

Gender Differences in Overeducation and Employee Engagement: Insights from Jammu

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Abstract-This study investigates gender differences in overeducation and employee engagement among employees in Jammu, India. Overeducation, a situation where individuals have higher educational qualifications than required for their current roles, is particularly pronounced among female employees in this region, reflecting a significant mismatch between educational attainment and job requirements. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research surveyed 623 participants from various public sector institutions in Jammu, with results indicating that women experience higher levels of overeducation compared to men. Interestingly, despite the prevalence of overeducation, female employees exhibited higher levels of engagement than their male counterparts. These findings suggest that while overeducation is more common among women, it does not necessarily decrease their work engagement, potentially pointing to adaptive strategies or resilience factors at play.

Key words: - Overeducation, Gender differences, Employee engagement, Educational mismatch

INTRODUCTION

The increasing participation of women in the workforce across developing and mostly developed countries has been largely driven by the growth of the service sector and the marketization of traditionally female-dominated roles such as housework and care work. This shift has often led to a concentration of women in specific occupations deemed to align with their 'innate abilities' or 'competitive advantages,' such as service roles in hospitality and clerical positions in administrative offices. Consequently, this trend has contributed to persistent gender inequality and occupational segregation (Costa, 2000; Emerek et al., 2001).

In contrast, the situation in India, particularly in regions like Jammu, presents a unique context where the intersection of gender, education, and employment outcomes warrants closer examination. India's burgeoning economy and rapidly expanding higher education system have produced a highly educated and skilled workforce. However, the phenomenon of overeducation—where individuals possess higher educational qualifications than required for their current jobs—has emerged as a critical challenge. Known also as "brain waste," overeducation signifies a significant mismatch between educational attainment and job requirements, leading to the underutilization of skills and potential.

In Jammu, a region with distinct cultural and economic dynamics, including a predominantly agrarian economy and a strong influence of traditional gender roles, the issue of overeducation is especially pronounced. Despite high educational aspirations and increased access to higher education, many employees find themselves in positions that do not fully utilize their qualifications. This mismatch not only affects individual job satisfaction but also has broader implications for economic productivity and growth.

Moreover, the impact of overeducation is not uniformly distributed across genders. The concentration of women in specific sectors and societal expectations surrounding their roles can exacerbate the issue of overeducation among female employees. Understanding how gender influences the prevalence of overeducation and its impact on employee engagement is crucial for developing targeted policy interventions.

The concept of education-occupation mismatch, or overeducation, refers to a situation where an individual's level of education exceeds the requirements of their job (Duncan & Hoffman, 1981; Verdugo & Verdugo, 1989). This phenomenon has been linked to various issues including reduced job satisfaction, higher turnover rates, and decreased workplace productivity (Tsang et al., 1985; Battu et al., 2000). Despite considerable investments in education, many countries, including India, face significant challenges with overeducation, affecting both economic growth and individual career outcomes (ILO, 2021; Bhattacharya, 2021).

In India, only 39.6% of employees' qualifications align with their job requirements, which is lower than the average for lower-middle-income countries (Sengupta, 2017). This disparity highlights a crucial need for policy interventions to better align educational qualifications with job opportunities, especially in regions like Jammu where educational and employment dynamics intersect in complex ways.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gender is a crucial demographic characteristic influencing socio-economic outcomes. Overeducation is more prevalent among women than men (Feldman & Turnham, 1995; Korpi & Tåhlin, 2009). This disparity may result from gender discrimination in the job market or the concentration of women in low-skilled jobs. Additionally, gender serves as a significant predictor of overeducation, with married women being more likely to be overeducated compared to married men (Benson, 2013), and women with children being more prone to overeducation than those without children (Buchel & Battu, 2003). Research indicates that women are more likely to experience poverty and lower wages than men (Baker et al., 2016). Benson (2013) suggests that married women face greater restrictions in job searches due to their husbands' employment, leading to limited job opportunities and acceptance of lower-level positions than their qualifications would suggest.

The division of labour at home also affects overeducation. Married women may experience overeducation more frequently because they often seek jobs within a geographically restricted area based on their husbands' jobs (Benson, 2013). Evidence

shows that overeducation among married women exceeds that of their husbands, regardless of the husbands' employment status (McGoldrick & Robst, 1996). This is attributed to the need for women to balance family and work responsibilities, often resulting in accepting less demanding jobs. Women whose income is secondary, with their husbands as the primary earners, are particularly affected.

