Overqualification of Employees and Knowledge Hiding in the Dynamic Social Environment

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ABSTRACT

The development of the knowledge age has triggered a transformation of the original organizational management methods of enterprises, and has also posed new challenges to the practice of knowledge management processes in enterprises. How can employees unleash their own value in a challenging employment environment? How to utilize one's surplus qualifications to realize one's own value? How can managers utilize employee qualifications to acquire and integrate effective knowledge from both internal and external sources, thereby achieving knowledge creation? How to effectively integrate with knowledge management processes to maintain the sustainable competitiveness of enterprises? This article is based on social cognitive theories at home and abroad and the development requirements in the new employment environment. Through sorting out domestic and foreign literature, it is found that in the future, with the continuous development of the knowledge age, the relationship and impact between employee surplus qualifications and knowledge management will become closer and more profound. In order to better respond to the challenges of the knowledge age, enterprises need to constantly pay attention to the discussion and exploration of the psychological cognition and knowledge management of overqualified employees in the organization, in order to lead the sustainable development and innovation of the enterprise.

KEYWORDS

Overqualification; Self-efficacy; Knowledge hiding; Knowledge management.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the continuous promotion of the strategy of revitalizing the country through science and education and strengthening the country through talent, a large number of highly educated and high-quality talents are constantly entering the labor market. However, in the context of economic transformation, industrial upgrading, and increasing downward pressure on the economy, some knowledge-based employees are forced to engage in jobs with lower qualification requirements, and individuals are in a state of "high success but low completion" qualification surplus, How to enable employees who are overqualified but underutilized to leverage their redundant value has attracted widespread attention in the academic community. Based on the perspectives of personnel job matching, relative deprivation, and organizational fairness, existing scholars have found that overqualification leads to an increase in the cost of organizational human capital and excessive waste of human resources, leading to employee job disengagement behavior (Li et al., 2020) and counterproductive behavior (Zhao , 2020). In the context of increasingly fierce competition in the labor market, individual knowledge sharing carries risks and may lead to the loss of individual unique competitive advantages. Overqualified employees may choose to hide or deceive others when facing knowledge requests to protect their self-worth. The knowledge hiding behavior generated by mutual

competition between individuals or teams may retain knowledge resources in the short term and improve the work level of individuals or teams, but in the long run, this behavior will reduce the overall efficiency of the organization (Wang et al., 2018). Employees with excessive qualifications have strong work abilities, a stronger willingness to share knowledge, and a lower likelihood of knowledge hiding behavior, which is conducive to promoting the long-term development of the organization. Therefore, this study provides a comprehensive discussion on the impact of overqualification on knowledge hiding behavior, providing new ideas for organizations to suppress employee knowledge hiding behavior.

Meanwhile, current research on the mediating mechanism between overqualification and its outcome variables mainly focuses on the emotional and behavioral perspectives of employees, such as revealing the mechanism of the relationship between overqualification and outcome variables from the perspectives of work anger (Wang, 2018) and interpersonal interaction (Cheng et al., 2021). However, existing research has paid less attention to the cognitive changes of individual employees. Self efficacy is an individual's evaluation and confidence in their own behavioral abilities (Yao, 2008). Employees with excessive qualifications usually possess the ability to perform challenging tasks and the confidence to achieve these goals. Therefore, whether they are willing to use redundant qualifications to improve work methods and assist in organizational development is currently a topic of concern. In addition, whether employees with excessive qualifications can generate positive behavior within their roles is influenced by the interaction between the individual themselves and the environment in which they operate. The consistency between individuals and organizations in terms of goals, values, and other aspects can inspire individuals with excessive qualifications to actively suppress knowledge hiding behavior and be willing to use their own experiences and insights to help colleagues achieve common progress.

