

RESEARCH ON THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG OVER QUALIFICATION, INITIATIVE BEHAVIOR AND RESPONSIBILITY OF TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES

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Abstract

In order to explore the relationship between work attitude and work behavior of temporary employees in China, 242 college interns or part-time students were investigated to investigate the relationship among their sense of over qualification, initiative behavior and sense of responsibility. The results showed that: (1) the scores of education level and KSAs were higher than the average, while the scores of experience and qualification were lower than the average. (2) The correlation between educational level, KSAs and initiative behavior was 0.417-0.620, that of experience and initiative was -0.227-0.084, and that of responsibility was between 0.413-0.571. (3) Responsibility plays a moderating role in the relationship between over qualification and proactive behavior.

Keywords

Temporary employees; sense of over qualification; initiative behavior; sense of responsibility

1. INTRODUCTION

In China, with the diversified development of market economy and the deepening reform of organizational employment system, temporary employment has become an important way for organizations to obtain human resources. There are various forms of temporary employment, including freelancers, hourly workers and seasonal workers. In China, University interns or part-time students are an important group of temporary employees, but their identity is significantly different from that of full temporary employees. Therefore, it is of great significance and value to pay attention to the working attitude and behavior of this group and their relationship, especially with the characteristic value of Chinese situation.

College interns or part-time students have higher education level, and have more and better knowledge, skills and ability. However, due to the characteristics of informal, temporary, part-time, auxiliary and alternative, the job requirements are low, and it is easy to

cause college interns or part-time students to have a sense of excess qualification. The sense of over qualification refers to the extent to which people perceive that their education, experience, knowledge, skills and abilities exceed the requirements of their jobs (fine, 2007). Due to the multi-level, extensive and complex influence of the sense of excess qualification on the organization, it has been widely concerned by scholars at home and abroad, and has become a global problem (global press report, 2012).

Previous studies have confirmed that over qualification has a negative impact on individual attitudes (Kraimer et al., 2009; Roh et al., 2014), but negative emotions can also have a positive impact on individual behavior, such as time pressure, situational pressure and other stressors can promote the emergence of proactive behavior in work (Ohly et al., 2006). Proactive behavior is a spontaneous and predictable behavior aimed at changing or improving situations and individuals (Parker et al., 2006). In addition, the level of responsibility may affect the relationship

between over qualification and proactive behavior. Studies have shown that employees with high sense of responsibility are willing to predict, plan, and spend extra efforts to achieve future goals in various situations (Judge & Ilies, 2002), while employees with low sense of responsibility tend to live in the present and avoid forecasting, planning and striving for future goals (Sarchione et al., 1998).

This study takes the temporary employees represented by University interns or part-time students as the research object, and discusses the relationship between the sense of responsibility, employee's sense of excess qualification and their initiative behavior, which undoubtedly has important theoretical significance and practical value.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

2.1 The definition of temporary employment, sense of over qualification, initiative behavior and sense of responsibility

Temporary employment originated in Europe and the United States. In Europe and the United States and other countries and regions, it is often called "uncertain work", "temporary intermediary work", temporary employment, temporary employment, fixed-term employment, etc. Temporary employment has the characteristics of informal, temporary, part-time, auxiliary and alternative (McKeown, 2005). Under the temporary employment relationship, the work that the employee is engaged in is arranged through the employment agency, and often the location, time and quantity of the work are potentially unpredictable. Temporary employment is a common form of atypical employment. In China, at present, the three concepts of temporary employment, non-standard (flexible) employment and informal employment are mixed with each other. The concept and scope of "temporary employment" are relatively confused. Up to now, there are two kinds of classification related to temporary employment in China's labor relations policy and practice: one is the regular staff within the establishment and the other is the temporary or flexible employment personnel outside the establishment; the other is the regular employment population and the flexible

employment population.

Over qualification refers to the phenomenon that individual qualifications exceed job requirements in organizational scenarios (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009), which is generally regarded as a sub concept of underemployment by researchers. According to the difference of measurement methods, the excess of qualification can be divided into objective and subjective. The former refers to the extent to which an individual actually possesses more than the qualifications required for the current job (Maltarich et al., 2011); the latter refers to the extent to which the employed individual perceives that his / her education, experience, and KSAs (knowledge, skills, ability) level exceed the job requirements (Fine, 2007). The research of this paper mainly focuses on the subjective level of excess qualification, that is, the sense of excess qualification.

