**Abstract**

Drawing from self-concept-based theory of work motivation, the present study sought to investigate the positive effect of perceived overqualification on employee outcomes via work engagement under the boundary conditions of empowering leadership and felt role clarity. We tested our hypotheses with a multi-source and multi-wave survey using a sample of 351 industrial employees from China. The results revealed a significant three-way interaction effect on work engagement (i.e., the interaction among the three variables of perceived overqualification, empowering leadership, and felt role clarity). Further, work engagement was found to positively mediate the relationship between the above three-way interaction effect and the employee outcomes of task performance and proactivity. The findings supported the study’s theoretical reasoning that perceived overqualification was positively related to employees’ behavioral outcomes via work engagement in the workplace under the boundary conditions we examined. The theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

**Keywords**

Perceived overqualification, empowering leadership, felt role clarity, work engagement, task performance and proactivity

**Linking Perceived Overqualification with Task Performance and Proactivity? An Examination from Self-concept-based Perspective**

**1. Introduction**

It is widely accepted that overqualification, occurring when an employee holds a surplus of qualifications relative to his/her job requirements (Hu, Erdogan, Bauer, Jiang, Liu, & Li, 2015; Yang, Guan, Lai, She, & Lockwood, 2015; Zhang, Law, & Lin, 2016), is one of the most common forms of inadequate employment. Relating to the prevalence of overqualification, researchers have primarily focused on its detrimental outcomes, such as low job satisfaction and commitment (Johnson & Johnson, 2000; Khan & Morrow, 1991), turnover intentions and resignation (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011), withdrawal behaviors (Maynard & Parfyonoca, 2013), and increased counterproductive work behaviors (Liu, Luksyte, Zhou, Shi, & Wang, 2015; Luksyte, Spitzmueller, & Maynard, 2011). However, as Hu et al. (2015) observed, the current research on overqualification has “drawn an overly simplistic conclusion” (p. 1228) and perceived overqualification may be positively associated with task performance (e.g., Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Hu et al., 2015), creativity (e.g., Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2015), and proactivity (e.g., Zhang et al., 2016). This is consistent with the assumption that perceived demand – abilities fit/misfit has both dark and bright sides (Astakhova, Beal, & Camp, 2017).

Indeed, the mixed findings and relatively scanty empirical studies on positivity of perceived overqualification suggest that investigating the outcomes of perceived overqualification remains an important topic (Erdogan, Karaeminogullari, Bauer, & Ellis, forthcoming). Especially, the potential value that overqualified employees contribute to organizations should be further clarified (Erdogan, Bauer, Peiró, & Truxillo, 2011; Luksyte & Spitzmueller (2015), given that exploring such relationships is important if organizations are to obtain competitive advantages and retain talented employees (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007). In addition, previous literature has also emphasized the importance to investigate boundary conditions which aid organizations to better manage overqualified employees (e.g., Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2015). Therefore, to clarify the inconclusiveness of existing findings and advance understandings about the effect of employee overqualification, the current study seeks to investigate the positive effects of overqualification on employee outcomes and underlying boundary conditions under which these positive effects of perceived overqualification are manifested.

Although well-established theoretical frameworks, such as fit theory and equity theory, have been adopted to understand effects of perceived overqualification (see Harari, Manapragada, & Viswesvaran, 2017 for a review), a neglected possibility in the previous overqualification literature is that the possession of surplus capabilities and inherent superiority embedded on perceptions of overqualification (Deng et al. 2018) can implicate employees’ self-concept to influence their performance at work. Simply put, because employees who feel overqualified occupy surplus job capacity and tend to hold a positive view toward job competence (Deng et al. 2018; Zhang et al. 2016); it is reasonable to expect that, under appropriate conditions (Wu, Luksyte, & Parker, 2015), they are likely to be motivated to realize their preferred self by engaging in certain work-related behavioral activities.

In this study, grounded in self-concept-based process of work motivation (Gecas, 1982; Leonard, Beauvais, & Scholl, 1999; Markus & Wurf, 1987), we develop a theoretical model that explains how, why, and under what conditions perceived overqualification may affect employees’ work engagement and have indirect effects on task performance and proactive behavior. Self-concept-based theory suggests that, in workplace, employees maintain their desired self by acquiring feedbacks from leaders and task activities (Leonard et al. 1999). Acting as social feedback from leaders, *empowering leadership* is defined as sharing power with followers (Vecchio, Justin, & Pearce, 2010). Additionally, *felt role clarity* serves as task feedback and we use the previous research by Zheng, Thundiyil, Klinger, and Hinrichs (2016) to define felt role clarity as an employee’s feeling of the extent to which information is provided to him or her regarding how to perform the job. We predict that, under appropriate managerial condition of empowering leadership and favorable individual perceptions of job role (i.e., felt role clarity), perceived overqualification will be associated with enhanced work engagement.

Further, an increased level of work engagement tends to determine how employees react to their feelings of overqualification, and thereby, boost their task performance and proactive behavior. We focus on performance relevant variables (i.e., task performance and proactive behavior) as our outcomes for several reasons. First, perceived overqualification is inherently relevant to employee performance. Overqualified employees possessing surplus capabilities not only can easily get job done, but also are expected to be have sufficient resources to make extra contributions (Hu et al., 2015). Using performance-related outcomes, our examination helps reconcile the mixed findings of overqualification – performance relationships in current literature. Second, performance is a direct outcome of work engagement because engaged employees tend to maintain an active and positive work-related state and perform better than their counterparts (Bakker, Demerouti, & Lieke, 2012). In addition, our selection of task performance and proactive behavior represent motivational outcomes (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010), which helps to describe the motivational process in self-concept-based theory (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). Thus, overqualified employees holding positive self-concept are able to contribute to performance. Figure 1 summarizes the hypothesized model we tested in the current study.

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The present study makes important contributions to the literature. First, to complement commonly used theories for overqualification, such as fit theory (e.g., Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2015), equity theory (e.g., Cheng, Zhou, Guo, & Yang, 2018), and relative deprivation theory (Erdogan, Tomás, Valls, & Gracia, 2018), we introduce self-concept-based theory to shed light on the active role an overqualified employee can play in influencing the work behavior. Specifically, existing theoretical perspectives mainly focused on passively psychological reactions resulted from overqualification (e.g., Erdogan et al. 2018; Liu et al., 2015). However, the impact of perceived overqualification on active presence of self has been overlooked, which highlights the adequacy of examining work engagement as a significant mediating mechanism in our study. Thus, adopting a new perspective of self-concept-based theory in our study advances the understanding on the critical role of individual work engagement, which not only explains why employees who feel overqualified may have enhanced task performance and proactive behavior, but also translates the active influences of perceived overqualification to real behavioral outcomes. In addition, we also add on extant studies and echo a call for more research on the underlying mechanisms of overqualification-performance relationship (Deng, Guan, Wu, Erdogan, Bauer, & Yao, 2016).

