





A silver lining: Perceived organizational career opportunities in the context of perceived overqualification and its outcomes

Barbara Körner^{1,2}  | Maike E. Debus³  | Mo Wang⁴  |
Martin Kleinmann¹ 

¹Department of Psychology, University of Zurich, Zürich, Switzerland

²Leeds University Business School, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK

³Institute of Work and Organizational Psychology, University of Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel, Switzerland

⁴Warrington College of Business, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, USA

Correspondence

Barbara Körner, Department of Psychology, University of Zurich, Binzmühlestrasse 14/Box 12, 8050 Zürich, Switzerland.

Email: b.koerner@psychologie.uzh.ch

Funding information

Schweizerischer Nationalfonds zur Förderung der Wissenschaftlichen Forschung, Grant/Award Number: 156537

Abstract

Although perceived overqualification is a ubiquitous career-related stressor, individuals may expect it to be a temporary experience. To better understand the positive role of potentially favorable career-related anticipation, we applied career motivation theory and dual-process frameworks to the context of perceived overqualification. We hypothesized that individuals' perceptions of organizational career opportunities would moderate the relationships between perceived overqualification and related affective reactions (i.e., anger toward the employment situation) and cognitive reactions (i.e., needs–supplies fit), which would, in turn, translate into more distal work and nonwork outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior toward the organization, and work–family conflict). We tested this proposition using a three-wave, multisource dataset including 297 employees and their closely related others. The results largely supported our hypotheses. Our findings highlight the importance of linking the literatures on perceived overqualification and career motivation. We also discuss how organizations can foster positive expectations among their overqualified employees.

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2026 The Author(s). *Applied Psychology* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd on behalf of International Association of Applied Psychology.

KEYWORDS

future expectations, perceived organizational career opportunities, perceived overqualification

INTRODUCTION

Perceived overqualification—defined as the perception that one's skills, experience, and qualifications exceed the demands of one's job—has become a pervasive career-related stressor (e.g., Erdogan & Bauer, 2021). Accordingly, prior research has documented a wide range of detrimental consequences for employees and their organizations, including lower employee well-being and organizational commitment, as well as higher turnover intentions (for meta-analytic evidence, see Harari et al., 2017). Moreover, perceived overqualification has been shown to undermine employees' longer term career outcomes, as reflected in lower perceived career success and reduced pay—an objective indicator of career success—when compared with their adequately qualified counterparts (Erdogan et al., 2018; Gkorezis et al., 2019; Mavromaras et al., 2010). However, even undesirable work situations may contain a silver lining. Specifically, the stepping stone hypothesis suggests that certain jobs or employment experiences can serve as precursors or “bridges” that facilitate advancement to more desirable positions along an individual's career path (e.g., De Cuyper et al., 2009; Kalleberg & Mouw, 2018). Following this logic, if individuals perceive their current, less-than-ideal position may function as a stepping stone to better future opportunities, they may be more willing to tolerate the unfavorable aspects of their present situation.

In the present study, we conceptualize *perceived organizational career opportunities*—defined as individuals' expectations that suitable career opportunities are available to them in their organizations (Kraimer et al., 2011)—as a manifestation of a stepping stone. We argue that such perceptions will buffer more immediate negative affective and cognitive reactions to perceived overqualification, consistent with dual-process theories (Evans, 2008). More specifically, and in line with the stepping stone logic outlined above, career motivation theory posits that individuals' feelings, cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors are shaped by their desire to attain their career goals (London, 1983; London & Mone, 2006). Thus, although perceived overqualification may create a suboptimal present situation, the expectation that meaningful career opportunities are attainable in the future may enable individuals to better tolerate their current unfavorable circumstances.

The role of future career expectations in the context of perceived overqualification should be examined for at least two reasons. First, perceived organizational career opportunities signal to employees that their current job may serve as a stepping stone to a more desirable position within the organization (Kraimer et al., 2011). Such perceptions provide an important frame of reference that helps overqualified individuals interpret their work situation and shape their reactions. By focusing on this forward-looking, situational boundary condition, researchers can better understand how future-oriented perceptions influence employee responses to perceived overqualification—a perspective largely absent from current research on boundary condition of overqualification (for an overview, see Erdogan & Bauer, 2021). Moreover, this perspective also enriches theorizing about career-related constraints that may be relevant in this context. Second, researchers have repeatedly suggested that the negative outcomes associated with perceived overqualification may be mitigated when organizations hire individuals “for the

organization” rather than “for a specific job,” thereby signaling future career opportunities and the possibility of upward mobility within the company (e.g., Kulkarni et al., 2015). Such an organizational hiring perspective is becoming increasingly important as employers in industrialized continue to face persistent skill shortages—an issue further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Causa et al., 2022; ifo Institute, 2022, August 2). Taken together, these arguments underscore the relevance of an individual’s future expectations for understanding how they respond to perceived overqualification—an issue that we explicitly investigate in this research.

In the present study (see Figure 1 for the conceptual model), we develop and test a theoretical model proposing that perceived organizational career opportunities attenuate the effects of perceived overqualification on both affective (i.e., higher *anger toward employment situation*) and cognitive (i.e., lower *perceived needs–supplies fit*) reactions, which in turn translate into more distal work- and nonwork-related outcomes (i.e., lower *job satisfaction*, lower *organizational citizenship behavior toward the organization* [OCBO], and higher *work–family conflict*). Drawing on dual-process models (e.g., Evans, 2008), we conceptualize affective and cognitive reactions to perceived overqualification as simultaneous mediators, as perceived overqualification elicits both affective and cognitive responses (e.g., Erdogan & Bauer, 2021). Examining the moderating role of perceived organizational career opportunities within this dual-pathway framework allows us to assess which mechanism— affective or cognitive—plays a more dominant role. In doing so, we deepen the understanding of the predictive validity of each theoretical mechanism and advance a more holistic perspective on how these processes jointly shape key outcomes of perceived overqualification.

In terms of outcomes, we examined functionally distinct effects of perceived overqualification on attitudinal (i.e., job satisfaction), behavioral (i.e., OCBO), and well-being-related (i.e., work–family conflict) reactions (e.g., Sonnentag & Frese, 2013), all of which are highly relevant to employee retention and organizational effectiveness (e.g., Nohe & Sonntag, 2014; Podsakoff et al., 2009; Tett & Meyer, 1993). By including work–family conflict as a nonwork outcome, we further illuminate the potential spillover effects of perceived overqualification into individuals’ private lives, thereby a recurring call for research in this area (e.g., Culbertson et al., 2011). Additionally, consistent with prior studies (e.g., Ilies et al., 2007; Ilies et al., 2009) and to minimize same-source bias, we obtained ratings of job satisfaction and work–family conflict from a closely related person (e.g., Podsakoff et al., 2012).

By testing the above theoretical propositions, our research makes several notable contributions to the literature. First, we introduce perceived organizational career opportunities as a manifestation of stepping stone perceptions in the context of perceived overqualification, thereby highlighting the motivational significance of this situational factor for overqualified individuals. Stepping stone arguments—emphasizing that accepting smaller or less desirable roles can serve as gateways to more impactful positions—have received considerable attention in the literatures on career development (Hall, 2004), leadership development (Charan et al., 2001), and temporary employment (Filomena & Picchio, 2022). By extending this concept to employees’ perceptions of future career opportunities and upward mobility within their current organization, and by linking it to perceived overqualification, we offer a more nuanced understanding of the consequences of perceived overqualification. Such theorizing is particularly valuable given the ongoing debate about whether overqualification is a transitory or permanent state in individuals’ careers (e.g., Frei & Sousa-Poza, 2012; Wen & Maani, 2019). Second, by comparing the effects of perceived overqualification on the same outcomes through affective versus cognitive mechanisms (i.e., increased anger vs. decreased needs–supplies fit),

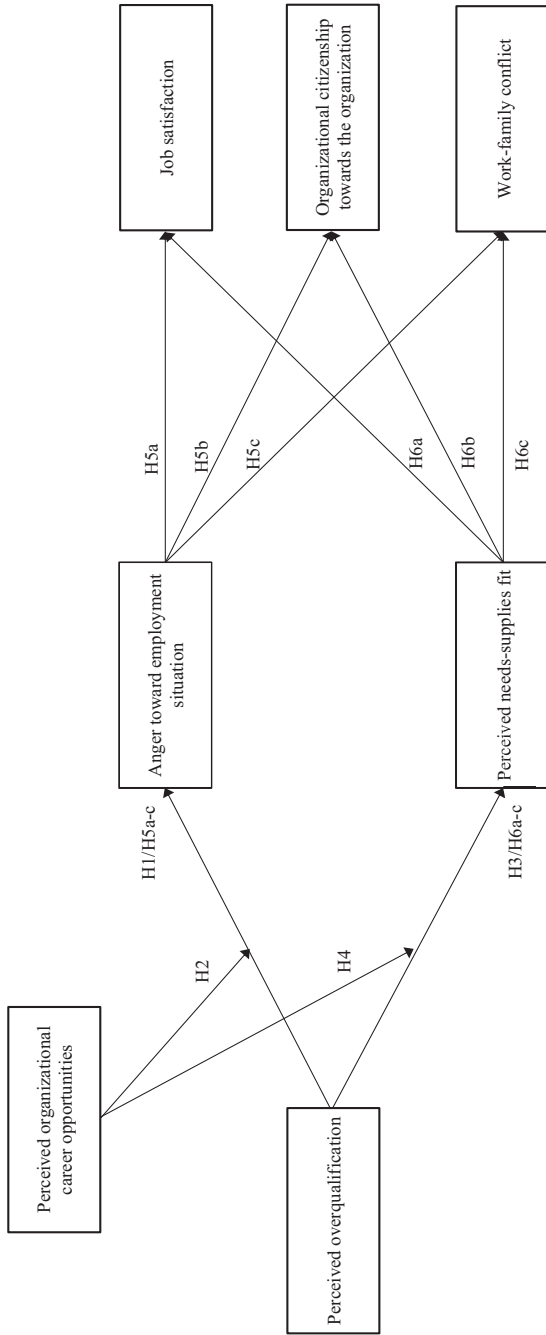


FIGURE 1 Hypothesized model. Note: H = hypothesis.

we directly assess the relative strength of competing theoretical explanations. While prior studies have typically relied on only one pathway, it remains unclear whether one mechanism is more strongly associated with particular types of outcomes (see Luksyte et al., 2022). More precise knowledge about the relative predictive strength of each pathway may also inform more targeted practical recommendations for supporting overqualified employees. Third, our research broadens the criterion domain of perceived overqualification by examining both work-related and nonwork-related outcomes. Including outcomes from both domains not only expands the range of theoretically meaningful correlates but also enables us to investigate how the experience of perceived overqualification may spill over into the nonwork domain (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Finally, by examining perceived organizational career opportunities as a meaningful boundary condition, our study also offers important implications for practitioners. By appropriately signaling potential career opportunities to overqualified employees, organizations may find an effective way to mitigate the negative consequences associated with perceived overqualification.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Perceived career opportunities as a boundary condition for affective and cognitive reactions to perceived overqualification

Studies on overqualification typically adopt one of two perspectives. The first views perceived overqualification as an economic and career-related stressor associated with detrimental consequences for employees and their organizations. The second, in contrast, recognizes that the surplus of capabilities inherent in perceived overqualification may serve as a natural stepping stone within one's career trajectory, signaling readiness for advancement and promotion (e.g., Erdogan et al., 2011; Erdogan & Bauer, 2021). Within the ongoing debate between these perspectives, the stressor view has been more dominant, leading scholars to focus largely on boundary conditions that either mitigate or amplify the negative consequences of perceived overqualification.

