ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.02 (2025)

"TOO QUALIFIED TO ADAPT? A STUDY OF HOW PERCEIVED CONTROL AND DEMAND-ABILITY FIT INFLUENCE ADAPTIVE PERFORMANCE"

Basit Aziz
Phd Scholar, Department of Management Sciences COMSATS University Islamabad, Lahore Campus
Email: basit396@yahoo.com
Muhammad Ibrahim Abdullah
Associate Professor, Department of Management Sciences COMSATS University Islamabad, Lahore Campus
Email: Miabdullah@cuilahore.edu.pk

Abstract
The public sector in Pakistan has several challenges. Principal problems are resource limitations, inadequate understanding of underlying causes, staff support, and integration. Addressing perceived overqualification requires considerable skill and innovative thinking, especially for its key outcome - employee adaptive performance. This study examines the public development sector and seeks to establish the relationship between perceived overqualification, perceived control, and demand-ability fit. Furthermore, it assesses their roles and the overall influence on employee adaptive performance. This corresponds with the tenets of Conservation of Resources Theory, and the research seeks to clarify how Perceived Overqualification affects employee Adaptive Performance outcomes. The study used a custom-designed questionnaire to gather data from a purposive sample of public sector employees in Pakistan. Following data collection, we used the questionnaire and process macro in SPSS for further analysis. The findings of the research demonstrate that perceived overqualification substantially influences adaptive performance. Public sector firms in Pakistan and authorities must critically evaluate inadequacies and enact enhancements.
Keywords: *Perceived Overqualification (POQ), Perceived Control (PC), Cynicism, Demand-Ability Fit (DAF), Conservation of Resource (COR) Theory, Adaptive Performance (AP)*

1. Introduction:

Individual adaptive performance, defined as the extent to which individuals manage, react to, and/or facilitate changes impacting their roles (Bonini et al., 2024), is seen as an important work habit for both people and businesses to deal with and adapt to changes at work (Parka & Park, 2021; Bajaba et al., 2021). Researchers are increasingly focused on identifying methods to promote adaptive performance in people (Jundt & Shoss, 2023; Rowe et al., 2024). Baard et al. (2014) say that the mainstream meta-competency approach stresses how important knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) are for helping people adjust to new situations (Roling et al., 2024; Bajaba et al., 2021). According to this meta-competency view, workers who know more than what is required for their jobs are better able to handle changes because they have the ability to learn new tasks, technology, and processes (Chen et al., 2021; Yasar & Alakuş, 2024). From the perspective of meta-competency, employing individuals who are overqualified for a position—those with talents above the requirements—can enhance organizational adaptability, since these personnel possess sufficient, and often superior, capabilities to adjust to changes.

According to Li et al., (2022), individuals may possess confidence in their ability to do a job but lack a compelling motivation to undertake it. The relationship between overqualification and adaptive performance has yet to be examined, and it remains uncertain if overqualified employees will contribute positively via adaptive behavior. This study examines the correlation between overqualification and adaptive performance within organizations to

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CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
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Vol.03 No.02 (2025)

address this knowledge gap. Nonetheless, it is uncertain if overqualified persons would exhibit more adaptability. From a control perspective (Zhou et al., 2023), we posit that overqualified workers will also be capable of adjustment due to their heightened self-regulation. Perceived control is an individual's conviction on their capacity to affect or govern events, outcomes, or their own behaviors in a certain context. Sabino et al., (2022) provides a current and often used definition, characterizing perceived control as the conviction that an individual has the ability, resources, or opportunity to achieve desired outcomes or avert unwanted ones via their own actions. Researchers have shown that individuals who see themselves as overqualified often get superior professional performance. Perceived overqualification (POQ) amplifies workers' perceived control, their impression of possessing the resources and power to impact results. In public-sector personnel, POQ was favorably associated with perceived control, which subsequently enhanced adaptive performance (Roy & Ortiz, 2023). Perceived control completely moderated this association, indicating that when overqualified workers experience empowerment, they use their excess talents towards proactive, collaborative conduct (Thompson & Kyle, 2021). Consequently, instead of exacerbating irritation, overqualification may enhance adaptive workplace behaviors if workers see enough autonomy and the ability to use their skills.

In Pakistan's public sector institutions, such as development agencies (CDA, LDA, KDA), several employees possess qualifications above the requirements of their positions (Khan et al., 2023). Organizational psychologists and management scholars have focused on the phenomenon known as Perceived Overqualification (POQ) due to its impact on adaptive performance, defined as an employee's capacity to adjust to change, acquire new skills, and manage uncertainty (Mushtaq et al., 2024). Perceived control significantly influences employee performance adoption. Workers are considered overqualified when their education, experience, or talents exceed the requirements of their positions (Abdallah et al., 2024). In Pakistan's public sector, overqualification is prevalent due to the limited availability of employment opportunities in the private sector. This indicates that highly educated individuals choose positions that exceed their degree of proficiency (Khan et al., 2024). In dynamic bureaucratic organizations influenced by political shifts, budgetary reductions, and evolving developmental goals, adaptive performance is a crucial behavioral outcome. Song et al., (2023) assert that adaptable performance encompasses the capacity to manage crises, devise inventive solutions to problems, acquire new skills, and demonstrate the ability to acclimate to new individuals. In the stringent and bureaucratic realm of development authority, overqualified professionals may experience stagnation in their positions. Nonetheless, several individuals continue to exhibit adaptive performance, especially when their personal and contextual resources are favorable (Kaya & Karatepe, (2020).