Second, we contribute to overqualification literature, leadership literature and general human resource management literature by identifying key conditions under which the positive effect of perceived overqualification is magnified and its negative effect is suppressed. Specifically, we proposed and tested a three-way interaction effect involving perceived overqualification, empowering leadership, and felt role clarity on work engagement and subsequent employee behaviors in workplace. In doing so, we challenge a simplistic view that perceived overqualification is detrimental (Hu et al. 2015). Rather, we theorize and examine leadership (empowering leadership) and job design (felt role clarity) perceived by employees as moderating factors that help translate employees’ perceived overqualification to positive outcomes at work. To this end, this research highlights how organizations could use key human resource management dimensions such as leadership and job role design to build up a motivational system to achieve employees’ preferred-self embedded in work engagement.

**2. Theory and Hypotheses**

Self-concept is broadly defined as “the totality of an individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to himself or herself as an object” (Gecas, 1982, p. 3). The self-concept-based process of work motivation recognizes that people are motivated to maintain and enhance their self-concept (Shamir et al., 1993) by pursuing a favorable sense of self (Leonard et al. 1999). This is particularly related to *work engagement* which is defined as “the simultaneous employment and expression of a person’s ‘preferred self’ in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence, and active, full role performances” (Kahn, 1990, p. 700). As individuals obtain and possess surplus qualifications, they can complete their work more effectively and efficiently (Deng et al. 2018). This usually means they hold positive self-evaluation which is an important source of intrinsic motivation to work engagement (Shamir et al. 1993). Characterized by a high level of energy and deep dedication, work engagement has been generally regarded as an optimal approach for shaping efficient employee-organization relationships (e.g., Eldor & Harpaz, 2015; Soares & Mosquera, 2019).

Nevertheless, self-concept theorists also suggest that the perception of self is developed and determined through interactions with one’s environment (Leonard et al. 1999). In particular, two primary forms of information a person receives from environment contribute to the development of perceived self and realization of its motivational effect, namely social feedback (i.e., the feedback one derives from others) and task feedback (i.e., the feedback from task activities) (Leonard et al. 1999). In workplace, enjoyable interactions convey cues about proliferated work engagement – offering clues for employees to form a favorable self-perception (Stamper & Masterson, 2002). As a result, in this study, we suggest that as a critical social feedback from leaders, empowering leadership will motivate overqualified employees to utilize their surplus capabilities to engage; and as feedback from individual task, felt role clarity will make the moderating effect of empowering leadership more prominent, engendering a higher level of work engagement for overqualified employees. To this end, we propose that the extent to which overqualified employees form a favorable self-concept perception to engage in their work depends on empowering leadership and felt role clarity.

*2.1 The Effect of Perceived Overqualification on Work Engagement*

Although the consequences of perceived overqualification have been widely investigated, past research examining its implication for work engagement is scant. Drawing on self-concept-based theory of work motivation, we argue that perceived overqualification is reasonably expected to predict work engagement. First, perceived overqualification is closely associated with positive self-evaluation. Employees with the perception of overqualification feel that they possess more capabilities than required by their jobs (Maynard, Joseph, & Maynard, 2006); these surplus qualifications enable employees to overcome difficulties, achieve targets (Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008; May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004), and make contributions (Hu et al. 2015). Because of the additional capabilities they possess, employees who feel overqualified can easily get their job done. Meanwhile, given the potential value they could bring to the organization, overqualified employees could be respected and admired by their peers (Deng et al. 2018). All of these encourage a positive evaluation of self for overqualified employees.

Second, self-concept theorists suggest that individual’s sense of self is a primary source of work motivation (Gecas, 1982; Leonard et al. 1999). This fundamental premise an overqualified employee holds about self reflects positive self-concept which generates strong work motivation. To this end, employees who feel overqualified are expected to be psychologically ready to engage in their jobs in the workplace. Indeed, previous studies have proved that employees who feel overqualified tend to be self-confident, determined, and efficacious, evincing higher level of role-breath self-esteem, and tolerance of discrepancies (Zhang et al., 2016; Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010). Such employees are motivated toward “actualizing themselves and exploiting their talents and potentials within their jobs” (Zhang et al., 2016, p. 64) and being ready to engage in more work roles. Our theorizing is also in line with work engagement research from a resource management perspective which suggests that work engagement fluctuates because of within-person differences (May et al. 2004), and an individual is ready to involve in role performance when he/she senses the possession of the necessary physical, emotional, and psychological resources and is capable of driving these resources (Kahn, 1990).

However, the effect of perceived overqualification on work engagement may only take effect when it is co-acting and compensated by other certain conditions (Kahn, 1990). After all, there are ample theoretical perspectives and evidence suggesting a potential negative association between perceived overqualification and work engagement. For example, grounded on relative deprivation theory (Feldman, Leana, & Bolino, 2002), previous studies have indicated that overqualified employees feel their positions do not match their qualification levels, and thus are more likely to have turnover intention or resignation (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009), rather than stay engaged. Moreover, holding a perspective of person-environment fit/misfit (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005), other scholars suggest that overqualified employees may perform in a more deviant way, such as counterproductive work behaviors (Luksyte et al., 2011). Recent studies also reported that employees who felt overqualified might experience stress, depression, and psychological distress which could reduce their job satisfaction (Arvan, Pindek, Andel, & Spector, 2019) and discourage them from pursuing higher level of work engagement. To offset these unfavorable effects, in this study, we propose two theory-based boundary conditions (i.e., empowering leadership and role clarity) and argue that they will interact with perceived overqualification to predict higher level of work engagement.