The psychological capital of employees is closely related to knowledge management in the digital age. The self-efficacy of employees is a positive psychological state. When facing a series of problems and difficulties caused by environmental dynamics, positive psychological construction can help employees quickly adapt to changes, empower themselves, and other positive behaviors. In terms of knowledge management, enterprises need managers to have the ability to manage knowledge, including identifying and creating new knowledge, as well as applying knowledge to solve problems and seize new opportunities. Managers also need to improve the organization's knowledge reserve and innovation capabilities by establishing an open work environment and encouraging employees to share ideas and opinions. At this point, the psychological aspect of employees is an important concern for managers. Managers need to have the ability to analyze and interpret employee psychology in order to make wise decisions from the perspective of employees, better understand their needs, and make accurate strategic adjustments and judgments. In short, the psychological state of employees is closely related to the knowledge management of managers. Managers need to combine the two and promote the sustainable development of the organization through innovation and open communication.

In response to the needs of reality, the academic community has engaged in heated discussions on the psychological changes of employees and knowledge management issues under dynamic environmental conditions. However, due to the short period of widespread attention to this phenomenon, related research is still relatively scattered and lacks systematicity. Therefore, this article attempts to explore the significance of psychological resource theory and management theory in the development of enterprise management. The review framework model of this article is shown in Figure 1.
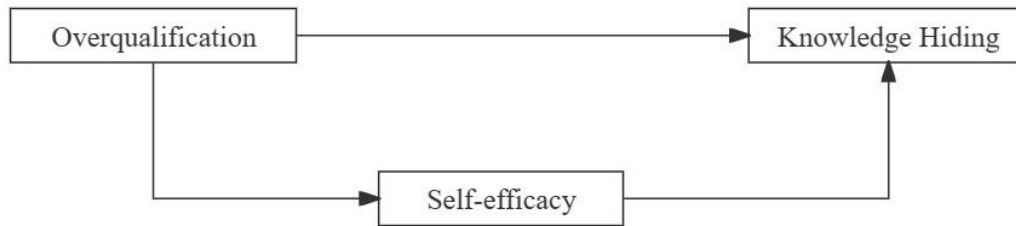
Figure 1. Framework Model

2. RESEARCH TRENDS AND STRUCTURAL DIMENSIONS OF OVERQUALIFICATION AT HOME AND ABROAD

The concept of overqualification originates from underemployment, which refers to employees whose educational level, knowledge, ability, experience, skills and other qualifications exceed the job standards, representing the low-quality employment situation of individuals with high levels of knowledge and skills (Feldman et al., 2002). Overqualification can be divided into two types: objective and subjective. Objective qualification surplus is determined by comparing an individual's qualifications to their job label (Sesen & Ertan, 2019), which is an objective fact that is fairly and impartially evaluated by an observer who is not bound by external constraints. Subjective qualification surplus is described as the degree to which an individual believes their qualifications meet the requirements of the position, which is related to their personal opinions (Maynard et al., 2006), within the scope of subjective evaluation. Studies have shown that individuals with excessive subjective qualifications are more susceptible to the impact of mismatched environments and qualifications (Luksyte et al., 2011).

The existing research on overqualification has mixed results. A large amount of research has focused on the negative effects of overqualification, as it is widely recognized as a cause of inactive psychology and negative behavior (McKee Ryan & Harvey, 2011; Li et al., 2018). For example, Zhao et al. (2019) pointed out that excessive qualifications may increase employees' sense of job alienation and weaken their organizational self-esteem; Xie et al. (2015) believe that excessive qualifications have a significant negative impact on employee work shaping behavior; Yuan et al. (2018) verified that overqualification has a negative impact on employee knowledge sharing behavior; Some scholars also believe that excessive qualifications can affect employee innovation behavior (He & Zhang, 2020; Li & Chen Yuang, 2022); It may also reduce employees' intrinsic motivation, thereby reducing role behavior (Chen et al., 2017). However, the positive impact of overqualification has been largely ignored, and only a few empirical studies have tested the positive effects of overqualification, finding that it can shape individuals' positive psychological cognition, such as task mastery, role self-efficacy, and work engagement (Deng et al., 2018; Erdogan et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021). Zhang et al. (2016) argue that employees with overqualification may view this high qualification positively and make proactive work behaviors.

There is no unified standard for the dimensions and measurement of overqualification. Khan & Morrows (1991) developed an 8-item scale for perceiving underemployment, which provides important reference for later scholars to study the feeling of overqualification. The scale consists of two dimensions, each containing 4 items, namely the perception of overqualification and the perception of no growth. The item descriptions are as follows: "My formal education has made me far competent for my current job" and "My job often brings new challenges".

