




## Multifaceted pathways from perceived overqualification to proactive work behavior in high-tech enterprises: Mediating role of competitive status motivation and moderating effect of role breadth self-efficacy

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### ABSTRACT

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This study examines the pathways through which perceived employee overqualification (PEO) influences proactive work behavior of employees (PBE) in high-tech enterprises focusing on the mediating role of competitive status motivation (CSM) and the moderating effect of role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE). Data were collected from 470 research and development employees in the Shenzhen High-Tech Industrial Park using structural equation modeling and moderated mediation analysis. The results indicate that PEO positively affects PBE directly and indirectly through Prestige-Driven Competitive Status Motivation (PCSM) and Dominance-Driven Competitive Status Motivation (DCSM). The moderating effect of PCSM is stronger than that of DCSM with RBSE enhancing the positive influence of prestige-driven motivation on proactive behavior. This study integrates psychological and individual motivational theories to understand better how PCSM and DCSM influence and shape employee proactive behaviors. The practical implications suggest that high-tech enterprises should focus on recognizing and nurturing overqualified employees. Organizations can enhance proactive behaviors, ultimately improving overall organizational performance by fostering intrinsic prestige-driven motivation and promoting RBSE.

**Contribution/Originality:** The study innovatively advances the proactive motivation theory. It explores how competitive status motivation, from prestige- and dominance-driven aspects, impacts employees' proactive behavior in high - tech firms with overqualified employees. By introducing role breadth self - efficacy as a moderator, it uncovers new variable relationships, enriching and developing the theory in the context of high - tech enterprises.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The cognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions of employees remain pivotal in contemporary organizational research. In high-tech enterprises, proactive work behavior (PBE) is widely recognized as a key driver of innovation and a sustained competitive advantage (Turner, 2019). Recently, there has been an influx of highly skilled workers in high-tech organizations, many of whom suffer from perceived overqualification of employees (POE), an affliction, whereby the knowledge and qualifications of the people at issue exceed the criteria for performing certain assigned functions (Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Khan & Morrow, 1991). PEO's impact on employee behavior is multi-faceted. On the one hand, it may lead to the worsening of job satisfaction, a decrease in organizational commitment and acts of knowledge hiding (Černe, Nerstad, Dysvik, & Škerlavaj, 2014; Erdogan, Bauer, Peiró, & Truxillo, 2011). On the other hand, it may spur creativity and proactivity if worker-friendly

organizational environments and incentives abound (Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2016; Zhang, Wang, & Li, 2021). This dichotomy calls for further inquiry into the mechanisms and contextual dynamics of PEO.

The theory of status construction provides a useful mechanism for analyzing how PEO relates to the way an employee behaves (Ridgeway, 1991). In other words, employees use social interaction to construct their organizational status. Prestige-Driven Competitive Status Motivation (PCSM) encourages prosocial and inventive behavior by showing competence and getting acknowledgment from the group while Dominance-Driven Competitive Status Motivation (DCSM) focuses on resources and power dynamics causing competition (Anderson, Hildreth, & Howland, 2015). However, the distinct pathways through which these motivations operate in a dynamic context of high-tech enterprises remain insufficiently studied.

China's rapid advancement in high-tech industries and sustained investment in R&D (Research and Development) have positioned highly skilled researchers as key contributors to technological innovation and organizational success. Stimulating the proactive behavior of overqualified employees in highly competitive, resource-constrained environments has emerged as a critical managerial challenge. To address this, the present study constructs a multi-path mechanism model to comprehensively examine the interplay between PEO, CSM, RBSE, and PBE, offering insights into their combined influence on employee behavior.

### 1.1. Research Questions

Building on the above discussion, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. How does perceived employee overqualification (PEO) shape proactive work behavior among highly qualified employees in high-tech enterprises?
2. What roles do prestige-driven and dominance-driven competitive status motivations play in mediating the relationship between PEO and proactive work behavior?
3. How does role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE) influence the relationship between competitive status motivation and proactive work behavior among highly qualified employees?

### 1.2. Research Objectives

This study aims to examine the many ways in which the high perceived employee overqualification (PEO) of high-qualified employees influences their proactive work behavior in high-tech enterprises through competitive status motivation (prestige-driven and dominance-driven). It will also look for the possible moderating role of role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE) within these mechanisms. The study will provide theoretical contributions and practical suggestions for motivating, such as highly qualified employees in a high-tech scenario.

### 1.3. Research Significance

The present study deals with motivating highly qualified employees in high-tech enterprises by using a multipath framework. It deepens the understanding of the relationship between perceived employee overqualification (PEO) and proactive work behavior of employees (PBE) in view of the dual paths of competitive status motivation when it comes to prestige-driven and dominance-driven, mediated by role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE). This approach gives a new commentary on culminating the theoretical framework of proactive work behavior, especially in high-tech industries, and of operational remarks for high-tech enterprises needing advice on optimizing resource allocation and managerial strategies in dealing with highly qualified employees. Their guidance would help support harmony, rational competition-cum-collaboration, better organizational performance and enhanced employee innovation.

Despite the increased interest in perceived overqualification effects on employees' behaviors, prior research has failed to pay due attention to the differential paths competitive status motivational mechanisms exert on proactive work behavior in high-technology contexts. Moreover, while recognizing that RBSE will be an important

moderator of individual behavior, very little attention is paid to exactly how it serves to shape the dynamics between perceived overqualification and proactive behavior. This study fills these gaps by providing an integrated model that incorporates PEO, competitive status motivation, and RBSE, which gives new insights into how high-tech enterprises can manage overqualified employees to facilitate both individual and organizational growth. The contribution of this research pertains not only to the theoretical development of proactive work behavior within organizational settings but also to practical recommendations in shaping a more creative and collaborative workplace within the competitive high-tech industry.

#### 1.4 Originality

The originality of this study lies in the first-time comparison of competitive status motivation from both prestige-driven and dominance-driven perspectives in influencing proactive work behavior. Its distinct contribution is guiding high-tech enterprises to critically assess competition and directly offering talent management optimization strategies.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

### 2.1. Theoretical Foundation

#### 2.1.1. Status Construction Theory as a Theoretical Basis for This Study

In highly competitive contexts, status competition is an important way of getting resources and power for employees. Prior research indicates that external status characteristics, such as gender, age, individual competence, and team orientation, importantly influence employees' abilities to gain status (Anderson et al., 2015). People acquire status either constructively, for instance, through capability and meaningful contributions or destructively, intimidation and threats, and usually out of self-interest (Bendersky & Hays, 2012; Van Dijk, Shantz, & Alfes, 2020).