Initiative behavior is a kind of spontaneous and predictable behavior aimed at changing or improving situations and individuals (Parker, Williams & Turner, 2006), which is spontaneous, forward-looking and transformative, and spontaneity is the basis of foresight and change. Proactive behavior is something that employees voluntarily do outside of the formal job description, or do something more than their own job in the absence of clear instructions, such as completing the goals set by themselves rather than the goals assigned by the organization. Proactive individuals can not only perform their core tasks better (Thompson, 2005), but also manage their career better (Carless & Bernath, 2007). Griffin, Neal and Parker (2007) believe that proactive behavior includes three dimensions: individual initiative, team initiative and organizational initiative. Individual initiative mainly refers to individual work, such as reasonable arrangement of working time; team initiative refers to helping team and other team members, such as clarifying team work content; organizational initiative is related to organizational system or organizational behavior, such as improving organizational training methods.

Responsibility refers to the degree to which an individual is disciplined, prudent, reliable, goal oriented and persistent (Hurtz & Donovan, 2000). Mount and Barrick (1998) believe that

responsibility can also reflect the degree of individual self-control and the ability to delay the satisfaction of needs, which is the most important quality affecting employees' work attitude and behavior in Big Five personality research. Individuals with a high sense of responsibility tend to be thoughtful, abide by rules and regulations, have strong discipline, responsibility and achievement needs, can experience a stronger sense of happiness and show higher productivity (Xu Shiyong, Liu Yanjun, Wang Zhen, Zhu Jinqiang, 2019)

2.2 The relationship and hypothesis of temporary employment, over qualification, initiative behavior and responsibility

Temporary employment is regarded as a supplement to formal employment. Its economic value is far lower than that of formal employment. It has the characteristics of informal, temporary, part-time, auxiliary and alternative (McKeown, 2005). Jiang Jianwu and Dai wanwen (2012) believe that temporary employees are often engaged in low-end, simple jobs with single requirements. Therefore, it is not difficult to speculate: compared with formal employment, the requirements of temporary employment are relatively low. Some scholars point out that college students have a higher level of education and have more and better knowledge, skills and ability. On the other hand, the study found that the current colleges and universities generally did not fully form a market-oriented talent training mechanism, resulting in a relatively lack of practical experience of college students (Hu Yongqing and Xu Yingyun, 2015). Chen liangqin (2016) believes that due to the lack of perfect practical teaching content in the whole higher education, both students' practical skills and students' specific practical experience are relatively scarce. Therefore, we speculate that the research object has less practical and working experience, and make the following hypothesis 1:

Hypothesis 1: among the three dimensions of the sense of over qualification, the scores of education level and KSAs (knowledge, skill and ability) dimension are higher than those of experience dimension.

Studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between some "negative" work characteristics and proactive behavior, such as time pressure, situational pressure and other

stressors can promote the emergence of proactive behavior in work (Ohly, Sonnentag & Plurtke, 2006). Although the sense of excess qualification indicates that there are some differences between personal qualifications and job requirements, it may enhance negative emotions (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009). However, Ohly and Fritz (2010) believe that being proactive is a way to deal with "negative" work environments. Individuals take proactive behaviors to reduce differences and achieve personal goals (Carver & Scheier, 2001; Zimmerman, 2000), and alleviate negative emotions. In addition, studies have confirmed the positive relationship between the sense of over qualification and individual initiative behavior (Zhang, law & Lin, 2016). At the same time, studies have confirmed that responsibility is positively related to many proactive behaviors, such as career planning (carless & Bernath, 2007), job hunting, etc. Therefore, we make hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 2a: the subjects' educational level and KSAs sense of over qualification are significantly positively correlated with each dimension of proactive behavior;

Hypothesis 2b: there is a significant positive correlation between the sense of responsibility and the dimensions of proactive behavior.

Employees with high sense of responsibility are willing to predict, plan and spend extra efforts to achieve their future goals in various situations (Judge & Ilies, 2002); studies have shown that they are likely to take various proactive behaviors in different situations, such as seeking information (Butler, 1993) and pursuing learning and development (Colquit & Simmering, 1998). Employees with a high sense of responsibility are less likely to change their proactive behavior, and they tend to expect to perform well in all situations (Grant, 2008). Therefore, we speculate that employees with high sense of responsibility may take initiative behavior in various situations, and less consider the sense of excess qualification; that is, employees with high sense of responsibility have less influence on proactive behavior. Therefore, we make hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 3: responsibility moderates the effect of excess qualification on proactive behavior, and the effect of excess on proactive behavior is greater in employees with low

responsibility than those with high responsibility.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research object

This study mainly selected college students who have temporary employment experience as the survey object, and obtained the data through the Internet questionnaire. The data were collected during the winter vacation in 2020, and questionnaires were distributed to students who were doing internships and part-time jobs (including freshmen to seniors) and those who had done internships and part-time jobs in their spare time (mainly senior students). A total of 280 responses were received, of which 242 were valid, with an effective rate of 86.43%.