Consistent with this perspective, prior research has identified several career-related boundary conditions that shape the relationship between perceived overqualification and its outcomes. Examples include career calling (i.e., the sense of purpose and meaning that individuals derive from their work; Lobene & Meade, 2013), career centrality (i.e., the extent to which individuals define themselves through their career; Erdogan et al., 2018), and idiosyncratic deals (Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2016). However, these studies have predominantly focused on contingency factors that reflect either individual characteristics (e.g., career centrality, Erdogan et al., 2018; career calling, Lobene & Meade, 2013; see also competence and growth needs, Maynard & Parfyonova, 2013) or perceptions tied specifically to one's current job (e.g., idiosyncratic deals; Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2016). Similarly, Lee et al. (2020) showed that viewing one's current job as instrumental to long-term career goals (i.e., occupational instrumentality) can mitigate feelings of relative deprivation among overqualified employees. Yet, like previous work, their focus remained on boundary conditions grounded in employees' present job experiences. Although occupational instrumentality captures the perceived developmental value of one's current role, it does not convey expectations about future career advancement within the organization.

In contrast, perceived organizational career opportunities constitute a forward-looking, situational boundary condition (Kraimer et al., 2011) that may shape employees' affective and cognitive responses to perceived overqualification. These perceptions concern anticipated future growth and advancement prospects, thereby extending beyond the primarily present-oriented factors examined in previous research. Such future-oriented expectations and anticipations are powerful drivers that shape individuals' current attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Forrier et al., 2015; Latan et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2016). Accordingly, in the following sections, we first examine the affective reaction to perceived overqualification and the moderating role of perceived career opportunities, followed by an examination of the cognitive reaction and its corresponding moderation.

Affective reaction to perceived overqualification and perceived career opportunities as a boundary condition

Research drawing on the dual-process framework (Evans, 2008) suggests that individuals process workplace information—such as the match between their capabilities and job demands—through both experiential and rational modes (e.g., Skarlicki & Rupp, 2010). The experiential mode emphasizes affective responses, providing a useful lens for understanding affective reactions to perceived overqualification. Thus, we first argue that perceived overqualification is associated with a negative affective response in the form of anger toward the employment situation. This reasoning aligns with relative deprivation theory (Crosby, 1976, 1984), as one of the most frequently applied frameworks for understanding perceived overqualification (Erdogan & Bauer, 2021). According to the theory, individuals compare what they currently have with what they believe they deserve or could attain; anger is a central affective reaction when individuals perceive themselves as worse off relative to such standards (Crosby, 1976, 1984). As Smith et al. (2012, p. 207) summarize, “RD [relative deprivation] theorists (Crosby, 1976; Folger, 1987; Martin, 1986; Runciman, 1966; Walker & Pettigrew, 2011) specify anger and resentment as the essential affective correlates of RD.” Anger represents a high-arousal, negatively valenced affective state (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones, 2004; Lindquist & Barrett, 2008) that arises when individuals perceive mistreatment “contrary to what ought to be” (Shaver et al., 1987, p. 1077). While emotions are more intense, short-lived, and linked to specific events, affective states encompass more persistent moods and feelings (Russell, 2003; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), making them consistent with the time-lagged design of our study (Debus et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2015). By focusing on anger toward the employment situation, we directly align this affective response with its proposed source—perceived overqualification as a work-related stressor (Liu et al., 2015). Thus, we expect perceived overqualification to be positively related to anger toward the employment situation (Liu et al., 2015).

Hypothesis 1. Perceived overqualification is positively related to anger toward the employment situation.

In addition, we argue that individuals' perceptions of future organizational career opportunities will mitigate the positive relationship between perceived overqualification and anger. From the perspective of career motivation theory, perceived overqualification can be understood as an obstacle to one's “desire for upward mobility” (London, 1983, p. 622). However, perceived organizational career opportunities provide employees with the expectation that

advancement prospects are attainable within the organization (e.g., Forrier et al., 2015; Latan et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2016). When overqualified employees believe that future roles aligning with their career interests and goals are within reach, they are more likely to tolerate their current situation and experience lower injustice-based feelings of deprivation. Accordingly, at high levels of perceived career opportunities, the positive relationship between perceived overqualification and anger toward employment situation should weaken. In contrast, when overqualified individuals do not anticipate improvement in the form of suitable, goal-congruent future positions—reflecting low perceived career opportunities—they are likely to become more sensitive to their current undesirable circumstances and experience a heightened sense of deprivation. Under such conditions, the relationship between perceived overqualification and anger toward the employment situation should strengthen.

Hypothesis 2. Individual's perceived organizational career opportunities moderate the positive relationship between perceived overqualification and anger toward employment situation, such that the relationship will be weaker when perceived organizational career opportunities are high.

Cognitive reaction to perceived overqualification and perceived career opportunities as a boundary condition

Second, reflecting the rational pathway within the dual-process framework (Evans, 2008), we argue that perceived overqualification is also related to a negative cognitive evaluation of how well one's job fulfills one's needs—specifically, lower perceived needs–supplies fit. Cognitive reactions to perceived overqualification are commonly explained using person–environment (P-E) fit theory (e.g., Edwards et al., 2006), another widely applied framework in overqualification research (Erdogan & Bauer, 2021). P-E fit theory emphasizes individuals' cognitive assessments of the (mis)fit between personal characteristics and environmental characteristics, and how such evaluations relate to subsequent outcomes. From this perspective, perceived overqualification represents a form of person–job misfit in which an individual's capabilities (i.e., abilities, qualifications, skills, and experience) exceed the job's demands. Due to this mismatch, overqualified employees are likely to conclude that their needs—such as those for responsibility, meaningful challenge, and opportunities for growth—are inadequately met in their current roles. Thus, we expect perceived overqualification to be negatively related to perceived needs–supplies fit (Luksyte et al., 2022).

Hypothesis 3. Perceived overqualification is negatively related to needs–supplies fit.

In addition, with regard to the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and perceived needs–supplies fit, perceived organizational career opportunities are likely to signal to overqualified individuals that future roles within the organization may better align with their needs (Kraimer et al., 2011; London, 1983). Such expectations indicate that positions offering greater challenge, responsibility, and developmental potential may be attainable over time. Consequently, when perceived organizational career opportunities are high, overqualified individuals may evaluate their current needs–supplies balance less negatively. In this case, because they anticipate that their work situation may become increasingly aligned with their career goals and aspirations, the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and

perceived need–supply fit should be weaker. In contrast, at low levels of perceived career opportunities—when no meaningful improvement in job responsibilities or career progression appears forthcoming—overqualified employees are likely to appraise their current situation more negatively. As a result, the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and perceived needs–supplies fit is expected to be stronger.

Hypothesis 4. Individual's perceived organizational career opportunities moderate the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and perceived needs–supplies fit, such that the relationship is weaker when perceived organizational career opportunities are high.

Indirect effects of perceived overqualification via anger toward the employment situation on job satisfaction, OCBO, and work–family conflict

Next, we hypothesize that anger toward the employment situation will be negatively related to job satisfaction and OCBO, and positively related to work–family conflict. Taken together, these relationships imply an indirect effect of perceived overqualification on all three outcomes via anger. First, job satisfaction is “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences” (Locke, 1976, p. 1300) and represents a core job attitude. When overqualified individuals feel angry about their employment situation, this negative affective state is likely to serve an informative function (Schwarz & Clore, 1988), shaping how they evaluate and appraise their jobs and, in turn, decreeing their job satisfaction.

Second, anger is also likely to diminish individuals' willingness to engage in OCBO, a form of discretionary behavior intended to benefit the organization (e.g., Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). Feeling angry about their work situation may lead individuals to hold their organization partially responsible for failing to provide employment that matches their skills and qualifications. Drawing on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), such feelings of anger reduce employees' willingness to reciprocate by investing additional effort in the organization or engaging in extra-role behaviors beyond formal job requirements (e.g., LePine et al., 2002).

Third, work–family conflict, as a type of interrole conflict, occurs when the demands, strain, or time commitments of the work role interfere with the family role (Netemeyer et al., 1996). Work-related affect—particularly anger—has been identified as a central driver of spillover processes (e.g., Du et al., 2018) that link experiences from the work domain to the home domain. Anger at work consumes emotional resources, heightens strain, and makes work experiences more taxing (Shah et al., 2022; Taxer et al., 2019), thereby compromising employees' ability to fulfill their family responsibilities.

Finally, given our earlier reasoning that perceived overqualification is positively related to anger toward the employment situation (Hypothesis 1), we therefore propose that perceived overqualification is indirectly related to lower job satisfaction and OCBO, and to higher work–family conflict, through heightened anger toward the employment situation.

Hypothesis 5. Anger toward the employment situation mediates the negative relationships between perceived overqualification and (a) job satisfaction and (b) OCBO, and the positive relationship between perceived overqualification and (c) work–family conflict.

Indirect effects of perceived overqualification via needs–supplies fit on job satisfaction, OCBO, and work–family conflict

Consistent with P-E fit theory (Edwards et al., 1998) and need–fulfillment theories (e.g., Locke, 1976; Rice et al., 1985), we further propose that perceived needs–supplies fit will be positively related to job satisfaction and OCBO and negatively related to work–family conflict. Taken together, these arguments imply an indirect effect of perceived overqualification on these outcomes via needs–supplies fit. Across both theoretical traditions, the core assumption is that when individuals feel their needs are being fulfilled at work, this gives rise to enhanced well-being and more positive attitudes. First, with regard to job satisfaction, Locke (1976, p. 1303) noted that “it is the degree to which the job fulfills or allows the fulfillment of the individual’s needs that determines his degree of job satisfaction.” Thus, when employees perceive that their jobs meet their needs, they are likely to appraise their work more positively and experience higher job satisfaction.

Second, we argue that need satisfaction will also motivate individuals to engage in OCBO. When employees perceive that their needs are being met, they experience positive affective states that broaden and build personal resources (e.g., Fredrickson, 2001). In turn, these enriched resources make individuals more inclined to invest additional effort in discretionary, pro-organizational behaviors that extend beyond formal job requirements.

Third, P-E fit theory also suggests individuals who perceive a strong fit between their needs and what their jobs provide are better positioned to manage work demands and experience less strain (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). This reduces the likelihood that work will interfere with family responsibilities, thereby decreasing work–family conflict (e.g., Du et al., 2018).

Finally, given our earlier reasoning that perceived overqualification is negatively associated with needs–supplies fit (Hypothesis 3), we therefore expect perceived overqualification to be indirectly related to lower job satisfaction and OCBO and higher work–family conflict through reduced needs–supplies fit.

Hypothesis 6. Perceived needs–supplies fit mediates the negative relationships between perceived overqualification and (a) job satisfaction and (b) OCBO, and the positive relationship between perceived overqualification and (c) work–family conflict.

Moreover, our theorized model and proposed hypotheses imply conditional indirect effects—that is, indirect effects of perceived overqualification on the outcomes via anger toward employment situation and needs–supplies fit that are contingent upon the level of perceived organizational career opportunities. Accordingly, we argue that the strength of these indirect effects varies depending on whether individuals perceive high or low future career opportunities within their organization. These conditional indirect effects will also be tested.

Relative strength of differing mechanisms of perceived overqualification

As discussed above, perceived overqualification is expected to influence the proposed outcomes through both an affective and a cognitive pathway (Evans, 2008). Although these pathways represent two equally viable theoretical mechanisms, an important question is whether their relative influence differs when considered simultaneously. For instance, while we expect the effects of perceived overqualification to spill over into the nonwork domain (i.e., work–family conflict)

via both pathways, the affective mechanism has been shown to be a particularly important driver of such spillover effects (e.g., Du et al., 2018; Eby et al., 2010; Williams & Alliger, 1994). Thus, the affective pathway may be more relevant for understanding the effects of overqualification on nonwork outcomes. Similarly, assessing the relative strength of affective versus cognitive mechanisms across outcomes may inform more targeted interventions, depending on which mechanism is most relevant for a given outcome. Accordingly, we examine the relative strength of these two mechanisms to better understand their relevance for different outcomes. Because this analysis is exploratory, we pose the following research question:

Research question: Through which mechanism (i.e., affective vs. cognitive mechanism) are the indirect effects of perceived overqualification on outcomes more dominant?

