

Article

Perceived Overqualification and Innovative Behavior: High-Order Moderating Effects of Length of Service

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Abstract: Perceived overqualification has been a hot topic in the field of organizational behavior in recent years and has become very common with the spread of education. In addition, in the current era of open innovation, the demand for innovative behaviors by enterprises is increasing day by day. Therefore, this study intended to link the two to explore the relationship between them. Based on self-evaluation theory and face theory, taking enterprise employees as the research object, this paper discusses the impact of perceived overqualifications on employees' innovative behavior and the internal mechanism and examines the first-order and high-order moderating effects of ability-face pressure and length of service in turn. The results showed that perceived overqualifications had a positive impact on employees' innovation behavior, and felt trust had a mediating role in the relationship. Ability face pressure played a negative moderating role in the impact of felt trust on innovative behavior and played a negative moderating role in the impact of perceived overqualifications on innovative behavior. With the increase in the length of service, the negative moderating effect of ability face pressure on the relationship between perceived overqualifications and employees' innovative behavior weakened. It is expected that these results will enable companies to understand the internal mechanisms of employee perceived overqualification, enlighten leaders to give more trust to employees, help companies to improve employees' innovative behavior, and pay attention to the psychological factors of employees, which will help to create a sustainable work environment and promote sustainable business development.

Keywords: perceived overqualification; innovation behavior; felt trust; ability face pressure; length of service; sustainable development



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1. Introduction

In the current business market with many talented people, there is a phenomenon that occurs where the supply of talents exceeds the demand for jobs, and coupled with the outbreak of SARS-CoV-2, the enterprise economy is seriously threatened and there are a large number of layoffs, which undoubtedly aggravates the imbalance between supply and demand in the talent market, resulting in a large number of talented people being unable to find suitable jobs, and the overqualification of employees becomes a very common phenomenon [1]. Therefore, combined with the quantity and quality of talents and the status quo of enterprises recruiting employees, the study of overqualification is not only beneficial to the physical and mental development and career development of employees but is also beneficial to enterprises' reasonable development of talents to obtain sustainable development.

Overqualification means that employees think that their ability and knowledge exceed the needs of their positions. At present, there are differences in the research views on perceived overqualifications. Most of them focus on the negative impact of perceived overqualifications. Some scholars believe that the sense of overqualification will reduce employees' work engagement, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, work performance, team performance, and organizational citizenship behavior, and lead to anti-productive behavior

due to unfairness, feeling deprived, or feeling that the mismatch between the employee and job will lead to negative employee output [2–5].

However, the previous positive research on perceived overqualifications is relatively lacking. Some studies start from the theory of relative deprivation and believe that employees with a sense of perceived overqualifications will work harder and achieve high task performance in order to get rid of relative deprivation, while other studies are based on psychological contract theory [6–8]. However, this is not sufficient, especially in the context of open innovation, where the market is complex and changing and competition is fierce since employees' innovative behavior is the basis and key for companies to gain a competitive advantage and achieve sustainable development [9]. For enterprises, innovation is the first productive force that can help them gain a sustainable competitive advantage and achieve sustainable business development. Therefore, it is crucial to explore the relationship between the influence of overqualification and innovation behavior and the inner mechanism and to rationalize the use of talents and stimulate the innovation behavior of employees. In view of this, this study was based on a new perspective, namely, self-evaluation theory, to explore the positive relationship between perceived overqualification and employees' innovative behavior, the mediating mechanism, and the boundary conditions based on face theory. This study also aimed to expand the research perspective of the intermediary mechanism between the perceived overqualifications and employees' innovative behavior and enrich the research on the boundary conditions of the perceived overqualifications and employees' innovative behavior.

In an organization, trust between leaders and employees also affects employees' innovative behavior [10]. Although trust is mutual, i.e., employees trust in leaders and leaders trust in employees, most of the current research focuses on employees' trust in leaders and relatively little attention is paid to leaders' trust in employees, that is, felt trust [11,12]. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the influence of employees' felt trust on their behavior from the trusted side [13]. The theory of self-evaluation points out that individuals will be influenced by the social environment and social information, and constantly conduct self-recognition and evaluation, which ultimately affects their attitudes and behaviors [14], especially when the information comes from important people in the organization (such as leaders) and is positive information, leading to the effect of self-evaluation being more obvious [15]. In particular, for employees with perceived overqualifications, under the premise of mismatches between an employee and their job, the trust of superiors may have an important impact on self-perceptions and evaluations, which, in turn, affect their attitudes and behaviors [16]. Therefore, based on self-evaluation theory, this study explored the influence mechanism of felt trust on perceived overqualifications and innovative behavior and further verified the explanation logic based on self-evaluation theory.

In the workplace, employee behavior can also be affected by stress [17]. According to face theory, employees will be affected by the ability face pressure at work and will be disturbed by the thinking of "don't lose face" at work [18]. In terms of the theory, although some scholars have discussed perceived overqualification and employee innovation behavior, it is not enough. Based on face theory, there are few studies that analyze the moderating effect of ability face pressure between the perceived overqualifications and employees' innovative behavior, and the relationship between felt trust and employees' innovative behavior.

In addition, the literature studying employee behavior in the field of organizational behavior has more often used the length of service as a control variable, but the length of service also has an impact on employees' work experience, interpersonal relationships, and skills [19]. As moderating variables in this study, the size of the ability face pressure is closely related to the employee's work experience, interpersonal relationships, and other factors [18]. Therefore, this study included length of service to explore its higher-order moderating effect. By establishing a three-dimensional interaction model, this study not only explored the influence of perceived overqualifications on employees' innovative behavior and felt trust on employees' innovative behavior but also explored the moderating

effect of ability face pressure on it, as well as the synergistic moderating effect of length of service.

