

The effect of perceived overqualification on relative deprivation: The moderating role of organisational silence

Aşırı niteliklilik algısının görelî yoksunluk üzerindeki etkisi: Örgütsel sessizliğin düzenleyici etkisi

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the perceptions of overqualification, relative deprivation, and organisational silence among gastronomy teachers employed in project schools established to enhance sector-school-student collaboration in Türkiye, and to examine the relationships among these perceptions. More specifically, the study will examine the effect of perceived overqualification on relative deprivation and the moderating role of organisational silence. To test the research hypotheses, a survey was conducted, and data were collected from 204 teachers. The primary effect was evaluated using simple linear regression analysis, while the PROCESS Macro was employed to assess the moderating effect. The influence of the interaction term was investigated with the Johnson-Neyman technique. The findings suggest that teachers who perceive themselves as overqualified tend to experience greater feelings of professional inadequacy. Conversely, this positive relationship intensifies as the perception of organisational silence diminishes. The study presents several recommendations for future research and practice. This study has the potential to establish a foundation for research into the relationships among perceived overqualification, relative deprivation, and organisational silence. Moreover, this study makes a contribution to the existing body of knowledge examining the effects of overqualification on person-centred outcomes.

Keywords: Perceived Overqualification, Organisational Silence, Relative Deprivation, Gastronomy Teachers

Jel Codes: M12, M54, I20

Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de sektör-okul-öğrenci iş birliğini geliştirmek amacıyla kurulan proje okullarında görev yapan gastronomi öğretmenlerinin aşırı niteliklilik, görelî yoksunluk ve örgütsel sessizlik algılarını ortaya koymayı ve bunlar arasındaki ilişkileri belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Daha spesifik olarak, çalışma, algılanan aşırı nitelikliliğin görelî yoksunluk üzerindeki etkisini ve örgütsel sessizliğin bu ilişkideki moderatör rolünü inceleyecektir. Araştırma hipotezlerini test etmek amacıyla anket tekniği ile 204 öğretmenden veri toplanmıştır. Temel etki basit doğrusal regresyon analizi ile değerlendirilirken, moderatör etkiyi test etmek için PROCESS Macro kullanılmıştır. Etkileşim teriminin etkisi, Johnson-Neyman tekniği ile irdelenmiştir. Bulgular, kendilerini aşırı nitelikli hisseden öğretmenlerin, daha fazla yoksunluk hissetme eğiliminde olduklarını göstermektedir. Buna karşılık, örgütsel sessizlik algısı azaldıkça bu olumlu ilişki daha da güçlenmektedir. Çalışma, gelecekteki araştırmalar ve uygulamalar için çeşitli öneriler sunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, algılanan aşırı niteliklilik, görelî yoksunluk ve örgütsel sessizlik arasındaki ilişkiler üzerine yapılacak araştırmalara öncülük etme potansiyeline sahiptir. Ayrıca çalışma, aşırı nitelikliliğin kişi merkezli sonuçlar üzerindeki etkilerini inceleyen mevcut literatüre katkı sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Algılanan Aşırı Niteliklilik, Örgütsel Sessizlik, Görelî Yoksunluk, Gastronomi Öğretmenleri

JEL Kodları: M12, M54, I20

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Introduction

The configuration of educational structures is subject to alteration in accordance with the evolving requirements of societies. The advent of information and communication technologies has precipitated the replacement of numerous professions by machines, particularly in the context of information retrieval. However, technological advancements have yet to reach a level where they can effectively substitute for occupations that demand a high degree of skill and expertise (Çalışkan, 2022). In this context, vocational education assumes particular importance in training the labour force that is not susceptible to replacement by technology. Graduates are equipped with the fundamental skills pertinent to their profession and aligned with the requirements of the sector, thereby rendering the investment in education a valuable one. However, the necessity for adaptation in response to evolving industry needs underscores the importance of a dynamic vocational education process. In this regard, the collaboration between the sector, educational institutions, and students is of paramount significance.

To enhance collaboration between the education sector and the tourism industry, a memorandum of understanding was established between the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCCT) with the objective of training qualified intermediate personnel for the tourism sector (MoNE, 2019). In accordance with the terms of the protocol, several educational establishments offering instruction in the areas of accommodation and food services were designated as 'project schools', and particular curricula were devised for these institutions. The curriculum to be implemented in the aforementioned project schools was redesigned in collaboration with representatives of the tourism sector and the MoNE. Consequently, the number of practical vocational courses planned for students during their tenure at the school was reduced in comparison to other schools. It was intended that these students would receive on-the-job training in hotels between May and September, with the practical training to be conducted by mentors (master trainers) (General Directorate of Vocational Technical Education, 2024). The teachers who will be employed at these schools are to be selected based on several criteria, including education, seniority, success, and performance. The intention is to appoint teachers who are suitably qualified for the role. It is important to note that qualifications may be subject to both objective and subjective criteria. It is therefore pertinent to consider the perceptions of overqualification of teachers working in these schools at this juncture. The concept of overqualification has both positive and negative consequences (Su, Li and Chen, 2021).