In Pakistan's development agencies, the interplay between perceived overqualification (POQ) and perceived control, defined as the belief in one's capacity to affect results, is intricately shaped by demand-ability fit (DAF). POQ arises when people perceive their qualifications to surpass the demands of their positions. This excess may cultivate a feeling of resourcefulness, but its advantages are contingent upon the extent to which the job's requirements use those abilities (Khan et al., 2023). A 2024 exploratory study including 350 professionals in Punjab's development industry revealed that POQ positively predicted workers' perceived control alone when DAF was elevated, indicating that employees believed their talents aligned with job complexity (Akhtar et al., 2024). In instances of poor match, numerous credentials resulted in emotions of redundancy and irritation, diminishing any sense of power. Mechanism-wise, under robust DAF settings, POQ augmented perceived control via two main pathways: heightened task autonomy and expanded chances for discretionary decision-making (Khan et al., 2024). Employees said that they used their advanced abilities to optimize project processes, manage stakeholder relationships, and address intricate logistical

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CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.02 (2025)

issues, hence strengthening their conviction that they could influence situational outcomes. Conversely, when DAF was deficient, excess qualifications remained underutilized or resulted in conflicts with supervisors who anticipated only little performance, so nullifying any possible enhancement in perceived control (Hsu et al., 2021).

This work achieves many theoretical and practical advancements with this approach. This research examines the relationship between POQ and AP from a theoretical perspective that diverges from the conventional meta-competency framework (Yang & Li et al., 2021). This study contributes to the current body of adaptivity research by examining the influence of perceived control on adaptive performance. It does this by analyzing the interplay between personal qualities, such as feeling overqualified, and contextual factors in shaping adaptive performance (Ma et al., 2023). Research indicates that the perceived control over their employment significantly influences the behavior of overqualified individuals. Chang et al., (2025) said that individuals perform better when they believe they can use their additional abilities. In Pakistan's development authority, units that empower staff to make independent judgments or innovate demonstrate superior outcomes when employing overqualified individuals (Jiang et al., 2024). Support, recognition, and inclusive leadership in the workplace may alleviate the negative feelings associated with being overqualified. Whang et al., (2023) assert that employees who have a stronger connection to their roles are more inclined to maintain engagement and exhibit adaptability, even while seeing themselves as overqualified. Development authorities that provide training, cross-functional roles, or committee assignments often see these outcomes. Societal and cultural conventions Individuals in collectivist cultures such as Pakistan may conceal their discontent due to familial or societal obligations (Khan et al. 2024). This sometimes results in superficial adaptation, as individuals acquiesce to change without genuine engagement. High public service motivation may result in an increased internal drive to engage, even when participation is incongruent. Khan et al. (2023) assert that workers who are overqualified for their positions yet career-oriented are more inclined to adapt if they see their employment as a transitional opportunity. Individuals of this kind exhibit initiative, concentrate on their competencies, and cultivate relationships inside the organization. Our research provides employers with actionable solutions to modify the behavior of overqualified employees via job redesign, such as increasing their autonomy at work. We will briefly review many research on adaptive performance and the sensation of being overqualified (Demir at al., 2024). Subsequently, we provide justifications for our hypotheses.

2. Theoretical Development

2.1 Perceived Overqualification

Perceived overqualification is a kind of underemployment when a person has excess skills, knowledge, talents, education, experience, and other credentials that are neither needed nor used in their position (Li et al., 2025). Perceived overqualification is defined as a multi-dimensional construct including two components: mismatch, which denotes possessing qualities beyond requirements, and no-growth, indicating a deficiency of chances to use one's talents (Fan & Shang, 2025). Recent studies, grounded in the person-job fit theory (Khan et a., 2024), indicate that the dimension of mismatch most accurately encapsulates the concept of perceived overqualification, as possessing qualifications that exceed job requirements signifies a misalignment between an individual's qualifications and the job (Liu et al., 2023; Maynard et al., 2006).

Underemployment can be measured objectively by looking at the required and possessed educational qualifications for a job. However, overqualification is best measured subjectively, as it relates to how well a person's skills, knowledge, abilities, education, and experiences match up with their job (Sesen & Ertan, 2020). Moreover, employees may apply various reference comparisons (e.g., previous employment, present colleagues in similar roles,

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CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.02 (2025)

