21**	.07
Residual variances	.08***	.07	1.01***	.08	.08***	.07	.98***	.08	.78***	.07	.08***	.01	.97***	.14
R^2	8.8%		15.0%		9.9%		17.9%		5.0%		12.1%		19.0%	

Note. SE = standard error

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

corrected confidence intervals from 20,000 bootstrap resamples, following Preacher and Hayes' (2008) recommendations; see also Mallinckrodt et al. (2006). In our data, the 95% confidence intervals excluded zero (95% CI for withdrawal [−.058, −.002], 95% CI for turnover intention [−.170, −.013]), thus supporting hypothesis 4 for both outcomes.[4] In all models, the control variable age was significantly negatively related to withdrawal, while NA was significantly positively related to turnover intention.

As mentioned in the methods section, we also computed semi-partial correlations between our variables of interest (removing the effects of the control variables from the two outcome variables). These semi-partial correlations were at most 0.03 different from the corresponding zero-order correlations; significance levels did not change. Re-running our analyses without control variables yielded identical findings for all interaction and mediated moderation effects, the only exception being that the indirect effect for turnover intention was significant within the 90% CI (but not the 95% CI; i.e., hypothesis 4). In line with Becker's (2005) recommendation, we also reran our analyses including only those control variables that were significantly related to the outcomes (i.e., NA and age); all results remained unchanged.[5]

[4] For comparison purposes, we had also collected employee self-reports of autonomy with the scale by Semmer (1984). Self and supervisor ratings correlated at $r = .46$ ($p < .01$), thus indicating reasonably high convergence in line with previous findings (Spector et al. 1988). More importantly, we were able to replicate all interaction and mediated moderation effects with self-reported autonomy. Detailed results can be obtained from the authors.

[5] Due to the partial nesting of our data (i.e., employee-supervisor dyads nested in organizations), we re-ran all analyses within a multilevel framework. All results remained unchanged. Detailed results can be obtained from the authors.

Discussion

There are several ways in which this study extends the previous literature. First, in addition to demonstrating that the moderating effect of autonomy generalizes beyond previously researched outcomes (Wu et al. 2015, 2017), this study introduced job crafting as a further moderator of the overqualification-outcome link. Our findings thus point to the notion that overqualified individuals are not passive recipients of their situation, but that they can become "competent and active architect[s]" (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001, p. 194) who re-define the boundaries of their jobs. As such, our study highlights the 'power of doing' as a useful way of dealing with overqualification. Accordingly, we also enrich recent findings by Zhang et al. (2016), who investigated proactive behavior as a direct outcome of overqualification (see also Lin et al. 2017).

Second, researchers in the field have repeatedly pointed to the crucial role of the work environment when it comes to predicting outcomes of overqualification (e.g., Luksyte and Spitzmueller 2016; Wu et al. 2017). Because such environmental conditions are oftentimes implicitly argued to exert their specific impact by triggering more proximal behaviors or psychological states, the present study may be a first step towards directly modeling these intervening variables. By showing that job crafting is a mechanism that transmits the moderating effect of autonomy, our study contributes to a more explicit modeling of such underlying processes. In a related vein, this study also adds to the testing of more complex models that describe the manifold processes associated with overqualification. For example, Deng et al. (2018) demonstrated the moderating role of interpersonal influence, showing that perceived overqualification was negatively related to supervisor-reported behavioral outcomes (transmitted via lowered social acceptance) only when interpersonal influence was low.

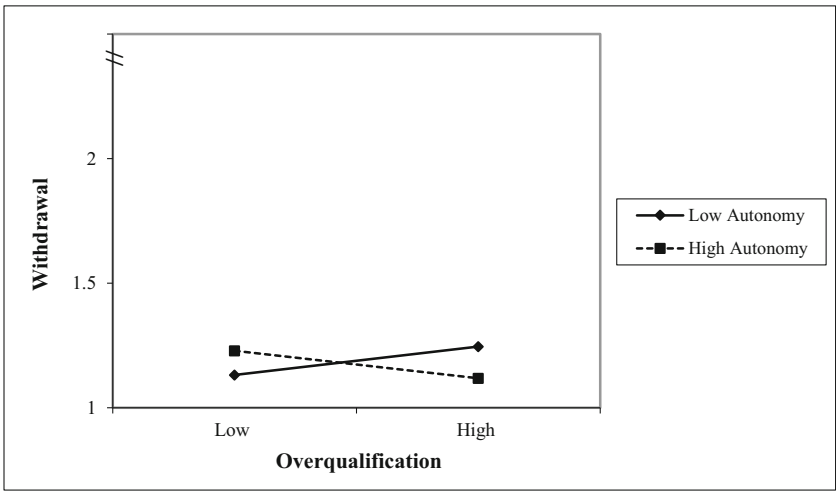

Fig. 2 Autonomy as a moderator of the relationship between overqualification and withdrawal

