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The effect of perceived overqualification on job satisfaction and career satisfaction among immigrants: Does host national identity matter?



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ABSTRACT

Overqualification is a form of person-job misfit that is common among those who reside in a foreign country. It is associated with poor work-related well-being and can inhibit full adjustment to the host society. The goal of our study is to examine the impact of perceived overqualification on job satisfaction and career satisfaction among immigrants. Furthermore, we investigated immigrants' host national identity as a moderator of the impact of perceived overqualification on job satisfaction and career satisfaction. We analysed longitudinal online survey data from 124 Italian and Spanish immigrants who migrated to Germany between 2000 and 2014. Regression analyses show that perceived overqualification is negatively associated with job satisfaction six months later. Furthermore, host national identity moderates the association between perceived overqualification and job satisfaction: low overqualification is beneficial for job satisfaction whereas high overqualification is a threat for job satisfaction, especially for immigrants who identify strongly with the host society. We do not find corresponding direct and moderating effects on career satisfaction. We conclude that indicators of acculturation, such as host national identity, are worth considering in order to understand the impact of person-job misfit on work-related well-being among immigrants.

Introduction

Employees who are overqualified possess more education, experience, knowledge or skills than required for their job. Consequently they are unable to put their full professional potential to use and are likely to perceive their job as a poor fit (Maynard, Joseph, & Maynard, 2006). Overqualification constitutes a form of underemployment, a broader concept that comprises various situations of having jobs that are inferior by some standards: such as insufficient pay or hours, employment outside of the person's training and expertise and limited options for utilizing professional skills (for a review, see McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011). The awareness of overqualification by an individual, referred to as perceived overqualification, has been widely used as an indicator of underemployment in social science and psychological research (for a review, see Liu & Wang, 2012). This research has shown a negative relationship between perceived overqualification and work-related well-being (e.g., Maynard et al., 2006; Wu, Luksyte, & Parker, 2015).

Overqualification is a common experience among immigrants (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Crollard, de Castro, & Tsai, 2012). Previous

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research has identified various barriers for immigrants to obtain positions commensurate with their qualifications. These include lack of language fluency, cultural knowledge and social contacts (Guerrero & Rothstein, 2012; Johnston, Khattab, & Manley, 2015) as well as lack of recognition of foreign degrees and experiences (Hakak, Holzinger, & Zikic, 2010; Zikic, Bonache, & Cerdin, 2010). However, studies have shown that these barriers do not fully explain overqualification among immigrants and have concluded that also discrimination might play a role (Duvander, 2001; Støren & Wiers-Jenssen, 2010).

The prevalence of overqualification indicates that immigrants are not sufficiently integrated into the host-country economy (Aycan & Berry, 1996). Overqualified immigrants lack the opportunity to use all of their skills on the job and are unable to realize their full potential. This, in turn, restricts their possibility of meeting their basic needs, such as economic and career advancements and recognition within the host society (Adler, 1977; Nabi, 2003). Consequently, overqualification may further hinder immigrants' overall adjustment to the host society and can be a serious stressor for them (e.g., Chen, Smith, & Mustard, 2010; Dean & Wilson, 2009).

Even though overqualification is a potentially stressful experience for all immigrants, individuals differ in the way they appraise and react to stressors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Thus, researchers have called for the investigation of factors that moderate the effect of perceived overqualification (e.g., Erdogan, Bauer, Peiró, & Truxillo, 2011; McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011). In our study we focus on identification with the host nation (hereinafter: host national identity; Fuller-Rowell, Ong, & Phinney, 2013) as a potential moderator of the impact of perceived overqualification on work-related well-being among immigrants.

We posit that the negative effect of overqualification on work-related well-being is stronger for immigrants with high levels of host national identity. We argue that these immigrants feel more attached to the host country (Fuller-Rowell et al., 2013) and therefore are likely to desire the status of a valued member of the host society (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Overqualification might threaten this goal as their job does not allow them to demonstrate their full professional potential.

The goal of our study is to examine the impact of perceived overqualification on work-related well-being among immigrants along with the moderating effect of host national identity. We contribute to the existing body of literature in three ways. First, we broaden knowledge on the effects of perceived overqualification in the context of migration and answer the call for more population-specific research on overqualification (Erdogan et al., 2011). In doing so, we focus on immigrants from Southern Europe (Italy and Spain) in Germany. Germany is the European country with the highest migration inflow in absolute numbers (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2016). In the years prior to this study, Germany faced a significant increase of migration, especially from Italy (+35% from 2012 to 2013) and Spain (+17% from 2012 to 2013, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2015). These countries were particularly affected by the recent economic crisis (Matthijs, 2014).

Second, we contribute to the literature on perceived overqualification by addressing two different indicators of work-related well-being as potential outcomes using a longitudinal research design. By investigating the impact of perceived overqualification on job satisfaction and career satisfaction, we focus on both the current work-related effects (job satisfaction) and long-term work-related effects (career satisfaction) of perceived overqualification. By using longitudinal data, we are able to investigate the effects of perceived overqualification over time.