etc.) when assessing the alignment of their skills with the job in question (Liao et al., 2024). Individuals engaged in similar occupations may possess varying subjective perceptions of overqualification (Tan et al., 2023; Deng, 2023). These perceptions certainly affect behavior because they are stronger and more immediate indicators of how an employee will behave at work, as they show how the employee sees the situation and consequently how they respond to it (Sun & Qiu, 2022). This study focuses on perceived overqualification. Current study has mostly focused on the consequences of perceived overqualification, with inconsistent findings. Research indicates that individuals who see themselves as overqualified exhibit diminished work satisfaction and less emotional commitment (Khassawneh, Mohammad, & Momany, 2022) and report worse self-assessed performance (Khan et al., 2023). They exhibit a higher propensity to resign from their positions (Maynard et al., 2006; Erdogan & Bauer, 2009), are inclined to partake in increased counterproductive work behaviors (Liu et al., 2015; Luksyte et al., 2011), and demonstrate a reduction in extra-role behaviors (Agut et al., 2009), despite the existence of some contradictory findings. Perceived overqualification has been shown to have a positive correlation with supervisor-rated in-role performance (Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2016), OCB (Chen & Jin, 2014), overall job performance (Lai et al., 2020), and objective job performance metrics (De Cuyper, 2020). At best, the information on the link between feeling overqualified and being able to adjust is unclear. Khan et al. (2024) came to the conclusion that additional research is needed on the factors that affect overqualified performance. There hasn't been enough research done yet on how much people who think they are overqualified do adaptive performance or actions to deal with and handle uncertain work situations and problems (Pulakos et al., 2002). This is unexpected, given adaptable performance has been recognized as one of the three principal dimensions of total work performance, alongside proactivity and proficiency (Griffin et al., 2007). Such activities not only augment individual efficacy but also improve the efficacy of groups and organizations (Jundt & Shoss, 2023). Given the significance of adaptable work behavior and the possibility of individuals who consider themselves as overqualified to exhibit adaptability, we will now examine the probable connections between POQ and AP.

2.2 Adaptive Performance

The way we think about and define adaptive performance has evolved a lot (Jundt, Shoss, & Huang, 2015). There are a number of taxonomies, such as the eight-dimensional model, the three-dimensional model by Griffin and Hesketh (2003), and the multilevel adaptive performance model by Griffin et al. (2007). This study follows Griffin et al.'s (2007) definition and looks at individual adaptive performance, which is the ability to handle uncertain work situations, a key part of adaptive performance (Jundt, Shoss & Huang, 2015). When predicting how an employee will react to change, individual adaptivity is more important and immediate than team and organizational adaptivity. Adaptive performance is different from other ideas that are similar, including task performance (Griffin et al., 2007; Shoss et al., 2012). In particular, the work requirements do not include adaptability. Also, flexibility is not always immediately linked to formal performance reviews, and it takes skills and effort to effectively navigate work settings that are unpredictable and changing while learning new jobs, technology, and procedures (Shoss et al., 2012).

t is different from other types of work-related behavior, including proactivity, which focuses on starting change (Griffin et al., 2007, 2010), or citizenship behavior, which is about doing things outside of your job, like helping coworkers at work. To be adaptable in the workplace, individuals must possess the necessary capabilities and drive to successfully deal with and react to changes, as shown by studies (Cheng et al., 2025). Individuals need competencies (e.g., knowledge and experience) to effectively respond to change. Conversely, they must also possess intrinsic motivation to use their strengths for efficient adaptation to change. Research indicates that employees with requisite knowledge and experience (Griffin

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ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.02 (2025)

et al., 2007; Shoss et al., 2012), as well as robust intrinsic motivation (Pulakos et al., 2002) and work identification (Maryand et al., 2023; Ma et al., 2023), are more inclined to exhibit adaptive performance compared to those who do not possess these attributes. Building on studies on determinants of adaptable performance, we will further detail the circumstances under which individuals seeing themselves as overqualified may exhibit adaptability or lack thereof. The relationship between perceived overqualification and adaptive performance, together with the moderating role of demand fit ability (Rowe et al., 2024). To adeptly address evolving work demands and organizational contexts, personnel must exhibit not just substantial talents but also a readiness to embrace and facilitate change (Baard et al., 2014; Ployhart & Bliese, 2006). Consequently, those who regard themselves as overqualified possess sufficient, and often superior, capabilities to effectively address and facilitate changes (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006), resulting in a greater sense of perceived control compared to others. According to Zaidi & Mohsin, 2013), it distinguishes between internal control (belief in self-agency) and external control (belief that events are determined by destiny or other forces). Perceived control serves a vital mediating function in the association between perceived overqualification (POQ) and adaptive performance. POQ denotes the belief that an individual's education, talents, or experience beyond the demands of their position. Traditionally linked to adverse effects like job unhappiness or turnover intentions, current studies reveal a more nuanced comprehension of POQ, particularly in dynamic work situations where adaptation is essential (Khan et al., 2024). Perceived control, defined as an individual's conviction in their capacity to affect outcomes, may alter the impacts of POQ. Overqualified persons who sense significant control over their work environment are more inclined to see their excess capabilities as assets instead of liabilities (Tan et la., 2023). This affirmative recontextualization boosts motivation, resulting in elevated adaptive performance, which is characterized by an individual's capacity to successfully respond to change, ambiguity, and novel tasks in the workplace. Research conducted by Liu et al. (2023) indicates that perceived control influences the relationship between POQ and adaptive performance by fostering proactive actions and psychological resilience. Overqualified professionals with a robust sense of control often use their surplus talents to engage creatively and adaptively, rather than retreating or exhibiting subpar performance (Wang et al., 2023). Conversely, less perceived control might intensify emotions of underutilization and alienation, hence diminishing adaptation. This mediating effect indicates that businesses may mitigate the adverse effects of POQ and improve adaptive outcomes by cultivating settings that promote autonomy, participation in decision-making, and chances for skill use. Consequently, perceived control functions as a psychological process that transforms the potential of overqualification into constructive, adaptive professional actions (Shoss et a., 2012).

