



RESEARCH PAPER

Bureaucratic Silence and the Surplus Competent: Examining the Moderating Role of Intra-Governmental Social Comparison on the Voice of Overqualified Public Servants

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at how peer social comparison (PSC) negatively modifies the relationship between employee voice behavior (EMB) and perceived overqualification (POQ) in Punjab, Pakistan's housing department. Employee Voice behavior has garnered ample attention in organizational behavior. The study investigates the influence of peer social comparison on overqualified employees' voice behavior in public sector. Regression analysis was used to test the suggested model after 300 employees' data was gathered from Housing, Urban Development & Public Health Engineering department, Government of Punjab using convenience sampling using cross sectional data. The results show that employee voice behavior is positively impacted by perceived overqualification; however, peer social comparison negatively moderates this relationship. These findings underscore the possible negative influence of peer comparison on employee engagement and offer fresh perspectives on the psychological factors influencing employee behavior. The study adds to the body of knowledge already available on organizational behavior and provides useful advice for HR managers, especially with regard to controlling overqualification and creating a positive work atmosphere in the public sector.

KEYWORDS Perceived Overqualification, Employee Voice Behavior, Peer Social Comparison, Housing Sector, Pakistan, Regression Analysis

Introduction

Employee voice behavior can be defined as an influential aspect of organizational dynamics and performance, and it consists of voluntary communication by employees, ideas, opinions, suggestions, and concerns, which can be done in order to enhance workplace procedures as well as organizational operations. The construct has also received much incident in behavioral and organizational psychology as it demonstrates the need to ensure a sense of employee empowerment to share their opinions.

There are two major dimensions of voice behavior which are promotive and prohibitive. Promotive voice constitutes the statement of positive suggestions that aim at the delivery of enhancements and alteration, whereas the prohibitive one is concerned with having and exposing maladaptive practices or behaviors in the organization (Morrison et al., 2011; Lu, 2020). Employee voice behavior is important not just because of the immediate response that it gives to the management at the given moment, but also the possible outcomes, which include the increase in job satisfaction, organizational commitment and the overall well-being of the employees (Jena et al., 2017; Farndale et al., 2011). Individual and contextual antecedents have been identified as affecting the antecedents of employee voice behavior. A study has suggested that the perceived organizational support is important in terms of persuading employees to adopt voice behavior, because it stimulates the feeling of recognition and respect (Ibrahim et al.,

2020). Moreover, a perception of psychological safety an assumption about not being punished or humiliated because of voicing has been cited as one of the most important elements which create an environment that is conducive to employee voice (Miao et al., 2020; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2015). Voice behavior is greatly affected by leadership style especially ethical and inclusive leadership. High-moral-standard leaders motivate their followers not only to express their opinion but also to intensify their organizational commitment and trust (Yang & Liu, 2013; Lam et al., 2016; Qi et al., 2023).

Additionally, the connection between contextual factors and voice behavior is proven to be mediated by motivational variables, which include employee grit and commitment (Nisar et al., 2020). High-performance work systems (HPWS) also have a positive impact on employee voice behaviors as it defines an environment that facilitates open communication and contact with employees (Ashiru et al., 2021; Rasheed et al., 2017). The voice behaviors have also been proved to be positively affected by the leadership behavior of employees namely assisting and enabling interactions, thus indicating the important role of the management practices to direct employee behavior (Almazrouei & Bani-Melhem, 2023; Gao & Jiang, 2019). Also, it is impossible to overestimate the association between employee voice and multiple organizational outcomes. The organizations that support the culture of open communication enjoy better decision-making, more innovation, and overall performance enhancement (Ashiru et al., 2021; Azevedo et al., 2020). Employees have an empowerment strategy of making their thoughts and concerns heard at work, which makes a more streamlined and innovative organizational climate, positively influencing retention rates and employee saturation (Jha et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2024). The relationship between various organizational dynamics, including employee voice and organizational justice is also found to be a significant defining factor in employee engagement and turnover intention (G.H.H.P & Nishanthi, 2018). That is, when employees get to contribute their ideas to the company via decision-making processes, it not only legitimizes the input they make, but also develops a more inclusive company culture. Numerous studies have confirmed that with a sense of employee value in their input, the employees would display a greater sense of commitment and engagement to the organization (Farndale et al., 2011; Mowbray et al., 2014).