A review of the literature reveals a paucity of studies that have sought to measure teachers' perceptions of overqualification. Biçkes & Toker (2024) concluded that the perceptions of overqualification held by teachers in private schools had a positive effect on their task performance. An individual's perception of overqualification can be conducive to achieving organisational goals when managed effectively. This is particularly evident in competitive fields such as private school teaching. Similarly, a study conducted by Su et al. (2021) on primary school teachers in China revealed that teachers with higher educational qualifications exhibited higher perceptions of overqualification than those with lower qualifications. However, a study conducted by Lobene & Meade (2013) in the USA revealed a negative correlation between perceived overqualification and job satisfaction and emotional commitment, as well as a positive correlation with turnover intention.

The objective of this study is to ascertain the perceptions of gastronomy teachers employed in project schools regarding their perceptions of overqualification, which are modern organisational psychology concepts, as well as their perceptions of relative deprivation and organisational silence and the relationships between them. The idea of relative deprivation, defined as a sense of discontent arising from a discrepancy between one's circumstances and expectations (Crosby, 1976; Lee, Erdogan, Tian, Willis & Cao, 2021), has not been sufficiently explored to comprehend its influence on the professional conduct of teachers fully. Brockman's (2024) investigation into the impact of relative deprivation on protest behaviours, including strikes, concluded that relative deprivation does not invariably trigger specific behavioural responses. The concept of organisational silence is similarly a significant factor that can influence the behaviour of teachers. The behaviours and managerial decisions of the school principal have been identified as a key factor influencing teacher silence (Alqarni, 2020). However, the phenomenon of organisational silence cannot be discussed in the context of an educational institution that espouses organisational values (Demirtaş, 2018). However, the nature of the educational institution also exerts a substantial influence on educators' perceptions of organisational silence. In his 2017 study, Önder posits that vocational high school teachers exhibit a greater proclivity towards perceiving organisational silence than their counterparts in other school types.

The number of studies in this field is insufficient to enable an understanding of the behaviours of teachers working in project schools established with the protocol signed between the MoNE and MoCCT. The objective of this study is to gain insight into the relationship between the perceptions of

overqualification and relative deprivation experienced by teachers of the gastronomy field who have been assigned to project schools for a period of four years. Furthermore, the moderating effect of organisational silence will be examined. The present study makes several contributions to the extant literature. Firstly, this study is pioneering in its examination of the perception of overqualification, relative deprivation, and organisational silence variables among gastronomy field teachers selected according to various criteria. Secondly, by investigating the influence of perceived overqualification on relative deprivation, we contribute to the extant literature examining the effects of overqualification on person-centred outcomes. Thirdly, the extent to which organisational silence moderates the relationship between overqualification and the outcomes mentioned above will be investigated.

Conceptual framework

Overqualification: An investigation from the perspective of person-environment fit

Achieving a satisfactory balance between the available opportunities and one's qualifications is of paramount importance for both the individual and the organisation (Polat, Misir and Şahin, 2021). While individuals invest significant time and effort in identifying a suitable work environment that aligns with their qualifications, one of the primary motivations for organisations is to select and place suitable candidates. In this process, it is crucial to ensure harmony between the individual and the job or organisation. A multitude of theoretical frameworks have been developed to understand the attitudes and behaviours of employees in the workplace. In this context, the person-environment fit theory offers a critical conceptual framework (Van Vianen, 2018; Gürlek, 2020).

The theory of person-environment fit is predicated on three fundamental components, suggesting that incompatibilities in the interaction between the individual and their environment can be a source of stress. The initial component delineates the comprehensive congruence between the individual and their immediate environment. The second component involves both objective and subjective assessment of the individual's qualities. The third component of the study examines the fit between the demands of the environment and the individual's capabilities. This construct also encompasses the discrepancy between an individual's needs and the available environmental resources (Edwards, Caplan and Harrison, 1998). Person-environment fit theory encompasses more specific domains, including person-job fit and person-organisation fit. This theory is predicated on the hypothesis that the stronger the fit between the individual and their environment, the more positive the individual and organisational outcomes will be (Holland, 1997).

It is not uncommon for individuals to make employment decisions that are not aligned with their educational qualifications (Özdemir, Polat & Met, 2015). This phenomenon is attributed to the concept of overqualification, a notion widely discussed in the existing literature. The idea of overqualification was initially delineated by Freeman in 1976. This term refers to individuals who possess a surplus of knowledge, skills, experience, and qualifications that exceed the requirements of their position. The concept is evaluated within two distinct dimensions: objective and subjective overqualification. Objective overqualification signifies a discrepancy between the qualifications required for a position and the qualifications possessed by the individual. Subjective overqualification, on the other hand, pertains to an individual's perception that their qualifications exceed the requirements of the position, as perceived by that individual. The term "mismatch" refers to the possession of skills that exceed the requirements of a position. At the same time, "lack of growth" signifies the inability of an individual to utilise their existing competencies in their professional role (Wu, Tang & Su, 2017).