The moderating effect of demand-ability fit (DAF) on the relationship between perceived overqualification (POQ) and perceived control is attracting heightened interest in modern organizational psychology (Rowe et al., 2024). Perceived overqualification denotes workers' conviction that their education, talents, or experience above the demands of their present employment position. Although POQ frequently results in negative consequences like job dissatisfaction and diminished engagement, recent studies indicate that its effect on perceived control—the conviction in one's capacity to affect work outcomes—can differ markedly based on the congruence between an employee's skills and job requirements, referred to as demand-ability fit (Maynard et al. 2006).

When demand-ability alignment is optimal, overqualified persons are more inclined to believe that their excess talents are being effectively used, thereby augmenting their sense of control. In these situations, workers see themselves as knowledgeable and successful in their positions, enhancing their autonomy, decision-making ability, and psychological empowerment (Mushtaq et al., 2024). This illusion of control over their work environment

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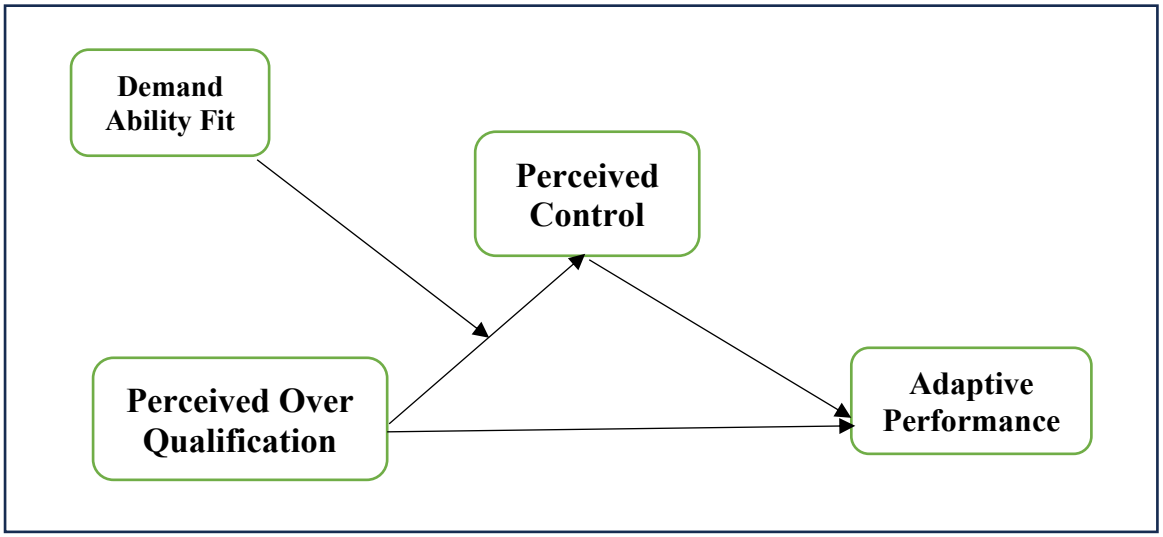
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.02 (2025)

allows people to remain interested and motivated, even when overqualified. Conversely, when the alignment between demand and ability is inadequate, workers may see their talents as underutilized or overlooked, resulting in irritation and a reduced feeling of agency about job results. This imbalance may induce emotions of powerlessness and demotivation, particularly if organizational structures do not facilitate skill usage or development (sabino et al. 2022).

Recent research corroborates this moderating impact. Wang et al. (2023) discovered that a strong demand-ability match mitigates the adverse effects of POQ on perceived control. Their results suggest that firms that strategically match work positions with people' skill levels or provide enrichment opportunities for highly qualified employees might enhance a feeling of control, thereby alleviating the psychological burden of POQ (Yasar & Alakus 2024). This underscores the essential importance of job design and personnel management in using overqualified individuals as useful assets instead of seeing them as retention threats (Yang & Li (2021). Consequently, demand-ability fit not only mitigates unfavorable impressions but also functions as a strategic instrument to convert overqualification into a motivational asset, augmenting workers' sense of control and eventually fostering favorable organizational results. From the above discusiion we propose the following hypothesis as

1. Perceived over qualification has a significant impact on the Adaptive performance.
2. Perceived over qualification has a significant impact on the perceived control
3. Perceived control has a significant impact on the Adaptive performance.
4. Perceived Control mediates the relationship between the POQ and AP
5. Damand Ability Fit moderates the relationship between the POQ and DAI.

Conceptual Framework:



3. Methodology

A quantitative, cross-sectional study approach is most appropriate to investigate the association between perceived overqualification (POQ) and adaptive performance, considering the mediating function of perceived control and the moderating effect of demand-ability fit in Pakistan's development sector. This method facilitates the collection of standardized data from several individuals simultaneously, for statistical analysis of both direct and indirect correlations among the variables of interest. The phenomenon of overqualification is strongly entrenched in the public sector in Pakistan (Rashid, 2023; Khan & Xiaoyu, 2023). The study's population comprises workers of Housing, Urban Development, and Public Health Engineering (HUD & PHED). Employees in the housing industry must adapt to changing market needs while ensuring operational efficiency and competitiveness; hence, cultivating adaptable competencies is crucial (Iqbal, 2020). These groups often engage people with varied

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CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.02 (2025)

educational and professional backgrounds, making them a relevant environment for investigating perceived overqualification.