Besides, issues such as fear of punishment and office politics, which associates with voice behavior, may discourage employees against freely speaking up. It is important to understand these challenges by an organization that wants to develop a vocal workforce. Organizations will be offered to exercise effective feedback and education systems that support the creation of an environment where constructive communication is both welcomed and promoted (Li et al., 2018). Perceived overqualification (POQ) within the Pakistani government is a serious issue, because it affects the attitudes towards their workplace, their performance, and their overall job satisfaction in a negative way. POQ is a condition in which the employees believe that their skills, qualifications, or experience are more than required in their current post and as such they feel underutilized and alienated (Alvi et al., 2024). A disparity between the qualification of those employed in the public sector and the skill requirements of that position is prevalent in the Pakistani public sector because of a considerable number of systematic problems, such as the higher average educational level of position holders when compared to those in the private sector (Hyder & Reilly, 2022).

A body of evidence shows that self-perceived overqualification can result in a variety of drawbacks when the employees working in the governmental sphere receive this impression (Chen et al., 2021), (Bao & Zhong, 2023). As an example, empirical research

places a strong correlation between POQ and the intention turnover changes as workers pursue better options in different cases (Neto& Borges-Andrade, 2024; , Chen et al., 2021). This is because this phenomenon undermines the efficiency of the public sector since turnover leads to talent loss and the associated high-recruiting expenses (Bao&Zhong, 2023). Adversely, there have been correlated adverse psychological effects of POQ e.g. job satisfaction decreases, organizational alienation, among others, which serve to weaken the quality of work (Alvi et al., 2024).

Dynamics of POQ in Pakistan can be partially explained by the peculiarities of the employment situation in the country its own job sector in the public sector, whereby the proportion of educated workers is high in the openings of the public sector, in contrast to the proportions of the private sector (Hyder& Reilly, 2022). This abundance of education makes a lot of employees overqualified to their jobs contrary to the economic reasoning that focuses on equating qualifications with jobs. It has been suggested that successful leadership and productive psychological contracts would be important interventions to address the unfavorable outcomes of perceived overqualification (Asif et al., 2023). Empowering leadership and effective psychological contracts are proposed as the corrective interventions to deal with the impacts of perceived overqualification (Alvi et al., 2024). Empowering leadership may offset the adverse impact of POQ due to the atmosphere it generates to develop a professional and reward employee effort, hence improving professional fulfillment and loyalty (Alvi et al., 2024).

Perceived over qualification can be termed as that kind of situation when employees feel that their expertise; that is, education, experience, and prowess is higher than that required by their present position. It is a subjective experience related to numerous negative outcomes on employees such as increased cynicism, decline in job satisfaction, and lack of involvement in work. Perceived Overqualification and employee cynicism relationship can be explained via multiple structures and empirical research.

The connection between perceived overqualification and employee voice behavior (EVB) is a complex section of enquiry in organizational behavior within which employee voice behavior is usually regarded as a dependent variable. The perception of overqualification arises whenever an employee feels that he/she is over qualified for the job that he/she is engaging in. Such a feeling may result in different consequences that have a great impact on the readiness of an employee to take part in the voice behavior. Overqualification has been found to contribute to bad workplace nature sentiments and behaviours, a typical feature where employees tend to disengage or quit their jobs. Studies found that when employees feel overqualified they will be more prone to feeling frustrated and a sense of being misused, and thus they will not be likely to raise their voice and give ideas and feedback Fan et al. (2023)(Erdogan et al., 2020). This perceived lack could be caused by the perception that their abilities and skills are not appreciated by the organization which will lead to low levels of engagement and the temptation of not giving opinions and suggestions (Sun &Qiu, 2022).

When speaking of the relationship between perceived overqualification and voice behavior, the mediating variables of feelings of discontent and the psychological contract between the employee and the organization must be mentioned. Employees are not likely to display voice behavior after recognizing a violation of the psychological contract, which can be in the form of their feeling that their input is being ignored (Erdoğan et al., 2020). According to the research, perceived overqualification has been said to reduce job

satisfaction, which is negatively associated with employee voice expression (Yang et al., 2023; Ma et al., 2020).

In addition, perceived over qualification may also affect social relationships at the workplace. The perception of the over qualification by employees may make them alienated to their co-workers, thus results in lack of support that is usually needed to create an atmosphere of employees being able to feel safe and not afraid to express their opinions (Jiang et al., 2024). The absence of conducive ties may also lower the chances of undertaking voice behavior since group support is essential in the creation of a robust culture of transparency in communication.

On one hand, is evidence to the fact that positive behaviors may also take place in the case of perceived overqualification, depending on circumstances. As an example, those who believe that they are overqualified can be encouraged to share their insights or suggest improvements so that they could obtain confirmation of their abilities and the sense of importance in the organization (Li et al., 2022; Zhao & Ma, 2023). Such a tendency may become observable as voice behavior toward the peers and management, as overqualified employees may advocate changes due to their high qualifications and knowledge (Yang et al., 2023). Hence, correlation between perceived overqualification and voice behavior is not unidirectional one but it can swing back and forth between proactive participation and detachment depending on how an employee perceives himself/herself and his/her situation within an organization.