METHOD

Sample and procedures

Prior to participant recruitment and data collection, the study received ethical review and approval from our faculty's ethics committee.¹ To test our proposed model, we collected time-lagged data from employees and their closely related others in the German-speaking part of Europe (Austria, Germany, and the German-speaking part of Switzerland). Data were collected between 2017 and 2018, and participants could begin the study at their convenience. Potential participants were contacted via messenger boards, newsletters, human resources departments, or newspapers and invited to participate in research on individual and organizational factors influencing job satisfaction. All participants received personalized feedback reports, and monetary incentives were offered, with three randomly selected participants each receiving €500.

After registering for the study and providing informed consent, participants completed surveys at three time points, each separated by a 2-week interval. We selected a 2-week lag because it allows the effects of perceived overqualification on affective and cognitive reactions to emerge while minimizing the influence of unrelated events (Simha, 2024). Similar time lags have been used in prior research examining the effects of overqualification on such reactions (e.g., Debus et al., 2023; Luksyte et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022) and align with recommendations for “shortitudinal” research designs (Dormann & Griffin, 2015). Additionally, this interval helps reduce common method bias and respondent fatigue (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

At the beginning of the first survey, participants completed several screening questions. Only individuals who were 18 years and above, not self-employed, not in vocational training or other education (i.e., only working as a side job), and working at least 3 days per week were included in the study. Employee self-reports were used to assess perceived overqualification, perceived organizational career opportunities, and control variables (i.e., *gender*, *number of previous promotions in the current organization*, and *years of education*) at Time 1 (T1); anger toward employment situation and perceived needs–supplies fit at Time 2 (T2); and OCBO at Time 3 (T3). Additionally, participants were asked to provide contact information for a closely related person (e.g., a spouse or partner, relative, or close friend), who was invited to complete an additional questionnaire at T3 assessing the focal employee's job satisfaction and work–family conflict (e.g., Ilies et al., 2007; Ilies et al., 2009). This procedure aligns with recommendations to reduce common method bias through temporal and source separation of measurement (Podsakoff et al., 2012). To ensure that these other-ratings provided valid assessments of the focal employee, job satisfaction and work–family conflict were also self-rated in the same questionnaire as OCBO at T3.

Initially, 315 employees agreed to participate in the study. Due to incomplete T1 surveys, the final sample consisted of 297 participants (269 participants completed the T2 survey, and 240 participants completed the T3 survey).² In this final sample, 56.20% were female, with a mean age of 40.98 years ($SD = 12.31$). Participants had an average of 11.55 years of education ($SD = 3.34$), corresponding roughly to a high school diploma plus either an occupational diploma or a bachelor's degree. On average, participants had experienced 1.15 previous promotions in their current organization ($SD = 1.70$).

Regarding the close others who provided additional ratings, 60.07% were female, with a mean age of 42.84 years ($SD = 13.03$). In terms of relationship to the focal employee, 58.11% of other ratings came from romantic partners, 22.30% from close friends, 10.14% from close relatives (i.e., parents, adult children, or siblings), and 9.46% were from others, mostly close colleagues.

Measures

Unless otherwise noted, all variables were measured using a 7-point rating scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree* to (7) *strongly agree*. Measures were translated from English to German following Brislin's (1980) translation-back-translation procedure. Cronbach's alphas for all scales are reported on the main diagonal of Table 1.

Perceived Overqualification

Employee perceived overqualification was measured using Maynard et al.'s (2006) nine-item Scale of Perceived Overqualification (SPOQ; e.g., "I have more abilities than I need in order to do my job") at T1.

Perceived organizational career opportunities

Employee perceived organizational career opportunities were assessed using the three-item measure by Kraimer et al. (2011, e.g., "There are career opportunities within my organization that are attractive to me") at T1.

Anger toward employment situation

Employee anger toward their employment situation was assessed using three items by Liu et al. (2015; i.e., "I feel angry about my current job status," "I feel angry about the job assignment I received from my employer," and "I resent my employment situation") at T2.

Perceived needs-supplies fit

Employee perceived needs-supplies fit was measured using four items by Cable and DeRue (2002; e.g., "This job fulfills my needs") at T2.

TABLE 1 Means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations of study variables.

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender ^a (T1)	.56	.50	—									
2. Number of promotions ^b (T1)	1.15	1.70	-.16**	—								
3. Years of education (T1)	15.55	3.34	-.01	.06	—							
4. Perceived overqualification (T1)	3.49	1.27	.02	-.10	.05	(.90)						
5. Perceived organizational career opportunities (T1)	4.14	1.48	-.19**	.22**	.14*	-.16**	(.85)					
6. Anger toward employment situation (T2)	2.22	1.29	.04	-.08	-.08	.26**	-.35**	(.92)				
7. Perceived needs-supplies fit (T2)	5.52	1.08	.04	.11	.05	-.36**	.34**	-.66**	(.93)			
8. Job satisfaction (other-rating) (T3)	5.72	1.14	-.07	.14	.14	-.24**	.31**	-.57**	.53**	(.87)		
9. Organizational citizenship behavior toward the organization (T3)	5.54	.85	-.23**	.22**	-.02	-.13*	.25**	-.35**	.34**	.30**	(.87)	
10. Work-family conflict (other-rating) (T3)	2.66	1.14	-.01	.11	.18*	.05	.16	.15	-.06	-.18*	-.001	(.90)

Note: $N = 297$. Alpha reliabilities appear in the parentheses along the diagonal. If not indicated otherwise, variables were assessed through self-reports.

^aFor gender: male = 0; female = 1.

^bNumbers of previous promotions in the current company.

* $p < .05$, and ** $p < .01$.

OCBO

Employee OCBO was measured using eight items by Lee and Allen (2002; e.g., “I offer ideas to improve the functioning of the organization”) at T3.

Job satisfaction

Employee job satisfaction rated by the closely related other was measured using the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire Job Satisfaction Subscale (MOAQ-JSS; Cammann et al., 1983) at T3. The MOAQ-JSS consists of three items and is a global assessment of the affective component of job satisfaction (e.g., Bowling & Hammond, 2008). We adapted the items to be appropriate for the two-week lag between measurement points (i.e., “He/she is satisfied with his/her job,” “He/she doesn't like his/her job,” and “He/She likes working here”). The same scale was used to measure employees' self-rated job satisfaction (i.e., “I am satisfied with my job,” “I don't like my job,” and “I like working here”).

Work–family conflict

Employee work–family conflict rated by the closely related other was assessed using the five-item scale by Netemeyer et al. (1996; e.g., “The demands of his/her work interfere with his/her home and family life.”) at T3. The same scale was used to measure employees' self-rated work–family conflict (e.g., “The demands of my work interfere with my home and family life”).

Control variables

In line with previous research in the area of perceived overqualification and perceived organizational career opportunities, we controlled for gender, number of previous promotions in the current company, and years of education, all of which were measured at T1 (e.g., Erdogan et al., 2011; Kraimer et al., 2011).

RESULTS

Preliminary analysis

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations among all study variables. Prior to hypothesis testing, we conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) in Mplus 8 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017) to evaluate the construct validity of all measures. We compared the proposed seven-factor model (M_0 ; i.e., in which perceived overqualification, perceived organizational career opportunities, anger toward employment situation, perceived needs–supplies fit, OCBO, job satisfaction, and work–family conflict are specified as distinct constructs) to an alternative four-factor model (M_1) designed to assess whether constructs measured at the same time point might be empirically indistinguishable. For this alternative model, all T1 constructs (i.e., perceived overqualification and perceived organizational career

opportunities) loaded on a single factor, all T2 constructs (i.e., anger toward employment situation and perceived needs–supplies fit) loaded on a second factor, the T3 self-reported outcome (i.e., OCBO) loaded on a third factor, and the close-other–reported outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction and work–family conflict) loaded on a fourth factor. Compared with M_0 ($\chi^2[539] = 1050.97, p < .00; CFI = .91; TLI = .90; RMSEA = .06; SRMR = .07$), this model M_1 ($\chi^2[554] = 2301.01, p < .00; CFI = .70; TLI = .68; RMSEA = .10; SRMR = .13$) fit the data significantly worse ($\Delta\chi^2[15] = 1250.04, p < .01$). Thus, these model comparison results confirmed that the measures used in the current study captured distinct constructs.

Hypothesis testing

To test our hypotheses, we used full information maximum likelihood estimation in Mplus 8 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017), which makes use of all available data when estimating parameters and therefore allows participants with incomplete survey data to contribute meaningfully to the analyses (Enders & Bandalos, 2001). We employed multivariate path modeling to estimate the hypothesized pathways. Perceived overqualification and perceived organizational career opportunities were both grand-mean centered (Cohen et al., 2003), and their product term was computed to model the interaction. The control variables were also grand mean centered. Anger toward the employment situation and perceived needs–supplies fit (i.e., mediators) were regressed on perceived overqualification, perceived organizational career opportunities, the interaction term, and control variables (i.e., gender, number of previous promotions in the current company, and years of education). Employee OCBO, job satisfaction, and work–family conflict (i.e., outcomes) were regressed on anger toward the employment situation, perceived needs–supplies fit, perceived overqualification, perceived organizational career opportunities, and control variables. Following prior recommendations (see Liu et al., 2012), we additionally controlled for the effects of the interaction term on all outcome variables. Unstandardized path coefficients for the estimated model are reported in Table 2, and Figure 2 provides a graphical representation of the results. To test the indirect effects proposed in Hypotheses 5 and 6, we conducted Monte Carlo simulations with 20,000 replications to obtain 95% confidence intervals (CIs; Selig & Preacher, 2008). Parameter estimates and CIs for these indirect effects are presented in Table 3.

As shown in Table 2, Hypothesis 1 was supported in that perceived overqualification was significantly and positively related to anger toward the employment situation, $\gamma = .21, p < .01$. Regarding Hypothesis 2, the interaction between perceived overqualification and perceived organizational career opportunities was significantly related to anger toward the employment situation, $\gamma = -.07, p < .05$ (see Table 2). Figure 3 illustrates this interaction. Simple slope analyses indicated that when perceived organizational career opportunities were low (1 *SD* below the mean), perceived overqualification was positively related to anger toward the employment situation ($\gamma = .32, p < .01$). In contrast, when perceived organizational career opportunities were high (1 *SD* above the mean), perceived overqualification was not significantly related to anger toward the employment situation ($\gamma = .11, ns$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

As shown in Table 2, Hypothesis 3 was supported in that perceived overqualification was significantly and negatively related to perceived needs–supplies fit, $\gamma = -.26, p < .01$. Regarding Hypothesis 4, the interaction between perceived overqualification and perceived organizational career opportunities was significantly related to perceived needs–supplies fit, $\gamma = .08, p < .01$ (see Table 2). Figure 3b illustrates this interaction. Simple slope analyses indicated that

TABLE 2 Unstandardized coefficients of the moderated mediation path model.

Variables	Anger toward employment situation		Perceived needs-supplies fit		Job satisfaction (other-rating)		OCBO		Work-family conflict (other-rating)	
	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE
<i>Intercept</i>	2.20**	.07	5.54**	.06	4.67**	.74	4.94**	.46	1.73	.91
<i>Control variables</i>										
Gender ^a	-.10	.15	.27*	.12	.03	.16	-.30**	.10	.04	.20
Number of promotions ^b	.00	.04	.03	.03	.02	.06	.08*	.03	.08	.07
Years of education	-.02	.02	.01	.02	.04	.02	-.01	.02	.05	.03
<i>Independent variables</i>										
Perceived overqualification	.21**	.06	-.26**	.05	.01	.07	.04	.04	.01	.08
Perceived organizational career opportunities	-.26**	.05	.21**	.04	.10	.06	.03	.04	.13	.07
<i>Interaction</i>										
Perceived overqualification × perceived career opportunity	-.07*	.03	.08**	.03	.05	.04	.02	.02	-.01	.05
<i>Mediators</i>										
Anger toward employment situation					-.33**	.09	-.13*	.05	.24*	.11
Perceived needs-supplies fit					.32**	.11	.16*	.07	.08	.14
R ²	18.5%		26.1%		46.4%		21.1%		9.2%	

Note: N = 297. If not indicated otherwise, variables were assessed through self-reports.

^aFor gender: male = 0; female = 1.

^bNumbers of previous promotions in the current organization. OCBO: organizational citizenship behavior toward the organization.

