

# Perceived Overqualification and Job Crafting: The Mediating Role of Workplace Anxiety and Moderating Role of Reappraisal

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## Abstract

Existing research has indicated the direct effect of perceived overqualification on job crafting, but little is known about the underlying mechanisms and processes through which this occurs. Drawing on motivation and capability-based approaches, we proposed and examined how employees' perception of their overqualification would influence job crafting by increasing workplace anxiety. Furthermore, we employ emotion regulation literature to predict that reappraisal will mitigate the negative effects of workplace anxiety on job crafting. Using a sample of 1,112 workers from China, our findings showed that (1) perceived overqualification was positively associated with job crafting; (2) perceived overqualification was positively associated with workplace anxiety, which in turn reduced job crafting; and (3) reappraisal emotion regulation weakened the detrimental effect of workplace anxiety on job crafting. Based on these findings, we discussed theoretical and practical implications.

## Keywords

perceived overqualification, workplace anxiety, job crafting, reappraisal emotion regulation; motivation and capability-based approaches

## Introduction

Given the global economic recession and a weak labor market, there is an increasing difficulty in obtaining access to decent jobs (Lee et al., 2021). Overqualification, which refers to a widespread organizational phenomenon in which an individual's education, knowledge, skills, and experiences exceed the requirements of his/her job position (Maynard et al., 2006), has become a prevalent and persistent organizational problem. Researchers have explored the outcomes of perceived overqualification, indicating that it had both positive and negative effects (see the recent review, Erdogan & Bauer, 2021). On the dark side, Maynard et al. (2006) found a positive link between perceived overqualification and intentions to quit. Erdogan et al. (2018) found that perceived overqualification impaired individual well-being. On the bright side, Fine and Nevo (2008) demonstrated that overqualified employees were sometimes high-level performers rated by their supervisors. Considering the dual effects of perceived overqualification, scholars, and organizational practitioners are keen on amplifying the positive sides. One possible solution is through job crafting (i.e., a type of self-initiated behavior that employees take to shape, mold, and change their jobs,

Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), as it is a promising way for overqualified employees to reach a better fit with their organizations. However, the relationship between perceived overqualification and job crafting is inconsistent.

Some research indicated a positive linking. For example, F. Zhang et al. (2021) found that overqualified employees were inclined to craft their jobs out of the person-job misfit. Similarly, M. J. Zhang et al. (2016) provided an indirect support for the positive linkage by indicating the positive influence of overqualification on proactive behavior. Some reported negative relationships. For example, Sesen and Ertan (2020) found negative associations between perceived overqualification and all the dimensions of job crafting.

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In addition, researchers also demonstrated a nonlinear relationship between them. For example, focusing on one dimension of job crafting (i.e., task crafting), Lin et al. (2017) reported a totally positive but indeed more complex relationship (i.e., the reversed U-shaped relationship) between them. In a later study, Woo (2020) also reported a reversed U-shaped relationship. Given the mixed findings on overqualification and job crafting link, it is surprising that little research has focused on the underlying mechanism. In this paper, we thereby explore one possible transference mechanism for the relationship between perceived overqualification and job crafting.

Specifically, drawing on motivation and capability-based approaches (Wu et al., 2017), we proposed that workplace anxiety (i.e., the general feelings of nervousness, uneasiness, and tension about job-related performance, Cheng & McCarthy, 2018, p. 537) channels the perceived overqualification and job crafting linkage. Motivation and capability-based approaches were useful to explain the confusing effects of perceived overqualification. The motivation-based view argues that overqualification would demotivate individuals because they perceived their job as deficient; while the capability-based view contends that superior skills and overqualification enables employees to perform better (Erdogan & Bauer, 2021). Moreover, the motivation-based view was especially helpful to explain the feelings aroused by overqualification, while the capability-based view was more related to behavioral outcomes (Erdogan & Bauer, 2021). Thus, following the motivation-based view, we argue that overqualification may demotivate individuals and arouse their anxiety due to a sense of deprivation; following the capability-based view, we argue that overqualification may lead to job crafting because of the superior skills and qualifications. We further propose the mediating effect of workplace anxiety on overqualification and job crafting link, as feelings are usually proximal results and behaviors are usually distal results of workplace stimulus (e.g., Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). In short, we provide one possible explanation of the confusing results of overqualification by examining two competing but sequential effects simultaneously.