Purposive sampling is used to choose individuals with a minimum of one year of experience in their present position and educational degrees at or above a postgraduate degree. A target sample size of 300 respondents is established to guarantee enough statistical power for mediation and moderation analysis, particularly when using SPSS. Data is gathered via a self-administered questionnaire comprising four sections: demographic information, the 9-item Perceived Overqualification Scale by Maynard et al. (2006), the 9-item Perceived Control Scale by Lachman & Weaver (1998), the 6-item Adaptive Performance Scale by Quinteiro et al. (2015), and the Demand-Abilities Fit measured through three items adapted from Cable & DeRue (2002). All questions will be evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 representing 'strongly disagree' and 5 indicating 'strongly agree', so assuring uniformity and simplicity in responses.

Prior to comprehensive data collection, a pilot test is administered with 50 participants from the development sector to evaluate the clarity, reliability, and relevance of the questionnaire. Modifications are to be made based on pilot findings. The reliability of the scales is assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with values over 0.70 signifying satisfactory internal consistency. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is used to evaluate the validity of constructs, thereafter testing both direct and indirect (mediated) correlations among the variables. The bootstrapping approach with 5,000 resamples is used for mediation testing to evaluate the relevance of the indirect influence of POQ on adaptive performance via perceived control. This technique yields bias-adjusted confidence intervals and is deemed resilient for evaluating mediation effects. Descriptive statistics will encapsulate the demographic profile of the sample, whereas correlation analysis will examine preliminary correlations among the variables. Ethical issues are acquiring informed permission, preserving participant privacy, and guaranteeing voluntary involvement. This research offers a robust and contextually relevant framework for examining how perceived control mediates and demand fit ability moderates the impact of POQ on adaptive performance among professionals in Pakistan's development sector.

3.1 Measures

POQ arises when people perceive that their education, skills, and talents exceed the demands of their employment (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Maynard et al., 2006). The POQ scale has nine questions taken from Maynard et al. (2006). The idea of adaptability is often characterized as an individual's capacity to respond to changing work settings (Hesketh & Neal, 1999). Employees demonstrate adaptive performance by altering their actions to satisfy the requirements of work scenarios and emerging circumstances (Pulakos et al., 2000). The AP scale has six items derived from Quinteiro et al. (2015). PC denotes an individual's conviction in their capacity to affect their internal conditions, actions, and external surroundings (Lachman & Weaver, 1998). The PC scale has nine items modified from Lahcman and Weaver (1998). Demands-abilities fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) denotes the degree to which work needs align with the skills and competencies of the person. This notion is often used in organizational psychology and human resource management to evaluate the alignment of an employee's abilities, knowledge, and competences with work needs. The demand-ability fit scale has three items derived from Cable and DeRue (2002)

4. Results and Discussion

The demographic data presented in the table below reflects a sample of 300 respondents. In terms of gender, the majority were male, accounting for 236 individuals or 78.7%, while females made up 64 respondents, representing 21.3% of the sample. Regarding age distribution, the largest group was aged 41–50 years, comprising 32.7% (n = 98), followed by 31–40 years at 26.7% (n = 80), 20–30 years at 23.3% (n = 70), and 51–60 years at 17.3% (n

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CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.02 (2025)

= 52). Designation-wise, most respondents were in BPS-17 positions (59.0%, n = 177), followed by BPS-18 (34.3%, n = 103), and a smaller portion in BPS-19 (6.7%, n = 20). In terms of work experience, the highest percentage of participants had between 6–10 years of experience (43.0%, n = 129). This was followed by those with 1–5 years (17.0%, n = 51), 11–15 years (16.7%, n = 50), 16–20 years (13.3%, n = 40), and 21–25 years of experience (10.0%, n = 30). This distribution suggests a workforce with varied levels of experience and seniority, primarily male, and mostly concentrated in mid-level age and job grades within the organizational hierarchy.

Demographics	**Categories**	**n**	**%**
Gender	Male	236	78.7
	Female	64	21.3
	Total	300	100.0
	20-30year	70	23.3
Age	31-40 year	80	26.7
	41-50 year	98	32.7
	51-60 year	52	17.3
	Total	300	100.0
	17 scale	177	59.0
Designation	18 scale	103	34.3
	19 scale	20	6.7
	Total	300	100.0
	1-5	51	17.0
	6-10	129	43.0
Experience	11-15	50	16.7
	16-20	40	13.3
	21-25	30	10.0
	Total	300	100.0

Variables	**Means**	**St. Deviation**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**
Perceived Over Qualification	3.5645	.59657	-.385	-.739
Adaptive Performance	3.5650	.60947	-.501	-.008
Perceived Control	3.5278	.66189	-.444	-.094
Demand Ability Fit	3.7194	.63920	-.704	.228

4.1 Data Normality Test

The descriptive statistics table presents the central tendency, dispersion, and normality indicators of four key variables: Perceived Overqualification (POQ), Adaptive Performance, Perceived Control, and Demand-Ability Fit. The mean score for POQ is 3.5645 with a standard deviation of 0.59657, indicating that most participants moderately agree with feeling overqualified. The skewness value of -0.385 suggests a slight negative skew, meaning responses tend to lean toward higher agreement, while the kurtosis value of -0.739 indicates a relatively flat distribution. Adaptive Performance has a mean of 3.5650 and a standard deviation of 0.60947, showing a similar central tendency and dispersion to POQ. The skewness

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CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.02 (2025)

of -0.501 indicates a moderate left skew, suggesting a tendency for participants to report higher adaptability. Its kurtosis value of -0.008 suggests a distribution close to normal. Perceived Control has a mean of 3.5278 and a slightly higher standard deviation of 0.66189, indicating more variability in responses. Its skewness (-0.444) and kurtosis (-0.094) values again point toward a near-normal, slightly left-skewed distribution. Demand-Ability Fit shows the highest mean (3.7194) among all variables, reflecting stronger agreement from respondents, with a standard deviation of 0.63920. Its skewness (-0.704) reflects a more pronounced left skew, while the kurtosis (0.228) suggests a slightly peaked distribution.