Third, we investigate host national identity as a potential moderator that increases the negative effect of perceived overqualification on work-related well-being. Previous research on overqualification identified various factors that interact with the effect of overqualification on work-related well-being (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Johnson & Johnson, 1997). However, this research did not focus on moderators that are specific to immigrants. Our study integrates theoretical considerations on host national identity as an indicator of acculturation (e.g., Berry, 1997, 2005; Phinney et al., 2001; Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2011) into research on overqualification, thus connecting two lines of research that are typically considered independently.

Perceived overqualification as a predictor of work-related well-being

Education, experience, knowledge and skills that exceed job requirements are associated with low levels of work-related well-being (Wu et al., 2015). This negative effect is often explained by person-job fit theory (Edwards, Caplan, & Harrison, 1998; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005): a fit between the characteristics of a person and his or her job enhances well-being, whereas a misfit impairs it. Overqualification is a misfit between the job requirements and abilities of an employee (e.g., Maynard et al., 2006). Likewise, overqualification can be considered as a misfit between the needs of an employee (e.g., to exercise valued skills) and the supply (e.g., challenging tasks) offered by the job (Liu, Luksyte, Zhou, Shi, & Wang, 2015; Luksyte, Spitzmueller, & Maynard, 2011).

The extent to which an individual perceives overqualification mainly depends on the objective mismatch between the person's educational attainments and the job's educational requirements. However, other influencing factors are the person's standards of comparison (e.g., his or her own prior job situation, the job situation of co-workers or of other immigrants), personality traits and contextual factors. As a result, objective and perceived overqualification are related but distinct constructs (Liu & Wang, 2012; Maltarich, Reilly, & Nyberg, 2011). Prior research suggests that perceived overqualification, compared to objective overqualification, is a more proximal and therefore stronger predictor of work-related well-being (Khan & Morrow, 1991; Liu & Wang, 2012).

This study focuses on job satisfaction and career satisfaction as indicators of work-related well-being. Job satisfaction is an employee's overall affective, cognitive and evaluative reaction towards his or her job (Greenberg & Baron, 1997). People assess various characteristics of their jobs, including the opportunity for skill utilization (Warr, 1999), and aspects such as task variety, opportunity for personal control, supervisor style, job security or salary (e.g., Lewis, Brazil, Krueger, Lohfeld, & Tjam, 2001; Skalli, Theodossiou, & Vasileiou, 2008; Warr, 1999).

Individuals who perceive overqualification can feel under-valued and consequently be dissatisfied with their job, because based on their qualification they feel entitled to a better job (Crosby, 1976; Wu et al., 2015). Research has widely investigated the impact of

perceived overqualification on job satisfaction and has demonstrated an adverse association (e.g., Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Johnson et al., 2002; Khan & Morrow, 1991; Maynard & Parfyonova, 2013; Peiró, Agut, & Grau, 2010; Wu et al., 2015).

Less attention has been paid to work-related outcomes from a broader perspective such as career satisfaction (Aryee, 1993; Aryee & Luk, 1996; Nabi, 2003). Career satisfaction refers to the contentment employees derive from various aspects of their career trajectories, including success, advancement, income and development opportunities (Korman, Mahler, & Omran, 1983). It is defined as “the overall affective orientation of the individual toward his or her career” (Gattiker & Larwood, 1989, p. 77) and is considered to be an indicator of perceived quality of life (Aryee & Luk, 1996). Career satisfaction is a self-referent measure of subjective career success, whereby individuals evaluate their professional development relative to personal standards and aspirations (Abele, Spurk, & Volmer, 2011). In contrast to job satisfaction, which considers the status quo of an individual’s job situation, career satisfaction considers progress to date and anticipated achievements. Furthermore, compared to job satisfaction, career satisfaction encompasses a broader range of relevant aspects, including work-life balance and sense of purpose (Heslin, 2005).

Career satisfaction is likely to be impacted by overqualification (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011; Nabi, 2003). Overqualified people may perceive dissonance between their current situation and their desired career because their current job does not provide adequate opportunities for skill growth and career development (Anderson & Winefield, 2011; Maynard, Brondolo, Connelly, & Sauer, 2015). A small body of research has reported associations between overqualification and career outcomes, including career satisfaction (Aryee & Luk, 1996; Lee, 2005; Nabi, 2003). Yet, not all studies on overqualification and career satisfaction have shown a significant effect (i.e., Ren, Bolino, Shaffer, & Kraimer, 2013). Furthermore, all of these studies were cross-sectional. Therefore, examining overqualification and career satisfaction over time can provide a more comprehensive picture of long-term work-related outcomes.

In the context of migration, research on overqualification and work-related well-being is still limited. Yet, there is some evidence of a negative impact of overqualification. Lee (2005) showed that among self-initiated expatriates in Singapore, perceived overqualification was negatively related to job and career satisfaction.