*p < .05, and **p < .01.

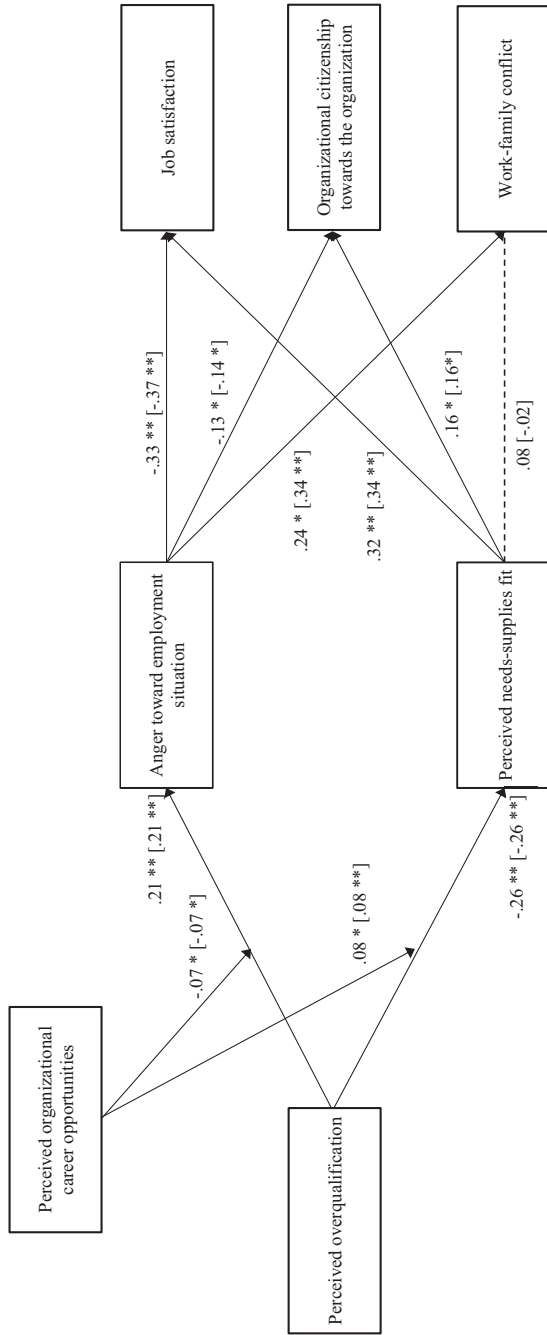


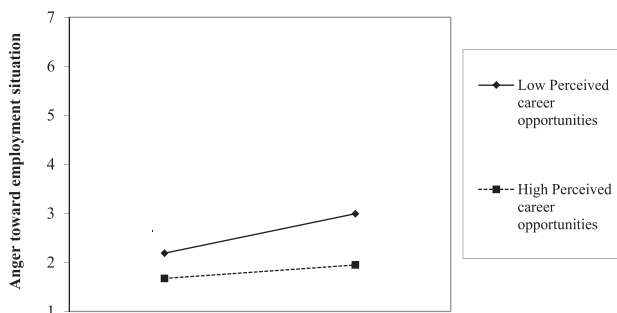
FIGURE 2 Results for the hypothesized paths. *Note:* Path coefficients in square brackets indicate results from a supplementary analysis based on a model that included self-rated measures of job satisfaction and work-family conflict, rather than the other-rated measures used in the main analysis.

TABLE 3 Unstandardized estimates and bias-corrected confidence intervals of indirect path coefficients of the moderated mediation model.

Variables	Indirect effect	
	Estimate	Bias-corrected 95% CI
Perceived overqualification → anger toward employment situation → job satisfaction		
<i>Indirect effect</i>	-.07	[-.13, -.06]
<i>Moderator perceived organizational career opportunities: Conditional indirect effects</i>		
High perceived career opportunities (HPCO)	-.04	[-.10, .01]
Low perceived career opportunities (LPCO)	-.11	[-.19, -.04]
Difference between HPCO and LPCO conditions	.07	[.003, .16]
Perceived overqualification → anger toward employment situation → OCBO		
<i>Indirect effect</i>	-.03	[-.06, -.01]
<i>Moderator perceived organizational career opportunities: Conditional indirect effects</i>		
High perceived career opportunities (HPCO)	-.02	[-.04, .01]
Low perceived career opportunities (LPCO)	-.04	[-.09, -.01]
Difference between HPCO and LPCO conditions	.03	[.003, .07]
Perceived overqualification → anger toward employment situation → work-family conflict		
<i>Indirect effect</i>	.05	[.01, .11]
<i>Moderator perceived organizational career opportunities: Conditional indirect effects</i>		
High perceived career opportunities (HPCO)	.03	[-.01, .08]
Low perceived career opportunities (LPCO)	.08	[.01, .16]
Difference between HPCO and LPCO conditions	-.05	[-.13, .001]
Perceived overqualification → perceived needs-supplies fit → job satisfaction		
<i>Indirect effect</i>	-.08	[-.15, -.02]
<i>Moderator perceived organizational career opportunities: Conditional indirect effects</i>		
High perceived career opportunities (HPCO)	-.04	[-.10, -.003]
Low perceived career opportunities (LPCO)	-.12	[-.22, -.04]
Difference between HPCO and LPCO conditions	.08	[.02, .17]
Perceived overqualification → perceived needs-supplies fit → OCBO		
<i>Indirect effect</i>	-.04	[-.08, -.01]
<i>Moderator perceived organizational career opportunities: Conditional indirect effects</i>		
High perceived career opportunities (HPCO)	-.02	[-.05, -.002]
Low perceived career opportunities (LPCO)	-.06	[-.12, -.01]
Difference between HPCO and LPCO conditions	.04	[.004, .09]
Perceived overqualification → perceived needs-supplies fit → work-family conflict		
<i>Indirect effect</i>	-.02	[-.09, .05]
<i>Moderator perceived organizational career opportunities: Conditional indirect effects</i>		
High perceived career opportunities (HPCO)	-.01	[-.06, .03]
Low perceived career opportunities (LPCO)	-.03	[-.14, .07]
Difference between HPCO and LPCO conditions	.02	[-.05, .10]

Note: Significant (conditional) indirect effects and differences between conditional indirect effects for high (+1 SD) versus low (-1 SD) values of perceived career opportunities are in bold.

(a)
*Perceived Career Opportunities Moderate the Relationship Between Perceived
Overqualification and Anger Toward Employment Situation*



(b)
*Perceived Career Opportunities Moderate the Relationship Between Perceived
Overqualification and Perceived Needs-Supplies Fit*

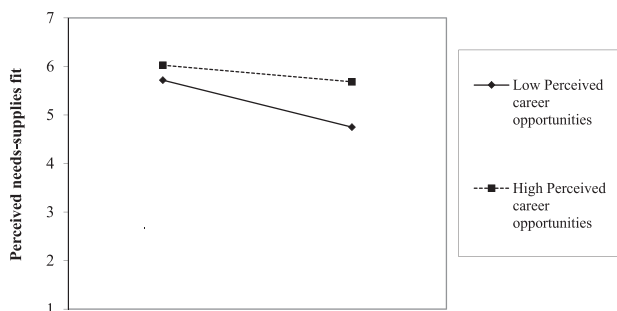


FIGURE 3 (a) Perceived career opportunities moderate the relationship between perceived overqualification and anger toward employment situation. (b) Perceived career opportunities moderate the relationship between perceived overqualification and perceived needs–supplies fit.

when perceived organizational career opportunities were low (1 *SD* below the mean), perceived overqualification was negatively related to perceived needs–supplies fit ($\gamma = -.38, p < .01$). When perceived organizational career opportunities were high (1 *SD* above the mean), perceived overqualification also remained negatively related to perceived needs–supplies fit ($\gamma = -.13, p < .05$), although the slope was less steep. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Next as shown in Table 3, Hypothesis 5a (i.e., perceived overqualification \rightarrow [+] anger toward employment situation \rightarrow [–] job satisfaction; indirect effect = $-.07$, 95% CI: $[-.13, -.06]$), Hypothesis 5b (i.e., perceived overqualification \rightarrow [+] anger toward employment situation \rightarrow [–] OCBO; indirect effect = $-.03$, 95% CI: $[-.06, -.01]$), and Hypothesis 5c (i.e., perceived overqualification \rightarrow [+] anger toward employment situation \rightarrow [+] work–family conflict; indirect effect = $.05$, 98% CI: $[.01, .11]$) were all supported. Furthermore, as shown in Table 3, Hypothesis 6a (i.e., perceived overqualification \rightarrow [–] needs–supplies fit \rightarrow [+] job satisfaction; indirect effect = $-.08$, 95% CI: $[-.15, -.02]$) and Hypothesis 6b (i.e., perceived overqualification \rightarrow [–] needs–supplies fit \rightarrow [+] OCBO; indirect effect = $-.04$,

95% CI: $[-.08, -.01]$) were also supported. In contrast, Hypothesis 6c (i.e., perceived overqualification $\rightarrow [-]$ needs–supplies fit $\rightarrow [-]$ work–family conflict; indirect effect = $-.02$, 95% CI: $[-.09, .05]$) was not supported, as perceived needs–supplies fit was not significantly related to work–family conflict ($\gamma = .08$, *ns*).

Additionally, conditional indirect effects and corresponding differences implied by the model—and computed following the recommendations of Preacher et al. (2007)—are presented in Table 3. These analyses indicate that, consistent with Hypotheses 2 and 5, the indirect negative effects of perceived overqualification on job satisfaction and OCB, as well as the indirect positive effect on work–family conflict via the affective mechanism (i.e., anger toward employment situation), were significant only at low levels of perceived career opportunities (i.e., 1 *SD* below the mean). At high levels of career opportunities (i.e., 1 *SD* above the mean), these indirect effects became nonsignificant. Likewise, consistent with Hypotheses 4 and 6, the indirect negative effects of perceived overqualification on job satisfaction and OCB via the cognitive mechanism (i.e., needs–supplies fit) were significant at both low and high levels of perceived career opportunities (i.e., 1 *SD* below and above the mean), although these conditional indirect effects were smaller when perceived career opportunities were high. Overall, the pattern that perceived organizational career opportunities attenuate the negative consequences of perceived overqualification via both the affective and the cognitive mechanism is reflected in significant differences between the conditional indirect effects for job satisfaction and OCBO (and, for the affective mechanism, also for work–family conflict) when comparing high versus low levels of perceived career opportunities.

Finally, our hypothesized model explained 18.5% of the variance in anger toward the employment situation and 26.1% of the variance in perceived needs–supplies fit, representing the affective and cognitive reactions to perceived overqualification. Moreover, the model accounted for 46.4% of the variance in job satisfaction, 21.1% in OCBO, and 9.2% in work–family conflict.

Exploratory analysis of the research question

To further address our research question concerning the relative strength of the affective and cognitive mechanisms underlying the effects of perceived overqualification, we estimated the difference between the two theoretically grounded indirect pathways for each outcome variable. Specifically, we compared the affective indirect effect (i.e., the pathway via anger toward the employment situation) with the cognitive indirect effect (i.e., the pathway via perceived needs–supplies fit) by calculating their difference (i.e., affective indirect effect – cognitive indirect effect). The results indicated that, for job satisfaction and OCBO, the differences between the respective mechanisms were not significant (job satisfaction: difference = $.01$, 95% CI: $[-.07, .09]$; OCBO: difference = $.01$, 95% CI: $[-.03, .06]$). These findings suggest that the effects of perceived overqualification on job satisfaction and OCBO operated through both the affective and cognitive mechanisms to a comparable extent. For work–family conflict, the difference between the two indirect effects was also not significant (difference = $.07$, 95% Monte Carlo CI: $[-.01, .16]$). However, it is important to note that for this outcome, the indirect effect of perceived overqualification emerged exclusively through the affective mechanism, whereas the cognitive pathway was not significant (see results for Hypotheses 5c and 6c and Table 3).