Psychological research has primarily focused on the phenomenon of overqualification through the lens of perceived overqualification. This research has evaluated the situation within the framework of the individual's perceptions and attitudes toward work (Hu, Erdogan, Bauer, Jiang, Liu, & Li, 2015). The phenomenon of overqualification has been shown to have a considerable influence on various individual-level outcomes, including career satisfaction (Cheng, 2019), job dissatisfaction (Zheng & Wang, 2017), health status (Büchel, 2002), and job performance (Uzunbacak & Karagöz, 2024). As asserted by Akbiyık (2015), the phenomenon of overqualification has been demonstrated to exert a detrimental influence on the professional performance of employees. This phenomenon can give rise to a range of adverse outcomes, including, but not limited to, deliberate underperformance, counterproductive behaviour, and the development of intentions to resign (Chen, Tang, & Su, 2021). The phenomenon of low person-job fit has been identified as a contributing factor to the emergence of these negativities. A discrepancy between an individual's qualifications and the requirements of a position can be indicative of a mismatch in their employability. This discrepancy can give rise to a perception of overqualification among the individual (Hu et al., 2015).

As a result, overqualification may have negative consequences in areas such as job satisfaction, career satisfaction and job performance. Therefore, ensuring person-job fit is critical for both individual and organisational success.

Relative deprivation

Maynard & Parfyonova (2013) posit that a robust person-environment fit is correlated with favourable outcomes, including career success, optimal job performance, and positive work attitudes. Conversely, a weak fit is linked to unfavourable outcomes. One of the outcomes in this context is the perception of relative deprivation. Relative deprivation is defined as the sense of inadequacy that individuals experience when comparing their current situation to established standards or the conditions of others (Schreurs, Hamstra, Jawahar & Akkermans, 2021).

The concept of relative deprivation was initially introduced through the research conducted by Samuel Stouffer and his colleagues in 1949 on American soldiers during World War II. Following an extended period of conceptual definition, the notion was shaped by individuals' perceptions of their own circumstances in comparison to established standards (Yeşiltaş, Arici & Sormaz, 2023). Runciman's (1966) seminal work introduced the concept of relative deprivation, defined as the discrepancy between an individual's desired state and their actual condition.

According to the relative deprivation theory, the satisfaction or dissatisfaction that individuals feel with the gains they have achieved may not be directly related to these gains (Lee et al., 2021). In this context, the comparison of gains becomes paramount, superseding the gains themselves. The phenomenon of relative deprivation emerges from an individual's perception that they are entitled to more based on comparisons with those who lack specific qualities, such as education and experience (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2007). In essence, relative deprivation can be defined as a pervasive social-cognitive tendency to prioritise external explanations for life events and outcomes experienced by oneself and others (Callan, Sutton, Chobthamkit, Yeung, Leung, Asano and Beattie et al., 2024). In this context, Smith, Pettigrew and Pippin (2012) conceptualised relative deprivation as a three-stage process. In the initial stage, a comparison is necessary for the occurrence of relative deprivation. Absent a comparison, relative deprivation remains nonexistent. Secondly, the individual making the comparison must engage in a cognitive evaluation that concludes that he/she or the group to which he/she belongs is disadvantaged. Thirdly, as a result of the cognitive assessment, the perceived disadvantage should be considered to be the result of an injustice.

Recent studies on relative deprivation have revealed that this concept has multiple simultaneous effects. In response to the circumstances mentioned above, feelings of anger and resentment have been identified as prominent emotional responses (Erdogan, Tomás, Valls & Gracia, 2018). This phenomenon can potentially result in a decline in job satisfaction and, consequently, a departure from the organisation. In this context, the phenomenon of overqualification can elicit a sense of relative deprivation, as the individual may perceive that their qualifications, knowledge, skills, and abilities justify a more desirable position than the one held (Erdogan & Bauer, 2021).

Organisational silence

According to the Oxford Dictionary, silence is defined as "an absence of all sound or noise" (OED, 2024). However, this definition is insufficient in organisational contexts. According to Morrison & Milliken (2000), organisational silence is defined as the deliberate non-sharing of information and thoughts by employees. This predicament emerges from employees' reluctance or inability to articulate their observations, criticisms, or suggestions, which often results in the suppression of information due to various concerns. While previously regarded as an adaptation behaviour, contemporary research acknowledges silence as a reactive response (Özdemir & Uğur, 2013; Gencer, 2018). Hirschman's seminal 1970 study examined organisational silence as a passive reaction, correlating it with commitment. Consequently, the absence of employee voice regarding negative experiences is often interpreted as indicative of a lack of organisational commitment. However, it has also been posited that silence is not solely attributable to commitment; employees' responses to organisational injustices may also be manifested through their silence (Bryant & Cox, 2004). Pinder & Harlos (2001) advanced the notion that silence is frequently an overlooked response among employees who are discontented with their professional circumstances.

The phenomenon of organisational silence is associated with a multitude of factors, including individual, managerial, and environmental elements (Yeşilaydın & Bayın, 2015). Individuals may adopt a state of silence for a variety of reasons, including the perception of being viewed as a complainant, the potential consequences of such behaviour on social relations, the loss of prestige and trust, or the experience of anxiety or fear regarding the possibility of not being promoted (Yaman & Ruçlar, 2014).