Building on person-job fit theory and the empirical evidence described above, we hypothesize:

Hypotheses 1. Perceived overqualification among immigrants has a negative effect on a) job satisfaction and b) career satisfaction.

Host national identity as a moderator

Host national identity is a form of social identity that refers to a person’s psychological affiliation with the country of residence (Fuller-Rowell et al., 2013). Similarly to other psychological conditions (e.g., cultural values or language preferences), the identity of immigrants is likely to change during the process of acculturation (Phinney, 2003). Acculturation refers to changes that occur to individuals through prolonged first-hand contact with a culture that is not their own (Berry, 1992). These changes encompass affective, cognitive and behavioural reactions toward both the original and host cultures (Berry, 1997). The identification of immigrants with their host society can be allocated to the affective domain of acculturation oriented toward the host culture (e.g., Schwartz et al., 2011). Host national identity involves self-categorization to and self-identification with the host society natives (Fuller-Rowell et al., 2013). Furthermore, it fosters the need to be accepted, valued and respected within the host society or, in general, the need to belong (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Smith & Tyler, 1997). Consequently, host national identity affects the extent to which a person seeks to adjust to the host country (Berry, 1997; Phinney et al., 2001).

Based on this definition, we claim that immigrants with high host national identity aim to acquire and maintain the status of a member of the host society. In other words, they are motivated to be assimilated or integrated as defined in Berry (1997)’s categorization (i.e., adopting the host culture). Furthermore, we argue that the opportunity to use one’s skills fully is beneficial in achieving this goal because it can help professional development, recognition and self-actualization within the host society (Adler, 1977; Aycan & Berry, 1996). Overqualification, on the other hand, may hinder immigrants’ chance to establish themselves in the host society. Therefore, a good person-job fit, or having a job that allows skill utilization, is especially important for immigrants who identify strongly with the host society. Edwards and colleagues state that the more important the fit between person and job, the stronger the impact of person-job fit or misfit on well-being (Edwards, 2008; Edwards et al., 1998). Conversely, we argue that being overqualified should be less detrimental for immigrants with low levels of host national identity. They feel less attached to the host society, might intend to stay for only a short time in the host country in order to bridge an economical difficult time and focus on continuing their career abroad.

Self-categorization theory (Turner, 1985) serves as a theoretical framework for our proposition. The self-categorization of a person as a member of a group requires cognitively incorporating the self into the in-group prototype and also aligning self-perception and behaviour with the in-group standards through normative behaviour, positive in-group attitudes and cohesion (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Self-categorization maximizes perceived similarities within the in-group and differences between groups. Therefore, members of a group are accepted and liked more by others, when they embody the in-group prototype. Marginal members, who behave less prototypically, are liked less and may even be rejected if regarded as deviants because they endanger the clarity and integrity of the in-group prototype (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

Because overqualification is more prototypical for immigrants than for individuals of the host society (e.g., Chiswick & Miller, 2009), it can be a threat for those who seek to be perceived as members of the host society. This threat, in turn, can increase the negative effect of overqualification on well-being (Ellemers et al., 2002). In contrast, the opportunity to utilize skills on the job satisfies the need for belongingness: it enables immigrants to show that they are capable members of the host society, which increases positive feedback and acceptance. We argue that overqualification is an identity-relevant stressor for immigrants with high levels of host national identity. Thoits (1991) stated that identity-relevant experiences are stronger predictors for well-being and satisfaction

than identity-irrelevant experiences. Reilly (1994) provides initial evidence that social identity strengthens the relationship between work stressors and well-being outcomes; however, her study focuses on work-related social identity.

Taken together, we argue that a job that fully utilizes a person's skills is particularly important for immigrants who strongly identify with the host society, and that overqualification has a stronger impact on their work-related well-being than on that of immigrants who do not identify with the host society.

Hypotheses 2. Host national identity moderates the relationship between perceived overqualification and work-related well-being among immigrants: the higher the degree of host national identity, the stronger the impact of perceived overqualification on a) job satisfaction and b) career satisfaction.

Methods

Survey procedure and sample

We used online survey data from a six-month longitudinal study conducted in Germany in 2014 with Italian and Spanish immigrants. The participants were recruited mainly through online social networks via posts in groups and mailing lists of different cultural associations. In total, 484 participants followed the link to the survey and completed the full questionnaire at Time 1. In a next step, 402 participants agreed to fill in a second questionnaire and provided a valid e-mail address. The link to the second questionnaire was sent to them via e-mail six months later. Among those who received the link, 223 participants (55%) answered the second questionnaire and provided a personal code that allowed us to match the data of the first and second questionnaire. As an incentive, four €50 prizes were raffled among participants. As overqualification can only be assessed among employees, we only included participants who were working at Time 1. Furthermore, we only included participants who provided data for both outcome variables at Time 2, migrated to Germany between 2000 and 2014, and still lived in Germany at Time 2. The final sample consisted of 124 participants: 65.3% were Italian nationals and 34.7% were Spanish. In the sample, 53.2% of the participants were female. The average age was about 33 years ($SD = 7.03$). At Time 1, participants worked as full-time employees (74.2%), part-time employees (15.3%) or freelancers (10.5%). They lived in 32 different German cities and communities. 70.2% lived in Germany less than 4 years. The median duration of residence was 28 months at Time 1.