*2.2 The Moderating Role of Empowering Leadership*

In this study, we identify empowering leadership as an important cue that encourages employees who feel overqualified to have greater work engagement. Although extant empirical evidence has proved that job autonomy plays a critical role in moderating the overqualification – behavior relationship (e,g., Wu, Tian, Luksyte, & Spitzmueller, 2017), we suggest that empowering leadership is different from job autonomy and worth examining for two reasons. First, empowering leadership is a broader concept which includes the implication of job autonomy. While job autonomy represents a work situation that provides employees with decision-making freedom (Meyer, Dalal, & Hermida, 2010), empowering leadership involves leaders’ sharing power with employees, providing them with additional responsibility for and control over their own work (Zhang, Ke, Wang, & Liu, 2018). Thus, investigating the role of empowering leadership on followers can better improve our understanding on how to motivate employees regarding job-related outcomes. Second, comparing with job autonomy, empowering leadership denotes a both context-specific and relation-oriented mechanism. Specifically, empowering leaders try to create a work context with autonomy and work meaningfulness to employees (Zhang et al. 2018). Further, leaders offer necessary support and remove bureaucratic constraints through empowerment (Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2005), representing favorable interactions in workplace. Thus, it makes logical sense and is meaningful to focus on empowering leadership as the boundary condition of overqualification – work engagement relationship.

Self-concept-based theory (Shamir et al. 1993) posits that leadership behaviors, as a key aspect of social feedback, tend to have profound impact on followers’ self-evaluation and self-concepts. Given that self-concept is related to work engagement of presenting “preferred self” (Kahn, 1990, p. 700), leadership behaviors can be powerful motivators and meet work demands by providing employees with favorable work environment, positive messages about self, and a feeling of meaningfulness (Zhang et al. 2018). In our study, we argue that empowering leadership moderates the relationship between perceived overqualification and work engagement as follows.

First, based on self-concept-based theory, individuals’ sense of self derives from their ability to cope with or control the environment (Shamir et al. 1993). Empowering leaders can provide employees with more autonomy by removing behavioral controls and bureaucratic constraints (Ahearne et al. 2005), which is particularly important to employee ability to control the environment. Given that employees who feel overqualified possess surplus capabilities, high levels of empowering leadership tend to grant those employees greater opportunities to express themselves regarding their organizational roles (Pierce & Gardner, 2004). As a result, overqualified employees will be able to fully exert their surplus qualifications to strengthen their sense of self and maintain engaged at work by breaking out of routines and searching for better alternative solutions to problems (Shalley & Gilson, 2004).Thus, we suggest that empowering leadership strengthens the work engagement of employees who feel overqualified by creating a favorable work environment.

Moreover, leaders with high level of empowerment provide followers with psychological meaningfulness, which confirms the sense of competence and superiority embedded in employees who feel overqualified (Deng et al. 2018) For instance, empowering leaders express confidence in employee abilities and allow them to get involved in decision-making process. High levels of empowering leadership convey clear social feedback that employees are competent and trustworthy team members (Gardner, Van Dyne, & Pierce, 2004). Such information facilitates an understanding that “how their work contributes to the goals and success of the company” (Zhang et al. 2018, p. 899), which makes employees feel valuable (Ergeneli, Arı, & Metin, 2007; Yang, et al., 2015). This is in line with the ideology embedded in overqualified employees that they are extraordinary individuals with superiority (Deng et al. 2018). Accordingly, favorable social feedback conveyed by empowering leadership keeps overqualified employees to be intrinsically motivated to exert their surplus qualifications on work activities such as exploring new and useful combinations of work procedures (Li, Li, & Chen, 2018). As a result, employees who feel overqualified are more likely to find their jobs interesting, rewarding, and meaningful (Yang, et al., 2015), resulting in high work engagement.

*2.3 The Moderating Effect of Felt Role Clarity*

To this stage, we have argued that empowering leadership is an important moderator strengthening the effect of perceived overqualification on work engagement. Meanwhile, we suggest that, according to self-concept-based theory, individuals need task feedback to interpret job tasks instructed by leaders, which further implicates work engagement of overqualified employees. Thus, as a particularly task-feedback-relevant factor, felt role clarity – individuals’ feeling that whether jobs are clearly defined or job-related information are adequately provided – serves as a key indicator to distinguish various work contexts (Newman, Allen, & Miao, 2015). Specifically, when employees feel that their leaders clearly define job roles, they tend to have knowledge on job expectations and approaches with which jobs are conducted. Conversely, when they perceive that job roles are defined ambiguously, they have limited understanding on what they are going to do to achieve job goals, which constrains their behaviors from matching the task requirements (Newman et al. 2015). Thus, we suggest that, beyond empowering leadership, employees’ felt role clarity further amplifies the positive effect of perceived overqualification on work engagement.

Following this notion, we argue that felt role clarity further improves work engagement of employees with perceived overqualification for two reasons. First, while empowerment by leaders endows overqualified employees with sense of competence and meaningfulness, a clearly defined job role enlightens overqualified employees on their “obligatory self” (Owens & Samblanet, 2013) by reinforcing a sense of responsibility. When feeling a clear job role, overqualified employees will hold more information, explicit expectations and objectives in terms of completing their duties and tasks (Kauppila, 2014; Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2011; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). Knowing the what themselves ought to be, they are more likely to create a sense of responsibility (Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2011) to exert their competence and utilize their surplus qualifications to attach job goals expected by employers or managers, leading to enhanced work engagement. However, in situations of low felt role clarity, employees struggle to understand job expectations and the most desired behaviors to engage in (Gilboa, Shirom, Fried, & Cooper, 2008). Failing to clarify the self-concept they ought to hold therefore discourages them from benefiting from empowering leadership and subsequently from engaging in job tasks. Our arguments are also consistent with previous study that a lack of role clarity depletes resources of employees and reduces their work-related behaviors (Newman et al. 2015).

Second, with favorable work environment created by empowering leaders, felt role clarity brings employees with additional feelings of secure, which describes a sense of feeling secure to show and employ oneself to engage in job tasks without fearing negative consequences to self-concept (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004). When individuals pursue favorable self, a sense of psychological safety makes them feel comfortable in expressing their self-concept (Singh, Winkel, & Selvarajan, 2013). In our research, given that overqualified employees tend to have positive views of their competences (Deng et al. 2018), felt role clarity is able to render positive self-concept by increasing their control over jobs (Bliese & Castro, 2000), and builds their self-esteem, resilience, and confidence (Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2011). This is because, feeling their job roles are clearly defined, they can leverage their surplus qualifications to predict the consequences of their behaviors, select the best routines, and avoid potential mistakes. As a result, such employees are expected to more actively engage in their work roles without concerning image-damage or risk-taking. Conversely, when they feel there is an absence of role clarity, overqualified employees are uncertain about what is expected of them, and may have a hazy direction toward goals (Kauppila, 2014). As such, they may be suffering if they become personally engaged, and thus “choose to guard their selves by withdrawing from their roles’ (Rich et al., 2010, p. 621).