Furthermore, given the possible negative effects of workplace anxiety, we propose a key boundary condition that may serve to buffer the relationship between anxiety and job crafting. Drawing upon the emotion regulation literature (Gross, 2015), we consider cognitive reappraisal to be a critical moderator of this relationship. The extant research has indicated that reappraisers are likely to experience more positive emotions and are less likely to experience depression when they are confronted with stressful situations (Gross & John, 2003; Spaapen et al., 2014). In this vein, we argue that individuals with high levels of reappraisal orientations are more likely to cope with the threatening situations aroused by anxiety, and thus their crafting behaviors are less affected.

The contributions of the current study are several. First, we introduce the competing views (i.e., motivation and

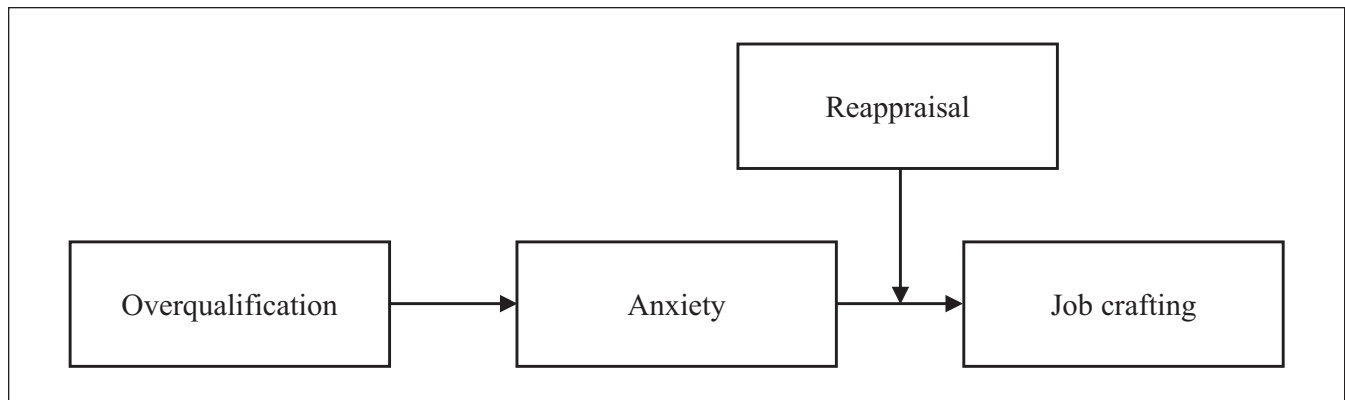
capability-based approaches) to explain the mixed results between overqualification and job crafting. Prior research has separately employed the motivation and capability-based view to explain the positive and negative effects of overqualification, but few studies have examined the opposite views in one theoretical model (with an exception, Lee et al., 2021). While Lee et al. (2021) considered both the motivation and capability-based path, they mainly focused on the effect of perceived overqualification on task performance. Moving on their study, our findings suggest that anxiety is the proximal reaction of overqualification based on the motivation-based view, and job crafting is the distal result based on the capability-based view, thus providing one possible mechanism for the present mixed findings. Second, we examined the buffering effect of reappraisal in workplace anxiety. Researchers have revealed the negative effects of workplace anxiety on individual well-being and work behaviors, and also spent effort in exploring the factors that relief the negative influence. However, the extent research mainly identified these factors from the interpersonal (e.g., coworker exchange, McCarthy et al., 2016) or individual motivation and ability perspectives (e.g., Cheng & McCarthy, 2018). Positioning cognitive reappraisal as our moderator, we extend this research line by indicating that individuals' emotional regulation tactic can also offset the negative impact of anxiety on job crafting. In sum, the current study will explicate one of the transferring mechanisms linking perceived overqualification and job crafting, while providing potential moderators that could buffer the harmful effects of workplace anxiety on job crafting behavior. Our theoretical model is illustrated in Figure 1.

## Theory and Hypotheses Development

### *Perceived Overqualification and Job Crafting*

According to the capability-based view (Wu et al., 2017), overqualified employees possess relatively higher-level skills and qualifications compared to their position. While overqualification represents a misfit between ones' experiences and job demands, the surplus ability enables them to manage the undesirable situation through change the boundary of their jobs (Lin et al., 2017; F. Zhang et al., 2021). Thus, we argue that overqualification can exert positive effect on job crafting (i.e., a way individuals apply to shape, mold and change their jobs, Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) following the capability-based view.