To investigate the potential impact of attrition, we tested differences in study variables between participants who only completed the first questionnaire (Time 1) and participants who also answered the follow-up questionnaire (Time 2). Participants who only responded at Time 1 showed higher levels of overqualification ($U = -2.4$; $p = 0.016$) and lower levels of job satisfaction ($U = -3.28$, $p = 0.001$). No significant differences were found for host national identity and career satisfaction. Therefore, immigrants with particularly poor job conditions in terms of high overqualification as well as low job satisfaction are likely to be underrepresented in the study sample.

Measures

Perceived overqualification was assessed at Time 1 with the nine-item Scale of Perceived Overqualification (Spanish version: Maynard et al., 2006) which measures the extent to which an employee feels that he or she has more education, experience, knowledge, skills and abilities than required for his or her job. Each item was measured on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*, e.g., "My job requires less education than I have"). Cronbach's alpha was 0.93.

Host national identity was assessed at Time 1 with three items (Fuller-Rowell et al., 2013) that measure endorsement of the values of the host national society and the sense of belonging to the host national culture (e.g., "I have a strong feeling of belonging to or being part of German culture"). Each item was measured on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Cronbach's alpha was 0.87.

Job satisfaction was assessed at Time 1 and Time 2 with one item ("All in all, I am satisfied with my current job"); it was answered on a rating scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Wanous, Reichers, and Hudy (1997) demonstrated that overall job satisfaction can validly be measured with a single item.

Career satisfaction was assessed at Time 1 and Time 2 with the five-item Career Satisfaction Scale (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990; Italian version: Sarchielli & Toderi, 2005; Spanish version: Enache, Sallan, Simo, & Fernandez, 2011). Each item was measured on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*; e.g., "I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career"). Cronbach's alpha was 0.88 at Time 1 and 0.91 at Time 2.

As control variables, we considered age, country of origin, duration of residence and financial strain. Following previous studies (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Maynard et al., 2006; Maynard & Parfyonova, 2013), we controlled for age because it is typically related to job attitudes (Ng & Feldman, 2010), and overqualification occurs especially at the beginning of a career (Feldman & Turnley, 1995; Maynard & Parfyonova, 2013). Country of origin was included to control for potential unmeasured differences among Italian and Spanish participants. Italian participants had lived for a longer time in Germany ($r = 0.21$; $p < 0.05$); however, neither overqualification, nor job satisfaction or career satisfaction was significantly related with the country of origin in this study. We also controlled for duration of residence because we focused on the potential moderating effect of host national identity in the association between overqualification and work-related well-being, independent of the amount of time spent in the host country. Finally, we included financial strain as a control variable. A job that does not utilize an employee's skills is likely to pay a lower salary (Maynard & Parfyonova, 2013). By adjusting our analyses for financial strain, we determined that lower levels of work-

related well-being are not due to financial strain but rather to overqualification. Financial strain was assessed with a single item (“My current financial situation is a serious strain”). The extent of agreement was measured on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

We also controlled for job satisfaction and career satisfaction at Time 1 in order to investigate the effects of overqualification and host national identity regardless of baseline levels of work-related well-being. This limited the risk of overestimating the effects of overqualification and host national identity on work-related well-being (Friedland & Price, 2003).

In our study, gender was correlated with none of the main study variables. This is consistent with previous research (Feldman, Leana, & Bolino, 2002; Maynard et al., 2006). Thus, we did not include gender as a control variable in order to preserve power (Becker, 2005).

All items were solely provided in Italian for Italian participants and Spanish for Spanish participants. When no validated versions of the measures in these languages were available (i.e., overqualification, host national identity, job satisfaction and the control variables), standard forward-backward translation methods involving four bilingual translators were used to create Italian and Spanish language versions. All Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were above 0.70 for all scales in each language version.

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for overqualification, host national identity and career satisfaction using the software R and Lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012). The fit statistics were acceptable: χ^2 (116, $N = 124$) = 201.14, $p < 0.001$; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.93; standardized root mean residual (SRMR) = 0.065; root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.077 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Data analysis

We predicted that overqualification would have a negative effect on work-related well-being (Hypotheses 1a and 1b) and that this effect would be stronger for immigrants with higher levels of host national identity (Hypotheses 2a and 2b). To test our hypotheses, we ran two hierarchical regression analyses in SPSS 22: one predicting job satisfaction at Time 2 and the other predicting career satisfaction at Time 2.