Based on the above elaborations, we suggest that the moderating effect of empowering leadership is especially prominent when felt role clarity occurs. This is because, on one hand, empowering leaders motivate overqualified employees to complete job tasks by providing them with autonomy and decision-making opportunity; on the other hand, when feeling a high level of role clarity, overqualified employees are able to autonomously and fully mobilize their capabilities in a precise manner when high levels empowering leadership presents a sense of responsibility and secure. Therefore, following self-concept-based theory, we suggest that, beyond empowering leadership (social feedback), felt role clarity (task feedback) is the second moderator further strengthens the positive relationship between perceived overqualification and work engagement. Thus, we propose a three-way interaction effect hypothesis, in which perceived overqualification interacts with two psychological conditions of empowering leadership and felt role clarity to promote work engagement.

**H1.** There is a three-way interaction effect among perceived overqualification, empowering leadership, and felt role clarity on work engagement, such that perceived overqualification will only be positively related to work engagement when both felt role clarity and empowering leadership are high.

*2.4* *Work Engagement and Behavioral Outcomes*

Finally, we propose that the positive relationship between the above three-way interaction effect and employee outcomes (i.e., task performance and proactive behaviors) would be mediated by work engagement. Our proposition is in line with both self-concept-based theory and findings of previous work engagement research. Research has suggested that organizational outcomes are significantly influenced by employees’ personal state through their work engagement (Rich et al., 2010). As a positive and fulfilling work related state of mind, engagement allows employees to express preferred self by maintaining passions and investing high levels of vigor into their jobs, shaping efficient employee-organization relationships (e.g., Eldor & Harpaz, 2015; Lu, Xie, & Guo, 2018) with increased task performance. In addition to the engagement-employee effectiveness linkage, work engagement serves as an indicator of holding positive self-concept and intrinsic motivation, arousing individuals’ activation, enthusiasm, and dedication toward their jobs (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008). Thus, the strong and long-lasting energy embedded in engagement (Eldor & Harpaz, 2015) in turn promotes individuals’ involvement in extra-role performance behaviors, such as proactive behavior. Previous studies have provided additional evidence that employee engagement is associated with extra-role behaviors such as organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs, Eldor & Harpaz, 2015; Rich et al., 2010).

Based on the theoretical and empirical arguments delineated above, it is expected that interacting with empowering leadership and felt role clarity, employees who feel overqualified will demonstrate higher level of work engagement that in turn would promote task performance. Increased work engagement would turn employees who felt overqualified into superior performers (Feldman & Maynard, 2011), and allow them to utilize their surplus knowledge, skills, and abilities to engage in more proactive behaviors. Thus, we hypothesize:

**H2a.** The three-way interaction effect of empowering leadership, felt role clarity, and perceived overqualification has an indirect effect on employees’ task performance through work engagement, such that the indirect effect is stronger when empowering leadership, felt role clarity, and perceived overqualification are high.

**H2b.** The three-way interaction effect of empowering leadership, felt role clarity, and perceived overqualification has an indirect effect on employees’ proactive behavior through work engagement, such that the indirect effect is stronger when empowering leadership, felt role clarity, and perceived overqualification are high.

**3. Method**

*3.1 Samples and Procedures*

We conducted a multi-source (i.e., supervisor-subordinate dyadic) and multi-waves (i.e., a time-lag) survey study to test the proposed model. A simple random sample selection technique was adopted to collect data. Given the focus on employee overqualification, we chose participants from three companies in technology-intensive industries in China where employees tend to possess higher level of capacities (e.g., education, skills, experiences, etc.) and are more likely to perceive to be overqualified. The range of the numbers of employees for each of these three companies is from 1,000 to 3,000. All participants in the current study were full-time employees, including the subordinates and their immediate supervisors. With the assistance of the human resource (HR) personnel of the companies, subordinates and their supervisors were randomly chosen to participate in the research.

Two separate surveys were administered. At Time 1, the employees rated their perceived overqualifications, empowering leadership, felt role clarity, and work engagement. At Time 2, the supervisors rated their subordinates’ task performance and proactive behaviors. The time interval between Time 1 and Time 2 was two weeks. During the data collection phase, 351 questionnaires were collected (with a total response rate of 77.3%). Of the participants, 47% were female. Tenure in the companies varied from 1 to 37 years (M = 10.81, SD = 9.77), and 65% of participants had 10 years of tenure or less. 61% were less than 40 years old. Most participants (i.e., 78%) held associates degree or higher. Before data collection, the English language questionnaires were translated into Chinese using the conventional method of translation and back translation (Brislin, 1980) by two Chinese bilingual academics to ensure that there were no major misinterpretations of the questionnaire items.

*3.2 Measures*

All scales were anchored using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (= completely disagree) to 5 (= completely agree).

***Perceived Overqualification***. Perceived overqualification was measured with the 9-item scale of perceived overqualification developed by Maynard et al. (2006). A sample item was: “My job requires less education than I have”. The scale had a reliability of α = .71.

***Work Engagement.*** Work engagement was measured by the 18-item scale developed by Rich et al. (2010). A sample item was “I work with intensity on my job”. (α = .93).

***Empowering leadership***. A 10-item scale developed by Vecchio et al. (2010) was adapted to measure empowering leadership. A sample item was: “Encourages me to ﬁnd solutions to my problems without his/her direct input”. (α = .87).

***Felt Role Clarity*.** Role clarity was measured with the six-item “role ambiguity/role clarity” scale developed by Rizzo et al. (1970). A sample item was: “I know exactly what is expected of me”. (α = .83).

***Task Performance.*** Task performance was rated by the immediate supervisors using the nine-item “work role performance” scale developed by Griffin et al. (2007). A sample item was: “This subordinate carried out the core parts of his or her job well”. (α = .93).

***Proactive Behavior.*** Proactive behavior was measured by the immediate supervisors using the seven-item scale developed by Frese, Hilburger, Leng, & Tag, 1997). A sample items was: “This subordinate actively attacks problems”. (α = .86).

***Control Variables***. In the current study, we measured and controlled the effect of participants” age, gender, education, participants’ total years of work, and differences in companies (dummy coded). Previous proactivity research has controlled for age, gender, and organizational tenure to “avoid possible confounding effect” and educational level to “have a more robust test for the specific effect of perceived overqualification” (Zhang et al., 2016, p. 69). Following Hu et al.’s study (2015), the individual cultural value of collectivism was controlled, as the study was conducted in China. Collectivism was measured using three items from Ilies, Wagner, & Morgeson, 2007). The scale had a reliability of α = .85.