Women with children show a higher tendency towards overeducation compared to men with children (Buchel & Battu, 2003). Women may also find themselves in female-dominated occupations that traditionally require less education and skill, although higher-educated women are less likely to end up in such roles (Mainar et al., 2014). For instance, individuals might decline promotions or better job offers due to relocation concerns or personal preferences, leading to voluntary overeducation (Rasheed & Wilson, 2013). Workers may also overeducate themselves to gain job features such as security, leisure time, and less stress.

Women's domestic responsibilities often restrict their access to education and employment opportunities (Aisenbrey, Evertsson, & Grunow, 2009). Women performing the majority of household tasks have less time for higher education or job opportunities, leading to underemployment. In contrast, men, who typically perform fewer domestic tasks, have more time and energy to invest in their careers (Daly, 2001). Evidence shows that overeducation is more common among married women than their husbands, with women often prioritizing family responsibilities over career aspirations (McGoldrick & Robst, 1996; Di Pietro & Urwin, 2006). McGoldrick and Robst (1996) found that married women are more likely to be overeducated due to job choices that offer flexibility, allowing them to balance family responsibilities. Di Pietro and Urwin (2006) suggest that overeducated women often have better work-family balance due to greater control over their work schedules.

Occupational segregation by gender also contributes to overeducation differences. Women are frequently concentrated in occupations requiring lower education and paying less compared to male-dominated fields (Blau & Kahn, 2017). However, higher-educated women have reduced odds of being in female-dominated occupations that require less education (Mainar et al., 2014). These women may

access more prestigious, higher-paying roles traditionally dominated by men.

Traditional explanations for gender-occupational inequality often revolve around three arguments. First, differences in human capital accumulation (e.g., education, experience) across genders may lead individuals to seek jobs suited to their characteristics (Mincer & Polachek, 1974). Second, job choices are influenced by preferences and job characteristics, with cultural norms and stereotypes reinforcing traditional gender roles (England, 2010; Becker, 1985; Bergmann, 1974). Third, gender discrimination exists, with only firms or sectors that do not discriminate employing women (Becker, 1985). Recent literature highlights that women's job satisfaction increases with the number of women in a specific occupation. Psychological factors, such as social identity theory, provide additional explanations for gender-occupational inequality. Akerlof and Kranton (2000) argue that individuals may experience a loss of utility working in jobs that do not align with their identity. Similarly, Alesina and La Ferrara (2000) show that the utility derived from joining a group increases with the proportion of similar members and decreases with the proportion of dissimilar members.

The topic of overeducation has been extensively studied, focusing on its negative impacts on returns, job satisfaction, and the displacement of less skilled workers (Moen, 1999; Hartog, 2000). Overeducation results from a surplus of higher-educated workers compared to demand. This may stem from individuals' attempts to compensate for lacking other skills or seeking better job opportunities (Groot & Maassen van den Brink, 2000; Dolado et al., 2009). Women who have experienced career interruptions, such as child-rearing, are more likely to be overeducated (Groot & Maassen van den Brink, 2000). Frank (1978) suggests that women, as secondary earners, may accept jobs for which they are overeducated due to restricted mobility.

Del Río and Alonso-Villar (2010, 2012) and Alonso-Villar and Del Río (2010a) propose a complementary approach to traditional measures of segregation. Instead of comparing the distribution of two population subgroups, such as men and women, they suggest local measures of segregation. These

measures compare the distribution of one subgroup (e.g., women) with the total employment distribution, rather than with another group. These studies show that local measures have strong properties and align with overall segregation measures (Alonso-Villar & Del Río, 2010b; Del Río & Alonso-Villar, 2010). These measures have been applied to the Spanish context to study segregation by gender and age, gender and educational attainment, and gender and contract types.