Supplementary analyses

We conducted a set of supplementary analyses to further examine the robustness of our results. The full results for all analyses are reported in Appendix S1. First, to examine whether other ratings of job satisfaction and work–family conflict provided valid assessments of these constructs for the focal employee, we conducted an additional analysis in which we replaced the other-rated measures with self-rated measures of job satisfaction and work–family conflict. An overview of the corresponding path coefficients is provided in Figure 2 (see also Table S1). Importantly, all findings reported in the Results section remained unchanged when the self-rated constructs were substituted for the other-rated constructs, indicating that our results are robust across rating sources.

Second, we also conducted analyses to examine the robustness of our results with respect to control variables. To do so, we reran the main analysis without the original control variables (i.e., gender, number of previous promotions in the current company, and years of education; see Table S2). Next, we added relationship status (in a relationship vs. not in a relationship) as a control variable for work–family conflict, as well as all other outcomes and mediators (see Table S3). Finally, we included participant income as an additional control variable (see Table S4). Across all three robustness checks, the results remained consistent with those obtained using the original control variables.

Third, we tested an alternative model as P-E fit theory (e.g., Edwards, 1991; Edwards et al., 1998) suggests that negative affective states, such as anger, may also arise from low needs–supplies fit. Accordingly, we ran a sequential mediation model in which the effects of perceived overqualification on outcomes were mediated first by needs–supplies fit and then by anger toward the employment situation. Results (see Table S5) indicated that perceived overqualification remained significantly and negatively related to perceived needs–supplies fit ($\gamma = -.26, p < .01$; supporting Hypothesis 3), and the interaction between perceived overqualification and perceived organizational career opportunities was also significantly related to needs–supplies fit ($\gamma = .08, p < .01$; supporting Hypothesis 4). Next, needs–supplies fit was significantly and negatively related to anger toward the employment situation ($\gamma = -.72, p < .01$), which in turn was significantly and negatively related to job satisfaction ($\gamma = -.48, p < .01$) and OCBO ($\gamma = -.21, p < .01$), as well as significantly and positively related to work–family conflict ($\gamma = .20, p < .05$). Although these findings highlight an alternative pathway among the variables in our model, they should be interpreted with caution, as needs–supplies fit and anger were measured simultaneously at T2 rather than at separate time points, as implied by the sequential mediation model.

Finally, we also examined whether the observed effects differ between younger and older employees. To test this, we included age as a second moderator, examining a three-way interaction among perceived overqualification, perceived career opportunities, and age on employees' affective and cognitive reactions to overqualification (i.e., anger toward the employment situation and needs–supplies fit). Results (see also Table S6) indicated that neither the two-way interactions (i.e., perceived overqualification \times perceived career opportunities, perceived overqualification \times age, and perceived career opportunities \times age) nor the three-way interaction (i.e., perceived overqualification \times perceived career opportunities \times age) were significant for anger toward the employment situation. For needs–supplies fit, however, the two-way interaction between perceived overqualification and perceived career opportunities remained significant for needs–supplies fit ($\gamma = .09, p < .01$). In addition, the three-way interaction with age was significant ($\gamma = .01, p < .05$). Figure S1 displays this interaction. Slope difference tests

showed that for older employees (1 SD above the mean), the difference between slopes for high (1 SD above the mean; slope = .02, $p = .89$) and low (1 SD below the mean; slope = $-.44$, $p < .01$) perceived career opportunities was significant (slope difference = .46, $p < .01$). In contrast, for younger employees (1 SD below the mean), the difference between slopes for high (1 SD above the mean; slope = $-.14$, $p < .05$) and low (1 SD below the mean; slope = $-.24$, $p < .01$) perceived career opportunities was not significant (slope difference = .10, $p = .08$). The results suggest that the mitigating effect of perceived career opportunities on the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and needs–supplies fit is significant only for older, but not for younger employees.

DISCUSSION

By integrating future career-related expectations into the literature on perceived overqualification, this three-wave, multisource study demonstrates that perceived organizational career opportunities are an important boundary condition for the outcomes of perceived overqualification. Specifically, they mitigated the positive relationship between perceived overqualification and anger toward the employment situation, as well as the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and perceived needs–supplies fit. Moreover, the affective pathway (via anger) mediated the effects of perceived overqualification on all three outcomes—lower job satisfaction, lower OCBO, and higher work–family conflict—whereas the cognitive pathway (via needs–supplies fit) mediated its effects on lower job satisfaction and OCBO but not on work–family conflict. Comparisons of indirect effects indicated that for work-related outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction and OCBO), both pathways were equally influential, whereas for the nonwork outcome (i.e., work–family conflict), only the affective pathway played a mediating role. Finally, the explained variance in anger toward the employment situation and in perceived needs–supplies fit highlights perceived overqualification as a significant predictor of affective and cognitive reactions to work. The model also accounted for 46.4% of the variance in job satisfaction, 21.1% in OCBO, and 9.2% in work–family conflict, suggesting that additional mechanisms may be relevant, particularly for explaining the effects of perceived overqualification on work–family conflict.

Theoretical implications

The results of this study provide important theoretical implications for the literature. First, we identified perceived organizational career opportunities as a critical boundary condition that enables overqualified individuals to better tolerate their situation, both in terms of the anger they experience and the reduced needs–supplies fit they perceive. Drawing on dual-process frameworks (e.g., Evans, 2008) and career motivation theory (London, 1983), our study extends previous research by introducing an expectation-related, forward-looking moderator (Kraimer et al., 2011; Latan et al., 2022). This perspective suggests that overqualified individuals may experience less detrimental outcomes if they perceive career opportunities to be available within their current organization.

Viewing overqualification as a “bridge” or facilitator toward a more desirable job situation has been largely neglected in the literature (for an exception, see Lee et al., 2020). However, numerous labor market studies indicate that overqualification often persists rather than

serving as a transitional phase, functioning more as a trap than a bridge (e.g., Acosta-Ballesteros et al., 2018; Baert et al., 2013; Kiersztyn, 2013; Meroni & Vera-Toscano, 2017; Verhaest et al., 2015; Wen & Maani, 2019). As contradictory as these findings may appear, they underscore the importance of career opportunities within an employee's current organization—particularly given evidence that private sector employees, where overqualification is most common, tend to exit overqualification by taking new roles within the same sector (Congregado et al., 2016). In light of these prior findings and the results of our study, the perception of career opportunities within the current organization emerges as a crucial signal for retaining overqualified and skilled employees, especially amid ongoing skilled labor shortages (e.g., Ifo Institute, 2022, August 2). Taken together, our findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of perceived overqualification, thus contributing to more robust theory building.

Second, as noted above, reactions to perceived overqualification can be understood through dual-process frameworks, with affective and cognitive reactions most often grounded in relative deprivation and P-E fit theories, respectively. Although both perspectives are typically discussed in parallel in review chapters and recent meta-analytic reviews (e.g., Erdogan & Bauer, 2021; Harari et al., 2017), empirical studies have largely examined them in isolation (cf. Luksyte et al., 2022). In the present study, we juxtaposed these affective and cognitive mechanisms, revealing the particularly central role of the affective pathway—via anger toward the employment situation—for explaining work–family conflict.

Finally, our study broadens the criterion domain of perceived overqualification by examining work–family conflict as a nonwork outcome. In doing so, we contribute to knowledge about the potential spillover effects of perceived overqualification and advance the ongoing discussion about its relationship with work–family conflict (Culbertson et al., 2011; Erdogan et al., 2011). A notable finding in this regard is that anger emerged as a key explanatory mechanism for work–family conflict (and job satisfaction and OCBO), whereas reduced needs–supplies fit did not mediate the effect on work–family conflict (although it served as a mediator for the other two outcomes). The fact that anger (but not lower perceived needs–supplies fit) mediated the effect of perceived overqualification on work–family conflict corroborates previous research and theorizing that affect is one of the most powerful spillover mechanisms (e.g., Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Our findings therefore reinforce the notion that employees may compartmentalize their cognitive evaluations within the work domain, but their affective experiences often extend beyond the workplace and spill over into the nonwork domain (e.g., ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

Moreover, regarding the direct relationship between perceived overqualification and work–family conflict, prior work has proposed two opposing perspectives: overqualified individuals may experience greater work–family conflict due to the strain and frustration stemming from their situation (Culbertson et al., 2011), yet they may also experience less work–family conflict because less demanding work could facilitate better management of nonwork responsibilities (Erdogan & Bauer, 2021). Although our theorizing focused on increased work–family conflict due to detrimental affective and cognitive processes, the direct effect of perceived overqualification on work–family conflict was not significant in our study ($\gamma = .01$, ns). This pattern suggests that both propositions may indeed hold—operating through opposing indirect pathways that suppress the direct relationship (e.g., MacKinnon et al., 2000). Thus, it is plausible that perceived overqualification may also relate to lower work–family conflict through mechanisms such as resource conservation.

Practical implications

Our study offers several practical implications for organizations seeking to manage overqualified employees effectively. First, clear policies and strategic human resource (HR) practices are essential to ensure that overqualified employees' potential is leveraged while minimizing dissatisfaction. One useful approach is to adopt transparent hiring policies that explicitly acknowledge and address overqualification (Kulkarni et al., 2015; Martinez et al., 2014). For instance, organizations may benefit from openly discussing career development opportunities with candidates and clarifying whether a given role serves as a stepping stone within a broader career trajectory. Beyond hiring, organizations should invest in long-term developmental HR initiatives—such as mentoring programs, structured career planning, and upskilling opportunities (Wen et al., 2023)—to foster sustained engagement. These practices signal that employees' skills are recognized and valued, thereby reducing the risk of disengagement, turnover, and underperformance (e.g., Harari et al., 2017). Such measures are especially critical for groups particularly vulnerable to persistent overqualification, including academics compared with vocationally trained employees (Damelang & Ruf, 2023), as well as young workers with secondary education and female graduates compared with tertiary-educated young men (Esposito & Scicchitano, 2022).

Second, organizations can improve the employee experience by providing open and reliable information about internal career opportunities. Perceived career opportunities within the current organization can serve as important signals for employee motivation and job satisfaction—signals that are particularly relevant in labor markets where job mobility is lower and average job tenure is comparatively high (e.g., the German-speaking part of Europe, where this study was conducted) compared with other countries (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023, 2024; European Commission, 2009; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2024). Regular communication about potential career paths, promotion criteria, and development programs can foster a sense of trust and fairness among employees and help overqualified employees view their current role as part of a longer term trajectory. This approach may be particularly beneficial for employees with protean (e.g., Hall et al., 2018) and boundaryless (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) career orientations. Overqualified individuals with a protean orientation, who value personal fulfillment and intrinsic success, are likely to benefit from development programs and meaningful project opportunities that align with their values. Similarly, employees with a boundaryless orientation, who prioritize external mobility and opportunities, may perceive a lack of career development as a signal to seek opportunities elsewhere. By offering clear and transparent career development options, organizations can not only address the aspirations associated with both orientations but also foster a sense of purpose, trust, and alignment of personal and professional goals, ultimately retaining talented employees.

Third, organizations must recognize and mitigate the range of negative outcomes associated not only with perceived overqualification—both within and beyond the workplace, as demonstrated in our study—but also with the potential consequences of prolonged delay of gratification among overqualified employees who are waiting for career opportunities to materialize. This is particularly important because research on career-related delay of gratification (Liu et al., 2007) has documented detrimental effects at the day level (e.g., Liu & Yu, 2021), as well as negative long-term career outcomes among employees who devalue delayed rewards (Xu, 2021; Xu & Yin, 2020). To prevent such adverse outcomes related to both perceived overqualification and delayed gratification, managers should proactively identify overqualified

employees—such as through regular check-ins—discuss their needs, and explore opportunities to increase responsibility and autonomy in their current roles. Empowering these employees by involving them in special projects or offering leadership opportunities within teams can help leverage their skill sets and reduce feelings of underutilization (Debus, Kleinmann, et al., 2020; Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Jiang, Dong, et al., 2022). By fostering a stronger sense of purpose and agency, organizations can turn potential liabilities into valuable assets while employees await future career opportunities.