We entered the predictors into each regression analysis in four steps. In Model 1, we entered age, country of origin, duration of residence and financial strain as control variables. Model 1 also included job satisfaction or career satisfaction at Time 1 (hereinafter referred to as the outcome variables at Time 1). We then entered perceived overqualification to test the main effect of perceived overqualification on work-related well-being (Model 2). Host national identity was included in the next step (Model 3) and finally the product term of host national identity and perceived overqualification (Model 4) to test the moderator effect of host national identity on the relationship between perceived overqualification and work-related well-being.

To facilitate interpretation of the effects in models containing interaction terms, we centred the predictor variables around their grand mean (Aiken & West, 1991). Because not all study variables were normally distributed, we used a bootstrap approach with $n = 2000$ bias-corrected resamples, which does not require normality and homoscedasticity of the sample distribution (Bollen & Stine, 1990).

Results

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations and zero-order correlations of the study variables and relevant demographic variables. The bivariate correlations show that perceived overqualification at Time 1 is negatively associated with job satisfaction and career satisfaction at Time 2.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations and Zero-order Correlations between Study Variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Gender ^a (T1)	0.53	0.50	–										
2 Age (T1)	32.67	7.03	–0.22*	–									
3 Country of Origin ^b (T1)	0.65	0.48	–0.31**	0.31**	–								
4 Duration of Residence ^c (T1)	43.30	40.90	–0.15	0.50**	0.21*	–							
5 Financial Strain (T1)	2.08	1.26	0.13	0.04	–0.09	–0.13	–						
6 Perceived Overqualification (T1)	3.45	1.76	0.02	–0.07	–0.15	–0.07	0.29**	–					
7 Host National Identity (T1)	2.71	0.99	0.06	0.22*	0.17	0.06	0.09	0.05	–				
8 Job Satisfaction (T1)	3.99	1.19	0.13	–0.02	–0.09	0.01	–0.23**	–0.32**	0.08	–			
9 Job Satisfaction (T2)	3.81	1.21	0.06	0.06	0.08	0.09	–0.13	–0.35**	0.08	0.42**	–		
10 Career Satisfaction (T1)	3.62	1.00	0.04	–0.06	–0.07	–0.06	–0.48**	–0.38**	0.19*	0.48**	0.39**	–	
11 Career Satisfaction (T2)	3.59	1.05	0.10	–0.04	–0.02	–0.10	–0.28**	–0.36**	0.23*	0.36**	0.57**	0.62**	–

Note. $N = 124$.
 T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2.
^a 0 = male, 1 = female.
^b 0 = Spain, 1 = Italy.
^c In months.
 * $p < 0.05$.
 ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 2
Hierarchical Regression of Job Satisfaction (T2).

Variable (T1)	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B
Age	0.00	0.11	−0.02	0.11	−0.03	0.11	0.02	0.11
Country of Origin ^a	0.13	0.11	0.09	0.11	0.08	0.11	0.07	0.11
Duration of Residence ^b	0.07	0.11	0.08	0.11	0.08	0.11	0.07	0.11
Financial Strain	−0.01	0.12	0.05	0.12	0.04	0.12	0.08	0.12
Job Satisfaction	0.51**	0.13	0.43**	0.13	0.42**	0.13	0.44**	0.13
Perceived Overqualification			−0.29**	0.11	−0.30**	0.11	−0.28**	0.10
Host National Identity (HNI)					0.06	0.11	0.06	0.10
Perceived Overqualification * HNI							−0.20*	0.08
R ²		0.191		0.237		0.239		0.265
F for change in R ²		5.59**		7.06**		0.30		4.01*

Note. N = 124. B = unstandardized regression coefficients. R² = explanation rate in each step. Results based on 2000 bootstrapped samples.

^a 0 = Spain, 1 = Italy.

^b In months.

* p < 0.05.

** p < 0.01.

The results of the regression analyses are presented in Table 2 for job satisfaction and Table 3 for career satisfaction. Overall, the results of Model 1 demonstrate substantial stability of the participants’ job satisfaction and career satisfaction: the outcome variables at Time 1 are significant predictors for job and career satisfaction at Time 2.

Main effects of perceived overqualification

We first report the main effects of perceived overqualification from Model 2 of the regression models. Perceived overqualification is negatively related to job satisfaction (B = −0.29, p = 0.005). Adding perceived overqualification to the model explains 4.6% of variance in job satisfaction in addition to the variables in Model 1. Overall, these results support Hypothesis 1a and indicate that perceived overqualification at Time 1 has a significant main effect on job satisfaction at Time 2 among immigrants after controlling for baseline levels of job satisfaction at Time 1.

For career satisfaction, we found no significant main effect of perceived overqualification (B = −0.16, p = 0.125). Although perceived overqualification explains 1.8% of variance in career satisfaction in addition to the control variables entered in Model 1, Hypothesis 1b is not supported.