Since the research variable of this study was employees' perceived overqualification and innovative behavior, it needed to be analyzed from employees' data; therefore, this study used a questionnaire to carry out the research and the obtained findings were processed using SPSS 25.0 and AMOS 24.0 to test the hypotheses of this study through the data structure via analysis and finally draw conclusions.

The theoretical contributions of this study are as follows: first, to verify the positive influential relationship between perceived overqualification and innovative behavior, and to obtain the mediating mechanism of felt trust between perceived overqualification and employee innovative behavior based on self-evaluation theory, enrich the research on the positive effect of perceived overqualification, identify the mediating mechanism between perceived overqualification and innovative behavior, and help companies recognize the inner mechanism of perceived overqualification. This study provided theoretical support for the maximization of talent utilization. Second, we discovered the boundary effects between perceived overqualification and innovative behavior and between felt trust and innovative behavior, and extended the literature on perceived overqualification by exploring the ability face pressure of employees at work based on face theory, and studied the ability face pressure of employees as a moderating variable, which was verified to clarify the boundary effects of overqualification of employees in the process of their ultimate effect on innovation behavior, and provides a new perspective for exploring the factors influencing employees' innovative behavior. Third, in the research process, the factor of employees' length of service was added, and it was argued that employees' ability face pressure may be influenced by the length of service. Therefore, a higher-order adjustment model was constructed, and length of service was used as a higher-order adjustment variable to explore the ultimate effect on overqualification and innovative behavior, which enriched the literature on perceived overqualification and length of service, where the length of service no longer appeared as only a statistical variable.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Perceived Overqualification and Innovative Behavior

Perceived overqualifications refer to the level of knowledge, skills, experience, and ability that an individual possesses that exceeds the requirements of the current job, which is a situation of underemployment [2]. Perceived overqualifications can be divided into two types: subjective perception and objective perception. Among them, subjective perceived overqualification is an individual's self-perceived belief that the level of knowledge and ability they possess is higher than that required for the job [1,20]. In the existing organizational behavior research, subjective perceived overqualification is more often studied. Because this study mainly investigated the influence of excess qualification on employees' innovative behavior, the concept of perceived overqualification was chosen. Employee innovative behavior refers to the new ideas, new products, new services, or new methods that employees generate in their work that are meaningful to the enterprise [21], and it is also a key topic of current organizational management research. In the face of the complex and changeable external business environment, the continuous emergence of employees' innovative behavior is an important guarantee for the company to maintain its competitive advantage and obtain sustainable development [9].

Many articles on perceived overqualification show that the sense of perceived overqualification is a negative feeling, but it also indicates that employees have knowledge and abilities above the job requirements [22,23]. The high work ability of employees can stimulate some positive behaviors, such as improving innovation ability and improving task performance [24,25]. First, perceived overqualified employees are capable of divergent thinking, drilling, and reflection, thus promoting the innovation process [26]; second, perceived overqualified employees can complete the tasks assigned by the organization in a shorter time, and thus have free time to think and explore, discover existing deficiencies,

generate new ideas, and then enhance innovative behavior. Third, perceived overqualified employees are easily dissatisfied with their existing jobs, which sometimes motivates them to engage in more interesting and challenging jobs, such as innovative behaviors, to enhance their sense of accomplishment [27]. Thus, we hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Perceived overqualification has a positive impact on employees' innovative behavior.*

2.2. Mediating Effect on Perceived Overqualification and Innovative Behavior

Felt Trust

Felt trust refers to the perception of one party's willingness to take risks for the actions of another party [28]. When employees perceive that their superiors have assigned them an important task that is directly related to the development of the enterprise, they will feel trusted by their superiors. Since only the superiors know whether they truly trust the subordinates or not, any information regarding being trusted by the superiors from the perspective of the subordinates is regarded as "felt trust" [13].

Compared with employees with perceived underqualification, employees with perceived overqualification are more likely to be valued by their superiors because of their higher level of ability and knowledge and are more likely to be entrusted with important responsibilities by their superiors, thus increasing the level of felt trust. On the other hand, employees with perceived overqualification can complete the tasks assigned by the organization in a short time, thus having some leisure time, further promoting the entrustment of heavy responsibilities by the superiors, and improving the felt trust level of employees.

On the other hand, self-evaluation theory points out that the formation of an individual's self-evaluation will be affected by the social environment and social information in which they live [14]. When social information is positive and originates from important members of the organization (such as superior leaders), the influence of individuals will be further increased [15]. According to trust-related research, leaders are an important source of social information for employees at work, and trust itself is a positive message. Therefore, when employees feel that they are trusted by their superiors, they are more likely to use this information for self-evaluation, which further affects their attitudes and behaviors [14]. Most studies showed that felt trust can significantly stimulate employees' organizational citizenship behavior, innovative behavior, and individual performance [13,28,29]. Due to positive feedback information, employees will show more behaviors expected by their superiors, such as innovative behavior [21,27].

In summary, employees with a sense of perceived overqualification have a relatively high level of knowledge and ability to complete their work and they are able to complete the tasks assigned by the organization more quickly, have spare time to do other tasks, increase the possibility of their superiors assigning important tasks, and promote the perception of being trusted. On the other hand, employees who feel the trust of their superiors as positive feedback will stimulate more innovative behavior. Thus, we hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 2a (H2a). *Felt trust has a positive impact on innovative behavior.*

Hypothesis 2b (H2b). *Perceived overqualification has a positive impact on felt trust.*

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Felt trust plays a mediating role in the effect of perceived overqualification on innovative behavior.*

2.3. The Moderating Effect of Ability Face Pressure

Ability Face Pressure

"Face" is a social psychological construct rooted in a culture that is the internal self-esteem and self-image of the individual, as well as social respect and identity that the

individual constantly seeks [18]. In a social culture that values face, individuals will attach great importance to their social status in the interpersonal network; therefore, they are very sensitive to the recognition and evaluation from others [30], and thus, face pressure is generated. Zhu believed that face pressure refers to the psychological process of negative self-perceptions perceived by individuals after receiving certain social feedback [31]. Therefore, this study explored the moderating influence of face pressure and regards face pressure as a continuous psychological process. Face pressure is divided into three types: ability face pressure, autonomous face pressure, and communicative face pressure. Among them, ability face pressure is feedback on personal ability [18]. Ability face pressure, also known as “perceived face threat based on ability,” is a result of the perceived possibility and potential risk of losing face due to the individual’s desire for others to recognize their own abilities, achievements, and status [31].