Status competition motivation can be defined as employees' intrinsic motivation to raise their organizational status (Willis, García-Sánchez, Sánchez-Rodríguez, García-Castro, & Rodríguez-Bailón, 2022). This study incorporates PCSM and DCSM into the research design, placing them at the center of the mediating variables between PEO and employee behavior. This research design from a psychological perspective opens up a line of discussion on how employees' status affects their behavior.

Workers with dominance-driven competitive status motivation (DCSM) think about the material rewards and substantial benefits that are involved in having status, such as power, financial rewards, and control. This drive compels them to engage in competitive behaviors to secure greater access to resources and authority (Zeigler-Hill, Sauls, Ochoa, Kopitz, & Besser, 2021). By contrast, those with prestige-driven competitive status Motivation (PCSM) view status as indicative of recognition and respect. Their primary aim is to attain respect from people and increase their status in society (Davis & Vaillancourt, 2023).

#### 2.1.2. Theoretical Support of Proactive Motivation Theory for This Study

The proactive motivation model explains how people enact proactive behavior in response to the dynamic interplay between intrinsic motivation and contextual factors. Proactive work behavior (PBE) represents a direct reflection of motivational drivers, thus providing a main target for theoretical analysis (Parker & Collins, 2010). This behavior personifies the act of changing the present or realizing future goals making it the central subject of this model. Proactive behavior, as a future-directed activity provides important lessons to be used in the elaboration of managerial policies and organizational practices (He & Kim, 2021). Proactive work behavior results directly from a combination of motivational factors. It is a tangible manifestation of motivational forces and is significantly shaped by goal-driven processes (Zhang & Inness, 2019). This underlines the high theoretical value that research on the relationship between motivation and behavior explains employees' proactive behavior.

In competitive settings, employees are bound to face pressures related to status and power that would encourage them to enhance their status by gaining control over resources and exercising authority, thus manifesting dominance-driven competitive status motivation (DCSM) (Bakker, Demerouti, & Verbeke, 2004).

This can be attributed to the situational activation effect as proposed by the proactive motivation model. Moreover, this model has highlighted the role of intrinsic motivation in that employees who perceive themselves as overqualified seek external validation and increased social status by being proactive, hence showing status competition motivation.

## 2.2. Hypothesis Development

### 2.2.1. Perceived Employee Overqualification and Proactive Work Behavior of Employees

Perceived employee overqualification (PEO) is when employees feel that they hold higher qualifications in terms of education, skills, knowledge, and experience than what their current job descriptions entail (Jiang, Dong, Hu, Liu, & Guan, 2022). PEO can be the result of various factors, such as the widespread access to education, improved employee skillsets, and changing job requirements (Onat & Eren, 2020). When employees perceive themselves as overqualified, it often drives them to engage in highly proactive and creative behaviors toward achieving their own fulfillment in the pursuit of accomplishment and satisfaction (Maden-Eyiusta, 2024). This intrinsic push drives them positively to go beyond their daily job responsibilities as they strive to seek larger challenges and opportunities.

Overqualified employees perceive a lack of challenge in the positions they hold and a sense that they are wasting their abilities and potential. They start to display proactive behaviors to investigate personal and professional opportunities (Sesen & Ertan, 2020). Studies have shown that harmonious work passion stimulates employee engagement and offers motivation to take up proactive changes for the organization's benefit (Ma, Khattak, Ghani, & Huo, 2024). Employees who consider themselves overqualified may find happiness and meaning in their work and extend passion for their work into proactive behaviors (Abdalla, Saeed, & Khan, 2024).

Overqualified employees may feel they possess advantages in their psychological standing compared to others. Such psychological advantages enhance their propensity and ability to innovate without diminishing the stimulating effect on proactive workplace behaviors (Chen, Liu, Zhang, & Qian, 2018). When considered together, these findings suggest that PEO should have a positive effect on PBE.

From these insights, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Perceived employee overqualification (PEO) positively influences employees' proactive work behavior (PBE).*

### 2.2.2. Perceived Employee Overqualification and Prestige-Driven Competitive Status Motivation

Perceived employee overqualification is the feeling that a certain employee's level of educational attainment, and work experience as well as knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed surpass those considered minimally necessary for the position the employee occupies. An employee who possesses a high degree of PEO belief will view the potential for their talents and values to be inoperative and non-desirable while still striving to achieve a status within the organization that is characterized by more recognition and social power (Maner & Case, 2016). Prestige-based competitive status motivation considers the symbolic value of status wherein employees are motivated to enhance their reputation based on outstanding competencies and achievements that deserve respect and accolades from others (Maner, 2017).

This view generates an innate urge to achieve social recognition and respect. Therefore, PCSM was born (Jiang et al., 2022).

Employees with high PEO demonstrate their abilities to attain a higher status and recognition, which is a reflection of PCSM (Brady, 2023). They tend to be more dedicated, participate more in teamwork, and perform better in ethical behaviors and professional skills to earn acceptance and respect from colleagues and superiors. In

addition to personal motives, PCSM can also result in prosocial behavior. For instance, overqualified employees may seek to use their high status to promote team development, thus achieving win-win results for themselves and their teams (Deng et al., 2018; Yang & Li, 2021). Organizations that see the opportunity of providing employees with some prestige are subconsciously motivating in the direction of PCSM. Hence, based on the interpretations, we put forth the following hypothesis:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Perceived employee overqualification positively affects prestige-driven competitive status motivation.*

### 2.2.3. The Impact of Perceived Employee Overqualification on Dominance-Driven Competitive Status Motivation

Perceived employee overqualification (PEO) stimulates the extension of individual aspirations for power and resources, thus catalyzing dominance-driven competitive status motivation (DCSM). Employees who feel they are overqualified for their jobs generally become dissatisfied; they want to attain a higher status within the company in order to gain more power and resources (Lee, Erdogan, Tian, Willis, & Cao, 2021). DCSM takes into account the need for a quest for power, rewards, and goal achievement with overqualified individuals tending more often to employ strategies of this nature in pursuing an advantageous position in resource apportionment (Casto, Edwards, Akinola, Davis, & Mehta, 2020).

In response to such underutilization, an employee might want to elevate their status by exerting control over organizational resources and authority. Status construction theory predicts that it is people themselves who actively establish and enhance their status by using such dominance and controlling others. Motivated by DCSM, employees may come to see their own personal gain interests as more important than those of the teams by actively using their superior status to access more control over resources.

Moreover, it is a common reaction of dissatisfaction with their position that getting more control and taking proactive measures to change the status quo according to their expectations are the real challenges in this interplay whereby PEO implements the push in DCSM (Zhao, Wang, Liu, & Mu, 2022). Therefore, PEO enhances resource control for their motivations for competitive status under no circumstances.