Moderating effects of host national identity

In the following, we report the interaction effects of perceived overqualification and host national identity on job and career satisfaction, as shown in Model 4. Host national identity moderates the effect of perceived overqualification on job satisfaction

Table 3
Hierarchical Regression of Career Satisfaction (T2).

Variable (T1)	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B
Age	0.03	0.09	0.02	0.08	−0.01	0.08	0.00	0.09
Country of Origin ^a	0.04	0.09	0.02	0.09	−0.01	0.10	−0.01	0.10
Duration of Residence ^b	−0.08	0.08	−0.09	0.08	−0.08	0.08	−0.09	0.08
Financial Strain	0.02	0.09	0.03	0.09	0.00	0.09	0.01	0.09
Career Satisfaction	0.68**	0.10	0.62**	0.11	0.56**	0.12	0.57**	0.12
Perceived Overqualification			−0.16	0.10	−0.18	0.10	−0.18	0.10
Host National Identity (HNI)					0.16	0.08	0.16	0.08
Perceived Overqualification * HNI							−0.06	0.09
R ²		0.391		0.409		0.427		0.430
F for change in R ²		15.13**		3.62		3.60		0.72

Note. N = 124. B = unstandardized regression coefficients. R² = explanation rate in each step. Results based on 2000 bootstrapped samples.

^a 0 = Spain, 1 = Italy.

^b In months.

* p < 0.05.

** p < 0.01.

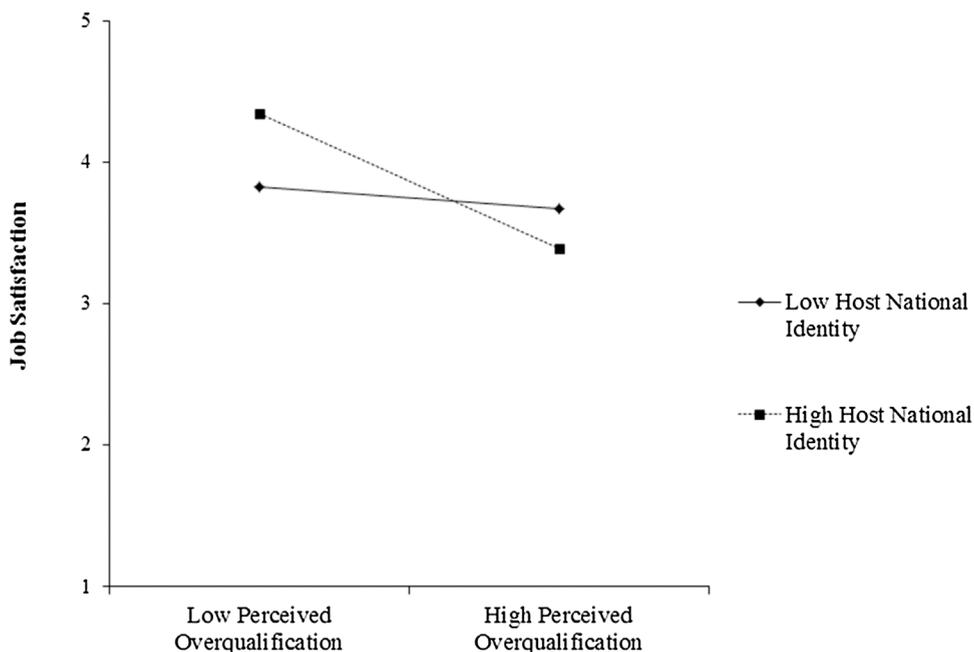


Fig. 1. Interaction of host national identity and perceived overqualification on job satisfaction.

($B = -0.20$, $p = 0.018$), which supports Hypothesis 2a. Entering the product term of host national identity and perceived overqualification explains an additional 2.6% of variance in job satisfaction. For a more specific test of the moderating effect, we conducted simple slope analyses as proposed by Aiken and West (1991) using PROCESS (Model 1; Hayes, 2013). The simple slope is negative and statistically significant for high levels of host national identity (+1 SD, $B = -0.47$; $SE = 0.13$, $t = -3.38$, $p = 0.001$) and negative but not significantly different from zero for low levels of host national identity (-1 SD, $B = -0.09$; $SE = 0.15$, $t = -0.59$, $p = 0.56$). Thus, for participants with high levels of host national identity, perceived overqualification has a negative effect on job satisfaction. For those with low levels of host national identity, perceived overqualification has no significant effect on job satisfaction (see Fig. 1). In contrast, we did not find a significant two-way interaction effect of host national identity and perceived overqualification on career satisfaction ($B = -0.06$, $p = 0.457$). Therefore, the data do not support Hypothesis 2b.

Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to examine the impact of perceived overqualification on work-related well-being among immigrants and to explore the moderating role of host national identity on this relationship. The person-job fit theory claims that overqualification is a person-job misfit that impairs well-being. Our results partly support this claim: perceived overqualification is associated with poorer job satisfaction six months later. Perceived overqualification explains 4.6% of variance in job satisfaction in this study of immigrants. The magnitude of this effect is rather remarkable considering our conservative approach of controlling for baseline job satisfaction. We do not find a significant effect of perceived overqualification at Time 1 on career satisfaction at Time 2.