**4. Results**

*4.1 Descriptive Statistics*

Table 1 sets out the means, standard deviations, and the correlations among the study variables. Consistent with expectations, perceived overqualification and work engagement were not significantly related (*r* = -.02, *p* ＞.05), indicating that necessary moderators were needed to jointly exert positive effects of perceived overqualification. Further, as expected, work engagement was found to be positively related with task performance (*r* =.27, *p* ＜.01) and proactive behavior (*r* =.27, *p* ＜.01). These results provided initial and indirect support for our hypotheses.

A series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were also conducted with AMOS (22.0) to examine the construct validity of the measurement models. We randomly formed parcels for constructs and the fit of our six-factor measurement model was appropriate based on commonly used indices (*X2* = 608.5; degree of freedom [*df*] = 257, *X2/df* = 2.37; comparative fit index [CFI] = .94; incremental fit index [IFI] = .94; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .06) (Hu & Bentler, 1999). A five-factor solution with two outcome variables loaded onto one factor yielded a weaker fit to the data (*X2* = 705.07, *df* = 262, *X2/df* = 2.69; CFI = .92; IFI = .92; RMSEA = .07). A four-factor solution with three constructs capturing psychological conditions combined onto one factor also provided a weaker fit to the data. (*X2* = 1034.92, *df* = 266, *X2/df* = 3.89; CFI = .86; IFI = .86; RMSEA = .09). Overall, these results show that our measures capture distinct constructs.

In addition, the variables in the present study were at individual level; however, participants were naturally assembled into groups because they reported to different supervisors. Due to the nested nature of the data, one-way random analyses of the variances of the two outcome variables were conducted to determine whether clustering affected the results. The results showed variances in task performance (F (112, 351) = 16.76, p ＜.01), and proactivity (F (112, 351) = 9.20, p ＜.01) were significant. The intra-class correlation (ICC 1) for task performance and proactivity were .64 and .51, respectively. Thus, there were substantial variances in the outcome variables, warranting multilevel modeling to test the hypotheses.

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*4.2 Hypothesis Testing*

SPSS Mixed regression models were run to test the hypotheses in separate steps, which is suitable to small sample size in three-way interaction analysis, and better reflects the indirect effect proposed in our study. The regression results for the testing of the hypotheses are shown in Table 2 and Table 3.

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***Step 1. Testing the Three-way Interaction Effect of Perceived Overqualification, Empowering leadership, and Felt Role Clarity on Work Engagement***

Hypothesis 1 predicted a three-way interaction effect of perceived overqualification, empowering leadership, and felt role clarity on work engagement. To test this effect, the control variables (i.e., gender, age, tenure, education, collectivism, and company), independent variable (i.e., perceived overqualification), two moderators (i.e., empowering leadership and felt role clarity), three possible two-way interaction effects, and the three-way interaction effects were entered. The results pertaining to this hypothesis are presented in Model 3, Table 2. The findings show that the three-way interaction was statistically significant (β = .04, S.E. = .01, *p* ＜ .01). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

***Interaction Plot.*** Adopting Aiken, West, & Reno’s (1991) and Dawson and Richter’s (2006) recommendations and instructions, we plotted the simple slopes for the three-way interactions (see Figure 2). The significant three-way interaction effect was plotted using unstandardized regression coefficients. Consistent with the analysis reported above, the strongest positive slope was once again found for the effect of perceived overqualification on work engagement. This effect was observed when the level of empowering leadership and felt role clarity were both high. As recommended by Dawson and Richter (2006), simple slope analyses were conducted for the significant three-way interaction effect. The results showed that for the relationship of perceived overqualification and work engagement, the slope of high empowering leadership-high felt role clarity was the most significant (*simple slope* = .49, *p* ＜ .01). However, the slopes of the other three combinations of empowering leadership and felt role clarity were either non-significant, or marginally significant: high-low (*simple slope* = .41, *p* = .05), low-high (*simple slope* = .39, *n.s.*), and low-low (*simple slope* = .32, *n.s.*).

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***Supplemental Analysis.*** As recommended by Dawson and Richter (2006), a slope difference test was also conducted as a post hoc test for the significant three-way interaction effect (see Table 4 for the results). Notably, the slope of high empowering leadership and high felt role clarity differed significantly from the other three combinations of empowering leadership and felt role clarity (i.e., high-low (*T* = 2.478, *P* = .014), low-high (*T* = 2.744, *P* = .006), and low-low (*T* = 2.996, *P* = .003). The high level of empowering leadership and high level of felt role clarity were shown to be important compared to situations in which one of the two factors was low. Thus, the slope difference test also supported a three-way interaction effect among perceived overqualification, empowering leadership, and felt role clarity on work engagement.

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INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

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***Step 2. Testing the Indirect Effect of Perceived Overqualification on Task performance and Proactivity via Work Engagement***

Step 2 tested the effect of perceived overqualification on task performance and proactivity, respectively, through work engagement. We followed the approach of Preacher and Hayes (2004) to conduct the test of indirect effects. Table 3 sets out the results for the models proposed in Hypotheses 2a and 2b, Hypothesis 2a predicted that the three-way interaction effect of empowering leadership, felt role clarity, and perceived overqualification is related to employees’ task performance via work engagement. To test this hypothesis, the direct three-way interaction effect on task performance was first examined (see Model 4, Table 3). A positive, but not significant relationship was found. Next, we regressed task performance on work engagement. The results showed that after including the control variables, main predictors, and interaction terms, engagement was significantly and positively related to task performance (β = .30, S.E. = .11, *p* ＜ .01 and see Model 5, Table 3). Thus, Hypothesis 2a was supported.

The same procedures were followed in relation Hypothesis 2b. The direct relationship between the three-way interaction effect and proactive behavior was found to be positively insignificant (see Model 6, Table 3). However, as expected, when we regressed proactive behavior on work engagement, a significantly positive relationship was found (β = .17, S.E. = .05, *p* ＜ .01, and see Model 7, Table 3). Thus, the indirect effect via work engagement proposed in Hypothesis 2b was supported.

Overall, the results indicated that the indirect effect of perceived overqualification on both task performance and proactive behavior via work engagement were significantly positive. Thus, both Hypothesis 2a and 2b were supported.