OBJECTIVE

To examine the influence of gender on the prevalence of overeducation and its impact on employee engagement among employees in Jammu.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Is there a significant difference in the levels of overeducation between male and female employees in Jammu?
2. How does overeducation differentially affect employee engagement among male and female employees?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology adopted for this study employed a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively investigate the factors influencing employee engagement among adequately qualified and overqualified personnel in Jammu District. Initially, a pretest and pilot test were conducted to finalize the research questions. Purposive sampling was utilized to target employees, including clerical staff, 4th class employees, and police constables, resulting in a representative sample of 623 participants selected from various government institutions such as colleges, universities, and police stations. This approach ensured diversity in educational qualifications and job roles within the public sector of the district.

Primary data collection covered four tehsils within Jammu District and involved a range of institutions, including government colleges, the University of Jammu, SKUAST-Jammu, Civil Secretariat, and various departments where 4th class and clerical staff employees are employed. The scope of data collection extended to police constables

stationed at different police stations, women cells, chaukis, battalions, and other relevant establishments, with a specific emphasis on locations housing a significant number of police constables.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Differences in Overeducation Levels Between Male and Female Employees in Jammu

Employee Engagement	Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Male	438	.56	.497	.024
	Female	185	.69	.463	.034

Source: calculation of the author

The study revealed that female employees in Jammu experience higher levels of overeducation compared to their male counterparts, as indicated by a mean score of 0.69 for females versus 0.56 for males. This aligns with previous research by Feldman & Turnham (1995) and Korpi & Tahlin (2009), which also found that overeducation is more prevalent among women. The greater prevalence of overeducation among women can be attributed to several factors, including occupational segregation and societal expectations. Studies by Blau & Kahn (2017) and McGoldrick & Robst (1996) similarly highlighted that woman often occupy roles with lower educational requirements due to cultural and structural constraints.

The t-test results for this study indicated a statistically significant difference in overeducation levels between genders ($p = 0.002$), reinforcing the finding that female employees in Jammu are more likely to be overeducated than their male counterparts. Levene’s test confirmed the differences in variances in overeducation levels between genders, aligning with research by Buchel & Battu (2003), who observed that married women or those with children experience higher rates of overeducation due to constraints such as family obligations.

Table 2. Differences in Employee Engagement Between Male and Female Employees in Jammu

Employee Engagement	Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Male	438	4.7719	.69749	.03333
	Female	185	4.9112	.56026	.04119

Source: calculation of the author

Regarding employee engagement, the study found that female employees had a higher mean engagement score (4.91) than male employees (4.77), suggesting that women are more engaged on average. This finding is significant as it suggests that despite the challenges associated with overeducation, female employees remain highly engaged, possibly due to coping mechanisms or a sense of resilience. The results also echo findings by Di Pietro & Urwin (2006), who noted that overeducated women often maintain higher engagement levels due to a perceived better work-life balance and control over their schedules. Female employees exhibit a higher mean engagement score (4.91) compared to male employees (4.77). This difference is statistically significant ($p = 0.016$), suggesting that women are more engaged in their work than men in Jammu. The lower standard deviation for females (0.56) compared to males (0.70) indicates that female engagement levels are more consistent. Levene's test shows significant differences in variances ($p = 0.014$), validating the use of both equal and unequal variance t-tests.

The study's results underscore the complex relationship between gender, overeducation, and employee engagement. Despite being more likely to be overeducated, female employees in Jammu demonstrate a strong level of engagement, perhaps indicating an adaptive response to the educational mismatch. This resilience among women, as evidenced by higher engagement levels, contrasts with findings by Tsang et al. (1985) and Battu et al. (2000), who found that overeducation often leads to reduced job satisfaction and productivity. The positive engagement levels observed among women may reflect societal adaptations or intrinsic motivations that help them stay engaged despite educational mismatches. Overall, these results suggest that while overeducation is an issue for both genders, its impact on engagement may differ.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that gender plays a significant role in the prevalence of overeducation and its impact on employee engagement among employees in Jammu. Female employees are more likely to experience overeducation than their male counterparts, as indicated by higher mean scores and statistically significant t-test results. Despite being

more overeducated, female employees demonstrate higher levels of engagement in their work compared to males. This suggests that while overeducation is more prevalent among women, it does not necessarily diminish their engagement, highlighting the resilience or coping mechanisms women may employ in the workplace. The findings underscore the need for targeted strategies that address the unique challenges faced by overeducated employees, particularly women, to enhance overall employee engagement and job satisfaction in the region.

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