Ability face pressure itself, as a pressure source, is the negative self-competence awareness of employees based on the social feedback they perceive in the organization [32], which has an obvious impact on work. According to face theory, individuals are threatened with “losing face” at work. When employees face social evaluations, such as their overqualifications and felt organizational trust, their final behavior must be affected by the ability face pressure [33].

For employees with high ability face pressure, they will pay special attention to social respect and recognition, and generate negative self-ability awareness through self-perception [32]. When employees are trusted by their superiors to a greater extent, they are more inclined to take care of themselves not to “lose face,” while innovative behavior itself is risky and the generation of new ideas may not necessarily be valued and recognized by the company [34,35], thus reducing the generation of innovative behaviors. Similarly, when employees have the perception of overqualifications, they tend to “not lose face,” which reduces risk-taking behavior and reduces innovation.

In contrast, when employees’ ability face pressure is low, they pay less attention to the “face” of their abilities. When they perceive positive external support, such as trust from superiors, they will make better use of their own resources to exert their value, and then stimulate innovative behaviors [13,36,37]; when employees perceive they are overqualified, they will use resources and their talents to explore and discover at work to bring out their greater value and promote innovative behaviors [27]. Thus, we hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 3a (H3a). *Ability face pressure plays a negative moderating role in the effect of felt trust on innovative behavior.*

Hypothesis 3b (H3b). *Ability face pressure plays a negative moderating role in the effect of perceived overqualification on innovative behavior.*

2.4. Synergistic Moderating Effect of Length of Service on Ability Face Pressure

Length of Service

Length of service is the length of time an employee has worked since entering an organization, where the length of service can have an important impact on employees’ perceptions, self-evaluations, attitudes, and even behaviors [38]. In most previous studies, length of service existed only as a control variable, but some scholars showed that the length of service is not only an important control variable but may also play an important role in the causal influence relationship between empirical studies [39]. Ability face pressure weakens the positive effect of felt trust, perceived overqualifications, and employees’ innovative behavior; however, this effect also depends on the length of time the employee has been with the organization [40]. Because new employees who have been working for a shorter time are less familiar with the work environment and less experienced in their work, they may not be able to achieve immediate innovative behavior [41].

Older employees who have been in the organization for a longer time tend to have a higher level of work experience, as well as better interpersonal relationships, a higher

level of organizational belonging, and organizational commitment [42]. Combined with the analysis of face theory, with the increase in the length of service, the interpersonal relationship of employees in the organization is strengthened, the proficiency and experience of the work are improved, and the negative feedback received is reduced. This also inadvertently slows down the perception of employee ability face pressure, which naturally weakens the moderating effect of ability face pressure. In addition, this study argued that as employees work for longer and longer, employees with a sense of overqualification do not treat their work negatively and reduce their work commitment and innovation. In contrast, due to the longer length of service, they become more familiar with their work, they receive more resources and support, they can finish their work and still have spare time for exploration and discovery, and their commitment to innovation will be higher, which, in turn, stimulates innovative behavior [43].

For employees who work for a shorter time, interpersonal relationships are weaker because they are not familiar enough with the work environment and their work, and their surrounding colleagues are also more unfamiliar. In this uncertain environment, employees may have a lower degree of job completion and pay special attention to the evaluation and feedback of those around them. According to face theory, employees will attach great importance to their social status in the interpersonal network and are sensitive to the recognition and evaluation of others, especially in an uncertain environment, which undoubtedly affects the ability face pressure, thus ultimately reducing the occurrence of innovative behavior. Thus, we hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 4a (H4a). *The negative moderating effect of ability face pressure on the relationship between felt trust and innovative behavior diminishes with increased length of service.*

Hypothesis 4b (H4b). *The negative moderating effect of ability face pressure on the relationship between perceived overqualification and innovative behavior diminishes with increased length of service.*

The theoretical model of this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

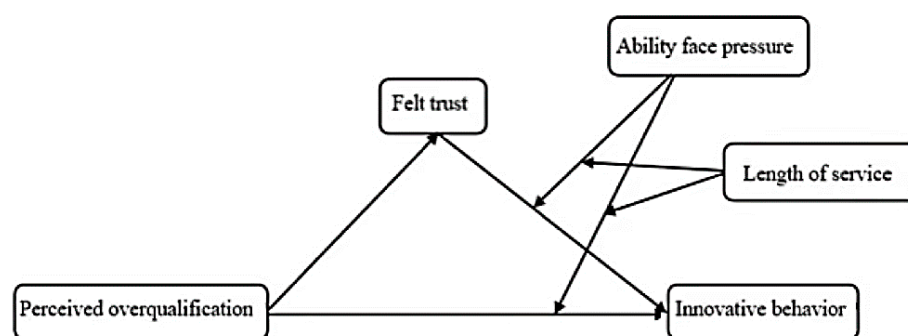


Figure 1. The theoretical model.