3.2 Measuring tools

The measurement of the sense of excess of qualification was based on the "scale of excess of qualification" compiled by Maynard et al. (2006). The scale is divided into three dimensions: education level (2 items), experience (2 items) and KSAs (knowledge, skills and ability) (3 items), with a total of 7 items. Likert's five point scoring method was used. The α coefficients of the three dimensions are 0.723, 0.771 and 0.872 respectively, and the α coefficient of the total table is 0.742.

Active behavior was measured by the "proactive behavior scale" developed by Griffin, Neal and Parker (2007). The scale is divided into three dimensions: individual (2 items), team (2 items) and organization (2 items), with 6 items in total. Likert's five point scoring method was used. The α coefficients of the three dimensions were 0.944, 0.924 and 0.946 respectively, and the α coefficient of the total table was 0.880.

Responsibility was measured by using the "responsibility subscale of the big five personality scale" compiled by McCrae and Costa et al. (1994). The six point scoring method was used in the scale, and the α coefficient of the total scale was 0.751.

Personal data of the respondents were included in the questionnaire, including gender, grade, form of employment, length of employment

and nature of the enterprise. The data were collected and analyzed by IBM SPSS 20.0.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Common method deviation test

Referring to Zhou Hao and long Lirong's (2004) method of common method deviation test, Harman single factor test was used in this study. The results of exploratory factor analysis showed that the first component could explain 39.11% of the variation, and the ratio of eigenvalues of the first factor (10.170) to the second factor (2.982) was 3.41, less than the critical value of 5. Therefore, it can be considered that the influence of common method bias in this study is small and will not affect the validity of the results.

4.2 Sample composition analysis

The basic information of this research sample is as follows: 101 males, accounting for 41.74%, 141 females, accounting for 58.26%; senior year students account for 65.29%; internship accounts for 62.4% and part-time accounts for 37.6%; the length of employment mainly concentrates on less than 6 months (including 6 months), accounting for 88.02%; the nature of the enterprises is mainly private enterprises, accounting for 45.87%.

4.3 Descriptive analysis

Table 1 lists the scores of the subjects in three dimensions of the sense of over qualification, three dimensions of initiative behavior and sense of responsibility. From table 1, we can find that: the scores of education level and KSAs are higher than the average score of 3 points, while the score of experience qualification is lower than the average score of 3 points; the scores of three dimensions of initiative behavior are higher than the average score of 3 points; the overall score of sense of responsibility is higher than the average score of 3.5. In addition, the correlation analysis showed that: the correlation of educational level, KSAs and initiative behavior was 0.417-0.620; the correlation between experience and initiative was -0.227-0.084; the correlation between sense of responsibility and initiative behavior was 0.413-0.571. The details are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1 Description and correlation analysis of sense of over qualification, initiative behavior and sense of responsibility

Index	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1Sense of educational level and qualification surplus	3.579	0.958	1						
2Excess of experience and qualification	2.715	0.824	-0.028	1					
3KSAs Sense of excess qualification	3.718	0.968	0.790**	0.086	1				
4Individual initiative behavior	3.847	0.883	0.620**	-0.084	0.603**	1			
5Team initiative behavior	3.486	1.130	0.615**	-0.160	0.528**	0.482**	1		
6Organizational initiative behavior	3.335	1.244	0.432**	-0.227**	0.417**	0.214**	0.765**	1	
7 conscientiousness	4.255	0.801	0.450**	0.005	0.514**	0.571**	0.413**	0.471**	1

Note: * * significant correlation at 0.01 level (bilateral).