**5. Discussion**

Previous research on overqualification have largely concentrated on the potential counterproductive outcomes of overqualification but overlooked the possible value overqualification can bring to employees’ attitudes and behaviors. In recent years, some researchers have found ambivalent results on the effects of overqualification on employees’ attitudes and behaviors (Erdogan et al., 2011; Hu et al, 2015; Sierra, 2011). Consequently, researchers have started to reconsider earlier conclusions. The present study adds to the literature on overqualification by investigating how, why, and when employees who feel overqualified can promote positive employee outcomes through increasing employees’ work engagement. The findings of the present study reveal that when interacting with empowering leadership and felt role clarity, employees’ perceptions of being overqualified is positively related to work engagement, which, subsequently, leads to positive task performance and proactive behavior.

*5.1 Theoretical Implications*

There are three major theoretical implications for the current study. First, the findings of our study extend and add value to the self-concept-based theory by linking it with overqualification research. Although a variety of theoretical perspectives—such as fit theory, equity theory, and relative deprivation theory (see Harari et al. 2017 for a review)—have been employed to explain the impacts of perceived overqualification on employees’ attitudes and behaviors at work, this line of investigation has mostly focused on how employees passively adapt to perceived overqualification, especially when the sense of being overqualified hurts their self-concept, such as self-esteem (Liu et al. 2015). However, what has become largely under-represented in the literature is the possibility that, when receiving favorable social and task feedbacks, employees who feel overqualified actively cope with their surplus capabilities. Drawing on self-concept-based theory, our findings theorize and test the boundary conditions (i.e., empowering leadership and felt role clarity) under which overqualified employees hold favorable self-concept to engage more in their work. As a result, these employees tend to have higher task performance and display more proactive behaviors. Our research thus extends the existing knowledge of the self-concept-based work motivation process though which perceived overqualification leads to beneficial behaviors of employees.

Second, we modeled a three-way interaction effect which indicated that the potentially positive effect of perceived overqualification on work engagement and subsequent behaviors at work depended on social and task feedbacks (empowering leadership and felt role clarity, respectively, in our study) employees received. The results of moderation effects of our research reveal that employees who feel overqualified hold positive self-concept to actively engage in their work when their leaders express empowerment. This finding is consistent with prior research findings that empowering leadership boosts individuals’ self-concept by showing that they are competent and trustworthy (Gardner et al. 2004). Thus, our study emphasizes, being viewed as agents of the organization (Newman et al. 2015), empowering leaders can be important players who help develop positive self-evaluation and favorable behaviors at work.

A point worth noting is that, although Erdogan and Bauer (2009) examined the role of empowerment as a moderator, their study is different from our current research and can serve as a foundation to spotlight our unique contributions to overqualification. Erdogan and Bauer (2009) suggested that, acting as a work characteristic, empowerment “alleviated the negative consequences of overqualification while did not curb its performance advantages” (p.563). Differently, in our research, empowerment is a type of leadership which exerts leaders’ empowering behaviors (i.e., empowering leadership). In line with the self-concept-based theory, empowering leadership presents social feedbacks that are important to shape self-concept, and we investigated its moderating role in strengthening the positive effects of perceived overqualification on work engagement and subsequent job performance (i.e., task performance and proactive behavior). Thus, our research is different from Erdogan and Bauer’s study and emphasizes social feedback provided by empowering leadership. In addition, Erdogan and Bauer did not clarify the practical implications of empowerment as a boundary condition. Differing from their study, our focus on empowering leadership has substantial implications to practitioners. That is, as leaders are key agents of the organization (Newman, Allen, & Miao. 2015), empowering leaders can significantly help employees to develop favorable self-concept and behaviors at work, providing insight to organizational management.

Moreover, we also found the promoting role of empowering leadership to be more effective among individuals whose job are clearly defined and with job-related information are adequately provided. Indeed, supported by previous research, job context can be a “key impinging force on organizational behavior” (Newman et al. 2015, p. 622) and felt role clarity serves as an important job characteristic in determining how employees share their behaviors. In sum, a three-way interactive effect of our study suggests that work engagement of employees with felt overqualification is jointly affected by individual attributes, interpersonal interactions, and organizational context (Brewer & Gardner, 1996), thereby demonstrating the complex nature of the process through which beneficial effect of perceived overqualification is manifested. To this end, our research contributes to overqualification, empowering leadership, and felt role clarity literature.

Third, our findings about the significant transmitting role of work engagement offer additional evidence on how and why overqualified employees can display positive outcomes (i.e., perform better or be more proactive in workplace) through the mechanism of work engagement. Work engagement has been previously linked to job task performance and proactive behavior (e.g., Eldor & Harparz, 2015; Rich et al., 2010). However, previous research has not examined the “unique psychological nature of perceived overqualification” (Liu et al., 2015, p. 251) through which perceived overqualification is indirectly related to workplace outcomes. Our findings on the self-concept-based mechanism of work engagement suggest that when overqualified employees are actively involved in their work roles, they will be able to transfer their personal energies into physical, cognitive, and emotional labors to better perform their job tasks. Moreover, when overqualified employees are captivated by their work, they also tend to exert their surplus capabilities and invest extra efforts to extra-role behaviors (e.g., proactive behaviors), rather than feeling being deprived and behaving counterproductively. Our study extended the prior research on various cognitive mechanisms serving as antecedents of proactive behavior (Liao, 2015).

## *5.2 Practical Implications*

Currently, the phenomenon of overqualification is common in organizations. Thus, the costs to organizations, related social problems, as well as the potential value of overqualification are worthy of consideration. In addition to the theoretical implications, our study also contributes to managerial practices in organizations by offering insights and broadening the range of knowledge on overqualification. Overall, the findings of the present study indicate that overqualification does not necessarily lead to negative employee outcomes, e.g., negative attitudes or behaviors. Indeed, when managed appropriately, overqualified employees can be assets to organizations (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Liu et al., 2015). Based on the existing literature on overqualification and the findings of the present study, organizations should adopt several strategies when hiring employees who feel overqualified and implement appropriate measures to better manage these potentially promising employees.

First, the findings of our study offer insightful guidance to Human Resource (HR) practitioners making hiring decisions. Usually, recruiters may want to screen out job applicants who are overqualified (Hu, et al., 2015) because hiring employees who feel overqualified may be related to risks such as high turnover (Luskyle & Spitzmueller, 2015). However, based on the findings, perceived overqualification may not necessarily be deleterious. If managed appropriately, employees who feel overqualified can also bring benefits to organizations when they actively engage in their work roles. Therefore, managers cannot simply screen out job applicants only because they are overqualified. Rather, during the recruitment and selection process, managers may emphasize realistic job previews using assessing tools such as assessment center and well-designed qualification and personality test to identify the feature of overqualified applicants. Further, managers may encourage such applicants to honestly express their needs and the environments in which they thrive (Simon, Bauer, Erdogan, and Shepherd, forthcoming).