Johnson & Johnson (1996) believe that perceived overqualification includes two dimensions: perceived mismatch (perceived mismatch between personal qualifications and job requirements) and perceived lack of growth (perceived lack of opportunities for learning and development in the work

environment). Based on these two dimensions, they developed a 10 item overqualification scale, with the former consisting of 4 items. The items described as "my formal education has enabled me to be far superior to my current job, my talents have not been fully utilized in the job, my work experience far exceeds the current job requirements, and in terms of my skills, I have been overutilized in my current job"; The latter includes 6 items, such as "My job often brings me new things, my daily work content rarely changes, my job has a lot of room for growth and change; continuing education related to work has improved my work performance and I fully grasp all aspects of work.".

Subsequently, Maynard et al. (2006) developed a 9-item overqualification scale through principal component analysis. The validity, clarity, and internal consistency of the scale's content are all good, making it the most effective and widely used scale for measuring employees' perceived overqualification. The scale describes items such as "my previous training was not fully utilized in this job.".

In addition, Fine & Nevo (2008) developed a perceived overqualification scale consisting of 9 items, based on the 8-item scale and the 10 item scale developed by previous researchers. The scale includes two dimensions: perceived cognitive mismatch and perceived cognitive non development. The scale describes items such as "I am smarter than most people in the same job" and "I can complete my work without thinking".

3. RESEARCH TRENDS AND STRUCTURAL DIMENSIONS OF KNOWLEDGE HIDING AT HOME AND ABROAD

Connelly first proposed the concept of knowledge hiding in 2012, defining it as a person intentionally concealing or hiding knowledge requested by others. This knowledge includes information, ideas, and professional knowledge related to the tasks performed by organizational members. Subsequently, the scholar further divided knowledge hiding into three dimensions: pretending to be foolish, avoiding hiding, and reasonable hiding, each dimension representing different strategies used by individuals to retain the knowledge requested by knowledge seekers.

Since the establishment of knowledge hiding structures in 2012, many studies have investigated the antecedents and consequences of knowledge hiding behavior. Connelly et al. (2019) pointed out that knowledge complexity, correlation between knowledge and tasks, distrust, and organizational knowledge sharing atmosphere have important impacts on knowledge hiding. Currently, some scholars have pointed out a negative correlation between interpersonal trust and knowledge hiding. The stronger the trust perception of knowledge seekers towards knowledge seekers, the lower the likelihood of knowledge hiding behavior occurring (Wang et al., 2019; Zhao & Xia, 2019). Some scholars have also explored the antecedents of knowledge hiding behavior from the perspective of leadership style. For example, Zhang & Xi (2016) believe that ethical leadership style can reduce employee knowledge hiding behavior; Zhao & Huang (2022) believe that emotional leadership has a negative impact on employee knowledge hiding. In a highly competitive environment, employees may choose to deliberately conceal knowledge from others in order to protect their own value. Scholar He (2013) based on the theory of possession psychology pointed out that knowledge psychological ownership and territorial behavior are also important factors affecting knowledge hiding behavior. In addition, some scholars have also examined the consequences of knowledge hiding behavior. Zhou et al. (2016) pointed out that knowledge hiding can affect employee creativity and have a significant impact on organizational knowledge stock and team performance in new product development.

Overall, the occurrence of knowledge hiding behavior not only has potential negative impacts on employees themselves, but may also bring huge economic losses to the organization and affect its long-term development (Cerne et al., 2014). Therefore, in organizational management, it is crucial to reduce knowledge hiding behavior to promote information transmission between individuals.

In the development and design of knowledge hiding dimensions, the academic community at home and abroad mainly based on the research results of Connelly et al. (2012), using empirical sampling and questionnaire methods to quantitatively analyze and study knowledge hiding behavior. The scale covers three dimensions, including silly hiding, evasion hiding, and reasonable hiding. There are a total of 12 items, with 4 items in each dimension.