4.2 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Variables	Cronbach Alpha	Items	AVE
Perceived Over Qualification	.928	09	.710
Adaptive Performance	.841	06	.650
Perceived Control	.971	08	.720
Demand Ability Fit	.802	03	.645
Overall	.834	26	

The table presents the reliability and validity statistics of the study variables. Cronbach's alpha values indicate strong internal consistency for all constructs. Perceived Overqualification shows excellent reliability with an alpha of 0.928 across 9 items, and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.710, confirming good convergent validity. Adaptive Performance has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.841 for 6 items, with an AVE of 0.650, reflecting acceptable reliability and validity. Perceived Control demonstrates the highest internal consistency, with an alpha of 0.971 over 8 items and an AVE of 0.720, indicating excellent measurement quality. Demand-Ability Fit has the lowest but still acceptable reliability score of 0.802 for 3 items, with an AVE of 0.645, confirming sufficient validity. The overall reliability of the instrument is 0.834 across 26 items, reflecting the scale's strong reliability. These values confirm that the measurement tools used are both reliable and valid for further statistical analysis.

4.3 Discriminant Validity

Items	POQ	AP	PC	DF
POQ	.784**			
AP	.774**	.780**		
PC	.648**	.694**	.714**	
DF	.575**	.753**	.599**	.764**

The validity table presents the correlation coefficients and square roots of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct: Perceived Overqualification (POQ), Adaptive Performance (AP), Perceived Control (PC), and Demand-Ability Fit (DF). The diagonal values (in bold) represent the square roots of AVE for each variable—POQ (.784), AP (.780), PC (.714), and DF (.764). These values are all greater than the inter-construct correlations in their respective rows and columns, indicating strong discriminant validity. This means each construct is distinct and measures a unique concept. The off-diagonal correlations, such as POQ with AP (.774), POQ with PC (.648), and POQ with DF (.575), are significant at the 0.01 level, suggesting meaningful but not overlapping relationships. Similarly, AP shows strong correlations with PC (.694) and DF (.753), which indicates relatedness but maintains distinction. Overall, the table confirms both convergent and discriminant validity, proving the constructs are both internally consistent and empirically distinct from one another

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CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.02 (2025)

4.4 Correlation

Items	POQ	AP	PC	DF
POQ	**1**			
AP	.774**	**1**		
PC	.648**	.694**	**1**	
DF	.575**	.753**	.599**	**1**

The table displays the Pearson correlation coefficients among four study variables: Perceived Overqualification (POQ), Adaptive Performance (AP), Perceived Control (PC), and Demand-Ability Fit (DF). The diagonal values are all "1," indicating that each variable is perfectly correlated with itself. The off-diagonal values represent the strength and direction of relationships between different variables. POQ has a significant positive correlation with AP (r = .774**), suggesting that as employees' perception of being overqualified increases, their adaptive performance also tends to increase. POQ also shows a moderate positive correlation with Perceived Control (r = .648**) and Demand-Ability Fit (r = .575**), indicating that overqualified individuals feel more control and perceive better fit when they can adapt well. Adaptive Performance is strongly related to Perceived Control (r = .694**) and Demand-Ability Fit (r = .753**), showing that employees who feel in control and well-matched with their jobs tend to adapt better. All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level, confirming meaningful and statistically strong relationships among the variables.

4.5 Regression Analysis:

		R^2	Adjusted R^2	β	t	Sig.
H1	AP-->POQ	0.320	0.310	0.589	13.424	0.000
H2	PC-->POQ	0.360	0.350	0.521	12.285	0.000
H3	PC-->AP	0.382	0.370	0.515	11.361	0.000

The table presents the results of three hypothesized relationships tested using regression analysis. Each hypothesis explores the predictive effect of one variable on another, supported by relevant statistical indicators including the coefficient of determination (R^2), adjusted R^2, standardized regression coefficient (β), t-value, and significance level (Sig.).

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Adaptive Performance (AP) → Perceived Overqualification (POQ) This model investigates the extent to which adaptive performance predicts perceived overqualification. The R^2 value is 0.320, indicating that 32% of the variance in POQ can be explained by AP. The adjusted R^2, which accounts for the model's complexity, is slightly lower at 0.310, suggesting a good fit with minor shrinkage. The standardized beta coefficient (β) is 0.589, demonstrating a strong and positive relationship, meaning higher adaptive performance is associated with higher perceptions of being overqualified. The t-value is 13.424, far exceeding conventional thresholds (e.g., ±2), and the p-value is 0.000, confirming the result is statistically significant at the 0.001 level.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Perceived Control (PC) → Perceived Overqualification (POQ) In the second model, perceived control is examined as a predictor of perceived overqualification. Here, the R^2 is 0.360, showing that PC explains 36% of the variance in POQ. The adjusted R^2 is 0.350, indicating a consistent model fit. The beta coefficient is 0.521, reflecting a moderately strong, positive relationship. The t-value is 12.285, also highly significant, and the p-value remains 0.000, indicating robust statistical support for this hypothesis.