Note: Under the background of open innovation, the demand for innovative behaviors increases, and improving innovative behaviors is also the result of the continuous pursuit of enterprises. Therefore, this study investigated how to promote the generation of employees' innovative behavior, and pays more attention to the outcome variable. Therefore, the moderator variable of ability face pressure was placed in the second half of the model to study the ultimate impact on innovative behavior.

3. Research Methods and Materials

3.1. Research Subjects and Data Collection

In order to test the hypothesis proposed in this study, the questionnaire survey method was used to collect data from the general employees in enterprises, where general em-

employees are employees who hold ordinary positions in each functional department of the enterprise, except for managers. Because the general employees are the basic productivity of the enterprise, they are the fundamental way to identify the problems of the enterprise and are the important force of the enterprise innovation. The research on general employees is helpful for enterprises to understand the inner working mechanism of employees' psychological behavior and help to realize the sustainable development of human resources. The surveyed enterprises used the random assignment method to distribute questionnaires to general employees, and 250 questionnaires were finally collected. After screening, testing, and eliminating outliers and invalid values, 220 valid questionnaire data were finally obtained and used for hypothesis testing.

3.2. Measurement Scales

The variable scales involved in the current study are well established and have been generally validated, both nationally and internationally. The survey items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 point ("completely disagree") to 7 points ("completely agree"). The reliability and validity of the 7-point scale were good.

In addition, the age and education level of employees may affect employees' ability face pressure and innovative behavior; at the same time, the scale and nature of the company where employees work may also affect employees' ability face pressure, innovation enthusiasm, felt trust degree, etc. To ensure that quality research was produced, the variables listed above were set as control variables in this study.

The measurement of the perceived overqualification in this study was based on the scale developed by Johnson and Johnson on perceived overqualification [44], with reference to the four-item scale developed by Sim et al. to measure employees' perceived overqualification [45]. The specific items are "My education level exceeds my current level of work," "My talents are not fully utilized at work," "My work experience exceeds the needs of my current job," and "I am far better at my current job based on my abilities."

The measurement of employee innovation behavior was derived from the items of Scott, Bruce, and other foreign scales [46], and the scale in the article of Yun et al. was adapted [47]. Some of the items are "In my work, I often have some creative ideas" and "I will discuss my new ideas with leaders or colleagues to gain support and approval."

The measurement of felt trust referred to the scale of felt trust developed by Gillespie [48]. There are three items in total, one of which is "what the leader thinks is important will try to make me participate and have influence."

The measurement of ability face pressure referred to the scales developed by Hodgins et al., Liebeskind et al., and Wang et al. to measure ability face pressure, with a total of four items [49–51].

Length of service is mostly presented as a control variable in many articles, with the measurement question "How long have you been working." The measurement of years of experience is divided into four levels: less than 1 year = 1, 1–5 years = 2, 6–10 years = 3, and more than 10 years = 4.

3.3. Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's α coefficient can test whether there is internal consistency between the variables in the scale. The reliability of the variable scales was tested by conducting validating factor analysis. The Cronbach's α coefficients of all variables in this study were greater than 0.70, which showed that the reliability of the scale was good. With the help of AMOS 24.0, validation factor analysis was conducted on the variables, which showed that the standardized regression weights of each factor were greater than 0.50 and the composite reliability CR was higher than 0.7. The specific data are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of confirmatory factor analysis of variables.

Constructs	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's α	CR
Perceived overqualification	PO1	0.667	0.706	0.7134
	PO2	0.551		
	PO3	0.675		
	PO4	0.581		
Felt trust	FT1	0.618	0.724	0.7308
	FT2	0.730		
	FT3	0.717		
Innovative behavior	IB1	0.641	0.760	0.771
	IB2	0.645		
	IB3	0.691		
	IB4	0.661		
	IB5	0.529		
Ability face pressure	AFP1	0.741	0.784	0.7924
	AFP2	0.688		
	AFP3	0.748		
	AFP4	0.614		

To further test the model discriminant validity, a validation factor analysis of the model factors was conducted using AMOS 24.0. Five variables were involved in this study: perceived overqualifications, innovative behavior, felt trust, ability face pressure, and length of service. Among them, length of service is a demographic variable and is not included in testing the discriminant validity. Therefore, the discriminant validity among only the other four variables needed to be tested. As shown in Table 2, only the fit index of the four-factor model met the standards generally recognized by the academic community. Among them, $\chi^2 = 155.868$, $df = 95$, $\chi^2/df = 1.641$, CFI = 0.935, TLI = 0.918, IFI = 0.937, and RMSEA = 0.054. The four-factor model fit the data significantly better than the other factor models. This indicated that the discriminant validity among these four variables was good.

Table 2. Confirmatory analysis results.

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	IFI	RMSEA
Single factor	521.900	101	5.167	0.549	0.464	0.558	0.138
Two factor a	483.698	100	4.837	0.589	0.507	0.598	0.132
Two factor b	306.464	100	3.065	0.779	0.735	0.783	0.097
Three factor	305.970	98	3.122	0.777	0.727	0.782	0.098
Four factor	155.868	95	1.641	0.935	0.918	0.937	0.054

Note: single factor—PO + FT + IB + AFP; two factor a—PO + FT + AFP, IB; two factor b—PO + FT + IB, AFP; three factor—PO + AFP, FT, IB; four factor—PO, FT, AFP, IB.