According to Yaman & Ruçlar (2014), organisational factors encompass management style, organisational communication structure, and perception of injustice. The tension between management's apprehension regarding feedback reception and employees' cognisance of this dynamic has been identified as a contributing factor to the propagation of silence behaviour (Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

Organisational silence can be regarded as a collective phenomenon, as employees often refrain from expressing their opinions due to concerns about potential repercussions. This reticence can propagate throughout the organisation, fostering an environment of collective inaction and hesitation to voice concerns (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Consequently, it is imperative to acknowledge that organisational silence can adversely impact organisational performance (Bowen & Blackman, 2003). This phenomenon has been shown to lead to a decline in employees' innovation and problem-solving capabilities, thereby exerting a deleterious effect on both intrapersonal and interorganizational relationships (Alqarni, 2020). To address this issue, it is imperative that managers acknowledge the prevailing culture of silence and proactively intervene to disrupt it (Fine & Nevo, 2008). The establishment of open communication channels and effective feedback mechanisms is crucial for addressing employees' concerns (Çubukçu & Tarakçıoğlu, 2010). In the context of organisational silence management, leaders must foster an environment of trust by addressing employees' concerns (Yeşilaydın & Bayın, 2015).

Research hypotheses and model

The interplay among the concepts of overqualification, organisational silence, and relative deprivation can facilitate a comprehensive understanding of employees' attitudes and behaviours in the workplace. A review of the extant literature reveals the potential for a correlation between employees' overqualification, tendencies to refrain from speaking up in the workplace (i.e., organisational silence), and individuals' experiences of relative deprivation when comparing themselves to others (Büchel, 2002; Demir & Demir, 2012; Akbiyık, 2015; Chen et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2021; Yeşiltaş et al., 2023; Brockman, 2024).

In accordance with the theory of person-environment fit, it can be posited that individuals with overqualifications may experience a sense of deprivation when confronted with the perception that they are being denied a suitable position for their qualifications (Erdogan et al., 2018). This assertion is corroborated by extant research in this field, as evidenced by the findings of Erdogan & Bauer (2021), Schreurs et al. (2021), and Yeşiltaş et al. (2023). Furthermore, teachers working in or starting to work in project schools have fewer practice lessons compared to teachers in other schools, in accordance with the education curriculum (General Directorate of Vocational Technical Education, 2024). This is due to criteria such as education, seniority, reward, and success. Consequently, there is inadequate time for teachers to transfer their knowledge and skills adequately. The gains that can be acquired through practice are desired to be moved not by teachers, but by mentors in the enterprises where students do internships. Consequently, these teachers' perception of relative deprivation may be amplified. In this direction, we hereby propose the following hypothesis:

H₁: Overqualification perception has a significant and positive effect on relative deprivation.

The interplay among overqualification, organisational silence, and relative deprivation has been theorised as a perpetuating cycle that exerts a detrimental influence on employees' workplace experiences (Pinder & Harlos, 2001; Lin, Wu, Dong, Chen, Wei and Duan, 2022; Uzunbacak & Karagöz, 2024). According to the principles of relative deprivation theory, the mitigation of shock from individual losses and feelings of worthlessness can contribute to the reduction of personal relative deprivation (Smith et al., 2012). In accordance with this rationale, providing opportunities for teachers to articulate their perspectives within the academic environment may serve to mitigate the impact of perceived overqualification on their experience of personal relative deprivation. This phenomenon can be attributed to the propensity of personal relative deprivation among teachers who do not receive the opportunities they anticipate. This can occur when individuals perceive a lack of appreciation from organisations that do not uphold their commitments. However, when teachers are allowed to speak, they may at least feel socially accepted, which may increase their self-evaluation and help them rebuild their self-worth (Lin et al., 2022). Consequently, the prevalence of negative sentiments is likely to diminish, as such support mirrors the esteem attributed to educators and fosters a sense of security (Bergeron & Thompson, 2020). In essence, the enhancement of teachers' organisational voice may facilitate the mitigation of the deleterious effects associated with perceived overqualification. Conversely, they may experience a deficiency in an effective emotional buffer, which can exacerbate feelings of personal relative deprivation. Based on this reasoning, we suggest the following:

H₂: Organisational silence has a moderating effect on the relationship between perception of overqualification and relative deprivation.

In line with this explanation, the model and hypotheses of the study were constructed as follows (Figure 1).

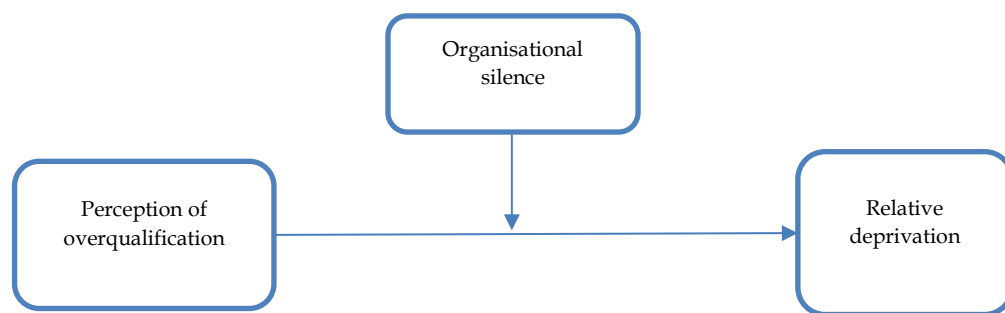


Figure 1: Research Model

Methodology

Data collection instrument

The data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire with two sections. The initial part of the questionnaire comprises scales developed using a 7-point Likert scale (1: Strongly disagree, 7: Strongly agree). The subsequent part of the questionnaire contains questions designed to ascertain the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Overqualification Scale: The scale of overqualification, as developed by Maynard, Joseph and Maynard (2006), was translated into Turkish by Yıldız, Özdemir, Habib & Çakı (2017). The scale's single-dimensional, nine-statement sample item is as follows: It has been posited that the level of education possessed by the subject exceeds the requirements of their occupation.