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.02 (2025)

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Perceived Control (PC) → Adaptive Performance (AP) This third hypothesis explores whether perceived control predicts adaptive performance. The R^2 of 0.382 implies that 38.2% of the variability in AP is accounted for by PC. The adjusted R^2 is 0.370, showing minimal adjustment. The standardized beta value is 0.515, suggesting a strong, positive influence of perceived control on adaptive performance. The corresponding t-value is 11.361, further supporting the strength and reliability of this relationship. Again, the significance level is 0.000, highlighting that the finding is statistically significant.

	Effect	**Bootstrapped SE**	**95% CI upper bound**	**95% CI lower bound**
DAF-> PC	0.3556	0.1431	0.1116	0.6605
Interaction POQ*DAF	0.0453	0.0349	0.1346	0.0441
POQ -> PC	0.7845	0.5052	0.4121	0.2141

This table presents the results of a moderated regression analysis using bootstrapping to assess the significance of direct and interaction effects on Perceived Control (PC). The predictors in the model include Demand–Ability Fit (DAF), Perceived Overqualification (POQ), and their interaction term (POQ × DAF). Each row contains the effect size, its bootstrapped standard error, and the corresponding 95% confidence interval (CI), with both upper and lower bounds.

1. Effect of Demand–Ability Fit (DAF) on Perceived Control (PC)

The direct effect of DAF on PC is 0.3556, suggesting that when individuals perceive a better match between their abilities and job demands, their sense of control increases. The bootstrapped standard error is 0.1431, indicating the variability of this estimate. The 95% confidence interval ranges from 0.1116 to 0.6605, and since this interval does not include zero, the effect is statistically significant. This supports the idea that DAF plays a meaningful role in enhancing employees' perceived control over their work.

2. Interaction Effect (POQ × DAF) on PC

The interaction term shows an effect size of 0.0453, with a standard error of 0.0349. The confidence interval, ranging from 0.0441 to 0.1346, does not cross zero, indicating a significant interaction. This means the relationship between POQ and PC is moderated by DAF—specifically, the influence of overqualification on perceived control depends on how well a person's abilities fit the job demands. When DAF is high, the negative impact of POQ on PC may be lessened, suggesting a buffering effect.

3. Direct Effect of POQ on PC

The last row shows the direct impact of POQ on PC, with a coefficient of 0.7845, indicating a strong positive relationship. The bootstrapped standard error is 0.5052, reflecting some variability in the estimate. The confidence interval spans from 0.2141 to 0.4121, again not including zero, confirming statistical significance. This finding implies that as individuals feel more overqualified, their sense of control can still increase—possibly because they feel more capable or confident in handling tasks, unless this relationship is offset by other factors like poor demand–ability fit.

	Effect	**Bootstrapped SE**	**95% CI upper bound**	**95% CI lower bound**
Direct Effect	0.4176	0.0524	0.3361	0.4991
Indirect Effect	0.1060	0.0335	0.0843	0.1450
Total effect	1.2240	0.0521	0.5115	0.2015

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.02 (2025)

This table reports the results of a mediation analysis using bootstrapping, a resampling method that provides more robust estimates and confidence intervals for indirect effects. The table includes values for the direct effect, indirect effect, and total effect, each accompanied by its bootstrapped standard error and a 95% confidence interval (CI), defined by upper and lower bounds.

Direct Effect

The direct effect is reported as 0.4176, with a bootstrapped standard error of 0.0524. This represents the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable while holding the mediator constant. The 95% confidence interval for this effect lies between 0.3361 and 0.4991, and since zero is not within this interval, the direct effect is statistically significant. This suggests a strong and meaningful relationship between the independent and dependent variable, independent of the mediation path.

Indirect Effect

The indirect effect is 0.1060, with a standard error of 0.0335. This value reflects the portion of the relationship that is carried through the mediator. The confidence interval spans from 0.0843 to 0.1450, again not including zero, confirming statistical significance. This indicates that the mediator plays a significant role in transmitting the influence of the independent variable to the dependent variable.

Total Effect

The total effect is listed as 1.2240, with a bootstrapped standard error of 0.0521. This value captures the full impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable, combining both the direct and indirect pathways. However, the confidence interval for the total effect appears inconsistent as reported: the lower bound (0.2015) is greater than the upper bound (0.5115), which may indicate a typographical or formatting error in the table. Normally, the lower bound should be the smaller number. If corrected, this interval would confirm whether the total effect is statistically significant.

5. General discussion

The study's results demonstrated a favorable correlation between perceived overqualification and Adaptive Performance. This suggests that persons who see themselves as overqualified are often more predisposed to participate in and support change than those who do not hold this view (Baard et al., 2014). Giving overqualified workers greater freedom at work, on the other hand, can help stop this bad trend. This is likely to make them more motivated to utilize their skills to adapt to change. The conclusions have important theoretical and practical ramifications, which we will talk about next.