Indeed, "can do" motivation has been identified as an important antecedent of proactivity, including job crafting (Parker et al., 2010). The "can do" motivation connected with the perception of self-efficacy, answering the question about "Can I do it?" (Parker et al., 2010). As overqualification is characterized as the surplus capacity relative to the job requirements, the overqualified employees are likely to form a positive view on their abilities (M. J. Zhang et al., 2016). This positive view will help them manage the misfit



**Figure 1.** Theoretical model.

by engaging more job crafting behavior. This idea has been supported by both meta-analytical and empirical studies, which indicated that self-efficacy could exert positive effect on job crafting (Rudolph et al., 2017; M. J. Zhang et al., 2016; F. Zhang & Parker, 2019). Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1: Perceived overqualification is positively associated with job crafting*

### **Perceived Overqualification and Workplace Anxiety**

Workplace anxiety refers to uncomfortable feelings including nervousness, uneasiness, and tension generated by one's job (Cheng & McCarthy, 2018). It is both a dispositional-level variable and state-level variable (Cheng & McCarthy, 2018). As we measured this variable at between-individual level, we operationalized workplace anxiety as an individual difference that reflected the general levels of one's feelings. Following the motivation-based view (Wu et al., 2017), which contends that overqualification would demotivate individuals and make them feel uneasy owing to the sense of their deficient jobs, we argue a negative relationship between overqualification and workplace anxiety.

Research has indicated that anxiety could be triggered by stressful work environment deriving from job characteristics (Cheng & McCarthy, 2018). Specially, uncontrollability is an important manifestation of stressful work environment (Sonnentag & Frese, 2013). The perceptions of deficient jobs are likely to elicit uncontrollability whereby induce workplace anxiety. On one hand, superior skills and qualifications but less opportunities to perform them inhibited the sense of achievement of overqualified employees (Harari et al., 2017). On the other hand, the deficient jobs put overqualified employees at a disadvantage in gaining further work resources, as the overqualified possess less initial work resources despite the superior qualifications (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Supporting this view, research has revealed that overqualified individuals

were usually in a situation which was labeled as a lack of opportunity and challenge (Liu & Wang, 2012). Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2: Perceived overqualification is positively associated with workplace anxiety*

### **Mediating Role of Workplace Anxiety**

We further propose a negative relationship between workplace anxiety and job crafting. In detail, anxious employees in the workplace were likely to devote resources to cope with threatening stimulus (Eysenck et al., 2007). This process would increase the likelihood of resource depletion (Hobfoll et al., 2018). For example, Xia et al. (2019) demonstrated that dealing with workplace ostracism drained emotional and physical resources. Furthermore, research has shown that continual depletion of personal resources should eventually affect people's work attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Trougakos et al., 2015), especially proactive behavior (i.e., job crafting). This is because job crafting requires individuals to input personal resources (e.g., time and energy) to undertake more job responsibilities (Tims & Bakker, 2010; Tims et al., 2012). As a result, anxious employees suffering from resource depletion are less likely to devote their existing resources to this kind of behavior; instead, they tend to protect their resources from further depletion (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Accordingly, we hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 3: Workplace anxiety is negatively associated with job crafting*

In summary, taking Hypothesis 1 to Hypothesis 3 together, based on the "outside stimulus-psychological experience-individual behavior" logic (e.g., Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), we expect that workplace anxiety is an important mechanism driving the relationship between perceived overqualification and job crafting. In other words, perceived overqualification can easily arouse employees' anxiety, which in turn decreases

job crafting behavior. Accordingly, we hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 4: Perceived overqualification has a negative indirect effect on job crafting via workplace anxiety*

### **Moderating Role of Reappraisal Emotion Regulation**

People are constantly exposed to a wide variety of potential stimuli every day, which arises from their work and life conditions (e.g., the overqualification situation). Dysregulation of emotional reactions to such stimuli severely weakens individuals' ability to adapt to society, so people must engage in some form of emotion regulation in reaction to the stimuli (Koole, 2009). Reappraisal, which refers to the cognitive reevaluation or reassessment of a potential emotion-eliciting situation to change its emotional impact (Gross & John, 2003), is regarded as an important way for individuals to regulate their emotions. Prior research suggested that one of the key components in reappraisal is exerting a protective effect against depressive emotions and diminishing their negative impact. For example, one daily diary study indicate that cognitive reappraisal can help deal with the harm of anxiety (Kivity & Huppert, 2016). In addition, reappraisal encourages people to think differently about a situation and negotiate stressful situations by adopting an optimistic attitude and reinterpreting what is found to be stressful, thus permitting active efforts at early mood repair (Gross & John, 2003). We thereby expecting that reappraisal is a key factor in determining job crafting behavior under anxiety.