The following is the Relative Deprivation Scale: The scale (one dimension, four statements) created by Callan, Shead & Olson (2011) was used to measure the relative deprivation levels of the participants. The Turkish adaptation of the scale was conducted by Gunay (2022). The sample statement of the scale is as follows: "I feel deprived when I compare what people similar to me have with what I have."

The Organisational Silence Scale is a tool used to assess the presence and extent of silence within organisational settings. One of the scales developed to measure the level of organisational silence in the literature was developed by Knoll & Van Dick (2013). In this study, the Turkish version of the scale, translated by Çavuşoğlu & Köse (2019), was employed. The original scale possesses a four-factor structure, categorising silence into passive, accepting, and active forms. However, in the Turkish version, passive and accepting silence were grouped under a single dimension, resulting in a three-factor structure. A sample statement from the scale is as follows: "I refrained from speaking at work to avoid conflicts."

Control variables: Bernerth & Aguinis (2016) posit that no control variables must be theory-oriented. The study also measured demographic variables, including gender, age, professional seniority, length of service in the school, and position within the school. These variables may affect the perception of overqualification, relative deprivation, and organisational silence. However, a close examination reveals that only significant relationships were found between the age variable and relative deprivation (see Table 1). Therefore, the incorporation of the age variable as a control variable into the final model was deemed necessary.

Sample

The data were collected from gastronomy field teachers working in project schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education. The teachers were provided with the questionnaire form in electronic format. The participants were initially informed about the questionnaire, and volunteer teachers were requested to complete it. The sampling method employed was convenience sampling. The administration of the research questionnaires occurred from 1 to 30 September 2023. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards set forth by the Kastamonu University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee. This approval was granted on 11 July 2023, and the committee's decision was numbered 15. Following the conclusion of the implementation process, a total of 218 questionnaires were collected, and subsequent analyses were conducted on 204 of these questionnaires. This decision was made after the removal of 14 questionnaires

that were either filled out incorrectly or incompletely. Power analysis demonstrated that 161 questionnaires were adequate to estimate the research model under the conditions of the number of observed ($N= 35$) and latent ($N= 9$) variables, effect size ($d= 0.30$), probability value ($p= 0.05$), and statistical power (0.80) (Soper, 2024). The sample of 204 respondents satisfied the minimum sample size requirement. The demographic characteristics of the participants are delineated in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	111	54,4
	Male	93	45,6
Age	20-29	12	5,9
	30-39	65	31,9
	40-49	82	40,2
	50+	45	22,1
Position	Teacher	80	39,2
	Workshop Supervisor	46	22,5
	Subject Head	62	30,4
	Vice Principal	8	3,9
	Principal	6	2,9
Professional tenure	1-5 years	16	7,8
	6-10 years	32	15,7
	11-15 years	40	19,6
	16-20 years	21	10,3
	21-25 years	43	21,1
	26+ year	52	25,5
The length of tenure at the school	1-5 years	89	43,6
	6-10 years	60	29,4
	11-15 years	35	17,2
	16+ year	20	9,8
Total		204	100

Common method variance

In this study, given that the data were collected from a single source using a survey technique, it is necessary to control common method bias. This is due to the potential impact on the analysis outcomes, as previously observed by Bozkurt, Gligor, Locander & Ahmad Rather (2023). To ascertain this, Harman's single-factor analysis was conducted. Consequently, a study revealed that if the total variance of the first factor exceeds 50%, it can be concluded that the results are likely to be negatively influenced by common method bias. According to the test results, the first Eigenvalue accounted for 29.97% of the total variance. Secondly, the variance inflation factor (VIF) was examined as well. The presence of a VIF value greater than 3.3 indicates that the model is susceptible to common method bias (Kock, 2015). The VIF values for all scales range from 1.02 to 1.31. The findings of both analyses indicate the absence of common method bias in the research model.

Measurement model

Initially, the skewness and kurtosis values of all expressions in the scales were examined to ascertain the normal distribution condition. Given that these values ranged from -1.5 to +1.5 (Ofiaz & Polat, 2023; Polat & Ödemiş, 2023), it was hypothesised that they would be normally distributed (see Table 2). To assess the multidimensionality of the research scales, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with Varimax rotation was conducted using SPSS. At this stage, two items in the organisational silence scale (item 9, item 16) were removed from the scale due to low factor loadings and problems with irregular distribution.