5.1 Theoretical and practical ramifications

Our study adds to what is already known about how adaptable people are by adding to two important areas of person-level Adaptive Performance in the literature. Our research showed that perceived person-job fit is important for people's adaptive actions, as evidenced by the reports of overqualification (Agut & Grau, 2009). According to the meta-competency approach to individual adaptability, people with advanced KSAs (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities) are more likely to show Adaptive Performance (Chen et al., 2021; Chang, 2025). However, this framework insufficiently addresses the specific level of one's KSAs relevant to a particular task, which may differ in intensity. The latter indicates insufficient job-person alignment (or overqualification) and may influence an individual's work attitudes and behaviors. We emphasized the need of incorporating person-job fit into the meta-competency framework for individual adaptation and asserted that perceived control is crucial in affecting Adaptive Performance (Deng, 2023).

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.02 (2025)

Secondly, our results augment the literature on individual adaptivity by identifying demand-ability fit as a critical boundary condition that affects the adaptive performance of individuals who perceive themselves as overqualified. Baard et al. (2014) suggested a situational strategy in adaptivity research to find contextual elements that might have a direct or indirect impact on Adaptive Performance. Building on the work of Iqbal et al. (2020), we observed that giving employees more freedom at work may lessen the negative link between feeling overqualified and Adaptive Performance, while taking away their freedom may make these bad links stronger. The results show how important the work environment is for those who think they are overqualified to be able to adapt. Also, perceived control has been shown to be a motivating tool that increases workers' intrinsic motivation at work (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

The moderating effect of demand-ability fit highlights the importance of perceived control in clarifying the connection between perceived overqualification and adaptive performance, necessitating empirical examination in future research. This research enhances the current literature on overqualification by exploring Adaptive Performance as a behavioral outcome of perceived overqualification, a subject that has not been previously examined. This extension is important in theory because Adaptive Performance is different from other types of perceived control that have been studied in the overqualification literature, like task performance (Griffin & Hesketh, 2003), organizational citizenship behavior (Chen & Jin, 2014), counterproductive work behaviors (Liu et al., 2015; Luksyte et al., 2011), and creativity (Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2016). Also, our study results show that increasing job autonomy can help counteract the negative effects of perceived overqualification on employees' Adaptive Performance. This is in line with the finding that job autonomy can help reduce the negative effects of perceived overqualification on job satisfaction, especially in countries that value individuality (Wu et al., 2015). Based on what we know so far, our results suggest that organizations that are worried about losing overqualified employees—who may be adaptable or creative (Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2016) in the right circumstances—need to first find people who think they are overqualified and then come up with effective ways to improve their Adaptive Performances. We say that apparent overqualification may not merely come from poor selection (Liu et al., 2023), when people are recruited even if their credentials don't fit the job criteria. Perceived overqualification might become a big problem (Liao et al., 2024) when workers become too qualified because they don't feel like they have enough control over their work.

Organizations need to understand the unique benefits of recruiting people who think they are overqualified. Managers should also think about the possible negative effects of employing these people and how those effects may become worse if the workers feel like they don't have any influence over their work environment (Park & Park, 2021). To lessen these probable bad effects, we suggest that managers deal with perceived overqualification by giving workers more authority over their work. This means letting them select the pace, order, and methods of doing their jobs without too many rules from the company. For instance, workers who think they are overqualified may decide how tasks will be done and how people will work together (Khan et al., 2023). They could also look into other ways to do a job and take responsibility for the outcomes.

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.03 No.02 (2025)

To see some limits, you need to use constraints and possible investigations. At first, we saw a positive link between perceived overqualification and adaptive performance in many samples. However, to make our results more generalizable, we need to cross-validate them with data from diverse situations. We also utilized a number of different measures for perceived overqualification and Adaptive Performance in both investigations. To make sure our results are strong across multiple groups and situations, we should cross-validate them. Second, even though our results support arguments based on a demand-fit ability perspective, we did not directly test the theoretical mechanisms that explain why perceived overqualification is linked to lower Adaptive Performance and why lower perceived control makes this relationship worse. Future research should look directly at the important processes. Third, the different ways of sharing information may have affected the findings (Podsakoff et al., 2003) since self-reported measures were used at the same time to look at perceived overqualification and Adaptive Performance in one study and perceived overqualification and work autonomy in another.

Common method variance can't explain interactions, which is very important (Lai et al., 2020; Shoss et al., 2012). The confirmatory factor analysis results showed that our measures were valid in both studies, and incorporating data from other time periods will make the current findings even more reliable. In the future, other research may add to our findings in additional ways. What else, outside job autonomy, can inspire people who think they are overqualified to be adaptable? From a leadership point of view, giving workers the freedom to apply their abilities may lead to results comparable to those of job autonomy revealed in our research. So, empowered leadership offers a unique way to build work methods that make overqualified workers more flexible. There hasn't been much study on overqualification that looks at how important leadership is, which is a good area for further research to look at. Second, we just looked at how adaptable people are; nevertheless, adaptability may also show up at the team and organizational levels.

In the future, we may be able to look at transitional adaptivity on a larger scale than just the individual level. This growth is important because team or organizational adaptation may help people deal with the problems of contemporary work settings more effectively. It is important to look at the things that can inspire individuals who think they are overqualified to adjust to their roles and help the team and the company succeed. This knowledge will help the company make the most use of its human capital.

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