Limitations and directions for future research

Admittedly, our study is not without limitations. First, the self-report nature of several measures (i.e., perceived overqualification, perceived career opportunities, anger toward employment situation, needs–supplies fit, and OCBO) may invite criticism. However, because our theoretical framework centers on perceptual and evaluative processes, self-reports represent the most accurate and conceptually appropriate source for these constructs (e.g., Cruz, 2022; Perrewé & Zellars, 1999; Simha, 2024). Moreover, regression estimates of interaction effects tend to be deflated in same-source data (Siemsen et al., 2010), which underscores the robustness and relevance of our findings. We also mitigated common method concerns by temporally separating the measurement of our constructs and by collecting job satisfaction and work–family conflict from a closely related other (see Podsakoff et al., 2012). Prior research has shown that such other-reports provide valid assessments of these constructs (e.g., Ilies et al., 2007; Ilies et al., 2009). Indeed, our supplementary analysis using self-reported job satisfaction and work–family conflict produced identical results, further supporting the validity of close-other ratings. In addition, meta-analytic evidence indicates convergence between self- and supervisor-reported performance (Heidemeier & Moser, 2009), suggesting that similar results would likely have emerged had we obtained OCBO ratings from another source.

Despite our time-lagged design, we also acknowledge that the study does not permit causal inference. Ideally, assessing all variables across all time points—allowing for the modeling of autoregressive effects—would provide a stronger test of causal directionality (Maxwell et al., 2011; Maxwell & Cole, 2007). Other measurement-related issues, such as the validity of the measures, may have influenced the observed differences in the relative strength of affective and cognitive pathways. Although we relied on well-established scales, future research should further examine these mechanisms using alternative operationalizations or multi-method approaches to more precisely evaluate their relative explanatory contributions. Relatedly, we did not control for caregiving responsibilities when examining the indirect effects of perceived overqualification on work–family conflict. However, we note that the results remained unchanged when controlling for relationship status, which may serve as a proxy for caregiving demands.

Second, because we assessed perceived organizational career opportunities only from the individual's perspective, we lack information on whether this perception is consistent with objective organizational conditions. Thus, future research could examine the alignment of individual and managerial perceptions of career opportunities, as well as which organizational and managerial practices (e.g., employee development programs or manager communication styles) may influence an individual's subjective perceptions of organizational career opportunities. Similarly, large panel data that follow the career paths of (overqualified) individuals would provide an ideal database to examine whether employees who perceive internal career

opportunities are actually more likely to move to higher positions. Furthermore, in this study, we focused on perceived career opportunities within one's current organization, but overqualified employees may also perceive career opportunities outside their organization. In terms of potential similarities and differences between internal and external career opportunities, we expect that external career opportunities will also moderate the relationship between perceived overqualification and anger by signaling that a potential job change is on the horizon—thus making employees more likely to tolerate their current position. Moreover, we expect turnover intentions to be a key outcome in the context of external career opportunities, as these external opportunities may be a key *push* factor for overqualified employees to leave their current employer, whereas perceived career opportunities within one's organization may be a key *pull* factor that keeps (overqualified) employees in their organization (Latan et al., 2022; Steel & Lounsbury, 2009).

Third, an examination of the descriptive statistics of our focal variables (see Table 1) reveals moderate means for perceived overqualification, rather low means for anger and work–family conflict, and relatively high means for needs–supplies fit and job satisfaction. These findings may reflect the broader socio-cultural and labor market context of Switzerland, Germany, and Austria (the three countries in which we collected our data), which are characterized by good to high wages, strong social security measures, and good employment protection (e.g., Wang & Aspalter, 2006). These labor market characteristics may directly contribute to more favorable evaluations and attitudes toward one's work. Furthermore, although perceived overqualification is a pressing issue in all three labor markets, the actual numbers are still lower than in many other countries (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2018; Randstad, 2012). Moreover, overqualification is particularly common among migrant workers (Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 2024). By offering our survey only in the German language, we may have created a language barrier and unintentionally excluded this population. Nevertheless, we would like to point out that our constructs showed considerable variance. Given that we found statistical support for most of our hypotheses, this pattern highlights that even low levels of overqualification can have meaningful effects on work-related outcomes. We encourage future research to examine overqualification and its outcomes in different cultural and socioeconomic settings.

Fourth, we assessed employee perceived overqualification as a chronic condition, thus neglecting how long employees have experienced this situation. Although this is a common approach in most studies of job stressors and job characteristics, the duration of exposure to overqualification may be important (Debus, Unger, & König, 2020; Sonnentag et al., 2014; Zapf et al., 1996). For example, it is conceivable that the experience of overqualification becomes stressful for employees only after a period of time, while in early phases it has no or only benign consequences (suggesting a sleeper effect; see Debus, Unger, & König, 2020). Relatedly, low to moderate levels of perceived overqualification may also be easily tolerated and even accepted in certain industries (e.g., nursing, retail, MedPro, 2015, August 25; Retail World, 2017, November 30), whereas after a certain level, perceived overqualification may become particularly stressful for employees—thus indicating nonlinear patterns (for a similar reasoning in the case of job insecurity, see Jiang, Lawrence, & Xu, 2022). To date, research has mainly examined overqualification, its outcomes, and its boundary conditions from a linear perspective—but we encourage future research to consider the role of exposure time as well as nonlinear patterns. Relatedly, future research could examine the situation where employees voluntarily take jobs for which they feel overqualified. For example, it has been suggested that new parents may voluntarily take jobs with low cognitive and time demands in order to focus on their families, and thus may not necessarily be negatively affected by overqualification if they willingly accept or

even seek out such work (Maltarich et al., 2011). Although research suggests that this voluntary overqualification may be conceptually distinct from perceived overqualification, and thus imply different outcomes (for a review, see Erdogan et al., 2011), future research could delve deeper into the conceptual similarities and differences between these two constructs.

Finally, by introducing the notion of future expectations into the overqualification literature, we hope that our study will stimulate further research in this direction. This concept is particularly important, as prior work indicates that overqualification can be detrimental to individuals' long-term career trajectories (e.g., Nabi, 2003). Relatedly, our supplementary analyses suggest that perceived career opportunities may be a particularly relevant boundary condition for older employees. Future research should therefore further integrate the literature on perceived overqualification with career development research. For example, career scholars have emphasized that “careers have become increasingly nonlinear, unstable, and boundaryless” (Jiang et al., 2023, p. 145) due to globalization, intensified competition, and rapid technological change—developments that increase the need for individuals to proactively manage their careers. Accordingly, future research may examine the extent to which overqualified individuals engage in career proactivity, defined as behavior through which individuals actively seek to influence, change, and improve their career circumstances to better meet their needs (Akkermans & Hirschi, 2023).

In addition, it has been suggested that career proactivity may also be triggered by contextual factors and signals (Forrier, 2023). Thus, applied to the context of our study, future research could examine whether perceived organizational career opportunities may act as a signal to (overqualified) employees that engaging in proactive career behaviors could be a good investment, thus making employees more likely to engage in these behaviors. Relatedly, future research could explore the notion that the acquisition of additional qualifications, which may subsequently lead to perceived overqualification, can itself be seen as a form of proactive career behaviors. Individuals may pursue further education or training as a deliberate strategy to enhance their employability or prepare for career advancement, reflecting a forward-looking approach to their career development. This perspective broadens the conceptualization of overqualification by framing it not only as a mismatch between qualifications and job requirements, but also as a potential outcome of proactive career management. Taken together, we encourage future research to consider perceived overqualification more strongly from a career perspective, thus clarifying how perceived overqualification can influence individuals' career trajectories and vice versa.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that perceived organizational career opportunities can mitigate the negative effects of perceived overqualification. In doing so, we integrate the role of future expectations as an important boundary condition in research on perceived overqualification. Moreover, we show that the affective pathway (via anger) is the slightly more dominant route (compared with the cognitive pathway) in linking perceived overqualification to its outcomes. In sum, this study contributes to a more holistic understanding of the mechanisms linking perceived overqualification to its outcomes and extends insights into the boundary conditions of perceived overqualification.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Alexandra Luksyte for her comments on an earlier version of this manuscript. We thank Janine Braunwalder, Julia Zeidler, and Lena Juds who helped collect the data for this study. Open access publishing facilitated by Universitat Zurich, as part of the Wiley - Universitat Zurich agreement via the Consortium Of Swiss Academic Libraries.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data are available from the corresponding author upon request.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Data were collected at the University of Zurich. Receiving ethical approval at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of the University of Zurich comprises a two-step procedure. In the first step, studies are prescreened to determine whether they require approval from the Institutional Review Board (i.e., Step 2) or not. The prescreen determined that our study did not fulfill the conditions for needing approval by the Institutional Review Board and was therefore declared exempt. More information about this procedure is available at <https://www.phil.uzh.ch/de/forschung/ethik.html>.

ORCID

Barbara Körner  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3650-4844>

Maike E. Debus  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1040-540X>

Mo Wang  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7004-3549>

Martin Kleinmann  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0939-1349>

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Obtaining ethical approval involved a two-step process. In the first step, researchers are required to self-assess the ethical safety of studies using a checklist, which prescreens studies to determine whether Institutional Review Board approval (i.e., step 2) is necessary. In our case, the pre-screening process indicated that the study did not meet the conditions requiring Institutional Review Board approval and was therefore exempt.
- ² We tested whether individuals who dropped out before completing T1 ($N = 18$) differed from those who were included in the final sample ($N = 297$) in terms of gender, years of education, or age. No significant differences were found.

REFERENCES

- Acosta-Ballesteros, J., Osorno-del Rosal, M. D., & Rodríguez-Rodríguez, O. M. (2018). Overeducation of young workers in Spain: How much does the first job matter? Social indicators research. *Social Indicators Research*, 138(1), 109–139. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-017-1643-z>
- Akkermans, J., & Hirschi, A. (2023). Career proactivity: Conceptual and theoretical reflections. *Applied Psychology*, 72(1), 199–204. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12444>
- Arthur, M. B., & Rousseau, D. M. (1996). The boundaryless career as a new employment principle. In M. B. Arthur & D. M. Rousseau (Eds.), *The boundaryless career: A new employment principle for a new organizational era* (pp. 3–20). Oxford University Press.

- Baert, S., Cockx, B., & Verhaest, D. (2013). Overeducation at the start of the career: Stepping stone or trap? *Labour Economics*, 25(25), 123–140. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2013.04.013>
- Berkowitz, L., & Harmon-Jones, E. (2004). Toward an understanding of the determinants of anger. *Emotion*, 4(2), 107–130. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1528-3542.4.2.107>
- Blau, P. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Borman, W. C., & Motowidlo, S. J. (1993). Expanding the criterion domain to include elements of contextual performance. In N. Schmitt & W. C. Borman (Eds.), *Personnel selection in organizations* (pp. 71–98). Jossey Bass.
- Bowling, N. A., & Hammond, G. D. (2008). A meta-analytic examination of the construct validity of the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire Job Satisfaction Subscale. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 73(1), 63–77. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2008.01.004>
- Brislin, R. W. (1980). Translation and content analysis of oral and written material. In H. C. Triandis & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology* (Vol. 2) (pp. 349–444). Allyn & Bacon.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023). *Number of jobs, labor market experience, marital status, and health for those born 1957–1964*. U.S. Department of Labour. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/nlsoy.pdf>
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024). *Employee tenure in 2024*. U.S. Department of Labour. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/tenure.pdf>
- Cable, D. M., & DeRue, D. S. (2002). The convergent and discriminant validity of subjective fit perceptions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(5), 875–884. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.5.875>
- Cammann, C., Fichman, M., Jenkins, G. D., & Klesh, J. (1983). Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire. In S. E. Seashore, E. E. Lawler, P. H. Mirvis, & C. Cammann (Eds.), *Assessing organizational change: A guide to methods, measures, and practices* (pp. 71–138). John Wiley & Sons.
- Causa, O., Abendschein, M., Luu, N., Soldani, E., & Soriolo, C. (2022). The post-COVID-19 rise in labour shortages (Economics department Working Papers).
- Charan, R., Drodner, S., & Noel, J. (2001). *The leadership pipeline: How to build the leadership-powered company* (Vol. 391). John Wiley & Sons.
- Cohen, J., Cohen, P., West, S. G., & Aiken, L. S. (2003). *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences* (3th ed.) Erlbaum.
- Congregado, E., Iglesias, J., Millán, J. M., & Román, C. (2016). Incidence, effects, dynamics and routes out of overqualification in Europe: A comprehensive analysis distinguishing by employment status. *Applied Economics*, 48(5), 411–445. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2015.1083080>
- Crosby, F. (1976). A model of egoistical relative deprivation. *Psychological Review*, 83(2), 85–113. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.83.2.85>
- Crosby, F. (1984). Relative deprivation in organizational settings. In B. M. Staw & L. L. Cummings (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior* (Vol. 6) (pp. 51–93). JAI Press.
- Cruz, K. S. (2022). Are you asking the correct person (hint: oftentimes you are not!)? Stop worrying about unfounded common method bias arguments and start using my guide to make better decisions of when to use self- and other-reports. *Group & Organization Management*, 47(5), 920–927. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10596011221103068>
- Culbertson, S. S., Mills, M. J., & Huffamn, A. H. (2011). Implications of overqualification for work-family conflict: Bringing too much to the table? *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 4(2), 252–255. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-9434.2011.01337.x>
- Damelang, A., & Ruf, K. (2023). Once outside, always outside? The link between overeducation persistence and training systems throughout the employment career. *Social Science Research*, 109, 102774. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2022.102774>
- De Cuyper, N., Notelaers, G., & De Witte, H. (2009). Job insecurity and employability in fixed-term contractors, agency workers, and permanent workers: Associations with job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 14(2), 193–205. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014603>
- Debus, M. E., Kleinmann, M., König, C. J., & Winkler, S. (2020). Being tough versus tender: The impact of country-level and individual masculinity orientations as moderators of the relationship between job insecurity and job attitudes. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 69(3), 616–652. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12189>