Cronbach's Alpha (CA) was utilised to assess the reliability of the data, while Composite Reliability (CR) was employed for internal consistency testing. Convergent and discriminant validity were measured as well. The factor loadings exhibited values greater than 0.50 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black, 2010). In addition, following Bagozzi & Yi (1988) and Hair et al. (2010), the CR values exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, while the average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.50, and according to the results, $CR > AVE$. The outcomes of this study are presented in Table 2. The square root of the AVE is greater than the square of the correlation between the constructs, thereby indicating satisfactory discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 2: Validity and Reliability Values of the Measurement Model

Scale	Range of Skewness Values	Range of Kurtosis Values	Range of Factor Loadings	CA	CR	AVE
Overqualification scale	-0,39 / -0,61	-1,37 / -0,58	0,85-0,89	0,95	0,96	0,74
Relative Deprivation scale	0,64 / -0,23	-1,3 / -0,67	0,60-0,87	0,76	0,85	0,59
Organisational Silence scale	-0,33 / 1,3	-1,26 / 1,42	0,57-0,84	0,94	0,94	0,51

CA= Cronbach's Alpha, CR= Composite Reliability, AVE= Average variance

The discriminant validity between the scales was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion (FLC). Consequently, the square root of the AVE value of a structure should exceed the correlation coefficients of that structure with other structures (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The (*) values in Table 3 are the coefficients resulting from this process, and they indicate that the discriminant validity of the scales was achieved. The findings of this study suggest the validity and reliability of the scales utilised in the investigation.

Findings

Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis results

A thorough examination of the means in Table 3 reveals that the perceptions of teachers' overqualification are at an average level ($\bar{x} = 3.32$). The perceptions of relative deprivation ($\bar{x} = 2.83$) and organisational silence ($\bar{x} = 2.37$) are at a low level. Furthermore, the Pearson correlation coefficients in the table demonstrate that there is no relationship between organisational silence and the other two variables; however, there is a weak positive relationship between overqualification and relative deprivation ($r = 0.18$; $p < .05$).

Table 3: Means and Correlations of Variables

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender	1,45	0,50	-							
2. Age	2,81	0,91	-0,08	-						
3. Professional tenure	3,98	1,66	-0,09	0,86**	-					
4. The length of tenure at the school	1,93	1,01	0,11	0,41**	0,50**	-				
5. Position	2,06	1,08	0,25**	0,06	0,20	0,19**	-			
6. Overqualification	3,32	1,04	0,02	-0,04	-0,1	0,09	-0,02	(0,86*)		
7. Relative Deprivation	2,83	,91	-0,03	-0,20**	-0,13	-0,09	-0,09	,18**	(0,76*)	
8. Organisational Silence	2,37	,77	-0,02	-0,02	-0,02	0,09	-0,12	,04	,03	(0,71*)

n=204

** $p < 0,05$ (two-tailed)

*FLC values

Direct effects

To test the hypothesis that overqualification perception exerts an influence on relative deprivation (H1), simple linear regression analysis was conducted. The findings indicate that the perception of overqualification is associated with an increase in relative deprivation ($b = 0.15$, $p < 0.05$). Specifically, it can be posited that educators or administrators working in vocational high schools may experience heightened feelings of deprivation if they perceive themselves as overqualified for their roles. Consequently, H1 was accepted.

Moderation effects (Conditional effects)

The PROCESS Macro Model 1 was utilised with 5,000 bootstrap and 95% confidence interval options to ascertain whether the impact of overqualification perception on relative deprivation is moderated by organisational silence (Bozkurt, 2023; Bozkurt et al., 2023). Given the established correlation between the age variable and relative deprivation ($r = -0.20$; $p < 0.05$) within the context of this process (see Table 3), the effects of the age variable were systematically controlled during the testing phase of the study to ensure the validity of the results. The findings indicated an interaction between overqualification and organisational silence on the perception of relative deprivation ($b = -0.17$; $p < 0.05$). Consequently, the perception of organisational silence has been shown to harm the positive effect of the perception of overqualification on the feeling of deprivation. In other words, as the perception of organisational silence decreases, the positive impact of the perception of overqualification on relative deprivation increases. The positive effect of the perception of overqualification on relative deprivation is more pronounced among teachers who perceive a low level of organisational silence (compared to those who perceive a high level). In light of the results mentioned above, the hypothesis that H2 is accepted.