To sum up, the connections between perceived over qualification and employee voice behavior are tangled and many-sided. Even though perceived overqualification has numerous negative consequences, including a decline in voice behaviour, it may also encourage some of them to emerge actively when recognition of their ability is required.

The correlation of perceived overqualification and voice behavior is one important aspect to take into account in organizational psychology; it therefore implies that the way employees perceive their qualification concerning their work position can affect the degree of their motivation to share their opinion and suggestions at the work place. The research problem to be examined is the effect of perceived overqualification (I.V) on employee voice behavior (D.V) and the moderating effect of peer social comparison to the effect. The issue of perceived overqualification is in a way a special dilemma to an employee, who then becomes alienated to their job, despite having the aptitudes and competencies, which are way above the job description. This decoupling frequently appears at a time when employees feel that their input is not appreciated and this can sometimes prevent them developing proactive behavior in their working place, which includes voice behavior (Li et al., 2022; Schreurs et al., 2020; . The behavior of employee voice is explained as communication exchanges of ideas, recommendations, or issues focused on an improved organizational performance that constitutes an important segment of workplace dynamics. Being aware that their qualification is higher than expected of them, such employees might be frustrated or feel entitled, which hurts their desire to contribute to the input (Schreurs et al., 2020; Vinayak et al., 2021).

Besides, peer social comparison is an important factor in this process. Self-comparison with the peers is also a basis on which the employees often judge themselves. This comparison analysis may increase a sense of being overqualified alongside disappointment (Li et al., 2022; Duan et al., 2022; Zhu et al., 2023). The theory of social comparison states that due to incomplete congruency on the level of job qualification in the workplace, an employee might feel themselves being overqualified more when

comparing themselves to their less qualified colleagues, which would consequently increase feelings of entitlement, in addition to, paradoxically, diminishing their desire to be engaged in the voice behavior due to frustrations with the organizational norms or structures that seemingly rewarded the less qualified colleagues more (Schreurs et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021; Dong et al., 2025)

On the contrary, the relationship can also demonstrate some unknown results. When an employee feels himself/herself overqualified but thinks about its peers favourably possibly as being equally, or even more skilled voice behavior can be successful. Hereby, a more democratic setting will be created under which employees will feel free to propose changes to the question of drawing on their abilities to improve overall team performance (Li et al., 2022; Luksyte et al., 2020; Dong et al., 2025). Thus, social comparison with peers could become a moderating factor that either enhances the adverse effects of perceived overqualification or limits them, depending on the character of peer reviews and a relationship in the working group.

To conclude, this research problem statement aims at empirically investigating the influence of perceived overqualification on the employee voice behavior, as well as evaluating the job of peer social comparison as a moderator. The exploration of this triad will bring to light what the organizational processes entail and the voice behaviors these processes do cause and present information that can be used to practice human resources so to achieve an organization that promotes a sense of value in employees and a drive to input their own opinions to better the organization.

Literature Review

Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory is the theory that was created by Steven Hobfoll that and according to him, people struggle and make efforts to get the initially valuable resources, keep and preserve them. These assets may be material, like monetary or material resources, or immaterial, like social support, self-esteem or knowledge (Hobfoll, 2001). This main principle of the theory is that stress happens when a threat to losing resources is present, there is an act of resource loss, or the gain of resources after investing in them is not enough (Mansour & Mohanna, 2024).

The COR theory has implications in other areas like organization behavior where it can be used in explaining the well-being and performance of employees regarding resource flow (Cheng et al., 2022; Hobfoll, 2011). As an illustration, the employees can become more stressed and perform their jobs at lower levels when their resources, i.e., time, energy, or social support points, are exhausted. On the other hand, the abundance of resources (Organizationally or even in terms of leadership) stimulates the ability of employees to resist stressors and even thrive in their work (Chen et al., 2021; Ashfaq et al., 2021)

COR theory has a wide range of application in the work place environment, including explaining the concept of burnout, engagement, adaptation to workplace changes etc. The value of resources Employees may become burnt out if they have a belief that they are losing resources (in terms of overburdened or underrepresented employees) or they are working in an otherwise unfriendly climate, and it is essential that organizational leadership help create a climate of intact resources as the positive resources can improve resilience and reduce the impact of stress (Chen et al., 2024; Khan, 2024).

The strategies which are compliant with the principles of COR theory can be used when employers introduce support systems, open communication and physical social environment that welcomes contributions of employees. In such a way, not only organizations preserve their current resources, but they also find a way to improve job satisfaction and work productivity in general (Hsu & Chen, 2015; Gupta et al., 2017). Moreover, COR theory highlights the significance of the psychological capital high positive mental attitudes resilience, hope, optimism, and self-efficacy as the resource that helps employees adjust to problems and might result in more successful job performance (Ashfaq et al., 2021; Gupta et al., 2017).