Jha et al. (2018) proposed a fourth dimension based on Connelly's three-dimensional measurement table, which is "reverse questioning" concealment. The concealer usually waits for the knowledge seeker to speak first, then adds some information based on their speech, and then poses a reverse question to the knowledge seeker, urging them to collect additional information from other sources, with the aim of obtaining knowledge from the seeker without sharing their understanding of the topic.

Anand et al. (2020) divided knowledge hiding into five aspects by exploring various events that may lead to employee knowledge hiding behavior: unconscious hiding (driven by occasional situations), motivational hiding (driven by behavior and competition), controlled hiding (driven by psychological ownership), victimized hiding (driven by shared hostility and leadership abuse), and preference hiding (driven by identity and norms).

Domestic scholars Rong et al. (2022) divided knowledge hiding into three dimensions: estimation of executive knowledge hiding behavior, selection of executive knowledge hiding strategies, and evolution of executive knowledge hiding behavior. This scale has a total of 12 items, each of which contains four items. The item description includes "I will analyze the operational situation of the executive team to determine whether knowledge hiding is necessary."

4. RESEARCH TRENDS AND STRUCTURAL DIMENSIONS OF SELF-EFFICACY AT HOME AND ABROAD

Self efficacy is a core concept proposed by Bandura (1978) based on social cognitive theory, which refers to how an individual behaves in a specific context depending on their cognitive ability to execute a certain behavior. Gist (1987) believes that self-efficacy is a dynamic concept that changes with the acquisition of new information. Lu et al. (2001) stated that self-efficacy refers to the evaluation of an individual's level of confidence in using their abilities or skills to complete management tasks. Therefore, self-efficacy is not a person's true ability, but their confidence in their behavioral ability. The occurrence and maintenance of a behavior mainly depend on the actor's expectations and beliefs about their relevant behavioral skills. High self-efficacy can encourage individuals to engage in positive behavior, while low self-efficacy may lead to negative behavior.

Domestic and international research on self-efficacy mainly focuses on the influencing factors and formation mechanisms of self-efficacy, as well as the mechanisms and processes by which self-efficacy affects organizational behavior. Ezell et al. (1993) believe that feedback methods can have an impact on self-efficacy. Only when positive feedback to individuals and positive feedback to the entire team coexist in an organization can its self-efficacy level be improved; Long Junwei and Wang (1999) stated that an individual's emotional characteristics can also affect their self-efficacy, such as tension and anxiety, which can reduce people's self-efficacy; Yao (2008) also proposed a significant positive correlation between task controllability, cultural factors, and self-efficacy. At present, the mediating role of self-efficacy is mostly related to performance. For example, Locke et al. (1984) verified that self-efficacy is the mediating mechanism between goals and job performance. Goal setting can have an impact on employee performance through self-efficacy, and self-efficacy plays a key role in it; Zhang et al. (2009) pointed out that emotional intelligence of managers partially mediates their subjective performance through self-efficacy. Due to the relatively limited and singular outcome variables of research on self-efficacy as a mediating factor, the study of its mediating mechanism urgently needs to be expanded. Therefore, it is necessary to further deepen the discussion on self-efficacy as a mediating factor.

Measurement of self-efficacy. Schwarzer et al. (1997) developed a self-efficacy measurement scale. The Self Efficacy Scale consists of 10 items, such as "I can calmly face difficulties because I can trust my ability to handle problems", "When facing a difficult problem, I usually find several solutions", "I am confident that I can effectively deal with any sudden situation", and so on.

Luthans et al. (2007) also developed a self-efficacy scale consisting of six items for data collection, such as "I believe I can analyze long-term problems and find solutions" and "I am confident in stating things within my scope of work during meetings with management.".

Domestic scholars Yang & Cai (2024) based on the GSES scale modified by Barlow et al. (2010), adjusted the scale to meet the special group of employees born in the 1990s. The final scale consisted of 10 items.