- Debus, M. E., Körner, B., Wang, M., & Kleinmann, M. (2023). Reacting to perceived overqualification: Uniting strain-based and self-regulatory adjustment reactions and the moderating role of formal work arrangements. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 38*(2), 411–435. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-022-09870-8>
- Debus, M. E., Unger, D., & König, C. J. (2020). Job insecurity and performance over time: The critical role of job insecurity duration. *The Career Development International, 25*(3), 325–336. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-04-2018-0102>
- Dormann, C., & Griffin, M. A. (2015). Optimal time lags in panel studies. *Psychological Methods, 20*(4), 489–505. <https://doi.org/10.1037/met0000041>
- Du, D., Derks, D., & Bakker, A. B. (2018). Daily spillover from family to work: A test of the work-home resources model. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 23*(2), 237–247. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000073>
- Eby, L. T., Maher, C. P., & Butts, M. M. (2010). The intersection of work and family life: The role of affect. *Annual Review of Psychology, 61*(1), 599–622. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.093008.100422>
- Edwards, J. R. (1991). Person-job fit: A conceptual intergration, literature review and methodological critique. In C. L. Cooper (Ed.), *International review of industrial and organizational psychology* (Vol. 6) (pp. 283–357). Wiley.
- Edwards, J. R., Cable, D. M., Williamson, I. O., Lambert, L. S., & Shipp, A. J. (2006). The phenomenology of fit: Linking the person and environment to the subjective experience of person-environment fit. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 91*(4), 802–827. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.91.4.802>
- Edwards, J. R., Caplan, R. D., & Van Harrison, R. (1998). Person-environment fit theory: Conceptual foundations, empirical evidence, and directions for future research. In C. L. Cooper (Ed.), *Theories in organizational stress* (pp. 28–67). Oxford University Press.
- Edwards, J., & Rothbard, N. (2000). Mechanisms linking work and family: Clarifying the relationship between work and family constructs. *Academy of Management Review, 25*(1), 178. <https://doi.org/10.2307/259269>
- Enders, C. K., & Bandalos, D. L. (2001). The relative performance of full information maximum likelihood estimation for missing data in structural equation models. *Structural Equation Modeling, 8*(3), 430–457. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15328007sem0803_5
- Erdogan, B., & Bauer, T. N. (2009). Perceived overqualification and its outcomes: The moderating role of empowerment. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 94*(2), 557–565. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013528>
- Erdogan, B., & Bauer, T. N. (2021). Overqualification at work: A review and synthesis of the literature. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 8*(1), 259–283. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012420-055831>
- Erdogan, B., Bauer, T. N., Peiró, J. M., & Truxillo, D. M. (2011). Overqualified employees: Making the best of a potentially bad situation for individuals and organizations. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 4*(2), 215–232. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-9434.2011.01330.x>
- Erdogan, B., Tomás, I., Valls, V., & Gracia, F. J. (2018). Perceived overqualification, relative deprivation, and person-centric outcomes: The moderating role of career centrality. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 107*, 233–245. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2018.05.003>
- Esposito, P., & Scicchitano, S. (2022). Educational mismatch and labour market transitions in Italy: Is there an unemployment trap? *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics, 61*, 138–155. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.strueco.2022.02.011>
- European Commission. (2009). Eurobarometer 71.2—Europäische Beschäftigungs- und Sozialpolitik: Ergebnisse für Deutschland [Eurobarometer 71.2—European employment and social policy: Results for Germany]. <https://doi.org/10.4232/1.10990>
- Evans, J. S. B. T. (2008). Dual-processing accounts of reasoning, judgment, and social cognition. *Annual Review of Psychology, 59*, 255–278. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.59.103006.093629>
- Filomena, M., & Picchio, M. (2022). Are temporary jobs stepping stones or dead ends? A systematic review of the literature. *International Journal of Manpower, 43*(9), 60–74. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJM-02-2022-0064>
- Folger, R. (1987). Reformulating the preconditions of resentment: A referent cognitions model. In *Social comparison, social justice, and relative deprivation: Theoretical, empirical, and policy perspectives* (pp. 183–215). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Forrier, A. (2023). What if we abandon the concept of career proactivity to move research forward? *Applied Psychology. An International Review, 72*(1), 191–198. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12441>

- Forrier, A., Verbruggen, M., & De Cuyper, N. (2015). Integrating different notions of employability in a dynamic chain: The relationship between job transitions, movement capital and perceived employability. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 89, 56–64. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2015.04.007>
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology. The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 218–226. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3122271/>
- Frei, C., & Sousa-Poza, A. (2012). Overqualification: Permanent or transitory? *Applied Economics*, 44(14), 1837–1847. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2011.554380>
- Gkorezis, P., Erdogan, B., Xanthopoulou, D., & Bellou, V. (2019). Implications of perceived overqualification for employee's close social ties: The moderating role of external organizational prestige. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 115, 103335. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2019.103335>
- Hall, D. T. (2004). The protean career: A quarter-century journey. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 65(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2003.10.006>
- Hall, D. T., Yip, J., & Doiron, K. (2018). Protean careers at work: Self-direction and values orientation in psychological success. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 5, 129–156. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032117-104631>
- Harari, M. B., Manapragada, A., & Viswesvaran, C. (2017). Who thinks they're a big fish in a small pond and why does it matter? A meta-analysis of perceived overqualification. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 102, 28–47. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2017.06.002>
- Heidemeier, H., & Moser, K. (2009). Self-other agreement in job performance ratings: A meta-analytic test of a process model. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94(2), 353–370. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.94.2.353>
- ifo Institute. (2022). Shortage of skilled workers in Germany reaches an all-time high. ifo Business Survey, July 2022. <https://www.ifo.de/en/press-release/2022-08-02/shortage-skilled-workers-germany-reaches-all-time-high>
- Ilies, R., Schwind, K. M., Wagner, D. T., Johnson, M. D., DeRue, D. S., & Ilgen, D. R. (2007). When can employees have a family life? The effects of daily workload and affect on work-family conflict and social behaviors at home. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(5), 1368–1379. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.5.1368>
- Ilies, R., Wilson, K. S., & Wagner, D. T. (2009). The spillover of daily job satisfaction onto employees' family lives: The facilitating role of work-family integration. *Academy of Management Journal*, 52(1), 87–102. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMJ.2009.36461938>
- International Labour Organization [ILO]. (2018). Global skills trends, training needs and lifelong learning strategies for the future of work. Report prepared by the ILO and OECD for the G20 Employment Working Group. https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/multilateral-system/g20/reports/WCMS_646038/lang-en/index.htm
- Jiang, J., Dong, Y., Hu, H., Liu, Q., & Guan, Y. (2022). Leaders' response to employee overqualification: An explanation of the curvilinear moderated relationship. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 95(2), 459–494. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12383>
- Jiang, L., Lawrence, A., & Xu, X. (2022). Does a stick work? A meta-analytic examination of curvilinear relationships between job insecurity and employee workplace behaviors. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 43(8), 1410–1445. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2652>
- Jiang, Z., Wang, Y., Li, W., Peng, K. Z., & Wu, C.-H. (2023). Career proactivity: A bibliometric literature review and a future research agenda. *Applied Psychology. An International Review*, 72(1), 144–184. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12442>
- Kalleberg, A. L., & Mouw, T. (2018). Occupations, organizations, and intragenerational career mobility. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 44, 283–303. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073117-041249>
- Kiersztyn, A. (2013). Stuck in a mismatch? The persistence of overeducation during twenty years of the post-communist transition in Poland. *Economics of Education Review*, 32(1), 78–91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2012.09.009>
- Kraimer, M. L., Seibert, S. E., Wayne, S. J., Liden, R. C., & Bravo, J. (2011). Antecedents and outcomes of organizational support for development: The critical role of career opportunities. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(3), 485–500. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021452>

- Kristof-Brown, A. L., Zimmerman, R. D., & Johnson, E. C. (2005). Consequences of individuals' fit at work: A meta-analysis of person-job, person-organization, person-group, and person-supervisor fit. *Personnel Psychology, 58*(2), 281–342. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2005.00672.x>
- Kulkarni, M., Lengnick-Hall, M. L., & Martinez, P. G. (2015). Overqualification, mismatched qualification, and hiring decisions: Perceptions of employers. *Personnel Review, 44*(4), 529–549. <https://doi.org/10.1108/pr-11-2013-0204>
- Latan, H., Chiappetta Jabbour, C. J., de Sousa, L., Jabbour, A. B., Ali, M., & Pereira, V. (2022). Career satisfaction in the public sector: Implications for a more sustainable and socially responsible human resource management. *Human Resource Management Journal, 32*(4), 844–863. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12469>
- Lee, A., Erdogan, B., Tian, A., Willis, S., & Cao, J. (2020). Perceived overqualification and task performance: Reconciling two opposing pathways. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 94*(1), 80–106. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12323>
- Lee, K., & Allen, N. J. (2002). Organizational citizenship behavior and workplace deviance: The role of affect and cognitions. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87*(1), 131–142. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.1.131>
- LePine, J. A., Erez, A., & Johnson, D. E. (2002). The nature and dimensionality of organizational citizenship behavior: A critical review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87*(1), 52–65. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.1.52>
- Lindquist, K. A., & Barrett, L. F. (2008). Emotional complexity. In M. Lewis, J. M. Haviland-Jones, & L. F. Barrett (Eds.), *Handbook of emotions* (3rd ed.) (pp. 513–530). Guilford Press.
- Liu, D., Zhang, Z., & Wang, M. (2012). Mono-level and multilevel mediated moderation and moderated mediation: Theorizing and test. In X. Chen, A. Tsui, & L. Farh (Eds.), *Empirical methods in organization and management research (in Chinese)* (2nd ed.) (pp. 545–579). Peking University Press.
- Liu, S., Luksyte, A., Zhou, L., Shi, J., & Wang, M. (2015). Overqualification and counterproductive work behaviors: Examining a moderated mediation model. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 36*(2), 250–271. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1979>
- Liu, X., Hao, C., Chen, J., & Cui, H. (2007). The influence of organizational career management on occupational promise and job satisfaction: Vocational delay of gratification as a mediator. *Acta Psychologica Sinica, 39*(04), 715.
- Liu, X., & Yu, K. (2021). When pursuing more career, success hits home and job: Examining the cost of vocational delay of gratification. *Career Development International, 26*(6), 806–823. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-08-2020-0204>
- Lobene, E. V., & Meade, A. W. (2013). The effects of career calling and perceived overqualification on work outcomes for primary and secondary school teachers. *Journal of Career Development, 40*(6), 508–530. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845313495512>
- Locke, E. A. (1976). The nature and causes of job satisfaction. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (pp. 1297–1343). Rand McNally.
- London, M. (1983). Toward a theory of career motivation. *Academy of Management Review, 8*(4), 620. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258263>
- London, M., & Mone, E. (2006). Career motivation. In *Encyclopedia of career development* (Vol. 1) (pp. 130–132). Sage Publications.
- Lu, C.-Q., Sun, J.-W., & Du, D.-Y. (2016). The relationships between employability, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention: The moderation of perceived career opportunity. *Journal of Career Development, 43*(1), 37–51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845315576372>
- Luksyte, A., Bauer, T. N., Debus, M. E., Erdogan, B., & Wu, C.-H. (2022). Perceived overqualification and collectivism orientation: Implications for work and nonwork outcomes. *Journal of Management, 48*(2), 319–349. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206320948602>
- Luksyte, A., & Spitzmueller, C. (2016). When are overqualified employees creative? It depends on contextual factors. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 37*(5), 635–653. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2054>
- MacKinnon, D. P., Krull, J. L., & Lockwood, C. M. (2000). Equivalence of the mediation, confounding and suppression effect. *Prevention Science, 1*, 173–181. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1026595011371>
- Maltarich, M. A., Reilly, G., & Nyberg, A. J. (2011). Objective and subjective overqualification: Distinctions, relationships, and a place for each in the literature. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 4*(2), 236–239. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-9434.2011.01332.x>