Finally, a central contribution of our study is that we also assessed autonomy via supervisor ratings (see recommendations by Semmer et al. 2004; Spector et al. 1988). Nevertheless, we have to acknowledge that doing so not only constitutes a different methodological approach compared to what is often seen in the literature, but also has a different conceptual meaning. More specifically, there are two conceptualizations of work conditions and their effects in the literature. The first conceptualization, rooted in the job design tradition, regards work conditions (such as autonomy) as objective situational characteristics. Work conditions are thus typically assessed by a source other than the employee, such as by supervisor ratings as done in the present study (Frese and Zapf 1988; Hackman and Oldham 1976). In contrast, the second conceptualization is rooted in transactional and attributional theories (Lazarus and Folkman 1984; Weiner 1985). It focuses on an employee's subjective appraisal of his or her work to be the most relevant predictor of well-being (e.g., Perrewé and Zellars 1999). As mentioned earlier, we were able to support the proposed interaction and mediated moderation effects for both conceptualizations, thus pointing towards the robustness of our findings. In the case of autonomy, the above two conceptualizations are hence less different than they may appear at first sight.

The effects of our control variables, particularly NA, warrant further discussion. In our analyses, NA exerted a relatively strong effect on turnover intention. This finding corroborates earlier research (e.g., Cropanzano et al. 1993) and there may be different reasons for this effect. First, NA might have contaminated the measurement of turnover intention (e.g., Spector and Brannick 2011); that is, individuals high in NA might be predisposed to report more discomforts, and, thus, a higher intention to leave their current employer. Yet, NA might also play a more substantive role (see Spector et al. 2000). For example, individuals high in NA might create a more unfavorable social work environment due to their neurotic behaviors, thus making them more willing to leave. Future research should aim to disentangle these mechanisms to better understand the role of NA in the turnover process. In a related vein, Spector et al. (2000) have also suggested that high NA may make individuals react more strongly to potentially unfavorable work conditions, thus suggesting a

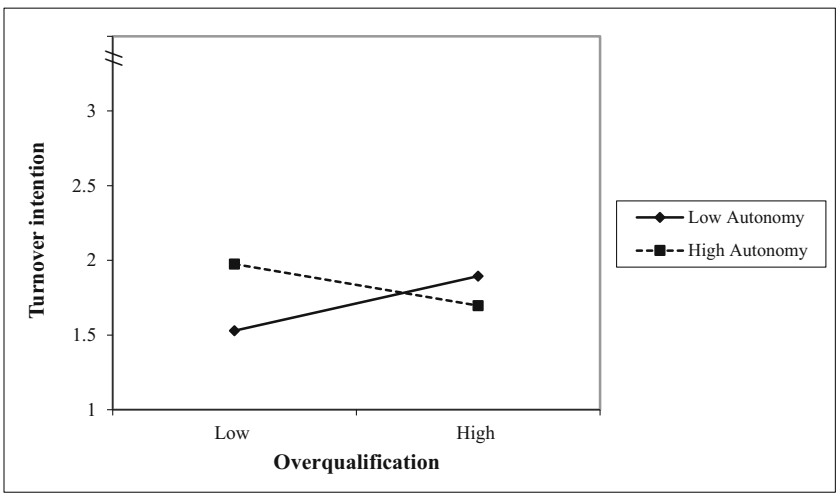

Fig. 3 Autonomy as a moderator of the relationship between overqualification and turnover intention