In addition to main effects, we find that perceived overqualification has a stronger negative impact on job satisfaction among immigrants who more strongly identify with the host country. This supports our argument derived from self-categorization theory (Turner, 1985): overqualification is a stressful experience especially for those who strongly identify with the host society because it threatens their social affiliation with the host society. However, we do not find such a moderating effect of host national identity with regard to career satisfaction. In the following, we will first discuss the main effects of perceived overqualification on work-related well-being before turning to the moderating role of host national identity.

Perceived overqualification and work-related well-being

Perceived overqualification and job satisfaction

Our study confirms the findings of previous studies on perceived overqualification and job satisfaction for immigrant employees. Whereas most of the previous studies are cross-sectional (e.g., Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Maynard et al., 2006; Maynard & Parfyonova, 2013; Peiró et al., 2010), our longitudinal study provides more robust evidence. In one of the few longitudinal studies, Johnson and Johnson (2000) failed to find a negative effect of perceived overqualification on job satisfaction one year later. Interestingly, in our study, we find such an effect in a shorter duration of six months. This raises the question as to how long these effects actually prevail, which should be addressed in future studies.

Low job satisfaction is a predictor for a variety of negative outcomes: poor health (Faragher, Cass, & Cooper, 2005), reduced

performance (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001), lower organizational commitment (Gutierrez, Candela, & Carver, 2012; Yücel, 2012) and higher turnover intentions (Yücel, 2012). In addition, low levels of job satisfaction among immigrants may also raise their intention to leave the host country (Waldorf, 1995). Therefore, reducing overqualification among immigrants may also reduce these negative consequences.

Perceived overqualification and career satisfaction

Even though perceived overqualification at Time 1 is significantly correlated with career satisfaction at Time 2, the relationship is attenuated in the regression models by controlling for baseline career satisfaction. Therefore, we cannot confirm the negative effect of overqualification on career satisfaction that we obtained with regard to job satisfaction. Job satisfaction and career satisfaction are moderately to strongly correlated in our study and in previous research (e.g., Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 1999; Burke, 2001). However, they are conceptually distinct, which may partly explain our findings.

One important difference is their temporal nature: job satisfaction refers to the current job only, whereas career satisfaction also includes past jobs and anticipated future achievements. As career satisfaction encompasses a broader time perspective than job satisfaction, it is a comparatively stable indicator of work-related well-being (Raabe, Frese, & Beehr, 2007; Spurk, Abele, & Volmer, 2011). Correspondingly, in our study, the temporal stability of career satisfaction at Time 1 and Time 2 ($r = 0.62$) was higher than that of job satisfaction ($r = 0.42$). Possibly, longer time lags would be more appropriate for investigating predicting effects on career satisfaction.

Second, career satisfaction is more strongly associated with long-term personality characteristics, such as emotional resilience and optimism (Lounsbury, Loveland, Sundstrom, Gibson, Drost, & Hamrick, 2003) and possibly less likely to be influenced by situational factors, such as overqualification, if they occur only temporarily. Long-term overqualification, however, might have an impact. In addition to determining currently perceived overqualification, it would have been worth considering how long these perceptions already existed.

Last but not least, whereas job satisfaction concerns various intrinsic and extrinsic aspects within the work environment, career satisfaction takes a broader perspective (Heslin, 2005). Erdogan et al. (2011) discussed that even if overqualification leads to dissatisfaction within the work domain, other career-related aspects possibly compensate for the negative effect of overqualification on career satisfaction. This might particularly apply to immigrants. People who move abroad for professional reasons might consider international experience itself to be important for career development as it can lead to enhanced career competencies such as intercultural skills, foreign language fluency and an international social network (Shaffer, Kraimer, Chen, & Bolino, 2012). This might at least temporarily make up for career disadvantages caused by a lack of professional skill utilization and therefore preserve higher levels of career satisfaction.

In addition, differences in the way we assessed job satisfaction and career satisfaction might partly account for the different results. Whereas the single-item measure used for job satisfaction captured an overall level of satisfaction (Wanous et al., 1997), career satisfaction was measured by capturing five specific aspects (income, overall success, advancement, career goals and skill development). They were equally weighted and summed up to an overall score; however, these aspects may not cover all important career aspects or may not be of equal relevance for all individuals, resulting in an inadequate measure of their overall career satisfaction (see Nagy, 2002).

To summarize, conceptual differences between job satisfaction and career satisfaction as well as differences in the way these variables were assessed may explain why we find a significant impact of overqualification on job satisfaction but not on career satisfaction.