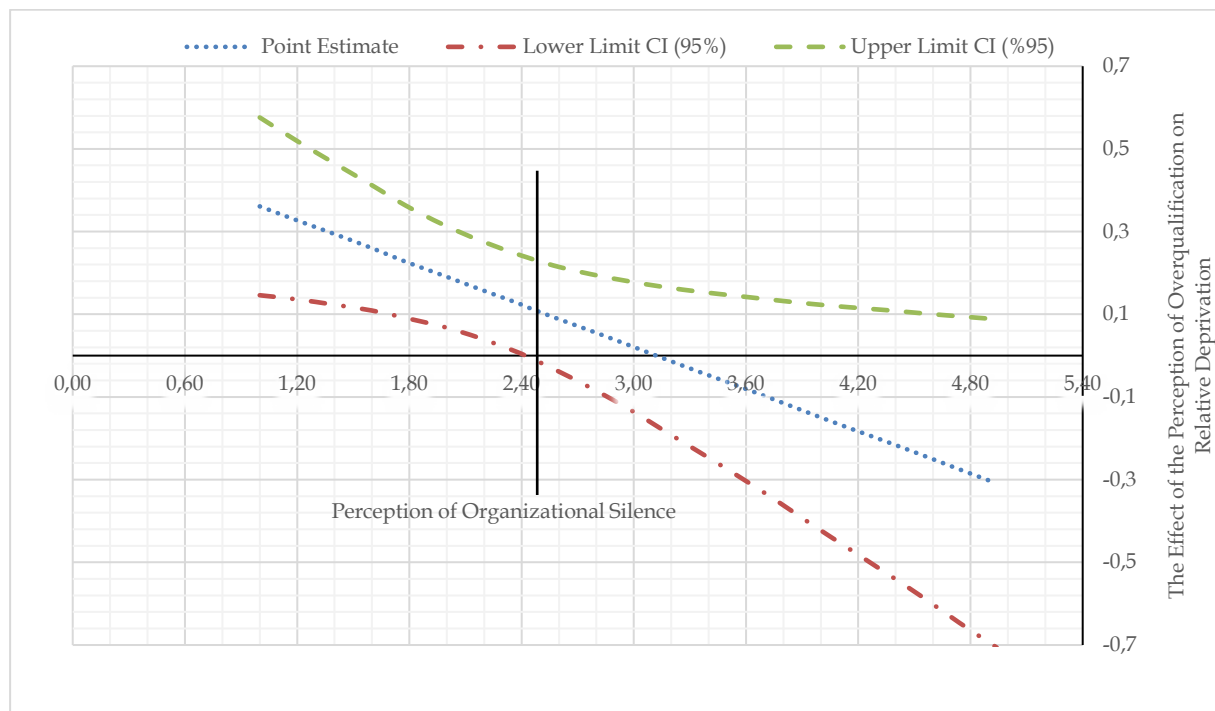


Figure 2: The Moderator Role of Perception on Organisational Silence

While it is imperative to underscore the significance of the interaction term, it is equally crucial to examine it in greater detail to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. To this end, the Johnson-Neyman (JN) technique was employed as the primary research method, given its established role in analysing continuous moderator variables (Bozkurt et al., 2023).

As demonstrated in Figure 2, the findings of the JN technique reveal that the conditional effect of perceived excessive qualification on relative deprivation is statistically significant and negative when the perceived organisational silence is equal to or lower than 2.42. In the upper echelons of this scale, there is an absence of a substantial moderating effect attributable to organisational silence. In other words, as the perception of organisational silence increases up to 2.42, the positive impact of perceived excessive qualification on relative deprivation decreases statistically; however, it is not statistically affected above the 2.42 level.

Discussion

Vaisey (2006) posits that individuals commence anticipating a "suitable" type of employment following the completion of their education, and that a discrepancy between educational and occupational outcomes can result in subjective challenges. The employment opportunity at hand is not merely a matter of financial compensation; rather, it is a position that will provide the appropriate level of income, working conditions, colleagues, sense of self, and social standing. Consequently, the discrepancy between educational and occupational achievements can precipitate cognitive dissonance and dissatisfaction. Researchers who examine feelings of overqualification utilise relative deprivation theory to explain how individuals respond to this particular type of skill-job mismatch (Erdogan et al., 2018; Peiró, Agut and Grau, 2010). As previously mentioned, relative deprivation occurs when an individual perceives a sense of disadvantage and feels deprived of something they rightfully deserve or are entitled to (Smith & Pettigrew, 2015).

Similarly, perceived overeducation, a form of perceived overqualification, has been shown to heighten individuals' expectations regarding their professional roles (Vaisey, 2006). Furthermore, the challenge of attaining adequate scores on various exams, in addition to a bachelor's degree, to secure employment as a teacher in Turkey further exacerbates these expectations. Consequently, teachers may develop sentiments of entitlement, perceiving themselves as entitled to more favourable working conditions (Lukšyte, Bauer, Debus, Erdogan and Wu, 2022). Consequently, the positive relationship between the perception of overqualification and relative deprivation that was obtained in the study is also supported by extant literature. To date, no research has been conducted with gastronomy teachers. However, similar results have been obtained in studies conducted with hotel employees (Yeşiltaş et al., 2023), undergraduate students (Erdogan et al., 2018; Lukšyte et al., 2022; Zhou, Zhang, Lin, and Li, 2023), and employees from different sectors (Schreurs et al., 2021).

In the present study, the researchers sought to assess the role of organisational silence perception in moderating the impact of overqualification perception on relative deprivation. The findings of this study indicate the presence of an adverse moderating effect of organisational silence, with a magnitude reaching up to 2.42. As organisational silence increases, that is, as teachers remain silent about organisational problems, the deprivation levels of those who evaluate themselves as overqualified are affected to a lesser extent. This phenomenon may be attributed to the assumption that educators who are likely to identify issues and perceive themselves as overqualified experience reduced feelings of deprivation, as evidenced by their less frequent expression of opinions. Indeed, as asserted by Lin et al. (2022), employees experiencing a sense of deprivation exhibit a reduced propensity to engage in constructive voice, defined as the voluntary articulation of concepts intended to enhance work efficacy. This tendency is often rooted in a response to adverse organisational treatment, as evidenced by research conducted by Bergeron & Thompson (2020). A preliminary review of the extant literature reveals an absence of studies that have examined these three variables in unison. Nevertheless, the existing literature provides empirical evidence suggesting that employees with advanced qualifications often refrain from voicing their opinions in the workplace (Liu, Li, Lan and Gong, 2024).