Second, organizations should take active measures to foster empowering leadership and clarify work roles in order to increase work engagement of overqualified employees. On the one hand, as empowering leaders tend to highlight the meaningfulness of the work, foster employees’ sense of competence and participation of decision-making, and remove bureaucratic constrains (Zhang et al. 2018), to increase the work engagement and subsequent performance of employees who feel overqualified, organizations need to encourage and train supervisors to adopt empowering leadership. Given that overqualified employees can easily get the job done, empowering leaders may consider more untraditional approaches such as providing sufficient delegations and opportunity of job crafting (Yang et al., 2015) to motivate those employees. On the other hand, organizations should take multiple meansures to clarify specific work roles – for example, redesign job descriptions/specifications to clarify of job roles. In addition, our findings suggest that felt role clarity adds on to the strengthen the moderating effect of empowering leadership, supervisors should therefore be encouraged to help subordinates to understand their roles clearly. This is consistent with prior research suggesting that supervisors play an essential role in maximizing felt role clarity (Kauppila, 2014; Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2011). To be specific, supervisors can provide formal and informal guidance to subordinates regarding what is expected of them and what goals need to be achieved (Newman et al. 2015).

## *5.3 Limitations and* *Directions for Future Research*

The findings of the present study should be considered in light of its limitations, which will suggest directions for future research. First, our two-wave data collection design in which we collected independent variable and mediator in a single timepoint may cause common method bias. Thus, future research should seek to replicate and extend the current research. Longitudinal designs or three-wave cross-sectional design for data collection should be applied to ensure the directionality of the overqualification effects on the outcome variables. Data from other industries and nations should also be collected and analyzed to examine the generalizability of this study’s findings. Second, the present study has focused on empowering leadership and felt role clarity; however, the other forms of leadership styles and contex-specific factors might have also affected employee’s psychological mechanisms and employee’ perceptions of overqualification. Thus, future research should investigate the effects of other leadership styles and contextual factors.

**6. Conclusion**

In this study, we found that perceived overqualification, empowering leadership, and felt role clarity jointly have positively indirect effects on employee outcomes (i.e., task performance and proactive behaviors) via work engagement. Our findings revealed that although perceived overqualification may be associated with some negative outcomes; when managed appropriately, employees who feel overqualified appeared to be able to make beneficial contributions to the organization. This process is consistent with the tenets of self-concept-based theory. Future studies are needed to replicate and extend our findings. Overqualification study is a new and promising line of research and we hope that our study will stimulate further research on the positive effects of perceived overqualification.

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Empowering leadership

Role Clarity

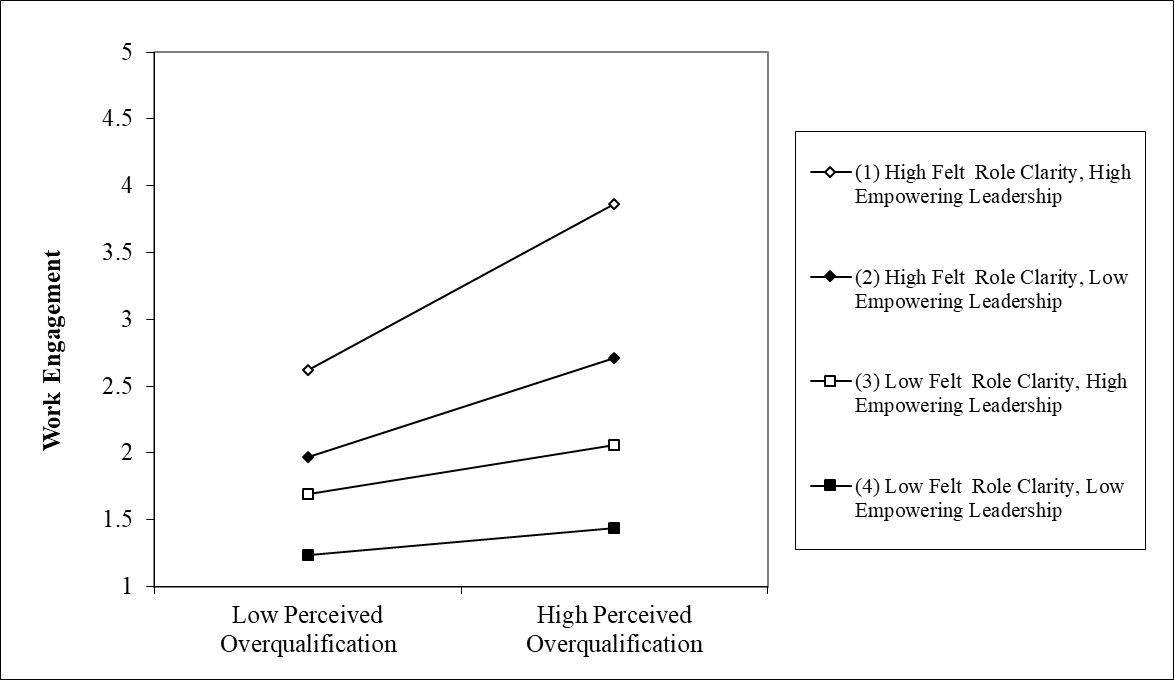
Perceived Overqualification

Work Engagement

Task Performance

Proactive Behavior

**Fig. 1.** Conceptual Model.



**Fig. 2.** Graphical plot of the three-way interaction effect among perceived overqualification, felt role clarity, and empowering leadership on work engagement.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 1**  Correlations, Reliabilities, Mean, and Standard Deviation. | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 1. Sex | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Age | -.17\*\* | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Tenure | -.11 | .69\*\* | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Education | .09 | -.53\*\* | -.48\*\* | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. Collectivism | -.03 | -.01 | -.04 | .03 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6. POQ | -.08 | .06 | .13\*\* | .09 | .02 | **(.71)** |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7. Felt role clarity | -.02 | .03 | -.03 | .02 | .27\*\* | -.04 | **(.83)** |  |  |  |  |
| 8. Empowering leadership | -.03 | .03 | .00 | -.02 | .25\*\* | .03 | .51\*\* | **(.87)** |  |  |  |
| 9. Engagement | -.02 | .10 | .04 | -.05 | .34\*\* | -.02 | .62\*\* | .61\*\* | **(.93)** |  |  |
| 10. Task Performance | .02 | .09 | -.02 | -.04 | .04 | -.09 | .18\*\* | .20\*\* | .27\*\* | **(.93)** |  |
| 11. Proactivity | -.07 | .06 | -.12\* | .00 | .03 | .02 | .19\*\* | .16\*\* | .26\*\* | .72\*\* | **(.86)** |
| **Mean** | 1.47 | 3.17 | 10.81 | 4.31 | 3.93 | 2.99 | 4.01 | 3.89 | 4.06 | 3.89 | 3.79 |
| **S.D.** | .51 | .88 | 9.77 | 2.92 | .71 | .53 | .46 | .48 | .45 | .63 | .65 |