Finally, based on this approach, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H<sub>3</sub>: PEO positively relates to DCSM.*

### 2.2.4. Prestige-Driven Competitive Status Motivation and Proactive Work Behavior of Employees

Employees low in PCSM will be motivated primarily by a drive for social recognition to promote their image and reputation in teams and organizations. In this sense, they contribute, share initiative, and show a strong sense of responsibility to enhance the success of others in teams or organizations to sustain their positive image as they aim for recognition from others. This motivation promotes the involvement of employees in teamwork behaviors and the sharing of knowledge and expertise used to assure environmental coping for the sake of team effectiveness and cohesiveness.

Employees with PCSM come up with more ideas and are more open to collaboration. To achieve higher social status and wider influence through inventions, they engage in effective cooperation and communication with colleagues (Bohlmann & Zacher, 2021). It is safe to assume that such motivated employees will demonstrate an enhanced desire to contribute novel ideas and solutions, along with making their teams and organizations more innovative (Xu, Loi, & Chow, 2022). Simultaneously, they pursue the spirit of collaboration so that they may aim for challenging collective goals.

Considered in this light, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

*H<sub>4</sub>: Prestige-driven competitive status motivation positively influences proactive work behavior of employees.*

### 2.2.5. Dominance-Driven Competitive Status Motivation and Proactive Work Behavior of Employees

Dominance-driven competitive status motivation (DCSM) drives employees to work harder to acquire more resources and opportunities to improve in the workplace. Employees with DCSM are motivated to continually seek new knowledge and skills, so they are not left behind but remain ahead in the workplace. Employees with DCSM are more proactive in assuming additional responsibilities and challenging tasks to gain a higher status and greater resources. They have a result orientation; they typically focus on tangible outputs with strong performance measurements (Sun et al., 2021). As influenced by DCSM, employees are much more focused on attaining work-related goals and adopting efficient and proactive approaches in performing their jobs. They find ways to enhance workflow and efficiency and then use improvements as bases to demonstrate their capabilities to enhance perceived value within the organization (Wahab & Blackman, 2023).

Based on these results, we hypothesized the following:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Dominance-driven competitive status motivation has a direct and positive relationship with employees' proactive work behavior.*

### 2.2.6. The Mediating Role of Competitive Status Motivation

Perceived employee overqualification can thus trigger prestige-driven competitive status motivation, which will inspire employees to prove themselves and elicit proactive work behavior. Overqualified employees will try by all means to prove their superiority in skills to get recognition from colleagues and superiors and to fill the psychological gap between qualifications and demands. Employees motivated by prestige tend to provide new solutions very often, thus enhancing their organizational performance (Phina, Chike, & Anene, 2022). Overqualified employees with a defensive regulatory focus are more likely to exhibit enhanced innovative capabilities along with proactive behavior (Zhang et al., 2021). These studies clearly show the importance of the mediating role of PCSM in the relationship between PEO and PBE.

Moreover, PEO can influence PBE via DCSM, particularly on resource acquisition and power dynamics.

For example, overqualified employees prefer to deploy dominance-oriented strategies, such as pulling resources and the attention of leaders toward them to boost their status (Zhao & Liu, 2020). The relevant differences between genders in dominance motivation were flagged with male employees typically gaining status through the control of valued resources (Schuh et al., 2014). The internal confidence characterizing the overqualified employee fortifies the dominance-oriented behaviors, such as accepting risky work tasks and making one's influence in the work setting felt (Vermeer et al., 2020). The conclusions allow for an inference that DCSM serves as a strong mediator between PEO and PBE, weighing in favor of competitive rather than collaborative behavior. Hence, it can be conjectured based on these evaluative findings that:

*H<sub>3</sub>: Prestige-driven competitive status motivation mediates in the relationship between perceived employee overqualification and proactive work behavior of employees.*

*H<sub>4</sub>: Dominance-driven competitive status motivation mediates within the relationship between perceived employee overqualification and proactive work behavior of employees.*

### 2.2.7. The Moderating Role of Role Breadth Self-Efficacy

Employees will attain social recognition, respect, and higher status, thereby achieving prestige-driven competitive status motivation (PCSM). Role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE) strengthens the positive relationship between PCSM and proactive work behavior of employees (PBE). Therefore, it indicates that those employees having high PCSM and RBSE experience more confidence in taking up challenging and innovative tasks. These tasks provide opportunities to showcase their expertise and contributions, thereby earning acknowledgment and respect from others (Bhattacharyya, 2024).



High RBSE boosts employees' confidence in solving problems and encourages them to behave proactively, which helps them raise their social status and influence (Ngo, Mustafa, & Butt, 2023). Employees are more innovative and collaborative when PCSM is congruent with high RBSE. They are no longer focused on individual performance, but also care about the effectiveness of their teams and organizations, working toward challenging goals through innovative and cooperative endeavors (Von Stieglitz, 2023).

In the case of DCSM, this view reflects efforts made by employees to control resources and achieve some tangible benefits (Chadwick & Flinchbaugh, 2021). RBSE modulates the relationship between DCSM and PBE by different mechanisms. Employees with high DCSM and RBSE tend to take initiative by embracing challenges in access to resources that would advance their status and competitiveness (Wang, Kim, Bateman, Jiang, & Tang, 2024). In achieving efficiency and high outcomes, these employees will thus adopt efficient and results-oriented work strategies. They will also be shown to have been RBSE characterized by efficiency and high performance within an organization (Hom, Samson, Cebon, & Cregan, 2021).

From this analysis arise further propositions:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE) acts as a moderator for the prestige-driven competitive status motivation-indicative work behavior (PCSM-PBE) relationship.*

*H<sub>3</sub>: Role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE) moderates the dominance-driven competitive status motivation and take proactive work behavior of employees (DCSM-PBE).*

The proposed model (see Figure 1) describes the relationships among the core variables: PEO, PCSM, DCSM, RBSE, and PBE. This model indicates the mediatory role of competitive status motivations between the two motivational pathways and that RBSE does moderate them thus providing a holistic framework to understand the dynamics of these variables.