In addition to this, new developments focus on the interaction of COR theory and other theories. To give an example, the principles of the theory have been combined with job demands-resources models to investigate how job demands can be balanced with tangible and intangible resources leading to the optimal performance outcomes (Bon & Shire, 2022; LIAO et al., 2022). The preservation of the precious assets, that is, the employees, becomes paramount in the terms characterized by the high demands, which can help retain the motivation and avoid exhaustion, confirming that resource management, both on the personal and on the organizational level, plays a decisive role in the framework of workplace dynamics (Hobfoll, 2001; Chen et al., 2024).

COR theory assumes that people aim at being able to obtain, maintain and defend valuable resources and stress emerged when the person experiences the threat of resource loss, real resource loss, or the inability of gaining resources after the investment of resources Hobfoll (2001)Chen et al., 2024). To the extent that it relates to ideas of perceived overqualification this theory can give ideas of how the perceptions of employees of having excessive skills and qualifications compared to the demands of their job can affect their participation in employee voice behavior.

A threat of resource deprivation among employees can also occur when affected employees feel that they are overqualified and thus can spend their resources (skills and abilities) (Erdoğan et al., 2020). Such a mentality toward lack of resource investment or gain may result in a lack of motivation and involvement, an unwillingness to present their ideas and suggestions on how to improve an organization (Sun & Qiu, 2022; Alfes et al., 2016). The overqualified employees can develop a feeling that their contribution is not appreciated or is not going to cause substantial change and, thus, will resort to quitting voice behaviors (Meirun & Fu, 2024).

Nevertheless, the connection between perceived overqualification and voice behavior is not so direct. Perceived overqualification may also become a resource under certain conditions which will encourage the employees to behave in voice manner. As an example, the overqualified workers can develop a desire to prove that they are worth being employed by this company and bring their experience to the workplace, so they become more active in sharing their ideas and proposals (Fan et al., 2023; Amira & Febrianti, 2022).

The moderate of the social comparison by peers may also affect this connection. Having overqualified employees in the company may feel entitled and would like to take a stand to demonstrate their worthiness over their colleagues, leading to voice behavior not letting them speak up (Sun & Qiu, 2022). On the other hand, being overqualified employees might consider their colleagues to be equal or more competent than them, which also might make more employees expected to work as a team and contribute their

ideas, which is a contributor to the voice behavior, as well (Alfes et al., 2016). Hence following hypothesis are devised

Hypotheses

H1: Perceived overqualification is positively associated with employee voice behavior.

H2: Peer social comparison negatively moderates the relationship between perceived overqualification and employee voice behavior, such that the relationship is stronger when the level of upward social comparison is high.

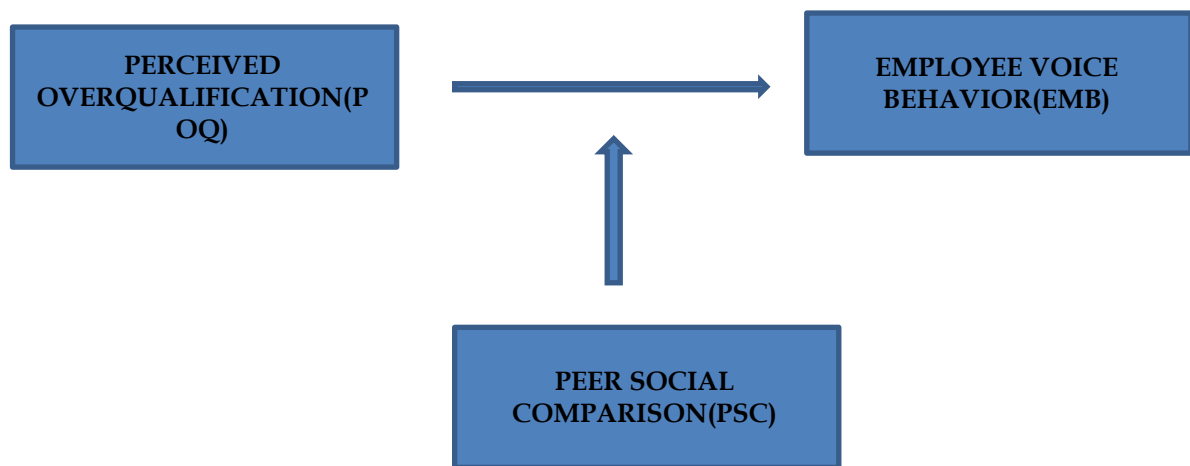


Figure 1 conceptual framework

Material and Methods

Employee Voice Behavior

The proactive and extra-role communication of an employee's ideas, suggestions, and concerns with the goal of enhancing organizational or unit functioning is known as employee voice behavior. This conduct, which can be either prohibitive (expressing worries about possible issues) or promotive (making recommendations for improvement), is frequently positive and change-oriented. Because it deviates from an employee's official job duties, it is regarded as a type of discretionary, extra-role behavior. The Van Dyne and LePine (1998) six-item scale is employed to evaluate EVB.