The discriminant validity reflects the low correlation between measurement items of different constructs. In this study, the discriminant validity of the scale was tested using a comparison between the arithmetic square root of AVE and the correlation coefficient between the variables. Specifically, if the arithmetic square root of AVE is greater than the correlation coefficient between the variables, it indicates that the discriminant validity of the scale is better. As shown in Table 3, the data in parentheses are the arithmetic square root of AVE, which are larger than the correlation coefficient between variables, thus indicating good discriminant validity of the scale. In summary, the reliability and validity of the measurement scales were good.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender	1									
2. Age	−0.135 *	1								
3. Education level	−0.004	−0.185 **	1							
4. Type of enterprise	−0.032	−0.243 **	0.001	1						
5. Enterprise scale	−0.115	0.079	0.165 *	−0.081	1					
6. Perceived overqualification	−0.032	0.182 **	−0.045	−0.091	0.091	(0.621)				
7. Innovative behavior	0.157 *	0.068	0.101	−0.129	0.122	0.351 **	(0.636)			
8. Ability face pressure	−0.001	0.144 *	−0.066	−0.132	0.036	0.237 **	0.204 **	(0.700)		
9. Felt trust	0.047	−0.024	0.090	−0.006	0.054	0.212 **	0.443 **	0.117	(0.690)	
10. Length of service	−0.048	0.644 **	−0.135 *	−0.143 *	0.049	0.172 *	0.064	0.094	0.013	1
Mean	1.56	2.05	2.95	2.18	2.42	5.125	5.472	4.596	4.896	2.74
Standard Deviation	0.497	0.594	0.555	1.017	1.154	0.866	0.823	0.982	1.105	0.741

Note: $n = 220$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$. Each number in parentheses is an arithmetic square root of AVE.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

The means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients of the variables in this study can be seen in Table 3. It was found that perceived overqualification was positively related to employees' innovative behavior ($r = 0.351$, $p < 0.01$), positively related to felt trust ($r = 0.443$, $p < 0.01$), positively related to ability face pressure ($r = 0.204$, $p < 0.01$), and negatively related to length of service ($r = -0.178$, $p < 0.01$); felt trust was positively related to employees' innovative behavior ($r = 0.547$, $p < 0.01$). The research hypotheses were initially confirmed, but further analysis was still needed.

4.2. Hypotheses Testing

In this study, we used structural equation modeling to verify the mediating effects. The optimal model was found by comparing a theoretical model, a nested model, and an alternative model. Perceived overqualification had a direct effect on employee innovative behavior in the theoretical model, while the difference between the nested model and the theoretical model was that the direct effect did not exist in the nested model. The difference between the alternative model and the theoretical model was that there was no mediating effect in the alternative model, that is, perceived overqualification and felt trust both affected employee innovative behavior directly. First, by comparing the model indexes of the theoretical model and nested model, we found that the fit indexes of the theoretical model, the nested model, and the alternative model met the requirements, but the degree of fit of the theoretical model was relatively good. By comparing the chi-square changes of the theoretical model and the nested model, we found that the chi-squared value had changed significantly ($\Delta\chi^2 = 6.448$, $\Delta df = 1$), and comparing the chi-square changes of the theoretical model and the alternative model, we found that the chi-squared value had changed significantly ($\Delta\chi^2 = 19.460$, $\Delta df = 1$). Following the above analysis, we concluded that the theoretical model was the optimal model for this study; specific data are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Fit indexes of the theoretical model, nested model, and alternative model.

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	IFI	RMSEA
Theoretical model	63.307	48	1.319	0.976	0.968	0.977	0.038
Nested model	69.755	49	1.424	0.968	0.957	0.969	0.044
Alternative model	82.767	49	1.689	0.948	0.930	0.949	0.056

To test the hypotheses proposed in this study, the variables were first centralized; then, interaction terms were constructed: (1) perceived overqualification $\times$ felt trust, (2) ability face pressure $\times$ felt trust, (3) ability face pressure $\times$ felt trust $\times$ length of service, and (4) perceived overqualification $\times$ felt trust $\times$ length of service. The specific interaction results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Test of the interaction effects.

Variables		Innovative Behavior					
		M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
Constant		4.335 **	1.779 **	−0.117	−0.545	0.418	0.57
Control variables	Gender	0.295	0.264 **	0.247	0.259 **	0.263 **	0.261 **
	Age	0.109	0.057	0.08	0.055	0.039	0.065
	Education level	0.145	0.118	0.13	0.133	0.132	0.12
	Type of enterprise	−0.077	−0.060	−0.036	−0.031	−0.047	−0.050
	Enterprise scale	0.08	0.052	0.052	0.043	0.053	0.06
Main effect	Perceived overqualification		0.231 **	0.612 **	0.189 **	0.205 **	0.353 **
	Felt trust		0.270 **	0.253 **	0.778 **	0.421 **	0.253 **
	Ability face pressure		0.078	0.534 **	0.633 **	0.236 *	0.219 *
	Length of service		−0.015	−0.032	−0.035	0.257	0.223
Double interaction	Perceived overqualification $\times$ ability face pressure			−0.090 *			
	Felt trust $\times$ ability face pressure				−0.111 **		
Triple interaction	Perceived overqualification $\times$ ability face pressure $\times$ length of service					−0.012 *	
	Felt trust $\times$ ability face pressure $\times$ length of service						−0.011
	F	3.178 **	10.873 **	10.522 **	11.190 **	10.278 **	10.170 **
	R ²	0.047	0.289	0.303	0.318	0.298	0.295
	ΔR^2		0.249 **	0.017 *	0.031 **	0.012 *	0.009
Variables		Felt Trust					
		M7	M8				
Constant		4.157 **	2.455 **				
Control variables	Gender	0.115	0.111				
	Age	−0.011	−0.122				
	Education level	0.162	0.183				
	Type of enterprise	−0.002	0.016				
	Enterprise scale	0.045	0.027				
Main effect	Perceived overqualification		0.261 **				
	Felt trust						
	Ability face pressure		0.093				
	Length of service		0.042				
Double interaction	Perceived overqualification $\times$ ability face pressure						
	Felt trust $\times$ ability face pressure						
Triple interaction	Perceived overqualification $\times$ ability face pressure $\times$ length of service						
	Felt trust $\times$ ability face pressure $\times$ length of service						
	F	0.538	1.894				
	R ²	0.012	0.032				
	ΔR^2		0.055				

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Model M1 tested the effects of five control variables: gender, age, education, firm type, and firm size on employees' innovation behavior. Model M2 tested the effects of perceived overqualification and felt trust on employees' innovation behavior. In the study of perceived overqualification on employee innovation behavior, the results showed that this effect was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.231$, $p < 0.01$), and hypothesis H1 was supported.