- Martin, J. (1986). The tolerance of injustice. In J. Olson, C. P. Herman, & M. Zanna (Eds.), *Relative deprivation and social comparison: The Ontario symposium* (pp. 217–242). Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Martinez, P. G., Lengnick-Hall, M., & Kulkarni, M. (2014). Overqualified? A conceptual model of managers' perceptions of overqualification in selection decisions. *Personnel Review*, 43(6), 957–974. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-06-2013-0104>
- Mavromaras, K., McGuinness, S., O'Leary, N., Sloane, P., & Fok, Y. K. (2010). The problem of overskilling in Australia and Britain. *The Manchester School*, 78(3), 219–241. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9957.2009.02136.x>
- Maxwell, S. E., & Cole, D. A. (2007). Bias in cross-sectional analyses of longitudinal mediation. *Psychological Methods*, 12(1), 23–44. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1082-989X.12.1.23>
- Maxwell, S. E., Cole, D. A., & Mitchell, M. A. (2011). Bias in cross-sectional analyses of longitudinal mediation: Partial and complete mediation under an autoregressive model. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 46(5), 816–841. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00273171.2011.606716>
- Maynard, D. C., Joseph, T. A., & Maynard, A. M. (2006). Underemployment, job attitudes, and turnover intentions. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 27(4), 509–536. <https://doi.org/10.1002/Job.389>
- Maynard, D. C., & Parfyonova, N. M. (2013). Perceived overqualification and withdrawal behaviours: Examining the roles of job attitudes and work values. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 86(3), 435–455. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12006>
- MedPro. (2015). How to address being overqualified as a traveling nurse candidate. MedPro - Healthcare staffing. <https://medprostaffing.com/how-to-address-overqualification-as-a-traveling-nurse-candidate/>
- Meroni, E. C., & Vera-Toscano, E. (2017). The persistence of overeducation among recent graduates. *Labour Economics*, 48, 120–143. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2017.07.002>
- Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (1998–2017). *Mplus user's guide* (8th ed.). Muthén & Muthén.
- Nabi, G. R. (2003). Graduate employment and underemployment: Opportunity for skill use and career experiences amongst recent business graduates. *Education and Training*, 45(7), 371–382. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00400910310499947>
- Netemeyer, R. G., Boles, J. S., & McMurrian, R. (1996). Development and validation of work-family conflict and family-work conflict scales. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81(4), 400–410. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.81.4.400>
- Nohe, C., & Sonntag, K. (2014). Work–family conflict, social support, and turnover intentions: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 85(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2014.03.007>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2024). Employment by job tenure intervals—Average job tenure. Retrieved 12.01.2025 from [https://data-explorer.oecd.org/vis?df\[ds\]=DisseminateFinalDMZ&df\[id\]=DSD_TENURE%40DF_TENURE_AVE&df\[ag\]=OECD.ELS.SAE&dq=TENURE_EMP.._T..A&pd=2015%2C&to\[TIME_PERIOD\]=false&ly\[cl\]=TIME_PERIOD&ly\[rw\]=REF_AREA%2CTENURE&vw=ov](https://data-explorer.oecd.org/vis?df[ds]=DisseminateFinalDMZ&df[id]=DSD_TENURE%40DF_TENURE_AVE&df[ag]=OECD.ELS.SAE&dq=TENURE_EMP.._T..A&pd=2015%2C&to[TIME_PERIOD]=false&ly[cl]=TIME_PERIOD&ly[rw]=REF_AREA%2CTENURE&vw=ov)
- Perrewé, P. L., & Zellars, K. L. (1999). An examination of attributions and emotions in the transactional approach to the organizational stress process. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20(5), 739–752.
- Podsakoff, N. P., Whiting, S. W., Podsakoff, P. M., & Blume, B. D. (2009). Individual- and organizational-level consequences of organizational citizenship behaviors: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94(1), 122–141. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013079>
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879–903. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879>
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2012). Sources of method bias in social science research and recommendations on how to control it. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 63, 539–569. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-120710-100452>
- Preacher, K. J., Rucker, D. D., & Hayes, A. F. (2007). Addressing moderated mediation hypotheses: Theory, methods, and prescriptions. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 42(1), 185–227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00273170701341316>
- Randstad. (2012). Skills mismatches and finding the right talent (incl. quarterly mobility, confidence, and job satisfaction). <https://www.randstad.com/press/2012/randstad-workmonitor-results-wave-3-employees-feel-overqualified-their-job/>

- Retail World. (2017). Are your staff overqualified? Retail World. <https://retailworldmagazine.com.au/are-your-staff-overqualified/>
- Rice, R. W., McFarlin, D. B., Hunt, R. G., & Near, J. P. (1985). Job importance as a moderator of the relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 6(4), 297–316. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15324834baspp0604_2
- Runciman, W. G. (1966). *Relative deprivation and social justice: A study of attitudes to social inequality in twentieth-century England*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Russell, J. A. (2003). Core affect and the psychological construction of emotion. *Psychological Review*, 110(1), 145–172. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.110.1.145>
- Schwarz, N., & Clore, G. (1988). How do I feel about it? Informative functions of affective states. In (pp. 44–62).
- Selig, J. P., & Preacher, K. J. (2008). Monte Carlo method for assessing mediation: An interactive tool for creating confidence intervals for indirect effects. <http://quantpsy.org/medmc/medmc.htm>
- Shah, S. H. A., Haider, A., Jindong, J., Mumtaz, A., & Rafiq, N. (2022). The impact of job stress and state anger on turnover intention among nurses during COVID-19: The mediating role of emotional exhaustion. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 810378. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.810378>
- Shaver, P., Schwartz, J., Kirson, D., & O'Connor, C. (1987). Emotion knowledge: Further exploration of a prototype approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52, 1061–1086. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.52.6.1061>
- Siemsen, E., Roth, A., & Oliveira, P. (2010). Common method bias in regression models with linear, quadratic, and interaction effects. *Organizational Research Methods*, 13(3), 456–476. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428109351241>
- Simha, A. (2024). Noblesse OBLige—An entreaty to stop using common-method bias as a carnwennan of carnage. *Group & Organization Management*, 49(3), 784–791. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10596011231151549>
- Skarlicki, D. P., & Rupp, D. E. (2010). Dual processing and organizational justice: The role of rational versus experiential processing in third-party reactions to workplace mistreatment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(5), 944–952. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0020468>
- Smith, H. J., Pettigrew, T. F., Pippin, G. M., & Bialosiewicz, S. (2012). Relative deprivation: A theoretical and meta-analytic review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 16(3), 203–232. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868311430825>
- Sonnentag, S., & Frese, M. (2013). Stress in organizations. In I. B. Weiner (Ed.), *Handbook of psychology*. Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/0471264385.wei1218>
- Sonnentag, S., Pundt, A., & Albrecht, A.-G. (2014). Temporal perspectives on job stress. In A. J. Shipp & Y. Fried (Eds.), *Time and work: How time impacts individuals* (Vol. 1) (pp. 111–140). Psychology Press.
- Steel, R. P., & Lounsbury, J. W. (2009). Turnover process models: Review and synthesis of a conceptual literature. *Human Resource Management Review*, 19(4), 271–282. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2009.04.002>
- Swiss Federal Statistical Office. (2024). Overqualification rate of employees with tertiary-level education or training. Bundesamt für Statistik (Schweiz). <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/population/migration-integration/integration-indicators/labour-market/overqualification.html>
- Taxer, J. L., Becker-Kurz, B., & Frenzel, A. C. (2019). Do quality teacher–student relationships protect teachers from emotional exhaustion? The mediating role of enjoyment and anger. *Social Psychology of Education*, 22(1), 209–226. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-018-9468-4>
- ten Brummelhuis, L. L., & Bakker, A. B. (2012). A resource perspective on the work–home interface. *American Psychologist*, 67(7), 545–556. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027974>
- Tett, R. P., & Meyer, J. P. (1993). Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention, and turnover: Path analyses based on meta-analytic findings. *Personnel Psychology*, 46(2), 259–293. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1993.tb00874.x>
- Verhaest, D., Schatteman, T., & Van Trier, W. (2015). Overeducation in the early career of secondary education graduates: An analysis using sequence techniques. *Young*, 23(4), 336–356. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1103308815596889>
- Walker, I., & Pettigrew, T. (2011). Relative deprivation theory: An overview and conceptual critique. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 23, 301–310. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1984.tb00645.x>
- Wang, D., & Aspalter, C. (2006). The Austrian and Swiss welfare state system in international comparison. *Journal of Societal and Social Policy*, 5, 25–49.

- Weiss, H. M., & Cropanzano, R. (1996). Affective events theory: A theoretical discussion of the structure, causes and consequences of affective experiences at work. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 18, 1–74.
- Wen, L., & Maani, S. A. (2019). Job mismatches and career mobility. *Applied Economics*, 51(10), 1010–1024. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2018.1524569>
- Wen, L., Maani, S. A., & Dong, Z. (2023). Educational job mismatch, job satisfaction, on-the-job training, and employee quit behaviour: A dynamic analytical approach. *Applied Economics*, 55(56), 6605–6626. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2022.2161990>
- Williams, K., & Alliger, G. (1994). Role stressors, mood spillover, and perceptions of work-family conflict in employed parents. *Academy of Management Journal*, 37(4), 837–868. <https://doi.org/10.2307/256602>
- Xu, H. (2021). Self-control in career decision-making: The roles of the hot and cool systems of gratification delay. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 131, 103652. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2021.103652>
- Xu, H., & Yin, M. (2020). The roles of time discounting and delay of gratification in career outcomes. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 67(6), 747–754. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000421>
- Zapf, D., Dormann, C., & Frese, M. (1996). Longitudinal studies in organizational stress research: A review of the literature with reference to methodological issues. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 1(2), 145–169. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1076-8998.1.2.145>
- Zhang, X., Ma, C., Guo, F., & Li, Z. (2022). Does perceived overqualification cultivate angels or demons? Examining its interpersonal outcomes through pride from an evolutionary psychology perspective. *Applied Psychology*, 71(1), 243–270. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12319>

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

How to cite this article: Körner, B., Debus, M. E., Wang, M., & Kleinmann, M. (2026). A silver lining: Perceived organizational career opportunities in the context of perceived overqualification and its outcomes. *Applied Psychology*, 75(1), e70052. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.70052>