5. THE IMPACT OF OVERQUALIFICATION ON KNOWLEDGE HIDING

In previous studies, there have been numerous studies on the impact of employee overqualification on work behavior, but the conclusions of these studies vary. Most studies suggest that overqualification has a negative impact on employee knowledge management behavior, such as knowledge hiding (Li et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2022), while Zutshi et al. (2021) argue that the association between knowledge hiding and negative emotions is stronger. Some researchers have also shown that excessive qualifications can reduce one's knowledge sharing behavior (Yuan et al., 2018). Comparing knowledge hiding and sharing, intentionally attempting to hide information that another person needs is called knowledge hiding (Li et al., 2022). Researchers emphasize that the main difference between the two behaviors (sharing and hiding) may be their motivations (Zhong et al., 2021; Agarwal et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2022). In previous studies, some scholars have suggested that excessive employee qualifications can also have a positive impact on the knowledge management behavior of employees in organizations. Excessive qualifications of employees can enhance their proactive work behavior (Zhang et al., 2016; Erdogan et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2012), and they may participate in work formulation in a positive manner (Erdogan et al., 2011; Laurence, 2010; Lin et al., 2017; Maynard, 2011; Pierce & Gardner, 2004; Russell et al., 2016; Sesen et al. (2019). Empirical studies have found that employees with higher qualifications are more willing to express their personal opinions in the organization to gain recognition (Shi et al., 2019). When employees have surplus knowledge, experience, and skills in their work (at least in their self-awareness), they may choose a more positive path - they can use the surplus knowledge, experience, and skills to help others (Li et al., 2022). For example, teams and organizations may utilize the knowledge, experience, and skills of overqualified employees throughout the team by encouraging other employees to request knowledge from them, or by having them guide more capable colleagues (Gallo, 2011; Russell et al., 2016; Sikora et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2013), in order to provide employees with a sense of self-worth satisfaction, Maximizing employee benefits for a team or organization.

6. THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF SELF-EFFICACY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OVERQUALIFICATION AND KNOWLEDGE HIDING

In the process of knowledge management, in addition to considering individual knowledge, skills, and experience, attention should also be paid to the individual's psychological state. Self efficacy is an individual's evaluation and confidence in their behavioral abilities (Yao, 2008), and individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to seek positive feedback from the environment. Overqualification is crucial for the formation of personal self-efficacy (Deng Hartog & Belschak, 2012), and employees with overqualification often have higher self-efficacy towards their knowledge and abilities (Nguyen, 2019). Individuals with excessive qualifications possess the ability to perform challenging tasks and the confidence to achieve these goals. Adequate reserves of knowledge and

skills can lead to higher self-efficacy. Individuals with excessive qualifications can provide positive dynamic energy during the work process, utilizing their excess abilities to help other members of the team or organization and make more contributions to the team or organization. In this process, organizations attach great importance to the key performance indicators of overqualified individuals, which in turn enhances employee self-efficacy (Luksyte et al., 2011).

According to social cognitive theory, self-efficacy is an intrinsic driving force for individual agency. A positive psychological state can stimulate positive behavior and effectively suppress negative behavior (Liden et al., 2000), while Hew et al. (2007) argue that a lack of self-efficacy is one of the most important reasons why people are unwilling to share knowledge. Individuals with high self-efficacy believe that their work itself has its unique value and significance. They are able to achieve self-development in completing challenging work tasks, thereby weakening the triggering motivation of negative behavior and motivating themselves to engage in better development of organizational goals (Patrick et al., 2007). According to the self-determination theory, people constantly seek or trigger feedback that is consistent with their self-concept in order to gain a sense of control and prediction of the outside world, thereby maintaining and strengthening their original self-concept (Gu, 2004). Individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to seek positive feedback from the environment, and they have the confidence to provide useful or valuable knowledge to others (Nguyen et al., 2019), Helping others solve problems through knowledge sharing and other means, thereby realizing personal value and gaining recognition from the outside world. Individuals with high self-efficacy have sufficient confidence and motivation to complete challenging tasks, and hold a high sense of responsibility for their task output results. Therefore, when facing knowledge requests from others, they tend to control their knowledge hiding behavior from the perspective of organizational development and engage in knowledge sharing (Stajkovic &Luthans, 1998).