Specifically, when feeling anxious in the workplace, employees with higher reappraisal orientations could change their attitudes toward the situation, and anxious feelings may have little effect on their work behavior (i.e., job crafting). In contrast, while people lack the orientation of reappraisal, they may respond to a situation caused by anxiety less efficiently, which does not reduce the negative effect that anxiety has on job crafting. To support this view, researchers have found that job stressors exert less effect on psychological distress for employees with a high reappraisal emotion regulation orientation (Too & Butterworth, 2018). Therefore, we propose that reappraisal buffers the negative impact of anxiety on job crafting. Accordingly, we hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 5: Reappraisal moderates the relationship between anxiety and job crafting: The negative relationship between anxiety and job crafting is weaker when the employee's level of reappraisal is higher*

## **Methods**

### **Samples and Procedures**

We collected our data based on an assessment project, which aims to evaluate employee experience and performance in

the workplace and ultimately provide targeted suggestions for further development of the employees and the company. The assessment was conducted in an electric power company located in southern China. With the help of human resources management department and 5 research assistants, we distributed questionnaires to employees and collected them during the assessment process.

The final sample consisted of 1,112 workers, including 699 males (62.9%) and 413 females (37.1%). The average age of the workers was 36 years ( $SD=8.77$ ). Most of them (44.1%) had an organization tenure of less than 5 years, 10.5% had tenure of 6 to 10 years, 21.6% of them had a tenure of 10 to 20 years, and 23.8% had more than 20 years of organization tenure.

### **Measures**

All scales were originally constructed in English, and we followed the translation and back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1970) to minimize the influence of cultural differences. Items were answered with options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

**Perceived overqualification.** We measured perceived overqualification using a five-item scale adapted from Maynard et al. (2006), and the five items assessed employees' perception of misfit between their job requirements and their abilities (e.g., education, skills, knowledge and experiences). Sample items are "I have job skills that are not required for this job" and "I have more abilities than I need to do my job" ( $\alpha=.68$ ).

**Workplace anxiety.** We used an eight-item scale adapted by McCarthy et al. (2016) to assess workplace anxiety. Sample items are "I worry that I will not be able to successfully manage the demands of my job" and "I worry about not receiving a positive job performance evaluation" ( $\alpha=.91$ ).

**Job crafting.** Job crafting was assessed by a four-item scale adapted by Vogel et al. (2016). Sample items are "Introduce new approaches on your own to improve your work" and "On your own, change the way you do your job to make it easier for yourself" ( $\alpha=.88$ ).

**Reappraisal.** We used Spaapen et al. s' (2014) five-item scale to measure employees' reappraisal. Sample items are "When I want to feel more positive (such as joy or amusement), I change what I'm thinking about" and "I control my emotions by changing the way I think about the situation I'm in" ( $\alpha=.83$ ).

**Control variables.** According to a recent review of job crafting, demographic variables such as age and tenure may have a potential influence on job crafting (F. Zhang & Parker, 2019). Thus, we controlled for employees' gender (coded 1 for "male," 2 for "female"), age (number of

**Table 1.** Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results.

Factors	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Four factors	347.66	98	3.55	0.97	0.97	0.048
Three factors: overqualified and anxiety combined	1,125.16	101	11.14	0.88	0.90	0.096
Three factors: anxiety and reappraisal combined	3,818.00	101	37.80	0.55	0.62	0.182
Null model	5,498.425	104	52.87	0.36	0.45	0.216

Note.  $N=1,112$ . TLI=Tucker-Lewis index; CFI=comparative fit index; RMSEA=root mean square error of approximation.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics and Correlations.