Perceived Overqualification

The idea that an employee's training, experience, and abilities exceed what their position calls for is known as perceived overqualification. This can have detrimental effects like decreased commitment and job satisfaction, but studies also show that it can have beneficial effects like increased creativity and job crafting, particularly when workers actively look for opportunities to apply their skills. Mynard et al., 2006 scale is used for measurement of perceived overqualification.

Peer Social Comparison

Self-esteem and motivation can be impacted by peer comparison, which is the unconscious or conscious process of assessing one's own skills, beliefs, and attributes.

This comparison, which is especially common in childhood and adolescence, can be "upward," looking at people who are more successful, or "downward," comparing oneself to peers who are less successful. Gibbons & Buunk, (1999) is used for measurement of this phenomenon.

Material and Methods

Nature

Since our research involves collecting numerical data through survey approach for testing hypothesis therefore quantitative nature research is used for this purpose .

Population

Data is collected from the employees of Housing, Urban Development and Public Health Engineering Department, Government of Punjab (HUD&PHED,GoP). HUD & PHED,GoP comprise of following organizations: comprise of following entities.

1. Lahore Development Authority (LDA)
2. Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA)
3. Multan Development Authority (MDA)
4. Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA)
5. Gujranwala Development Authority (GDA)
6. Punjab Housing & Town Planning Agency (PHATA)
7. Ravi Urban Development Authority (RUDA)
8. Central Business District (CBD)
9. Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA)
10. Punjab Saaf Paani company

Sample Size And Technique

Convenience sampling technique is used for data collection keeping in view accessibility of public sector officers. An officer of grade 17 and above is taken as unit of analysis. Sample size is 300. Study is conducted in natural settings. Study has a cross sectional design.

Instrument

Questionnaire is used for collection of data from respondents. A five point Likert scale is used ranging from strongly disagree=1 to strongly agree=5

Validity and Reliability

The standard for evaluating validity relies on the factor loadings. When the loadings exceed the designated threshold, issues of convergent validity arise. The sample size is essential for establishing the validity of this issue. A sample size above 350 respondents requires factor loadings of at least 0.30. When the sample size surpasses 150, loadings greater than 0.40 was considered acceptable.

The reliability test evaluates the consistency of study components by confirming that the instrument consistently produces identical or nearly identical results across various places and contexts (Bell & Bryman, 2007). The dependability of the constructs is evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. This research evaluates dependability by Cronbach's alpha, establishing a threshold value beyond 0.60 (Hair et al., 2012). Scholars see a Cronbach's alpha score below 0.60 as undesirable although passable to some extent

Data Analysis Technique

For the quantitative analysis, we employed confirmatory factory analysis to study the underlying patterns in the data using SPSS V. 28. Moreover Linear regression technique is used to test for hypothesis.

Ethical consideration

The data is gathered in research with the prior consent of all participants and does not use any coercive actions to collect data from participants (Connelly, 2014). Moreover, the researcher also makes sure that the study causes no harm to any individual. The study also uses the data gathered from questionnaire respondents for the purpose of research only, maintains their anonymity by not disclosing their identity and keeps data in secure folders. Lastly, data will be discarded upon the completion of the research study (Arifin, 2018).