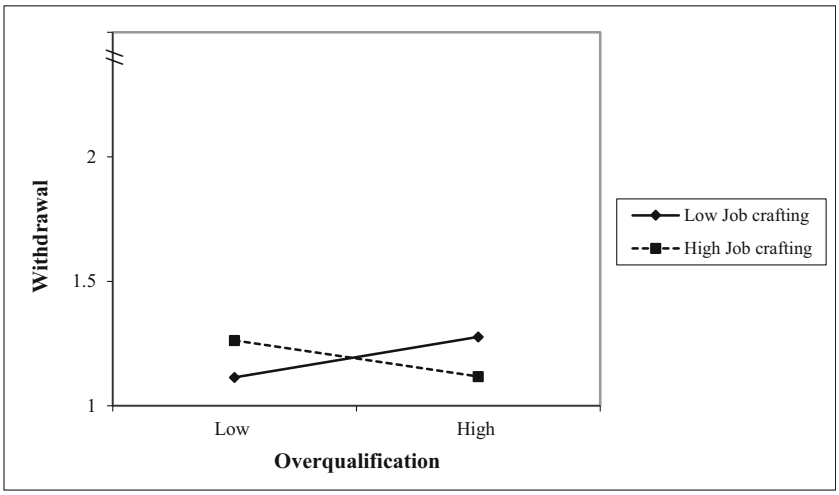

Fig. 4 Job crafting as a moderator of the relationship between overqualification and withdrawal

moderating effect of NA. Although such an interaction has been demonstrated with other work characteristics (e.g., Moyle 1995), there was no significant NA × overqualification effect in our data.[6]

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Of course, our study is not without limitations. First, the cross-sectional nature of our study does not allow for causal inferences. Unfortunately, there are no longitudinal studies in the field of overqualification that have investigated the same outcomes. However, theoretical arguments (e.g., Spector and Fox 2005; Steel and Lounsbury 2009) and empirical results of longitudinal studies looking at the effects of other job conditions on both withdrawal and turnover intention (e.g., Dekker and Schaufeli 1995; Detert et al. 2008) provide support that causality is highly likely to run in the proposed direction. The same applies to the sequence of moderator variables. Although we were able to demonstrate that autonomy predicted job crafting in line with Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) theoretical model, we encourage future research to longitudinally examine these relationships.

Second, although measuring overqualification via supervisor ratings has several advantages, there may in fact be some trade-offs as well. As mentioned in the introduction, using supervisor reports can eradicate typical shortcomings associated with the use of employee self-reports (Semmer et al. 2004; Spector 1992). Yet, supervisors may not observe all cues relevant to judging whether or not a person might be overqualified; thus, supervisors may be prone to overgeneralizations or halo-effects (e.g., Morgeson and Campion 1997). Moreover, employees may also differ in the degree to which they 'act out' their overqualification (e.g., by complaining or actively approaching their supervisor); thus, there may be differences with regard to how easily supervisors become aware of their employees' overqualification (Frese and Zapf 1988). Future research will need to investigate these possibilities in more detail.

With regard to future research, it is important to examine whether our findings generalize to more tenured employees as well as to those with lower levels of education. As mentioned previously, we chose this particular sample because we assumed the effects of job crafting and autonomy to be particularly strong for employees who are relatively new to their job. Yet, future research may test whether our findings can be replicated among more tenured employees. Moreover, participants in our sample were also relatively well-educated. Although the jobs that participants held were highly heterogeneous, it is conceivable that participants with high education levels selected into jobs that provided a higher level of autonomy; in this way, job crafting might have been more readily stimulated. Future studies might thus examine whether our findings also generalize to less educated employees.

In addition, it is conceivable that the benefits of autonomy may not hold for all overqualified individuals in the same way. Hackman and Oldham (1976) suggested that autonomy is particularly impactful for individuals high in growth need strength. Applied to the present context, autonomy might become even more potent (also for stimulating job crafting) among individuals high in this trait. Relatedly, future research may also extend the approach of the current study to other types of misfit. For example, in the case of person-vocation (mis)fit, individuals may compensate their misfit by engaging in voluntary work that fulfills their occupational interests (Mojza and Sonnentag 2010), thus potentially generating similar effects as in the present study. Or, in the case of person-organization (mis)fit-outcome relationships, employees' economic alternatives might play a similar moderating role (Carsten and Spector 1987).

Finally, future research may delve more deeply into the exact mechanisms that underlie the proposed processes of interference and carryover. In line with P-E fit theory

[6] We thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this analysis.