Theoretical contributions

This study makes a theoretical contribution to the literature by drawing attention to the concepts of overqualification, organisational silence, and relative deprivation. First, these concepts have typically been examined separately in the literature. In this study, the interrelationships between these concepts are investigated holistically, and a model with a tripartite framework is presented. This model can also help in understanding employee behaviours in organisations more comprehensively.

Second, while studies in the literature have examined the effects of overqualification on organisational silence, no studies have been found that explore its moderating effect on the relationship with relative deprivation. This research fills this theoretical gap by offering new findings on the tendencies of overqualified employees to remain silent due to their belief that their voices are not heard or their ideas are undervalued.

Third, we offer a new perspective on the concept of relative deprivation. Relative deprivation has typically been examined by focusing on emotional states (e.g., stress, depression) or individual behaviours (e.g., deviance, gambling). There are only a few studies that attempt to illuminate the social-cognitive processes of relative deprivation (Callan et al., 2024). In this study, we contribute to the literature by examining the concept through the cognitive processes that arise when employees do not receive recognition for their qualifications in the workplace.

Fourth, since the study was conducted with gastronomy teachers, it also contributes to the educational management literature. By addressing the relationships between these concepts through the experiences of teachers working in project schools, it offers more specific and applicable insights within the context of human resource management in education.

In conclusion, this study provides a significant contribution to theoretical discussions in organisational psychology and human resource management by examining the interactions between overqualification, organisational silence, and relative deprivation within a holistic model.

Practical contributions

The present findings indicate that the phenomenon of overqualification is associated with relative deprivation and that organisational silence serves as a moderating factor in this relationship. These findings have several practical implications. First, individuals contemplating the acceptance of a position for which they feel overqualified should be cognizant that this decision may result in feelings of deprivation. This phenomenon may be particularly salient for individuals aspiring to a career in education. As previously stated, in Turkey, the profession of teaching is contingent upon the successful completion of rigorous examination processes and the subsequent successful navigation of interview stages. Consequently, when seeking their initial employment, individuals may either seek positions that align with their qualifications or temper their expectations, becoming amenable to roles that fall below their skill level. The second option has the potential to result in a more expeditious job search and accelerated entry into the labour market. However, it is also important to note that studies show this second possibility could be associated with higher levels of relative deprivation (Erdogan et al., 2018). Therefore, individuals must meticulously evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of accepting a position for which they possess excessive qualifications for their own benefit.

Secondly, university career centres can play a pivotal role, particularly in helping soon-to-be graduates make informed decisions about job selection. This is because our findings indicate that accepting a position for which one is overqualified may result in psychological costs. For individuals who regard their initial employment as a provisional stepping stone toward more favourable future employment opportunities, accepting a position that does not necessitate a high level of qualifications may be a less problematic decision.

Thirdly, as is well understood, in Turkey, secondary school administrators do not possess the prerogative to select the teachers who will be employed in their institutions. Consequently, administrators must identify strategies to capitalise on the potential high job performance of these teachers. Administrators must prioritise cultivating a sense of belonging for these teachers within the organisation, proactively addressing potential feelings of deprivation through initiatives such as mentorship and participatory decision-making processes.

Fourthly, the findings of this study suggest that teachers who do not remain silent within the organisation (school) and perceive themselves as overqualified may experience increased levels of deprivation. This increased deprivation may be due to assumptions that teachers who perceive themselves as overqualified cannot contribute to solving problems or lack support from their leaders. Consequently, the insights and proposals of educators who have been granted (or are currently in possession of) the opportunity to articulate their thoughts should be accorded due consideration, endorsed by their leadership, and, if feasible, incorporated into the curriculum. Conversely, the consequences of relative deprivation, such as anger and frustration, may become more pronounced for these individuals.

Limitations

This study investigated the impact of perceived overqualification on relative deprivation, with organisational silence as a moderating variable. The findings confirmed that overqualification significantly predicts feelings of relative deprivation, and that organisational silence intensifies this effect. These results contribute to the literature by empirically linking overqualification to psychological outcomes through a specific organisational mechanism.

Despite these valuable insights, the study is not without limitations. First, although the sample size met the criteria for model testing, it remains relatively modest, and the use of convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research should replicate this model using larger, randomly selected samples to enhance the external validity and robustness of the conclusions. In particular, stratified probability sampling may provide a more representative understanding of how overqualification affects different demographic groups.

Second, the relatively high education level and narrow age range of the participants may have influenced perceptions of overqualification. To broaden applicability, future studies should examine more diverse samples that vary in age, education, and occupational background. Third, while this study focused on relative deprivation as an outcome, overqualification may also affect other critical organisational behaviours. For example, future research could investigate whether overqualified employees exhibit higher levels of counterproductive work behaviour or turnover intention. Such findings could have direct implications for recruitment practices and retention strategies. Moreover, this study identified organisational silence as a moderator; however, future research might explore other boundary conditions. For instance, perceived supervisor support or coworker empathy may either buffer or exacerbate the psychological impact of overqualification. Understanding these dynamics could inform the design of supportive workplace climates that mitigate the adverse effects of talent underutilisation.

By situating our findings within the broader discourse on person-job fit and psychological contract theory, this study offers both theoretical enrichment and actionable recommendations. Organisations should develop tailored communication strategies and engagement practices to address silent dissatisfaction among overqualified staff, thereby turning potential disengagement into proactive contribution.

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