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Gender	1.37	0.48								
2 Age	36.17	8.77	0.08**							
3 Team tenure	2.25	1.24	0.11***	0.78***						
4 Type of work	2.03	0.73	-0.16***	-0.07*	-0.11***					
5 Overqualification	3.09	0.60	-0.05	0.01	-0.02	0.03	(.68)			
6 Workplace anxiety	2.83	0.83	-0.14***	-0.01	-0.03	0.03	0.09**	(.91)		
7 Reappraisal	3.92	0.54	0.03	-0.51 <sup>†</sup>	-0.02	0.04	0.22***	0.00	(.88)	
8 Job crafting	4.02	0.55	-0.01	-0.09**	-0.08**	-0.02	0.21***	-0.10***	0.57***	(.83)

Note.  $N=1,112$ . Cronbach's alpha reliabilities are in parentheses on the diagonal.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ . <sup>†</sup> $p < .1$ .

years), and work tenure (coded 1 for “less than 5 years,” 2 for “6 to 10 years,” 3 for “11–20 years,” and 4 for “more than 20 years”). We also controlled for job type (coded 1 for “administration,” 2 for “production,” 3 for “marketing,” and 4 for “other positions”), because job characteristics such as autonomy have a potential impact on job crafting (Petrou et al., 2012).

### Analytic Strategy

We first performed the Harman's single-factor test to examine the common method bias in our study, as all of the studied variables were rated by one source. Second, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine the distinctiveness of the studied variables by using AMOS 23. Third, we assessed the hypotheses by conducting path analysis in Mplus 8.3. Specifically, we modeled the direct relations between overqualification, workplace anxiety, job crafting, and calculated the indirect effect using the MODEL CONSTRAINT command. We also examined the moderating effect as well as the moderated mediating effect of reappraisal in the overall model.

## Results

### Assessing Common Method Bias

Harman's single-factor test was conducted to examine whether common method bias may disturb the hypothesized relationships. We performed a principal component factor analysis on all the items in our theoretical model

(i.e., overqualification, workplace anxiety, job crafting and reappraisal), extracting 5 factors, and the first factor accounts for 24.2% (lower than 40%) of the variance. The results of this test suggest that common method bias is not a serious problem in our research.

### Discriminant Validity and Descriptive Statistics

Confirmatory factor analysis results are presented in Table 1. We tested the hypothesized four-factor model as well as three competing models, and the results showed that the four-factor model fit the data best ( $\chi^2=347.66$ ;  $df=98$ ;  $RMSEA=0.048$ ;  $CFI=0.97$ ;  $TLI=0.97$ ); therefore, the studied variables were distinct from each other.

Descriptive statistics results are presented in Table 2. As shown, the correlation between overqualification and job crafting ( $r=0.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the correlation between overqualification and workplace anxiety ( $r=0.09$ ,  $p < .01$ ) is positive; Besides, the correlation between workplace anxiety and job crafting is negative ( $r=-0.10$ ,  $p < .001$ ), providing initial support for Hypotheses 1 to 3.

### Mediating effect test

Table 3 presents the results of hierarchical regression analysis. As shown in Table 3, perceived overqualification was both positively related to job crafting ( $b=0.19$ ,  $SE=0.03$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and workplace anxiety ( $b=0.12$ ,  $SE=0.04$ ,  $p < .01$ ), while workplace anxiety was negatively related to job crafting ( $b=-0.09$ ,  $SE=0.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ), providing support for Hypothesis 1 to Hypothesis 3. To examine the mediating

**Table 3.** Unstandardized Coefficients from Path Model.

Predictors	Workplace anxiety		Job crafting					
	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE
Overqualification	0.12**	0.04	0.19***	0.03	0.20***	0.03	0.08***	0.02
Workplace anxiety					-0.08***	0.02	-0.09***	0.02
Reappraisal							0.57***	0.03
Workplace anxiety × reappraisal							0.06*	0.03
Gender	-0.21***	0.05	-0.00	0.03	-0.02	0.02	-0.04	0.03
Age	0.00	0.01	-0.01*	0.00	-0.01	0.03	-0.00	0.00
Work tenure	-0.03	0.03	-0.00	0.02	-0.01	0.00	-0.02	0.02
T1	-0.01	0.11	0.08	0.07	0.08	0.02	0.12*	0.06
T2	0.07	0.09	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.05
T3	0.04	0.16	0.07	0.10	0.07	0.06	0.02	0.08
Residual variance	0.68***	0.03	0.28***	0.01	0.28***	0.10	0.19***	0.01

Note.  $N = 1,112$ . Estimate = unstandardized coefficient; SE = standard error; T1 was coded as 1 = "Administration," 0 = "others"; T2 was coded as 1 = "Production," 0 = "others"; and T3 was coded as 1 = "Marketing," 0 = "others."