In the study of the effect of felt trust on employees' innovative behavior, the results showed that this effect was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.270, p < 0.01$), and hypothesis H2a was supported.

Model M3 tested the relationship between the ability face pressure in the perceived overqualification and the innovative behavior of employees, and the results showed that the interaction item "perceived overqualification $\times$ ability face pressure" was significant ($\beta = -0.090, p < 0.05$), which indicated that there was a negative moderating effect of ability face pressure on the relationship between perceived overqualification and employees' innovative behavior, and hypothesis H3a was supported.

Model M4 tested the moderating effect between felt trust and employees' innovative behavior. The interaction term "felt trust $\times$ ability face pressure" was significant ($\beta = -0.111, p < 0.01$), which indicated that ability face pressure had a negative moderating effect on the relationship between felt trust and employees' innovative behavior, and hypothesis H3b was supported.

Model M5 tested whether the three-dimensional interaction effect composed of perceived overqualifications, ability face pressure, and length of service was obvious. The results showed that the interaction term was significant ($\beta = -0.012, p < 0.05$), and the coefficient of the two-dimensional interaction term (perceived overqualification $\times$ ability face pressure) had the same negative sign, indicating that the higher-order moderating effect of length of service was positive, and hypothesis H4b was supported.

Model M6 tested whether the three-dimensional interaction effect of felt trust, ability face pressure, and length of service was significant. The results showed that the interaction term of this interaction was not significant ($\beta = -0.011, p > 0.05$). Hypothesis H4a was not supported.

Model M7 tested the influence of five control variables of "gender, age, education level, firm type, and firm size" on felt trust. Model M8 tested the effect of perceived overqualifications on felt trust. The results showed that this effect was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.261, p < 0.01$), and hypothesis H2b was supported. Since both H2a and H2b were supported, H2 was supported.

In order to show the moderating effect more intuitively and accurately, the simple slope method was further used in this study to conduct the test (that is, the mean $\pm$ standard deviation was used as the high and low contrast groups, respectively, and the regression analysis is performed), and the results are shown in Figures 2–4. The moderating effect of the test ability face pressure is shown in Figures 2 and 3. The higher-order moderating effect of the test length of service is shown in Figure 4.

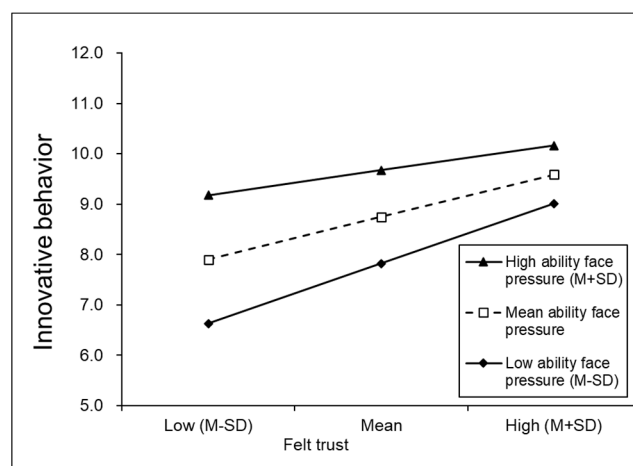


Figure 2. Diagram of the moderating effect of ability face pressure on felt trust and innovative behavior.

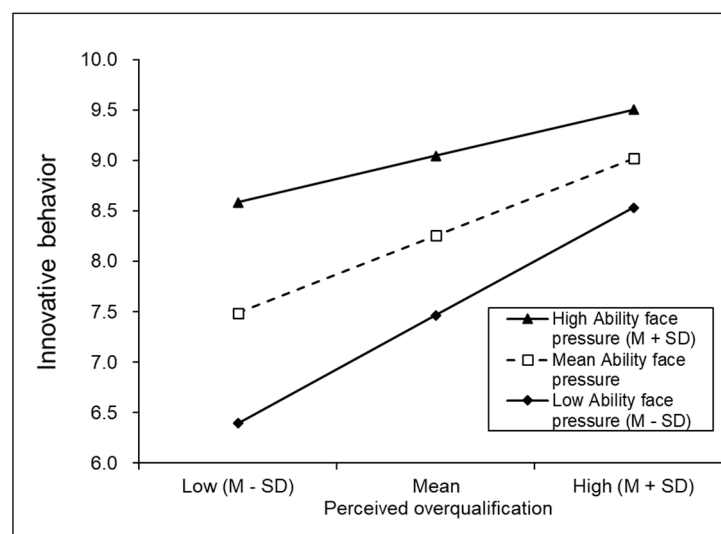


Figure 3. Diagram of the moderating effect of ability face pressure on perceived overqualification and innovative behavior.