4.4 Regression analysis among variables

Taking the initiative behavior as the dependent variable, this paper introduces the independent variables such as education level, experience and KSAs. The results show that: the sense of educational level qualification excess ($\beta = 0.419$), experience qualification excess ($\beta = -0.215$) and KSAs qualification excess ($\beta =$

0.320) have significant influence on initiative behavior; among them, the contribution rate of education level qualification surplus to initiative behavior is 44%, and that of experience and KSAs is 3.3%. The details are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2 Regression analysis results of educational level, experience and KSAs sense of excess qualification on initiative behavior

Predictive of variable	Beta	t	Change of R ²	F test of R ² gain
Sense of educational level and qualification surplus	0.419	8.253***	0.440	188.861***
Excess of experience and qualification	-0.215	-4.646***	0.033	15.082***
KSAs sense of over-qualification	0.320	3.999***	0.033	15.995***

4.5 The moderating role of sense of responsibility in the relationship between over qualification and initiative behavior

Firstly, the sense of over qualification (education level, KSAs) and sense of responsibility are centralized, and then the initiative behavior is taken as the dependent variable. Then, the independent variable, the moderating variable and the interaction between the independent variable and the moderating variable are introduced for regression analysis, and three models are obtained. Model 1 includes an independent variable (sense of excess qualification), model 2 adds a moderating variable (sense of responsibility) on the basis of model 1, and model 3 adds an interaction item (the product of sense of qualification and responsibility) on

the basis of model 2. The purpose of model 1 is to study the influence of the independent variable (sense of responsibility) on the dependent variable (initiative behavior) without considering the moderating variable (sense of responsibility). The results showed that: the independent variable (sense of over qualification) showed significant ($t = 14.190, P = 0.000 < 0.05$), which means that the sense of excess of qualification will have a significant impact on proactive behavior. In addition, the interaction between the independent variable (sense of excess qualification) and the moderating variable (sense of responsibility) also showed significant ($t = -2.235, P = 0.026 < 0.05$), which means that when the sense of excess qualification affects the initiative

behavior, the influence range of different levels of responsibility has significant difference. The

details are shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3 The moderating effect of sense of responsibility on the relationship between over qualification and initiative behavior

Index	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			
	β	t	p	B	t	p	B	t	p	
constant	3.556	83.694	0.000	3.556	89.971	0.000	3.592	84.754	0.000	
Over qualification	0.663	14.190	0.000	0.504	9.985	0.000	0.472	9.071	0.000	
conscientiousness				0.356	6.192	0.000	0.245	3.247	0.001	
Sense of excess qualification *							-0.098	-2.235	0.026	
conscientiousness										
Adjust of R ²		0.454			0.527			0.535		
F value		F=201.348, p=0.000			F=135.513, p=0.000			F=93.516, p=0.000		
ΔR^2		0.456			0.075			0.010		
ΔF value		F=201.348, p=0.000			F=38.346, p=0.000			F=4.994, p=0.026		

In order to further explain the relationship between regulatory effects, the simple slope analysis method of Aiken and West (1991) was used to group the regulatory variables with one standard deviation higher than the mean value and one standard deviation below the mean value, and then the regression analysis of the sense of excess qualification and responsibility on the subjective behavior was conducted at the high and low levels, and the results were plotted. The results showed that high-level sense of responsibility had a significant

moderating effect on the relationship between the sense of over qualification and initiative behavior ($t = 5.616, P = 0.000 < 0.05$), and the low level was also significant ($t = 10.16, P = 0.000 < 0.05$). The chart shows that the influence range (slope) of independent variable (sense of excess qualification) on dependent variable (initiative behavior) is significantly different at different levels of regulatory variable (sense of responsibility). The details are shown in **Figure 1**.

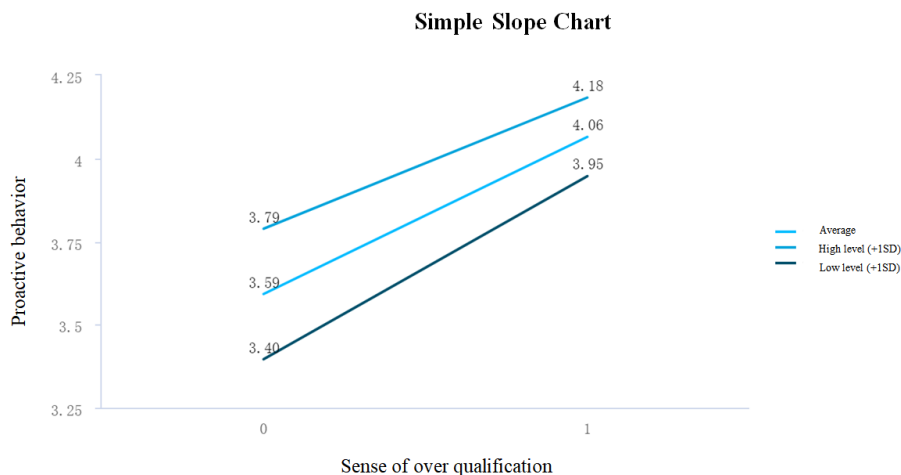


Fig 1 The moderating effect of sense of responsibility on the relationship between the sense of over qualification and proactive behavior