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

effect of anxiety, we applied MODEL CONSTRAINT command in Mplus to calculate the indirect effect. Results showed that the effect of perceived overqualification on job crafting via workplace anxiety was  $-0.01$  ( $SE = 0.004$ , 95%  $CI = [-0.018, -0.003]$ ), thereby supporting Hypothesis 4.

### Moderating effect test

Hypothesis 5 posited the moderating effect of reappraisal. As shown in Table 3, when taking job crafting as the dependent variable, the coefficient of the interactive term (i.e., workplace anxiety × reappraisal) was significant ( $b = 0.06$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $p < .05$ ), which provides support for Hypothesis 5.

To further interpret the moderating effect of reappraisal, we defined high and low reappraisal as plus and minus 1 SD from the mean (Cohen & Cohen, 1983) to plot the interaction effect. The results (see Figure 2) suggested that when employees hold low-level reappraisal (*simple slope* =  $-.120$ ,  $p < .001$ ), the negative relationship between workplace anxiety and job crafting is stronger than when employees hold high-level reappraisal (*simple slope* =  $-.056$ ,  $p < .01$ ). We also drew the Johnson-Neyman plot to depict the effect of workplace anxiety on job crafting within the scope of reappraisal. After mean centering, the range of values for reappraisal was  $[-2.92, 1.08]$ . As shown in Figure 3, when the value of reappraisal was lower than 0.75, workplace anxiety was negatively related to job crafting; and when the value of reappraisal was higher than 0.75, the effect of workplace anxiety on job crafting was not significant.

### Supplementary analysis

To expand Hypothesis 5, we also examined whether reappraisal moderates the indirect effect of perceived

overqualification on job crafting via workplace anxiety. Specifically, we estimated the indirect effect at higher (+1 SD) and lower (−1 SD) levels of reappraisal. The results showed that the indirect effect was  $-0.006$  with a 95% CI of  $[-0.012, -0.001]$  when reappraisal was higher and was  $-0.014$  with a 95% CI of  $[-0.025, -0.004]$  when reappraisal was lower. The difference between the estimate of the two indirect effects was 0.007 with a 95% CI of  $[-0.001, 0.016]$ , 90% CI  $[0.000, 0.015]$  ( $p < .1$ ), indicating a marginal significance of the moderated mediation.

## Discussion

Building on motivation and capability-based approaches (Wu et al., 2017), we explored one possible underlying mechanism (i.e., workplace anxiety) between perceived overqualification and job crafting behavior. We also focused on the moderating role of reappraisal between workplace anxiety and job crafting. We found that overqualification positively affects employees' job crafting, while workplace anxiety impairs this positive linking by negatively channel the perceived overqualification and job crafting relationship. Additionally, reappraisal weakens the negative effect of workplace anxiety on job crafting.

### Theoretical Implications

The current study provides several theoretical contributions. First, we introduce a competing perspective (i.e., motivation and capability-based approaches, Wu et al., 2017) to test the dual results of overqualification at work. Scholars have spent efforts in identifying the positive and negative results of overqualification (see the review, Erdogan & Bauer, 2021). But most of the extant research focused on one aspect of the results and didn't examine them simultaneously (with an



Figure 2. The moderating effect of reappraisal emotion regulation.