The role of host national identity

We find that, as person-job fit theory predicts, immigrants with high host national identity benefit from a good person-job fit, which gives rise to higher job satisfaction, whereas if they are overqualified, they experience low job satisfaction. However, our findings suggest that person-job fit theory may not apply to immigrants who do not particularly identify with the host country. Based on these findings, we conclude that the impact of overqualification on work-related well-being can be affected by the level of host national identity. This, however, depends on the indicator of work-related well-being: we do not find a corresponding moderating effect with regard to career satisfaction.

When interpreting our results, we need to take into account the fact that host national identity is only one aspect of immigrant acculturation and refers only to the affective level of acculturation (Schwartz et al., 2011). Other aspects, including aspects on a behavioural level such as language skills, may affect how immigrants react to adverse job conditions. It is plausible that better language skills increase the perceived entitlement and accessibility to a better job. Overqualification appears more unjustified to a person with high language skills, resulting in more feelings of relative deprivation and frustration and, in turn, in lower well-being (Crosby, 1984).

Furthermore, the context of employment can be worth considering when investigating overqualification (or any employment conditions). Being employed within an ethnic economy (e.g., working in a Spanish restaurant or Italian specialty shop) is likely to have different implications on working conditions and career prospects than being employed in the broader host country economy. Jobs within the ethnic community are often easier to obtain (Portes, 1995; Waldinger 1994). However, they bear a higher risk of long-term person-job misfit, such as long-term overqualification (Battisti, Peri, & Romiti, 2016; Waldinger, 1994). Being embedded in ethnic communities can slow down acquisition of the foreign language, hinder contact to host nationals and deprive immigrants of information about the local labour market (Battisti et al., 2016; Hum, 2001; Warman, 2007).

The present study focused on host national identity, but did not consider the context of employment or the impact of other aspects of acculturation, such as language skills. Including these aspects in future research could help to strengthen our theoretical assumptions.

Strengths and limitations

We focused on an understudied population, employed immigrants, as a response to a call for more population-specific research on overqualification (Erdogan et al., 2011). We also used a longitudinal design in which we controlled for the baseline levels of our outcome variables. This rigorous testing gave us a solid insight into how perceived overqualification affects work-related well-being over time.

Furthermore, we investigated host national identity as a boundary condition that influences the impact of perceived overqualification on work-related well-being. Previous research has suggested a negative association between host national identity and underemployment. For example, Vinokurov and colleagues showed that underemployed immigrants in the United States had stronger feelings of “being out of place” and were less likely to feel acculturated in America than immigrants who were adequately employed (Vinokurov, Birman, & Trickett, 2000). We have extended this knowledge by identifying host national identity as a moderator of the impact of underemployment (in terms of perceived overqualification) on work-related well-being.

Apart from these strengths, we need to point out several limitations. First, the use of self-report data may have limited the statistical power to detect interactions through common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Whereas most variables of interest in this study are highly subjective and best measured by self-reports, future studies should combine subjective and objective measures of overqualification. A second limitation is the self-selection of the sample. Because people who experience high levels of overqualification and low levels of work-related well-being were less likely to participate in both points of measurement, the variance in well-being indicators could be limited. Consequently, we may have underestimated the association between overqualification and work-related well-being. Finally, the specific sample of Spanish and Italian immigrants limits the generalizability of findings to other immigrant populations, specifically to immigrants from non-EU countries.

Practical implications and directions for future research

Our results have several implications for companies and host societies. Given that the competition for skilled workers extends beyond national boundaries, committing immigrant employees to stay in a company has become as relevant as recruiting them. Overqualification contradicts the high effort that companies and policy-makers invest in recruiting skilled migrants and is disadvantageous for the host nation’s economy, especially in times of labour shortage. Addressing structural barriers that immigrants face is important, such as recognizing foreign credentials (Zikic et al., 2010) and facilitating transitions between jobs once certain skills (e.g., language skills) are available.

To advance the theory on immigrants’ working experiences, we need to further investigate the impact of underemployment on immigrants’ work-related well-being with a focus on immigrant acculturation. Understanding how underemployment affects well-being among immigrants and how acculturation plays a role will help integrate immigrants into the host national labour market. Our findings suggest that those who are more motivated to be assimilated or integrated (i.e., high host national identity) would be more hurt by underemployment. This experience over time might lead to lower desire to adopt the host culture, which is a component of separation or marginalization (Berry, 1997). However, because overqualification is only one form of underemployment and host national identity is only one indicator of acculturation, future research should cover a broader perspective, including various facets of underemployment and acculturation in order to derive a comprehensive picture.

Conclusion

This study reveals that overqualification leads to lower levels of job satisfaction among immigrants. Furthermore, it shows that host national identity moderates the effect of overqualification on job satisfaction, such that immigrants with high levels of host national identity benefit from holding a job that puts their full professional potential to use, thus showing higher levels of job satisfaction. The findings suggest that person-job fit is particularly relevant for those who strongly identify with the host society and that indicators of acculturation are worth considering when investigating overqualification or other forms of underemployment among immigrants.

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