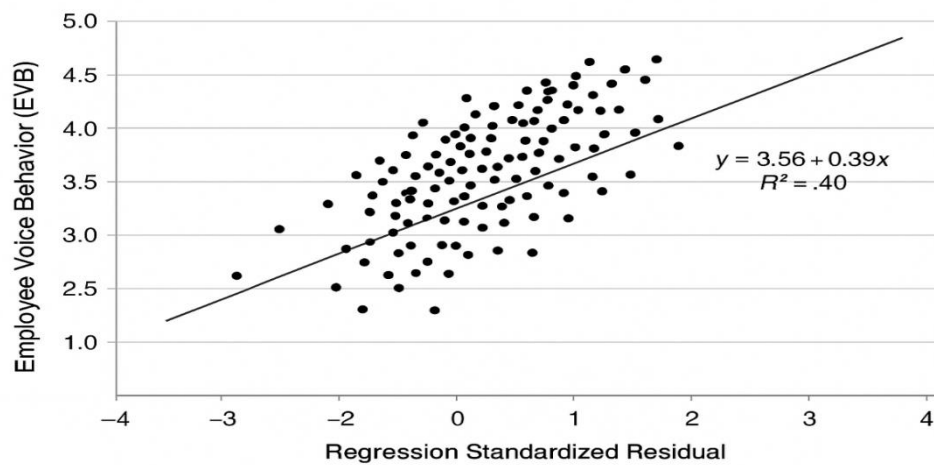
Results and Discussion

Table 1
Demographics

Items	Particulars	Numerical	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	236	78
	Female	64	22
	Total	300	100.0
Designation	17 scale	177	59
	18 scale	103	34
	19 scale	20	6
	Total	300	100.0
Education	Graduation	151	50
	Masters/M.Phil.	148	49
	Ph.D.	01	1
	Total	300	100.0

The goal is to outline the fundamental traits of the 300-person sample population. 78% of the sample is male. Just 6% of respondents are at the "19 scale," while the majority are at the lower rungs of the organizational hierarchy with 49% having a Master's or M.Phil. degree and 50% having a graduation degree, the sample is highly educated. Just 1% hold a Ph.D. Data is collected from the employees of Housing, Urban Development and Public Health Engineering Department, Government of Punjab (HUD&PHED, GoP). Convenience sampling technique is used for data collection keeping in view accessibility of public sector officers. An officer of grade 17 and above is taken as unit of analysis. Study is conducted in natural settings. Study has a cross sectional design.

Test for Homoscedasticity

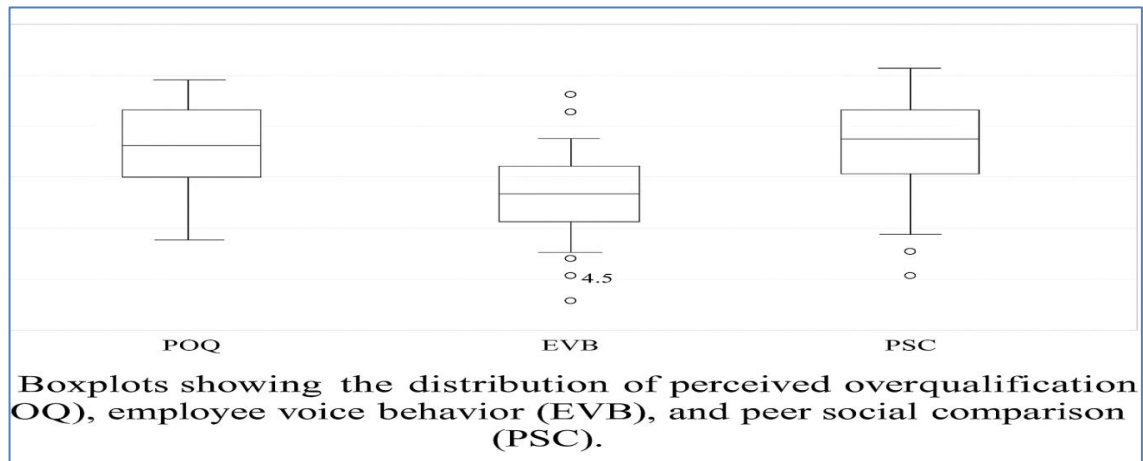


Note. The plot depicts the positive linear relationship between regression standardized residuals and EVB ($y = 3.56 + 0.39x$, $R^2 = .40$).

Figure 2 Scatter plot

A random scatter of residuals (errors) is probably visible in the plot (image1.png). This is favorable because it supports the homoscedasticity assumption, which states that the variance of errors is constant at all independent variable levels.

Outliers



Boxplots showing the distribution of perceived overqualification (POQ), employee voice behavior (EVB), and peer social comparison (PSC).

Figure 3 Box plot

To identify extreme values that might skew the results, the plot box is utilized. Since no serious problems are seen as outliers are less than 1% , it is assumed that outliers were either not a big deal.

4.3 Linearity test:

Table 2

Analysis of Variance for Employee Voice Behavior by Perceived Overqualification

Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F
EVB, POQ				
Between Groups				
Combined	72.003	26	2.769	19.354*
Linearity	66.534	1	66.534	464.993*

Deviation from Linearity	5.469	25	0.219	1.529
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Note. EVB = Employee Voice Behavior; POQ = Perceived Overqualification * $p < .001$.

The anova test determines whether there is a straight-line relationship between the variables. The use of linear regression models is supported by a roughly linear pattern.