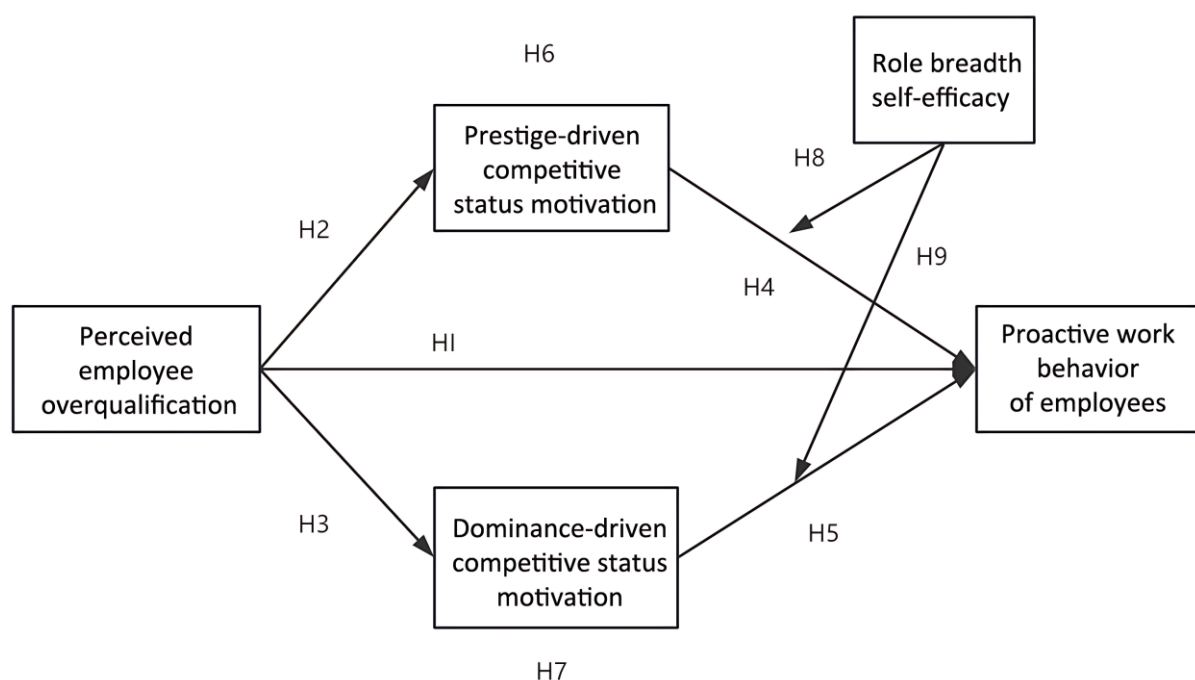


Figure 1. Structural model.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Data Collection

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship among perceived overqualification, status-competitive motivation, and proactive work behaviors, and also to analyze the moderating role of role breadth self-efficacy. The Shenzhen high-tech zone was chosen as the setting for the study because it is an important base of science and

technology innovation in China, housing many of the high-tech enterprises that represent a perfect environment for this study. The study invited R&D department employees of high-tech enterprises to participate in the survey and collected a total of 470 valid samples to ensure higher authenticity and reliability of the sampled data. This ensured that different kinds of enterprises and different types of work settings were covered in the study to enhance the representativeness and applicability of the findings.

With the assistance of the Shenzhen Science and Technology Innovation Bureau, the research team established contact with a number of high-tech enterprises and selected their R&D departments as the primary research subjects. In terms of enterprise types, this study encompasses a wide range of industries, including information technology, biomedicine, new materials, and intelligent manufacturing with the objective of ensuring the diversity of the sample and avoiding the influence of a single organisational environment on the research results.

This study encompasses a range of R&D professionals from entry-level to senior-level positions, thereby ensuring representation of employees at various stages of their careers. The study encompasses R&D engineers, product managers, technical support personnel, test engineers, and project managers, thus ensuring that it covers R&D workers across diverse functional categories. Respondents were all regular employees with a minimum of one year of R&D-related work experience, thereby ensuring that they possessed sufficient knowledge of the organisational climate and individual work behaviours.

During the sample selection process, the research team communicated extensively with the management of the enterprises in order to clarify the purpose and methodology of the study and to coordinate the distribution of the questionnaires through the human resources departments of the enterprises. The study obtained key characteristics of respondents such as age, gender, educational background, and years of work experience, rank, and the technical field to which they belonged with regard to the collection of employee background information. This was done to further analyse the differences between employees with different backgrounds in terms of their perception of overqualification, motivation to compete for status, and proactive work behaviours. All participants completed the questionnaire anonymously and full informed consent was obtained to ensure data anonymity and confidentiality. The questionnaires were distributed online and offline distributing through emails and online survey platforms; offline, they were completed by participants during regular meetings, training sessions, and seminars held by the R&D team.

### 3.2. Measurement Scales

#### 3.2.1. Perceived Employee Overqualification (PEO)

In this research, perceived overqualification was measured using [Khan and Morrow's \(1991\)](#) scale, which is based on the concept of underemployment with the nine-item single-dimensional perceived overqualification questionnaire (SPOQ) proposed by [Maynard, Joseph, and Maynard \(2006\)](#). The scale has several dimensions, including educational attainment, professional skills, and work experience. In the present study, measurable PEO was taken as six items measured on a 5-point Likert scale, running from 1 = strongly disagree to 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree ([Khan & Morrow, 1991; Maynard et al., 2006](#)).

#### 3.2.2. Competitive Status Motivation (CSM)

This scale has been adapted from [Bendersky and Hays \(2012\)](#) and [Tang, Chenhui, Ran, and Xin \(2020\)](#) modifying certain items to fit the scope of this research. The original measure was two-dimensional measure: Prestige-driven competitive status motivation and dominance-driven competitive status motivation. In the current research, each dimension was estimated using four items; hence, the overall measurement had eight items. Answers were provided on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree ([Bendersky & Hays, 2012; He & Kim, 2021; Tang et al., 2020](#)).



### 3.2.3. Proactive Work Behavior of Employees (PBE)

The scale PBE was based on Parker, Wang, and Liao (2019) that classified proactive work motivation into task-oriented and strategic, social and relational, and self-discipline dimensions. Further, the study drew on the work of Belschak and Den Hartog (2009) who identified different types of proactive behavior, namely social, organizational, and individual levels. Parker and Collins (2010) who developed different types of proactive work behavior. Based on these frameworks, eight items were designed to measure PBE with responses recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 2 =disagree , 3 =neutral , 4 =agree , and 5 = strongly agree (Belschak & Den Hartog, 2009; Parker et al., 2019).

### 3.2.4. Role Breadth Self-Efficacy (RBSE)

The measurement in this study concerning RBSE has been done through Parker's original 10-item scale from Parker, Williams, and Turner (2006) since it has obtained wide acceptance and support.

In a subsequent refinement, Parker and Collins (2010) chose seven high-loading items to yield a revised scale that demonstrated substantial reliability and validity in empirical research. The current study used Parker's refined scale and selected five items with the highest factor loadings. Response categories were based on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 =strongly agree ; 2 = disagree; 3 =neutral ; 4 =agree and 5 = strongly agree (Parker & Collins, 2010; Parker et al., 2006).

## 4. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Basic Information

The five demographic characteristics analyzed include gender, age, educational background, years of work experience, and monthly income.