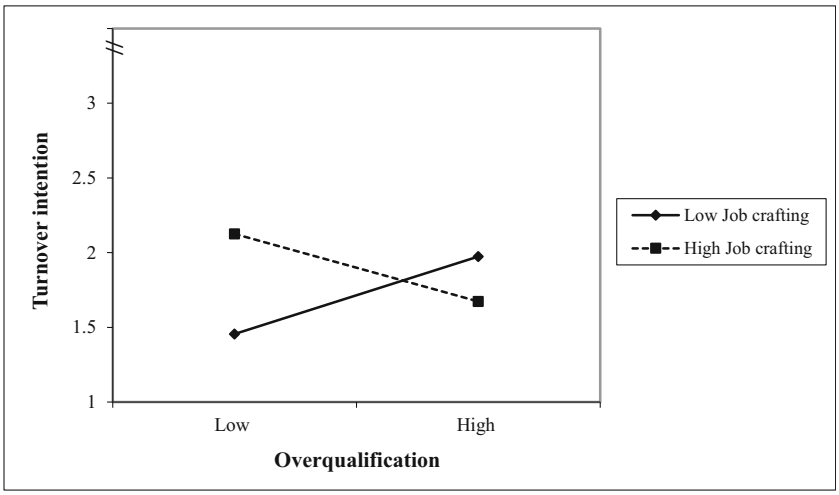

Fig. 5 Job crafting as a moderator of the relationship between overqualification and turnover intention

(Edwards 1996), we argued that autonomy and job crafting reduce interference with individuals' needs and desires and allow for a carryover of skills and abilities to alternative tasks. Although the pattern of our findings was consistent with the general notion of interference and carryover, future research should investigate these mechanisms more directly.

Practical Implications

A recent study among hiring managers (Kulkarni et al. 2015) revealed that 20 out of 24 interviewed managers were willing to hire overqualified applicants and highlighted their potential value for the organization. Thus, instead of hoping that overqualified employees leave as soon as possible, companies appear to be interested in retaining these employees and fully utilizing this human capital. Related to this, our results highlight that organizations need to initiate relatively small changes (i.e., providing their overqualified employees with autonomy), which can then transform into behaviors (i.e., job crafting) that can benefit both the individual and the organization. Indeed, providing autonomy also appears somewhat easier for organizations to implement than supporting their overqualified employees in feeling empowered (Erdogan and Bauer 2009). Though both constructs are related, empowerment refers to employees' subjective feelings in regard to meaningfulness, self-determination, competence, and impact—and is, thus, more subjective and cognitive in nature than autonomy (see also Wu et al. 2015).

As an alternative, companies may also actively teach their overqualified employees how to craft their jobs similar to the approach by van den Heuvel et al. (2015). Among a sample of police employees, the authors taught participants to actively redesign their jobs. After a theoretical introduction, participants mapped their own tasks, as well as demands and resources. This was followed by creating a plan with individual crafting goals. Participants then worked on these goals for four weeks, which was finalized with a common reflection session. Compared to a pre-measurement before the intervention, participants reported less negative affect, higher self-efficacy, higher developmental opportunities and leader-member exchange in the post-measurement. No such changes were detected in a corresponding control group.

Finally, if overqualification is a known issue in certain types of jobs (e.g., cashiers, cleaning personnel), organizations may be well advised to screen for high levels of proactivity among their applicants (e.g., Bledow and Frese 2009)—such that these future employees may more easily find ways to cope with their emergent overqualification. Yet, we need to acknowledge that this approach only appears reasonable for jobs that do provide some autonomy and the opportunity for job crafting.

Conclusion

In a recent survey among more than 10,500 job changers (Linkedin Talent Solutions 2015), 36% of respondents indicated that they had left their previous job because they "wanted more challenging work" (p. 13). This finding highlights the role that experiences related to overqualification play in the withdrawal and turnover process. Our findings illustrate that overqualified employees are not passive recipients of their situation. Instead, if these employees are provided with autonomy, they can capitalize on this job characteristic by engaging in job crafting. Accordingly, they become less inclined to withdraw and leave their current employer. The present study sheds light on how autonomy can be enacted, thus providing a deeper understanding into the mechanism that underlies the moderating impact of autonomy in the context of overqualification.

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