**Note:** N = 351. POQ = Perceived Overqualification

\*\*p < .01; \*p < .05

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 2** Mixed Regression Result of the Three-way Interaction Effect | | | | | | | | | |
|  | **Engagement**  **(T1S)** | | | | | | | | |
|  |  | **Model 1** | |  | **Model 2** | |  | **Model 3** | |
|  |  | **B** | **SE** |  | **B** | **SE** |  | **B** | **SE** |
| **Control Variable** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Gender |  | .01 | .02 |  | .01 | .02 |  | .01 | .02 |
| Age |  | .04 | .03 |  | .04 | .03 |  | .05 | .03 |
| Tenure |  | -.01 | .03 |  | -.01 | .03 |  | -.01 | .03 |
| Education |  | -.02 | .02 |  | -.02 | .02 |  | -.01 | .02 |
| Collectivism |  | .06\*\* | .02 |  | .06\*\* | .02 |  | .06\*\* | .02 |
| **Main Effect** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Perceived Overqualification (POQ) (T1S) |  | -.01 | .02 |  | -.01 | .02 |  | -.03 | .02 |
| Felt role clarity (T1S) |  | .17\*\* | .02 |  | .17\*\* | .02 |  | .16\*\* | .02 |
| Empowering leadership (T1S) |  | .18\*\* | .02 |  | .18\*\* | .02 |  | .17\*\* | .02 |
| **Interaction Effect** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| POQ x Felt role clarity |  |  |  |  | .00 | .02 |  | .03 | .02 |
| POQ x Empowering leadership |  |  |  |  | .00 | .02 |  | -.00 | .02 |
| Felt role clarity x Empowering leadership |  |  |  |  | -.01 | .01 |  | .02 | .01 |
| POQ x Felt role clarity x Empowering leadership |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | .02\*\* | .01 |
| **-2 Restricted Log Likelihood** |  | 219.931 | |  | 238.699 | |  | 237.441 | |
| **Pseudo-R2** |  | .4425 | |  | .3949 | |  | .3981 | |
| **Note:** N = 351. POQ = Perceived Overqualification. All data are unstandardized estimates.  T1S = variables rated by subordinates at Time 1.  \*\*p < .01; \*p < .05 | | | | | | | | | |

**Table 3** Mixed Regression Result of the Integrated Model

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Task Performance**  **(T2L)** | | | | | |  | | **Proactivity**  **(T2L)** | | | | |
|  |  | **Model 4** | |  | **Model 5** | | |  | **Model 6** | |  | **Model 7** | |
|  |  | **B** | **SE** |  | **B** | **SE** | |  | **B** | **SE** |  | **B** | **SE** |
| **Control Variable** |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Gender |  | .04 | .04 |  | .04 | .04 | |  | -.02 | .04 |  | -.03 | .04 |
| Age |  | .16\*\* | .05 |  | .14\*\* | .05 | |  | .18\*\* | .05 |  | .17\*\* | .05 |
| Tenure |  | -.09 | .05 |  | -.09 | .05 | |  | -.20\*\* | .05 |  | -.20\*\* | .05 |
| Education |  | .03 | .04 |  | .04 | .04 | |  | .02 | .04 |  | .03 | .04 |
| Collectivism |  | -.02 | .04 |  | -.04 | .04 | |  | -.01 | .04 |  | -.04 | .04 |
| **Main Effect** |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Perceived Overqualification (POQ) (T1S) |  | -.06 | .04 |  | -.05 | .04 | |  | .03 | .04 |  | .04 | .04 |
| Felt role clarity (T1S) |  | .05 | .04 |  | .00 | .05 | |  | .07 | .05 |  | .01 | .05 |
| Empowering leadership (T1S) |  | .08\* | .05 |  | .04 | .05 | |  | .04 | .05 |  | -.02 | .05 |
| **Interaction Effect** |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| POQ x Felt role clarity |  | .08 | .05 |  | .08 | .05 | |  | .18 | .05 |  | .07 | .05 |
| POQ x Empowering leadership |  | -.05 | .05 |  | -.05 | .05 | |  | -.06 | .05 |  | -.06 | .05 |
| Felt role clarity x Empowering leadership |  | .03 | .03 |  | .02 | .03 | |  | .01 | .03 |  | -.00 | .03 |
| POQ x Felt role clarity x Empowering leadership |  | .02 | .01 |  | .01 | .01 | |  | .02 | .01 |  | .01 | .01 |
| **Mediating Effect** |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Engagement (T1S) |  |  |  |  | .30\*\* | .11 | |  |  |  |  | .17\*\* | .05 |
| **-2 Restricted Log Likelihood** |  | 647.68 | |  | 642.92 | | |  | 670.17 | |  | 664.00 | |
| **Pseudo-R2** |  | .0336 | |  | .0407 | | |  | .0317 | |  | .0520 | |
| **Note:** N = 351. POQ = Perceived Overqualification. All data are unstandardized estimates.  T1S = variables rated by subordinates at Time 1. T2L = variables rated by leaders (supervisors) at Time 2.  \*\*p < .01; \*p < .05 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 4**  Slope Difference Test of Three-way Interaction Effect | | | |
| **Slope comparison** | | **Work Engagement** | |
| ***T*** | ***P*** |
| High Felt role clarity and  High Empowering Leadership | High Felt role clarity and Low Empowering Leadership | 2.478 | .014 |
| Low Felt role clarity and High Empowering Leadership | 2.744 | .006 |
| Low Clarity and Low Empowering Leadership | 2,996 | .003 |
| High Felt role clarity and Low Empowering Leadership | Low Felt role clarity and High Empowering Leadership | .810 | .418 |
| Low Clarity and Low Empowering Leadership | 1.949 | .052 |
| Low Felt role clarity and High Empowering Leadership | Low Clarity and Low Empowering Leadership | .869 | .386 |