From the above argument on the relationship between overqualification, self-efficacy, and knowledge hiding behavior, it can be concluded that overqualification of employees has a positive impact on their self-efficacy, while self-efficacy of employees has a negative impact on knowledge hiding behavior. From the above relationship between overqualification and self-efficacy, it can be seen that overqualification enhances individual employees' good expectations and perception of themselves, helps employees understand and achieve organizational goals, thereby enhancing their sense of self recognition and effectively enhancing their confidence in the organization (Ding, 2020). And self-efficacy can effectively enhance employees' spirit of exploration and dedication in their work, thereby triggering more inhibition of knowledge hiding behavior through this sense of exploration and dedication. Furthermore, individuals with excessive qualifications have strong job adaptability and can adjust their work patterns according to the nature of their work, allowing their surplus qualifications to be fully utilized. Osman and Niusha (2016) argue that the ability to adapt at work to a certain extent reflects an employee's self-efficacy. Employees with excessive qualifications receive positive evaluations and feedback in organizational knowledge interaction, which puts them at a higher level of self-efficacy. At this time, individuals tend to exhibit a more positive work attitude and behavior when facing knowledge requests from others. Hakanen et al. (2018) pointed out that a positive work attitude of overqualified employees will help enhance their self-efficacy. When overqualified employees are in a low challenge and low sense of achievement work state, self-efficacy will help restore their cognitive resources(individual knowledge, experience, etc.), thereby further inhibiting knowledge hiding behavior. Employees with higher self-efficacy are more inclined to share knowledge and choose to achieve their desired results in a goal oriented and positive manner.

7. MANAGEMENT INSIGHTS

7.1 Enhance employee psychological awareness, continuously learn and master professional knowledge and skills

Enterprise executives need to have a deep understanding and pay attention to the needs and psychological conditions of organizational employees. Only with a profound understanding of employees can one play a leadership role in the enterprise and promote knowledge sharing among employees. Training courses and encouraging employees to increase reading can also be conducted to help build their self-efficacy, in order to better assist the enterprise in knowledge management.

7.2 Cultivate professional talents and establish a good team atmosphere

Enterprise managers need to attach importance to the cultivation of professional talents, identify and cultivate qualified personnel within the organization, establish a good team atmosphere, and promote ways and methods of knowledge sharing in order to better help employees achieve common progress.

7.3 Integrate internal resources, promote internal cooperation and communication

Enterprise managers need to have a sense of challenge in strategic integration and talent resource investment, comprehensively integrating resources from all aspects, including talent, finance, technology, business, etc. At the same time, it is necessary to be adept at utilizing information from various organizations in order to grasp the allocation of global resources, promote the rational use and optimized allocation of resources. At the same time, it is also possible to organize internal meetings, establish internal communication platforms, and promote cooperation and communication among various departments within the enterprise, in order to better integrate resources and promote the process of knowledge management.

7.4 Establish corporate culture, continuously learn and improve

Enterprise managers need to advocate and establish a corporate culture of knowledge sharing, encourage employees to actively participate in sharing digital knowledge and experience, promote knowledge sharing and exchange within the enterprise, maintain mastery and learning of relevant knowledge at all times, and continuously improve their knowledge literacy and ability to adapt to the constantly changing market environment and enterprise needs.

8. CONCLUSION

The changes of the times not only drive the transformation of enterprises, but also put forward new requirements for their knowledge management. As an important link in the process of economic transformation, the development of employees and the knowledge management process of managers can not only help enterprises achieve organizational structure upgrading and transformation, but also create and update value for various aspects of the organization by leveraging the surplus qualifications of employees. This article provides business practitioners with a new understanding of the consequences of overqualification. Firstly, having too much experience does not necessarily mean relative deprivation or talent waste. Some research findings also indicate that employees who perceive excessive qualifications tend to focus more on their remaining abilities rather than inadequate working conditions, and will actively seize opportunities to complete more tasks, resulting in better performance (Zhu et al., 2022). Employees can use their surplus qualifications to regulate their psychology and do more things. They achieve self-efficacy by completing broader tasks, and they can actively make pro social changes. Excess qualifications not only stimulate their sense of value in the team, organization, and society, but also encourage them to obtain better performance ratings and respect for others. The outcome of overqualification may vary depending on whether the individual wants to become a chicken head or a phoenix tail. When employees have excessive qualifications, they may engage in more job seeking behavior.

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