Normality measures

Table 3
Skewness and kurtosis

	Mean	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
POQ1	3.7433	-0.804	0.141	0.099	0.281
POQ2	3.79	-0.727	0.141	-0.17	0.281
POQ3	3.8	-0.805	0.141	0.046	0.281
POQ4	3.51	-0.538	0.141	-0.61	0.281
POQ5	3.4767	-0.5	0.141	-0.864	0.281
POQ6	3.4567	-0.448	0.141	-1.004	0.281
POQ7	3.7	-0.906	0.141	0.233	0.281
POQ8	3.4767	-0.389	0.141	-0.974	0.281
POQ9	3.4733	-0.451	0.141	-1.041	0.281
EVB1	3.7333	-0.117	0.141	-0.621	0.281
EVB2	3.9067	-0.2	0.141	-0.34	0.281
EVB3	3.87	-0.043	0.141	-0.545	0.281
EVB4	3.7233	-0.279	0.141	-0.708	0.281
EVB5	3.8567	-0.165	0.141	-0.546	0.281
EVB6	3.8533	-0.039	0.141	-0.247	0.281
PSC1	3.8367	-0.85	0.141	0.667	0.281
PSC2	3.61	-0.56	0.141	-0.34	0.281
PSC3	3.8967	-1.008	0.141	0.883	0.281
PSC4	3.9167	-0.955	0.141	0.66	0.281
PSC5	3.75	-0.705	0.141	0.257	0.281

The purpose of these tests is to make sure the data satisfies the statistical presumptions needed for regression analysis. This table determines whether the information for every question on the survey is distributed normally. Skewness quantifies the distribution's symmetry. Since all of the values are negative, the data for the majority of the items is skewed to the left, with the majority of responses falling on the higher end of the spectrum. Kurtosis quantifies the distribution's "tailedness." The majority of values are negative, suggesting that the tails are lighter than in a normal distribution (platykurtic). The robustness of subsequent parametric tests is ensured by the fact that the absolute values of kurtosis ($< |1.0|$ for most) and skewness ($< |1.0|$ for most) fall within acceptable bounds for assuming a normal distribution.

Table 4
Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	Component		
	1	2	3
POQ1	0.343		
POQ2	0.379		
POQ3	0.352		
POQ4	0.779		
POQ5	0.830		
POQ6	0.883		

POQ7	0.319	
POQ8	0.840	
POQ9	0.886	
EVB1	-	0.790
EVB2		0.723
EVB3		0.716
EVB4		0.765
EVB5		0.699
EVB6		0.763
PSC1	0.813	
PSC2	0.714	
PSC3	0.878	
PSC4	0.793	
PSC5	0.801	
PSC6	0.880	

The components neatly divide into three different factors: All nine POQ items (POQ1-POQ9) are included in Component 1, which has high loadings (particularly POQ4-POQ6, POQ8, and POQ9 > 0.77).

- Component 2: All six PSC items (PSC1-PSC6) are present, and their loadings are extremely high (all > 0.71).

- Component 3: All six EVB items (EVB1-EVB6) are present, and they all have high loadings (all > 0.69).

The constructs are different from one another, confirming discriminant validity, and there is no significant cross-loading (an item loading highly on more than one component). The measurement model is very good. The fact that the survey items precisely correspond to the three intended concepts demonstrates that the researchers are measuring the things they say they are

Table 5
KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.866
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4511.220
	Df	210
	Sig.	0.000

The goal is to determine whether the data is appropriate for factor analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure is 0.866. This value (above 0.8) is considered "meritorious" or "great." It suggests that factor analysis is highly appropriate because the patterns of correlation between the variables are compact. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 0.000 (p < .001) is the significance value. This indicates that there are important relationships between the variables, which gives factor analysis meaning, and that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix.

Validity and Reliability Measurements

Table 6
Validity and reliability

Construct	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
POQ	0.93	0.87	0.5
EVB	0.85	0.89	0.55
PSC	0.90	0.92	0.67

The items on each scale are highly correlated and consistently measure the same underlying construct, indicating excellent internal consistency reliability. Every AVE

value is higher than the crucial 0.50 threshold. This demonstrates convergent validity, which is the ability of a construct's items to explain more than half of its variance.

The goal is to verify the measurement scales' validity and internal consistency. All values are significantly higher than the suggested cutoff of 0.70.

Correlation Analysis

Examining the direction and strength of the linear relationships between the primary variables is the goal.

Table 7
Pearson Correlation

	POQ	EVB	PSC
POQ	1	0.75**	0.62**
EVB	0.75**	1	0.73**
PSC	0.62**	0.73**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

POQ and EVB have a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation ($r = 0.75$, $p < .01$). This is the first conclusive proof in favor of H1. POQ and PSC have a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.62$, $p < .01$). There is a strong positive correlation between EVB and PSC ($r = 0.73$, $p < .01$).