**Table 1.** Basic information.

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	250	53.2
	Female	220	46.8
Age	Under 30	120	12.1
	31-40	213	34
	41-50	128	26.2
	Above 51	9	21.1
Education level	Master's or below	217	46.2
	Doctorate	253	53.8
Work experience	Under 1 year	46	9.8
	1-3 years	187	39.8
	4-6 years	172	36.6
	Over 7 years	65	13.8
Income	Below 10,000 CNY	5	1
	10,000-20,000 CNY	87	19
	20,000-30,000 CNY	231	49
	30,000-50,000 CNY	121	26
	Above 50,000 CNY	26	6

Table 1 presents who employees exhibit typical characteristics of youthfulness, high educational attainment, and relatively rich work experience. Gender and age distributions are fairly balanced and income levels are concentrated in the mid-to-upper range. These fundamental demographic details provide a foundational context for subsequent behavioral analyses and the investigation of influencing mechanisms.

#### 4.2. Reliability Test

This study conducted a reliability test on the scales using SPSS. If the corrected item-total correlation coefficient is less than 0.5, the corresponding item needs to be deleted. The reliability of the scale is determined by the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Generally, a Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.7 indicates acceptable reliability for the latent variable. If the value is between 0.5 and 0.7, the scale for the latent variable requires revision. If it is below 0.5, the questionnaire needs to be redesigned. Additionally, during the reliability test, if removing a specific item increases the Cronbach's alpha value of the latent variable beyond the overall Cronbach's alpha value for all latent variables, that item should be removed (Henson, 2001; Wu, 2021).

**Table 2.** Reliability analysis.

Variables	Items	Mean if item deleted	Variance if item deleted	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted	Cronbach's alpha
Perceived employee overqualification	PEO1	15.970	22.809	0.801	0.891	0.913
	PEO2	15.960	23.506	0.744	0.899	
	PEO3	15.960	23.779	0.742	0.900	
	PEO4	16.010	23.595	0.741	0.900	
	PEO5	16.000	23.043	0.765	0.896	
	PEO6	16.000	23.606	0.745	0.899	
Prestige-driven competitive status motivation	PCSM1	10.730	6.787	0.770	0.829	0.877
	PCSM2	10.690	6.940	0.702	0.855	
	PCSM3	10.690	6.712	0.754	0.835	
	PCSM4	10.710	6.917	0.714	0.850	
Dominance-oriented status competition motivation	DCSM1	11.000	4.493	0.668	0.817	0.848
	DCSM2	10.920	4.706	0.719	0.795	
	DCSM3	10.940	4.674	0.665	0.817	
	DCSM4	10.950	4.635	0.699	0.802	
Proactive behavior of employees	PBE1	23.940	43.161	0.788	0.927	0.936
	PBE2	23.950	42.831	0.822	0.924	
	PBE3	23.910	43.815	0.753	0.929	
	PBE4	23.900	44.083	0.754	0.929	
	PBE5	23.960	45.271	0.711	0.932	
	PBE6	23.930	43.548	0.779	0.927	
	PBE7	23.910	44.145	0.771	0.928	
	PBE8	23.950	42.690	0.818	0.924	
Role breadth self-efficacy	RBSE1	12.460	9.771	0.709	0.823	0.860
	RBSE2	12.430	9.951	0.722	0.820	
	RBSE3	12.480	9.990	0.691	0.828	
	RBSE4	12.400	10.433	0.624	0.844	
	RBSE5	12.460	10.074	0.645	0.840	

From the Table 2, the reliability of each item and measurement are good enough.

#### 4.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis

##### 4.3.1. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Prior to conducting exploratory factor analysis, two key preliminary tests, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity were performed to assess the suitability of the data for factor analysis.

**Table 3.** KMO and Bartlett's test.

KMO sampling adequacy		<b>0.933</b>
Bartlett's sphericity test	Approx. chi-square	9141.531
	Degrees of freedom	528
	Significance	0

According to the data presented in Table 3, the KMO value is 0.933 indicating that the data is highly suitable for factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity is statistically significant confirming that the variables exhibit significant correlations and are appropriate for factor analysis.

#### 4.3.2. Rotated Component Matrix

Table 4 shows the rotation of the factor loading matrix by the Kaiser Normalized Varimax method, Principal Component 1 items PEO1 ~ PEO6. All items falling within this component appear to represent the PEO construct based on the content and characteristics in each of the items.

Principal Component 2: Items PCSM1~PCSM4 load onto this component, reflecting prestige- driven competitive status motivation (PCSM).

Principal Component 3: Items DCSM1~DCSM4 are associated with the dominance- driven competitive status motivation (DCSM) construct

Principal Component 4: Items PBE1~PBE8 compose this component to reflect proactive work behavior of employees (PBE).

Principal Component 5: Items RBSE1~RBSE5 load onto this component and the role breadth self- efficacy construct represents (RBSE).

All factor loadings were above 0.7, and all variable communalities were above 0.2. The extracted components perfectly match the specified dimensions of the questionnaire, therefore showing strong theoretical coherence and statistical validity.

Table 4. Rotated component matrix.

Items	Components				
	1	2	3	4	5
PEO1		0.818			
PEO2		0.779			
PEO3		0.765			
PEO4		0.759			
PEO5		0.785			
PEO6		0.807			
PCSM1				0.809	
PCSM2				0.752	
PCSM3				0.800	
PCSM4				0.765	
DCSM1					0.767
DCSM2					0.810
DCSM3					0.769
DCSM4					0.824
PBE1	0.799				
PBE2	0.811				
PBE3	0.757				
PBE4	0.745				
PBE5	0.713				
PBE6	0.777				
PBE7	0.790				
PBE8	0.817				
RBSE1			0.804		
RBSE2			0.819		
RBSE3			0.800		
RBSE4			0.751		
RBSE5			0.754		

**Table 5.** Convergent validity.

Path			Estimate	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
				CR	AVE
PEO1	<---	PEO	0.847	0.914	0.638
PEO2	<---	PEO	0.783		
PEO3	<---	PEO	0.788		
PEO4	<---	PEO	0.785		
PEO5	<---	PEO	0.809		
PEO6	<---	PEO	0.778	0.878	0.643
PCSM1	<---	PCSM	0.843		
PCSM2	<---	PCSM	0.761		
PCSM3	<---	PCSM	0.826		
PCSM4	<---	PCSM	0.775	0.85	0.587
DCSM1	<---	DCSM	0.740		
DCSM2	<---	DCSM	0.811		
DCSM3	<---	DCSM	0.736		
DCSM4	<---	DCSM	0.776	0.936	0.647
PBE1	<---	PBE	0.805		
PBE2	<---	PBE	0.869		
PBE3	<---	PBE	0.771		
PBE4	<---	PBE	0.781		
PBE5	<---	PBE	0.735		
PBE6	<---	PBE	0.802		
PBE7	<---	PBE	0.796		
PBE8	<---	PBE	0.865	0.861	0.555
RBSE1	<---	RBSE	0.78		
RBSE2	<---	RBSE	0.791		
RBSE3	<---	RBSE	0.755		
RBSE4	<---	RBSE	0.683		
RBSE5	<---	RBSE	0.710		

**Note:** The diagonal values represent the square root of average variance extracted (AVE).

#### 4.4. Total Confirmatory Factor Analysis

##### 4.4.1. Convergent Validity Analysis

According to Table 5, the CR values for all paths exceed 0.7 with most values close to or exceeding 0.9, demonstrating good internal consistency among the measurement items for the latent variables. The AVE values for most latent variables exceed 0.5, indicating that the measurement items effectively explain the variance of their corresponding latent variables.