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There are micro and macro reasons for the

emergence of temporary employment. The micro reasons include: (1) choosing flexible workers to meet the temporary employment

needs of enterprises can adapt to the rapid changes of the market. (2) Compared with regular employees, the salary and welfare level of temporary employees is usually lower, which can reduce labor costs and obtain competitiveness. (3) The management is more convenient, which can save the cost and time needed to recruit, configure and train a formal employee. The macro reasons include: (1) under the background of economic globalization, more and more enterprises pursue low-cost strategy and hope to obtain cost advantage in human resource cost. (2) The change of workers' employment concept includes the need for flexibility of working place and working time, the demand for diversity of work, the balance between family and work, etc. (3) The frequent changes of market demand and the rapid demand for talents urge enterprises to maintain the flexibility of employment.

First of all, this study found that the scores of the subjects' sense of excess of education level and KSAs qualification were higher than the average score of 3 points, while the score of experience qualification excess was lower than the average score of 3 points; the scores of all dimensions of initiative behavior and sense of responsibility were higher than the average score. In our opinion, one of the important reasons is that compared with formal employment, temporary employment requires relatively low job requirements, while university interns or part-time students have higher education level, have more and better knowledge, skills and ability, and are prone to have a sense of excess qualification; on the other hand, University interns or part-time students have less practice and work experience. Therefore, the conclusion is drawn: in the three dimensions of over qualification, the sense of educational level and KSAs is stronger than that of experience and qualification; hypothesis 1 is supported.

Secondly, this study found that the correlation between the three dimensions of students' educational level, KSAs and initiative behavior was 0.417-0.620, the correlation between experience and initiative was -0.227-0.084; the correlation between sense of responsibility and initiative behavior was 0.413-0.571. In our opinion, an important reason is that when

employees have a sense of over qualification, taking initiative to match their qualifications can reduce the difference between their goals and goals, and alleviate negative emotions. It is worth noting that the research object has a higher level of education, has more and better knowledge, skills and ability, but less practice and work experience. Therefore, it is concluded that there is a positive relationship between the over qualification of education level, KSAs and initiative behavior of the temporary employees represented by University interns or part-time students, but there is no positive relationship between the sense of experience and the initiative behavior; there is also a positive relationship between the group's sense of responsibility and active behavior; hypothesis 2 is supported. This is consistent with the research conclusions of many scholars in the past. For example, Zhang, law and Lin (2016) believe that there is a positive relationship between the sense of over qualification and personal initiative behavior; previous studies have confirmed that the sense of responsibility has a positive relationship with many proactive behaviors, such as career planning (Carless & Bernath, 2007), job hunting, etc. This also proves the reliability of this study.

In addition, this study also found that: in the three dimensions of the sense of excess of qualifications, the contribution rate of the sense of excess of educational level to initiative behavior was 44%, and that of experience and KSAs was 3.3%. This means that among the three dimensions of the sense of over qualification, the education level has the most important influence on the initiative behavior, while the other two dimensions have little influence on the initiative behavior.

Then, this study found that the independent variable (sense of excess of qualification) had a significant impact on the dependent variable (active behavior) ($t = 14.190$, $P = 0.000 < 0.05$); when the independent variable (sense of excess of qualification) had an impact on the dependent variable (active behavior), there were significant differences in the influence range of different levels of regulatory variables (responsibility and willfulness) ($t = -2.235$, $P = 0.026 < 0.05$). In our opinion, an important reason is that employees with high sense of responsibility may take initiative behavior in

various situations, and less consider the sense of excess qualification; that is, employees with high sense of responsibility have less influence on proactive behavior. At the same time, employees with low sense of responsibility take initiative behavior more seriously, that is, employees with low sense of responsibility have more influence on initiative behavior. Therefore, the conclusion is drawn: responsibility moderates the influence of excess qualification on proactive behavior, and the influence of excess qualification on proactive behavior is greater in employees with low responsibility than those with high sense of responsibility; hypothesis 3 is supported.

Finally, this study can draw the following conclusions: first, in the three dimensions of the sense of excess qualification, the sense of educational level and KSAs is stronger, and the sense of excess of experience qualification is weak. Second, there is a positive relationship between the sense of educational level, KSAs and initiative behavior, but there is no positive relationship between the sense of excess of experience and initiative behavior; there is also a positive relationship between the sense of responsibility and the initiative behavior. Third, the sense of responsibility of the above groups plays a moderating role between the sense of excess qualification and initiative behavior.

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