Every construct has a positive relationship with every other variable. Additionally, workers who feel overqualified are more likely to use voice and compare themselves to their peers.

Multi Collinearity Test

The goal is to determine whether the POQ and PSC independent variables are overly correlated, as this could skew the results of regression analysis.

Table 8
Test for multi collinearity

Construct	Tolerance	VIF
POQ	0.614	1.629
PSC	0.614	1.629

The VIF values fall well short of both the more stringent 3 threshold and the more common 5 threshold. The tolerance values are significantly higher than 0.2. This demonstrates that multicollinearity is not an issue and that POQ and PSC can be included in the same regression model without any problems.

Table 9
Model Summary for Regression of Employee Voice Behavior on Perceived Overqualification

Model	R	R ²	Adj R ²	S.E
POQ-EVB	.774	0.599	0.598	0.38

Table10
Regression Coefficients Predicting Employee Voice Behavior

Predictor	B	SE	β	T	95% CI
Constant	0.75	0.14		5.51*	[0.48, 1.01]
POQ	0.79	0.04	.77	21.10*	[0.72, 0.86]

Table 11
ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	66.534	1	66.534	445.243	.000
Residual	44.531	298	.149		
Total	111.066	299			

Analysis of Regression (POQ on EVB)

The goal is to determine whether employee voice behavior (DV) is directly impacted by perceived overqualification (IV). 445.243 is the F-statistic, and .000 is the significance level. This indicates that the regression model outperforms a model without predictors in terms of EVB prediction and is statistically significant. A significant amount of the variance in EVB can be explained by the model. POQ alone accounts for roughly 56% of the variance in EVB, according to the correlation's R^2 of $(0.75)^2 = 0.5625$. This analysis confirms that perceived overqualification is a significant positive predictor of employee voice behavior, thereby offering strong support for Hypothesis 1 (H1).

Moderation analysis**Table 12**
Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
.8379	.7021	.1118	232.5921	3.0000	296.0000	.0000

Table 13
Model

	Coef	Se	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	-1.9180	.7525	-2.5487	.0113	-3.3991	-.4370
POQ	1.0824	.2221	4.8731	.0000	.6453	1.5195
PSC	.9808	.2114	4.6404	.0000	.5648	1.3968
Int_1	-.1492	.0599	-2.4921	.0132	-.2671	-.0314

Product terms key:

Int_1 : POQ x PSC

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):

	R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p
X*W	.0062	6.2105	1.0000	296.0000	.0132

The goal is to determine whether the relationship between POQ and EVB is moderated by peer social comparison (PSC). With an R-sq of .7021, the complete model (including POQ, PSC, and their interaction term) accounts for 70.21% of the variance in EVB. The coefficient for the interaction term is -.1492 and is statistically significant ($p = .0132$). The "R2-chng" of .0062 ($p = .0132$) for the interaction term, while small, is statistically significant. This means adding the interaction term significantly improves the model's explanatory power.

Hypothesis 2 (H2) is supported by this result. Peer social comparison is a powerful moderator. It is important that the coefficient has a negative sign (-.1492). It suggests a "buffering" effect or negative moderation. A loss prevention mindset is triggered by peer social comparison. The overqualified employee chooses to hoard their remaining psychological resources (energy, self-esteem, and effort) rather than investing

them in a risky behavior like voice that is unlikely to be rewarded and could result in further loss because they feel unfairly treated and vulnerable as a result of constant comparison.

The motivational pathway is essentially disrupted. The defensive, resource-conserving state "locks down" the overqualified employee's excess resources.

Conclusion

According to the study's findings, workers in Pakistan's public sector who believe they are overqualified are initially more likely to use constructive voice behavior because they are motivated to enhance their working environment and have extra skills. However, this potential is effectively muffled by a culture of intense peer social comparison, negating the benefits of having a highly skilled workforce. The results demonstrate that employees' motivation shifts from proactive improvement to defensive resource conservation when they are constantly compared to their peers, which creates a perceived threat of resource loss. In the end, the administrative culture of the public sector, which is frequently defined by seniority-based promotions and standardized pay, creates an atmosphere that is conducive to negative social comparisons.

Recommendations

Merit-based recognition and reward schemes should be used by public sector organizations to lessen the sense of unfairness that encourages unfavorable social comparisons. Overqualified talent must be identified and proactively managed by managers, who should then assign them to mentorship or special projects that make use of their abilities without inciting animosity among their peers. The goal of HR policies should be to create a cooperative, psychologically secure environment where workers are appreciated for their contributions as a team rather than in relation to one another. Decentralizing HR procedures and enabling more individualized career paths will help future reforms lessen the negative effects of social comparison by helping overqualified workers feel appreciated for their distinctive contributions.

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