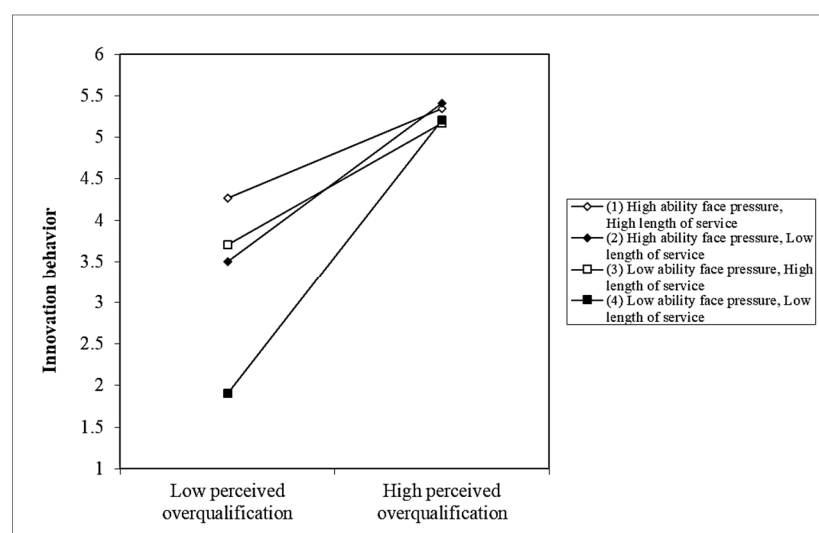


Figure 4. Secondary adjustment chart of length of service.

According to Figure 2, when the ability face pressure was high, the positive effect of the level of felt trust on employee innovation behavior was weakened ($\beta = 0.560, p < 0.01$); when the ability face pressure was low, the positive effect of felt trust on employees' innovative behavior was enhanced ($\beta = 1.299, p < 0.01$). This suggested that hypothesis H3a was further validated. According to Figure 3, when the ability face pressure was high, the positive effect of perceived overqualification on employees' innovative behavior was weakened ($\beta = 0.715, p < 0.01$); when the ability face pressure was low, the positive effect of perceived overqualification on employees' innovative behavior was enhanced ($\beta = 1.333, p < 0.01$). This suggested that hypothesis H3b was further validated. According to Figure 4, when the length of service was low, the ability face pressure had a stronger positive moderating effect between the perceived overqualifications and employees' innovative behavior; when the length of service was high, the positive moderating effect of ability face pressure between the perceived overqualification and employees' innovative behavior was weakened, which indicated that hypothesis H4b was further verified.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

5.1. Discussion

From the above quantitative analysis, we concluded the following: first, the perceived overqualification had a significant positive effect on employees' innovative behavior, while felt trust played a partial mediating role between the perceived overqualification and employees' innovative behavior. The verification of the mediating role of felt trust extended the research on the mediating mechanism in the influence of perceived overqualification and innovative behavior [1]. In the long run, the perceived overqualification of employees promotes leaders to entrust employees with important responsibilities, deepens employees' perception of trust, and further stimulates employees' innovative behavior. This is a positive virtuous circle. The higher the ability and knowledge of employees, the easier it is to make leaders feel at ease to hand over some important tasks, promote employees' perception of trust, and positively stimulate innovative behaviors. Of course, there are many ways to improve employees' felt trust, such as leaders communicating more with employees.

Second, we verified the boundary effect of ability face pressure. Ability face pressure negatively regulated the relationship between perceived overqualification and employees' innovative behavior, that is, when the pressure of ability face was greater, the positive relationship between the sense of excess qualification and employees' innovative behavior was weakened. Regarding the relationship between felt trust and employees' innovative behavior, when the ability face pressure was greater, the positive relationship between felt trust and employees' innovative behavior was weakened. Affected by the face culture, the pressure on employees' ability and face was real. What enterprises can do is to minimize the perception of employees' ability face pressure. For example, they can improve their proficiency and flexibility by training employees and use a "mentor-apprentice" system that allows new employees to understand the job and get familiar with the work environment as soon as possible to reduce the perception of ability face pressure.

Third, this study established a higher-order adjustment model and added length of service to the study. With the increase in length of service, the negative relationship between ability face pressure on the perceived overqualification and employees' innovative behavior weakened. The moderating effect of length of service on the negative correlation between felt trust and employees' innovative behavior was not significant. This showed that with the increase in length of service of employees, the work experience and familiarity of the employees were improved; when the employees of perceived overqualifications who had worked for a long time, they were less affected by the negative boundary effect of ability face pressure than those who had worked for a short time, and the degree of innovation was elevated. In this regard, enterprises should pay more attention to talent in the recruitment of new employees at the same time, but also pay more attention to the presence of older employees, know how to "treasure talent," improve the sense of belonging and cohesion of employees, and thus extend the service time of employees. The moderating effect of length of service on the negative correlation between felt trust and employee innovative behavior under the ability face pressure was not significant. It may be that under the high ability face pressure, with felt trust as a kind of positive organizational support, both old employees with long working time and new employees with short working time may have the idea of "not losing face" and seeking progress in a stable manner may weaken the generation of new risk-taking behaviors and reducing innovative behaviors.

5.2. Theoretical Contributions

This study empirically confirmed the possible positive relationship between the perceived overqualification on employees' innovative behavior, which is an enrichment of the positive research on perceived overqualification and echoes the research of Adams and other scholars [24–26]. Based on social exchange theory, most previous scholars have argued that the perceived overqualification requires firms to provide resources and support to employees and that employees who make an exchange after receiving support and

resources will actively engage in innovative behavior. Other research is based on the perception of fairness perspective [52], the human–job matching theory perspective [53], the relative exploitation perspective [54] when studying the mechanism of perceived overqualification, and the research even involved cross-level research according to the structure of the enterprise itself. More negative effects of perceived overqualification have been explored, while less attention has been paid to positive effects [55]. This study explored the possible positive effects of perceived overqualification, taking into account the characteristics of the ordinary employee within the firm and their motivation for achievement, and found that perceived overqualification could motivate innovative behavior through the level of felt trust that employees perceive in their superiors.