The overall results indicate excellent convergent validity. The measurement items for all latent variables reliably and effectively explain their corresponding variances showing high reliability and aggregation validity. This model can be trusted for subsequent analyses and theoretical validation.

**Table 6.** Discriminant validity analysis.

Variables	PEO	PCSM	DCSM	PBE	RBSE
PEO	0.799				
PCSM	0.511	0.802			
DCSM	0.363	0.343	0.766		
PBE	0.509	0.529	0.446	0.804	
RBSE	0.268	0.211	0.220	0.314	0.745

**Note:** The diagonal values represent the square root of AVE.

##### 4.4.2. Discriminant Validity Analysis

According to Table 6, the diagonal values (square root of AVE) are all greater than the correlations with other latent variables. Most latent variables in the model are effectively distinguishable with no overly high correlations between variables.

Specifically, the square root of AVE (in statistics, average variance extracted AVE is a measure of the amount of variance that is captured by a construct in relation to the amount of variance due to measurement error. ) values exceeding correlations with other latent variables demonstrates that each latent variable effectively explains the variance of its measurement items and does not share excessive variance with others.

The model exhibits strong discriminant validity, successfully distinguishing different latent variables. This supports the reliability of the model in distinguishing between constructs and ensures its suitability for further analysis and theoretical exploration.

**Table 7.** Pearson correlation analysis.

Variables	PEO	PCSM	DCSM	PBE	RBSE
PEO	1				
PCSM	0.463**	1			
DCSM	0.323**	0.296**	1		
PBE	0.475**	0.483**	0.403**	1	
RBSE	0.235**	0.184**	0.195**	0.287**	1

**Note:** \*\* Significant correlation at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

#### 4.5. Pearson Correlation Analysis

According to Table 7, the square root of AVE is greater than the correlations with other latent variables for all the diagonal values. In the model, there are not very highly correlated latent variables, and most latent variables are effectively distinguishable.

Specifically, the square root of AVE values greater than correlations with other latent variables indicates that each latent variable is distinctly able to explain the variance of its measurement items and does not share excessive variance with other latent variables.

It has strong discriminant validity with sharp differentiation between latent variables. The same shows the reliability of a model that provides clear differentiability among constructs, which then may be valid to fit further analyses and theoretical considerations.

**Table 8.** Direct path standardized factor loadings.

Path			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
PBE	<---	PEO	0.244	0.049	4.704	***
PCSM	<---	PEO	0.438	0.041	8.812	***
DCSM	<---	PEO	0.320	0.036	5.907	***
PBE	<---	PCSM	0.277	0.060	5.238	***
PBE	<---	DCSM	0.231	0.067	4.864	***

**Note:** \*\*\* indicates <0.001.

#### 4.6. Path Analysis (SEM)

##### 4.6.1. Direct Path Analysis

PEO → PBE: Perceived employee overqualification → proactive work behavior of employees: path coefficient = 0.244, C.R. = 4.704, and  $P < 0.001$ .

This shows that PEO has a significant positive effect on PBE. Hypothesis H1 is verified.

PEO → PCSM: Perceived employee overqualification → prestige-driven competitive status motivation: path coefficient = 0.438, C.R. = 8.812, and  $P < 0.001$ .

This shows that PEO has a significant positive effect on PCSM. Hypothesis H2 is verified.

PEO → DCSM: Perceived employee overqualification → dominance-driven competitive status motivation, path coefficient = 0.320, C.R. = 5.907, and  $P < 0.001$ .

This implies that PEO has a positive effect significantly on DCSM. So, hypothesis H3 gets supported.

PCSM  $\rightarrow$  PBE: Prestige-driven competitive status motivation  $\rightarrow$  proactive work behavior of employees, path coefficient = 0.277, C.R. = 5.238, and  $P < 0.001$ .

This test for a positive effect significantly PCSM on PBE. Hence, hypothesis H4 stands true.

DCSM  $\rightarrow$  PBE: The path coefficient = 0.231, C.R. = 4.864, and  $P < 0.001$ , which means that DCSM and PBE are positively related to a significant extent. Hence, hypothesis H5 is supported.

**Table 9.** Mediation effect analysis.

Parameters	Bias-corrected (95%)			P
	Estimate	Lower	Upper	
PEO-PCSM-PBE	0.121	0.066	0.183	***
PEO-DCSM-PBE	0.074	0.040	0.116	***

**Note:** <0.01, \*\*\* indicates <0.001.

#### 4.6.2. Mediation Effect Analysis

According to the results of the mediation effect analysis in Table 9,

##### 1) PEO $\rightarrow$ PCSM $\rightarrow$ PBE

The mediation effect estimate is 0.121, with a confidence interval of [0.066, 0.183] and  $P < 0.001$ . This confirms that PCSM significantly mediates the relationship between Perceived Employee Overqualification (PEO) and PBE. Accordingly, Hypothesis H6 is validated.

##### 2) PEO $\rightarrow$ DCSM $\rightarrow$ PBE

The mediation effect estimate is 0.074, with a confidence interval of [0.040, 0.116] and  $P < 0.001$ . Since the confidence interval does not include 0, DCSM significantly mediates the relationship between PEO and PBE. Thus, Hypothesis H7 is supported.

#### 4.7. Moderation Effect Analysis

##### 4.7.1. Moderating Effect of Role Breadth Self-Efficacy on the Relationship between Prestige-Driven Competitive Status Motivation and Proactive Work Behavior

The three-step regression model was used to test the moderation effect.

The model 1 contains only control variables, namely, gender, age, and education, without independent and moderating variables.

Model 2 added the independent variable, namely PCSM, and the moderating variable, RBSE, to analyze their main effects.

Model 3 added the interaction term, namely, PCSM  $\times$  RBSE, to test the moderation effect.

**Table 10.** Moderating effect of role breadth self-efficacy on the relationship between prestige-driven competitive status motivation and proactive work behavior.