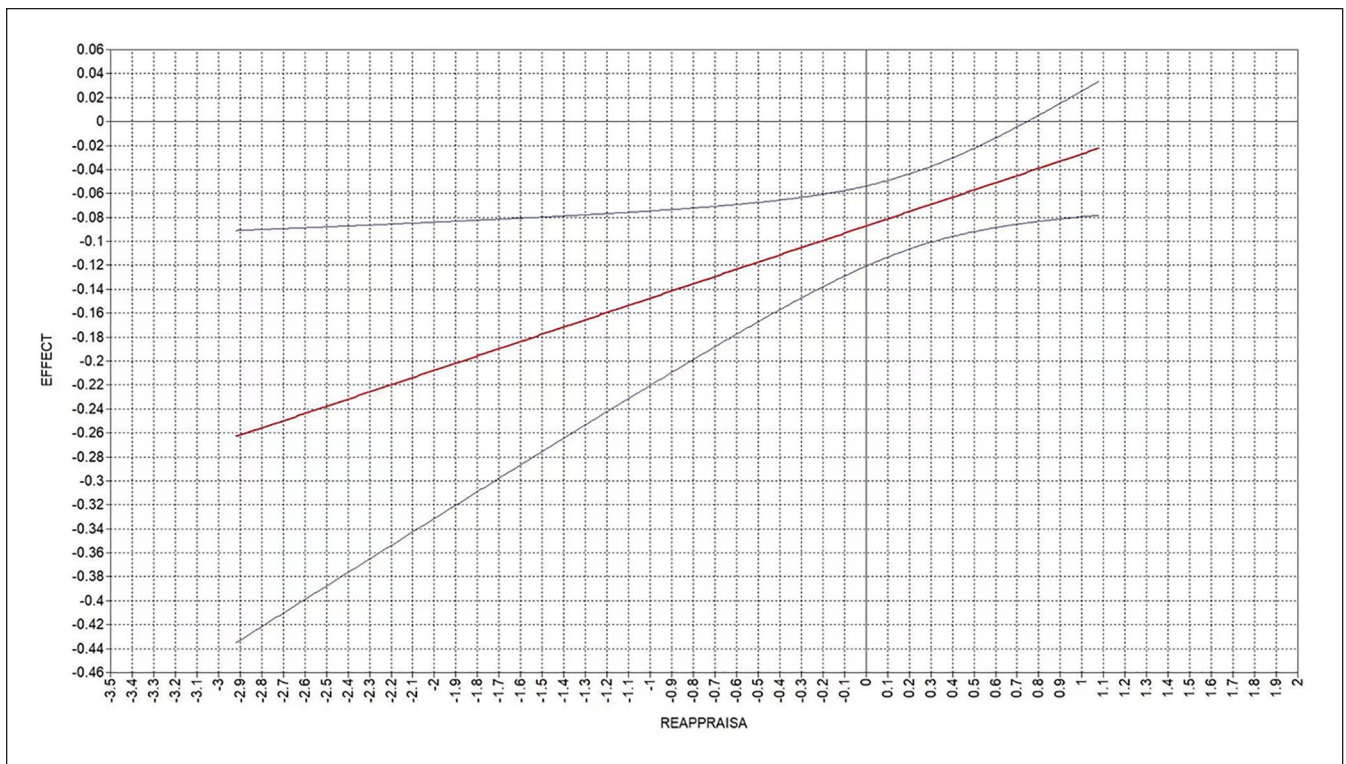


Figure 3. The relationship between workplace anxiety and job crafting under different levels of reappraisal.

Note. The red line represents the effect of workplace anxiety on job crafting within the scope of reappraisal; the upper and lower curves are the upper and lower bounds of the 95% CI of this effect, respectively.

exception, Lee et al., 2021). Although Lee et al. (2021) examined the positive and negative paths in a theoretical model, they only examined the effect of perceived overqualification on task performance. Based on their research, we examined the dual effects of perceived overqualification on job crafting, a proactive behavior that differs from task performance (F. Zhang & Parker, 2019).

Second, we provide evidence that perceived overqualification is a source of workplace anxiety. Perceived overqualification indeed deriving the mismatch of one's superior skills and qualifications with the deficient jobs. Prior research has largely focused on the former part, indicating that perceived overqualification is an important trigger for emotional (e.g., anger and resentment, Liu et al., 2015) and cognitive (e.g., sense of relative deprivation, Erdogan et al., 2018) reactions. However, the later part is relatively neglected, namely that the deficient jobs may leave the overqualified ones under the threat of resource depletion and inability to gain further resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). We addressed this by focusing on the stressful sides that overqualification may arouse, and concluded that overqualification could elicit workplace anxiety.

Third, we help answer the mixed findings between perceived overqualification and job crafting. While extent studies have tested the direct effect, and found that perceived overqualification exerted both positive (e.g., F. Zhang et al., 2021), negative (e.g., Sesen & Ertan, 2020), and reversed U-shaped relationships (e.g., Lin et al., 2017) on job crafting, less explored the underline mechanisms toward the inconsistent results. By employing a competing perspective, we concluded a positive relationship between overqualification and workplace anxiety based on the motivation-based view; and found a positive relationship between overqualification and job crafting based on the capacity-based view (Erdogan & Bauer, 2021). Besides, we further showed a negative indirect effect through workplace anxiety. Our results indicate that the direct emotional or motivational effect of overqualification will hinder the positive behavioral results eliciting from the superior qualifications. We thus provide one possible explanation of the inconsistent relationship between perceived overqualification and job crafting.