This study used a new theory, namely, self-evaluation theory, to develop the analysis from the employees' perspective, and studied felt trust to provide a deeper understanding of the interpersonal trust mechanism [13]. This study proposed and examined the mediating mechanism between the perceived overqualification and innovative behavior, which helps leaders to understand the factors that influence the innovative behavior of perceived overqualified employees and how to stimulate it more. In addition, this study proposed a mechanism for the influence of perceived overqualification on innovation behavior under "face consciousness," which demonstrated that employees were influenced by the ability face pressure at work and negatively moderated the influence of felt trust on employees' innovation behavior, as well as negatively moderated the influence of perceived overqualification on employees' innovation behavior, enriching the evidence of existing research on face [33,56], which expands the "face" problem of employees in companies, and helps companies to realize the role of ability face pressure.

This study constructed a three-dimensional interaction model, including length of service, and verified that ability face pressure and length of service had an interactive moderating effect on the perceived overqualifications and employees' innovative behavior. The study found that with the increased length of service, the moderating effect of ability face pressure on the relationship between perceived overqualifications and employees' innovative behavior weakened. In the field of organizational behavior research, length of service is generally used as a control variable and is rarely used as a model variable for further research. This study found that different lengths of service had different requirements for employees' work ability, and with the increase in length of service, employees had different interpersonal relationships and received different social feedback, which, in turn, affected the ability face pressure and perceived overqualifications, which affected employees' innovative behavior. Therefore, this study changed the normal state, included length of service into the research, established a three-dimensional interactive model, and examined the high-order moderating effect of length of service. It revealed the influence of perceived overqualifications on employees' innovative behavior and felt trust on employees' innovative behavior. Compared with new employees, old employees have better job proficiency and better interpersonal relationships because they have stayed in the company for a long time. These may reduce the ability face pressure of employees, reduce the awareness of avoiding "losing face," and promote innovation [43].

5.3. Managerial Implications

First, managers should maintain some encouragement and trust for employees with perceived overqualifications and provide them with full trust and necessary support. Managers understand the perceived overqualifications of employees, which is a subjective perception of employees. Further, it is not necessarily a bad thing for employees to have a sense of overqualification since it may also promote them to engage in innovative behavior. Therefore, on the one hand, managers should implement an incentive system for employees to give them opportunities and space to show their talents so that they can experience felt trust from the organization and stimulate innovative behaviors. At the same time, managers should pay attention to the contributions made by employees and pay attention to rewarding the innovative behaviors of overqualified employees. Furthermore, in addition

to a financial guarantee, in the current era of open innovation, managers can provide employees with opportunities to learn and improve at work, which, on the one hand, can ensure the iterative nature of employees' knowledge and give them the opportunity to improve themselves, while on the other hand, employees who have learned and received new knowledge will also work on their own to significantly improve innovative behavior. As a result, it can also improve the innovation performance of the company and obtain a sustainable competitive advantage.

Second, we should pay attention to the influence of "ability face pressure." The impact of the ability face pressure of employees related to their work should not be underestimated. This study demonstrated that the higher the level of ability face pressure, the weaker the positive effect of perceived overqualification on innovative behavior and the weaker the positive effect of felt trust on innovative behavior. This suggests that managers should pay attention to the influence of "ability face pressure," improve the proficiency and experience level of employees, and create a good organizational atmosphere and organizational cohesion. When assigning tasks, managers should consider the influence of employees' "face" awareness; give employees help and support at work; help employees adapt to work; improve work proficiency, fair treatment, and resource support; and minimize the negative impact of ability face pressure and enhance its innovativeness. In addition, organizing regular training for employees to improve their work ability is also a way to help employees reduce the ability face pressure caused by worrying about doing a bad job.

Finally, managers should retain as much talent as possible. Length of service can reduce the negative moderating effect of ability face pressure on perceived overqualification and innovative behavior. This enlightens managers to retain talent in the organization as much as possible. The longer employees work in the organization, the more familiar they are with the corporate environment, the more experienced they are in what they do, the less ability face pressure they will have, the more comfortable they will be with their work, and the more time they will have to think about innovation, and therefore, improve innovative behavior. Therefore, organizations should do a better job of retaining talent. For example, they should understand the needs of employees; meet the basic salary based on the ability of employees; provide employees with a better platform to help employees to achieve the value of self-fulfillment; and develop a sense of collective honor, respect for employees, and recognition of employees to improve the sense of belonging.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

In this study, the measurement of the perceived overqualification was rated subjectively by employees, but it does not mean that employees' abilities and experience are beyond the job requirements and may be susceptible to common methodological biases. In fact, even though employees were more educated than the job required when they were on the job, they may not be able to apply what they have learned in a timely manner due to lack of work experience and may not be able to perform their jobs well in the short term. Studies showed that perceived overqualification is positively related to the level of the narcissism of employees. Due to personal factors, the perceived overqualification may be exaggerated, resulting in a research bias. In the future, an objective study of overqualification can be conducted to examine its impact on employees' innovative behavior. In this study, when the questionnaire was distributed, it was distributed to employees, and all variables were measured in the same period. There were certain limitations in the verification of the causal and moderating relationship of each variable. In the future, the form of experimental method can be considered for measurement.

This study explored the mediating effect of felt trust, the moderating effect of ability face pressure, and the higher-order moderating effect of length of service. However, employees' innovative behavior may also be related to leadership style; organizational strategic goals; and employees' traits, self-efficacy, and sense of job belonging. Future perspectives could be used to explore the mediating mechanisms and boundary conditions of perceived overqualification on employees' innovative behavior. Incorporating the length

of service into the research model also showed that the promotion of employees' innovative behavior was also related to the length of service. With the increase in employees' length of service in the organization and the people's awareness of "face," the quality of employees' interpersonal relationships in the organization may also affect employees' ability face pressure. In the future, employees' interpersonal relationships can be incorporated into the triple interaction model for further research.

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