Variables	Dependent variable: Proactive work behavior of employees (PBE)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Gender	-0.009	0.017	0.035
Age	-0.023	-0.009	-0.002
Education	-0.006	0.043	0.042
Work tenure	0.030	0.002	0.002
Income	0.026	0.016	0.013
Z prestige-driven competitive status motivation		0.45***	0.505***
Z role breadth self-efficacy		0.199***	0.255***
Z prestige-driven competitive status motivation $\times$ Z role breadth self-efficacy			0.134***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.021	0.291	0.301
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.004	0.276	0.284
F	1.239	18.838***	17.935***

**Note:** \*\*\* indicates <0.001.



Findings from Table 10:

In model 1, the control variables did not reach significance.

In model 2, PCSM was significantly positively related to PBE, with a  $\beta$  of 0.45, while RBSE also showed a significant positive effect on PBE with a  $\beta$  of 0.199. Both were highly significant ( $P < 0.001$ ).

In model 3, the interaction term ( $PCSM \times RBSE$ ) also showed a significant positive relation with  $\beta = 0.134$  and  $P < 0.01$ . That means RBSE significantly moderates the relationship between PCSM and PBE. The interaction term noticeably raised the  $R^2$  of this model from 0.291 to 0.301, and the adjusted  $R^2$  also notably improved, hence giving an indication of better model fit, with a significant effect on the prediction of PBE. The F-value was 17.935 with high significance,  $P < 0.001$ , hence inclusion of interaction term significantly and highly improved model fit.

The moderation effect analysis results show that RBSE significantly moderates the relationship between PCSM and PBE. More specifically, at higher levels of RBSE, the impact of PCSM on PBE is more salient, thus showing a stronger positive influence. Thus, hypothesis H13 is supported, which states that RBSE moderates the relationship between PCSM and PBE.

**Table 11.** Moderating effect of role breadth self-efficacy on the relationship between dominance-driven competitive status motivation and proactive work behavior.

Variables	Dependent variable: Proactive work behavior of employees (PBE)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Gender	-0.005	-0.006	-0.002
Age	-0.027	-0.023	-0.018
Education	-0.006	-0.005	-0.010
Work tenure	0.039	-0.012	-0.009
Income	0.031	0.006	0.006
Z dominance-driven competitive status motivation		0.363***	0.37***
Z role breadth self-efficacy		0.21***	0.215***
Z dominance-driven competitive status motivation $\times$ role breadth self-efficacy			0.133***
$R^2$	0.019	0.223	0.241
Adjusted $R^2$	0.035	0.206	0.222
F	1.110	13.188***	13.2***

**Note:** \*\*\* indicates  $<0.001$ .

#### 4.7.2. Moderating Effect of Role Breadth Self-Efficacy on the Relationship between Dominance-Driven Competitive Status Motivation and Proactive Work Behavior

Findings from Table 11:

In model 1, the control variables did not reach significance.

In model 2, DCSM is found to relate positively and significantly to proactive work behavior (PBE), with  $\beta = 0.363$ , while RBSE,  $\beta = 0.21$  was also found to be significantly and positively related to PBE with  $P < 0.001$ . This infers that both variables significantly contribute to PBE.

In model 3, the interaction term ( $DCSM \times RBSE$ ) was positively related to PBE with a significant coefficient of  $\beta = 0.133$  at  $P < 0.01$ , thus suggesting that RBSE moderates the relationship between DCSM and PBE.

The introduction of the interaction term improved the  $R^2$  of the model from 0.223 to 0.241, indicating an improvement in the explanatory power of the model. The adjusted  $R^2$  increased from 0.206 to 0.222, reflecting improved fit for the model after including the interaction term. The overall F-value was 13.2 with very high significance ( $P < 0.001$ ), confirming that adding the interaction term greatly improved the fit of the model.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1. The Mechanism of Perceived Employee Overqualification on Proactive Work Behavior

In employees' proactive work behavior, PEO has an influence that can be revealed. The path coefficient in this respect comes to 0.244 and was significant at the 0.001 level,  $P < 0.001$ . Most of those employees with a high

degree of PEO felt that the current job was unable to utilize their capability and hence performed proactive behavior in fulfillment and for their career growth. This observation is supported by the previous studies by Maden-Eyiusta (2024) and Sesen and Ertan (2020) which found PEO to be one of the intrinsic drivers that motivated employees beyond their role expectations.

Further analysis revealed that innovative tasks have overqualified workers acting as an attempt to display one's potential or show high ambition for career advancement. The results also support Ma et al. (2024) regarding the aspect of work passion that comes as a harmonious type brought about by PEO. The study is confirmed by the aspect that enhanced proactive behavior increases psychological confidence and self-efficacy as earlier confirmed by Chen et al.'s (2018) conclusion.

Hence, PEO is a strong direct driver of PBE and hence strongly supports hypothesis H6. Among the various variables, the effect of PEO on PBE is substantial not only in a direct manner but also through indirect means like competitive status motivation. If the organizations are to draw full benefit from highly qualified employees, there is a need for recognition of positive effects caused by PEO and strategies that allow them to unleash their full capacities.

### 5.2. The Mediating Role of SCM in PBE

The mediating role of prestige-driven competitive status motivation and dominance-driven competitive status motivation in the relationship between perceived employee overqualification and proactive work behavior is, therefore, empowered, confirming hypotheses H9 to H12. To be specific, the path coefficient of  $PEO \rightarrow PCSM \rightarrow PBE$  reached 0.121 ( $0.438 \times 0.277$  and  $p < 0.001$ ), which is significantly higher than that of  $PEO \rightarrow DCSM \rightarrow PBE$ , 0.074 ( $0.320 \times 0.231$  and  $p < 0.001$ ).

PCSM exerts a stronger influence on proactive work behavior by encouraging employees to seek social recognition and prestige, thereby fostering collaborative innovation and knowledge-sharing. The findings suggest that PCSM enhances employees' contributions to their teams and strengthens their social influence and organizational performance (Davis & Vaillancourt, 2023). This effect is particularly evident among overqualified employees, who often leverage social recognition as a compensatory mechanism for their perceived job misalignment.

In contrast, DCSM mainly facilitates employees' proactive efforts through the struggle for resources and control. Nevertheless, its impact on PBE seems weaker, suggesting that dominance-driven motivation would align more with short-term task completion rather than with sustained proactive engagement (Maner & Case, 2016). Besides, the findings point to a pronounced prosocial impact of PCSM in the influence pathway of PEO, further underlining the critical role it plays in shaping proactive behavior.

The overall implication of this study is that, while managing DCSM constructively for employee motivation, one must not lose sight of the fact that PCSM is the major mechanism in the PEO-driven pathway.