Finally, we provide a new factor that helps alleviate the negative effect of workplace anxiety. Considering the dark sides of workplace anxiety, researchers has identified factors could buffer this negative effect. Prior research has showed that interpersonal factors (e.g., coworker exchange) help release the negative effect of workplace anxiety (McCarthy et al., 2016). A more recently theoretical paper of workplace anxiety proposed some personal factors (e.g., emotional intelligence, ability, and motivation) could mitigate the effect of anxiety, but lack of empirical evidence (Cheng & McCarthy, 2018). We extend this by exploring one important emotion regulation tactic (i.e., reappraisal) weaken the negative impact of workplace anxiety played

on job crafting behavior. The result provides a new solution based on emotion regulation literature to tackle workplace anxiety.

### *Managerial Implications*

Given the prevalence of overqualification among workers and the dual effect on employees' attitudes and behaviors, how to expand the bright side while narrow the dark side of overqualification is increasingly important. Our results provide some insights about this.

On one hand, our findings indicate that perceived overqualification can easily arouse employees' negative psychological reactions (i.e., workplace anxiety) and further reduce their job crafting. Therefore, managers should pay more attention to the psychological state of employees who perceive that they are overqualified. Some measures towards increasing job resources such as more job autonomy or fully empowerment can be taken to help them establish resources (Wu et al., 2017), and then help them decrease the levels of workplace anxiety.

On the other hand, our results also reveal that reappraisal plays an important role in conquering the dark side of workplace anxiety. Managers should intentionally improve this emotion regulation tactic of their employees, especially the overqualified ones. This could be achieved by some trainings such as mindfulness interventions (Cásedas et al., 2020).

### *Limitations and Future Directions*

The current study also has some limitations. First, the use of cross-sectional data in the current study cannot infer causality. Particularly, following motivation and capability-based approaches (Wu et al., 2017), we proposed that perceived overqualification exerted sequential effects on workplace anxiety and job crafting. In other words, workplace anxiety was the proximal result while job crafting was the dismal result of perceived overqualification. However, the cross-sectional data is limited to test this sequential effect, we encourage future research to examine this relationship through longitudinal data.

Second, our research relied on a single self-report survey to measure the studied variables, which may raise common method bias. However, we believe that our design will not bias our results. According to Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2000), despite the subjectivity of self-report surveys, it is the best method to measure employees' perceptions of the person-job fit. Although the results of Harman's single-factor test indicated that common method bias was not a serious concern in our study, we encourage future studies to analyze overqualification from various sources, such as supervisor and peer ratings (Erdogan & Bauer, 2021).

Third, we only offer and examine one proximal reaction of perceived overqualification (i.e., workplace anxiety) from the motivation-based view. Other potential reactions aligned

with the motivation-based view such as anger (Liu et al., 2015), a sense of inequity (Liu & Wang, 2012), and boredom (Loukidou et al., 2009) might also play roles in the perceived overqualification and job crafting link. Besides, from the capability-based view, self-efficacy, and core self-evaluation (F. Zhang & Parker, 2019) could also help explain the complicated relationship. Future studies may have important implications for testing more transfer mechanisms in a systematic model.

Fourth, we only explored one moderator that buffered the negative effect of workplace anxiety on job crafting, namely, reappraisal. Other factors may also serve as possible factors to release workplace anxiety. For instance, in a theoretical paper about workplace anxiety, Cheng and McCarthy (2018) proposed that emotional intelligence, ability and motivation were potential boundary conditions of workplace anxiety, but no empirical evidence was presented. Future research is therefore encouraged to identify and examine the potential buffers for workplace anxiety.

## Conclusion

Taken together, managing overqualified employees is becoming increasingly widespread around the world in today's organizations. Our study focused on the mechanism and boundary conditions for perceived overqualification and the job crafting relationship. Specifically, based on motivation and capability-based approaches (Wu et al., 2017), we illustrate that workplace anxiety is a negative transformed mechanism of the relationship between perceived overqualification and job crafting. In addition, we find that reappraisal buffers the negative influence of anxiety on job crafting. We hope that our findings will spur future research to unpack the "black box" of the relationship between perceived overqualification and employee behaviors.

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## Ethical Approval

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional

and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards with written informed consent from all subjects. This research was approved by the Research Committee at the Business School, Beijing Normal University.

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