### 5.3. The Moderating Role of RBSE

Role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE) serves as a critical moderator in the relationship between competitive status motivation and proactive work behavior. The findings suggest that RBSE strengthens the positive influence of prestige-driven competitive status motivation (PCSM) on proactive work behavior (PBE) (moderating effect path coefficient = 0.134,  $p < 0.01$ ). Simultaneously, it enhances the motivational impact of dominance-driven competitive status motivation (DCSM) by improving employees' ability to identify and allocate resources effectively while increasing task efficiency. Employees with high RBSE are more likely to seek social recognition by engaging in innovation and teamwork, thereby further reinforcing the motivational effects on proactive behavior.

For high-tech enterprises, fostering RBSE should be a strategic priority in employee development. Organizations can build employees' confidence in handling complex tasks through cross-functional project assignments and specialized skills training. Additionally, career mentoring programs and clear delegation mechanisms can enhance employees' ability to manage multi-role responsibilities. Encouraging employee participation in internal entrepreneurship initiatives can provide platforms for talent demonstration and innovation, thereby maximizing the beneficial moderating effects of RBSE on proactive work behavior.

## 6. CONCLUSION

### 6.1. *Perceived Employee Overqualification (PEO) as a Core Driver of Proactive Work Behavior (PBE)*

The results suggest that PEO significantly influences PBE and is a crucial determinant of the proactive behavior of employees. It can be seen from the data that PEO influences PBE not only directly (path coefficient = 0.244 and  $p < 0.001$ ) but also indirectly through prestige-driven competitive status motivation. Those employees who feel that the job does not quite fit may exhibit more proactive behaviors to realize personal value and career advancement. This would mean that PEO plays an important role in driving employee innovation and teamwork.

PEO is more likely to be found in high-tech enterprises with a highly qualified labor force. It is important for the organization to identify the needs of highly qualified employees and unlock their potential by offering them flexible job design and challenging assignments. Besides, opportunities for participation in internal entrepreneurial and innovation projects may allow employees to use their capabilities in the interests of organizational development.

### 6.2. *Prestige-Driven Competitive Status Motivation as the Primary Bridge to Employees' Proactive Behavior*

This study validates the mediating role of both prestige-driven competitive status motivation (PCSM) and dominance-driven competitive status motivation (DCSM) in the relationship between perceived employee overqualification (PEO) and proactive work behavior (PBE). Notably, PCSM significantly enhances teamwork, innovation, and knowledge-sharing behaviors by encouraging employees to seek social recognition and professional reputation (path coefficient = 0.277 and  $p < 0.001$ ). In contrast, DCSM primarily motivates employees through resource acquisition and hierarchical positioning, yielding a comparatively weaker long-term impact on PBE.

In high-tech enterprises, where teamwork and innovation are essential for success, organizations should prioritize the cultivation of PCSM. For example, implementing clear and merit-based reward mechanisms—such as “innovation contribution awards” or “team collaboration awards” can reinforce employees' motivation to gain social recognition. Furthermore, organizations should establish well-defined resource distribution policies and performance evaluation frameworks, ensuring that competitive efforts are directed toward enhancing team performance and organizational effectiveness to optimize the constructive effects of DCSM.

### 6.3. *Role Breadth Self-Efficacy as a Moderator Strengthening the Impact of Status Motivation on Proactive Work Behavior*

RBSE is the significant moderator of competitive status motivation on PBE. It can be observed from this study that RBSE has a positive effect on strengthening prestige-driven competitive status motivation to PBE (moderation coefficient = 0.134,  $p < 0.01$ ). Meanwhile, RBSE strengthens the influence of dominance-driven competitive status motivation by strengthening the capability of employees in recognizing resources and increasing task efficiency. The employees with high RBSE seek social recognition through innovation and collaboration, which further strengthens the link between competitive motivation and proactive work engagement.

For the high-tech enterprises, RBSE development should be one of the strategic tasks in talent management. Cross-functional project involvement and targeted professional skill training may enhance the confidence level of employees to handle complicated tasks. Besides, clear mentorship arrangements and well-laid frameworks of delegation can significantly enhance the employees' competence for diverse responsibilities. Organizations may

promote internal entrepreneurship initiatives where employees have platforms to manifest their capabilities to contribute towards innovations. These all put together can maximize the RBSE benefits for proactive work behavior and organizational performance.

#### *6.4. The Critical Mechanism of Perceived Overqualification—Competitive Status Motivation—Role Breadth Self-Efficacy*

The findings of the study prove that perceived employee overqualification exerts a positively direct impact on prestige-driven competitive status motivation while the interacting variable of the mentioned motivation has positive effects together with role breadth self-efficacy and exerts itself to proactive work behavior. Thus, in explaining the influences mentioned above-the complete process underlying the individual perceptions and motivation triggering, psychological resources development, and behavioral outcomes-is substantial both in theory and practically relevant.

In high-technology companies, this mechanism needs to be optimized through strategic intervention: designing job roles and tasks to suit the competencies of highly qualified workers to stimulate their intrinsic motivation; enhancing the motivational impact of PCSM by well-structured reward systems and an innovation platform; and the implementation of structured RBSE development programs in order to fully realize its motivational role. This type of initiative helps an organization get the most utilization from employee capability while aligning and integrating individual aspirations for the accomplishment of organizational objectives, thus sustaining competitive advantage within a continuously changing market.

#### *6.5. Research Limitations and Future Directions*

Though the present study provided a rich context for unpacking the processes through which PEO, competitive status motivation (PCSM and DCSM), and role breadth self-efficacy influence proactive work behavior, it has various limitations. First, the adoption of a cross-sectional design limits the causal inferences, and reliance on self-report measures may introduce response bias. Besides, the sample has an overwhelming proportion of high-tech enterprises from the target industries and regions, which may affect the generalizing power of the findings. Moreover, this study mainly explores competitive status motivation-including prestige-driven and dominance-driven and does not adequately cover other possible motivational factors, such as achievement motivation or prosocial motivation, which may influence employee behavior. Third, there is a lack of research that has considered the moderating mechanisms and external contextual factors in the analysis; therefore, the dynamic process between motivation and behavior cannot be taken into account.

This study should be designed with a longitudinal approach to examine causal relationships and dynamic variations among these variables. In addition, more diverse sample scopes of regions, industries, and cultural contexts should be widened when testing the generalization of such conclusions. Future research should also consider other forms of motivation in order to enrich the theoretical framework on how motivation influences employee behavior. Moreover, external contextual factors such as organizational culture, team atmosphere, and leadership styles must be included to provide a more holistic understanding of the complex relationship between motivation and behavior. Integrating objective performance data with multi-source feedback will carry more credibility to the findings and more actionable insights for behavioral management practices in enterprises.

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**Transparency:** The author states that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

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