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# MISMATCH OF TERTIARY EDUCATION ON LABOR DEMAND IN THE RETAIL INDUSTRY: BASED ON THE PHENOMENON OF OVEREDUCATION IN A GLOBAL SUPERMARKET CHAIN EXPANSION PROGRAM

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## ABSTRACT

*This research examines the phenomenon of overeducation in entry-level roles within a global supermarket chain, particularly as it relates to the organization's expansion program. As tertiary education has expanded globally, an increasing number of graduates face underemployment, with highly qualified individuals working in low-skill retail positions. Based on a qualitative research approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six overqualified employees to get insights from them about the research objectives concerning job satisfaction, job skills, promotion prospects, and work teams. Major themes identified were constraint due to lack of challenges to tap into, restricted career mobility, and lack of social interaction with colleagues. They complained about the repetitive mundane work and perceived the job as being temporary, therefore having high turnover intentions. As outlined by Human Capital Theory and Person-Job Fit Theory, this study reveals the mismatch between the qualifications possessed by the employees and the requirements of the positions held. Some of the recommendations suggested in the context of overeducating include identifying career lattice opportunities, providing job enlargement possibilities, and advancing equal employment opportunities. Thus, understanding and optimally applying overqualified employees could help organizations enhance staff satisfaction, presence, and performance. This study thus provides a theoretical contribution to the field of labor market and provides best practices for overqualified employees in retail.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Overeducation, Retail Industry, Entry-Level Roles, Job Satisfaction, Career Advancement.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

The rapid expansion of tertiary education across the globe has led to an increasing number of graduates entering the labor market with advanced qualifications. According to Marginson (2016), while this trend is often celebrated as a marker of progress and development, it has also resulted in a phenomenon of "overeducation," where the level of education held by employees exceeds the requirements of available jobs. This mismatch between education and labor demand is particularly evident in the retail sector. Moreover, Śmigielska and Oczkowska (2016), specified that the retail industry, dominated by global supermarket chains like Walmart, Carrefour, and Tesco, traditionally offers jobs that require lower to intermediate levels of skill and educational attainment. However, Ban and Heng (2023), emphasized that as more individuals obtain tertiary education, an increasing number of graduates are applying for these positions due to limited opportunities in their fields of study or due to economic constraints that force them to take any available job. This dynamic creates a paradox in labor markets. Furthermore, Kulkarni et al. (2015), assessed that supermarket chains, focused primarily on cost efficiency and workforce flexibility, often cannot or do not leverage the higher skills and knowledge of these overeducated employees.

The proliferation of degree programs in non-technical fields, coupled with the aspiration-driven push for higher education, has created a saturation of qualified candidates in a market that does not have sufficient high-skilled roles to accommodate them (Jovović, Đurašković & Radović, 2017). When these large corporations expand to new industries especially in the developing world, they replicate business systems that stress on economies of scale rather than possible employment strategies (Boto-García and Escalonilla, 2022). It can create a situation when numerous highly skilled applicants of local origin apply for menial retail positions, primarily because they may have few other options in these areas. Consequently, this misallocation hampers social justice since the flow of future talent workers is restrained from active investment, with negative repercussions on personal and structural growth in the long-run (Pérez & Benito, 2022).

### 1.2. Problem Statement

The rapid growth of tertiary education in China creates overeducation through the increasing number of graduates who possess qualifications

above what is required for most labor market positions. The sector of retail prominently displays this situation due to large supermarket chains that regularly hire entry-level personnel without requiring college graduation (Delaney et al., 2020). Many workers hold education levels beyond what their job roles require because of limited employment options or financial needs which produces a condition of underemployment and qualification underuse. Employers and employees face difficulties because their educational backgrounds do not match job requirements. The situation creates negative effects on employee happiness as well as team performance and creates obstacles for corporate output (Capsada & Munsech, 2017). The analysis shows an essential problem between educational systems and labor market requirements which becomes especially apparent when global retail chains begin broad Chinese store expansion through standardized business models. The nature of open positions resulting from globalization creates work-related tension because they do not match the education level employees expect to perform.

### 1.3. Research Objectives

The current research explores how overeducation impacts employees' workplace behavior as well as team dynamics and job performance across entry-level retail positions while studying the problems experienced by educated people in these roles. This research examines global supermarket chain hiring practices of educated personnel for fundamental positions and explores their market entry challenges through analyzing the specific problems overeducated employees experience during expansion.

### 1.4. Research Questions

The current study emphasize in questions like how does overeducation impact workplace dynamics, team cohesion, and performance in entry-level roles within the retail sector? What are the hiring practices and rationale of the global supermarket chain regarding the recruitment of highly educated individuals for grassroots-level positions? What challenges do overeducated employees face when working in entry-level retail positions within a global supermarket chain expansion program?

### 1.5. Significance of the Research

This research is significant as it addresses the influence of overeducation in the retail sector, revealing challenges faced by both overqualified employees and employers. Understanding this

mismatch can inform workforce strategies in global supermarket chains, improve job satisfaction, and enhance productivity. Additionally, the findings could guide policymakers and educational institutions in aligning tertiary education programs more closely with actual labor market demands, particularly in emerging economies.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. *Effect of Overeducation on Team Dynamics*

Overeducation refers to a situation whereby an employee has acquired qualifications or possesses skills that are not necessary in performing his or her tasks. Indeed, overeducation has been noted to lead to adverse effects in retail workplaces, especially in the entry level employees (Finch et al., 2016). The possession of higher education by employees may first imply problem-solving abilities, flexibility, and willingness to learn. Nevertheless, their qualifications may result in unrealistic perceptions of the complexity of the job and its potential for career advancement (Bedemariam & Ramos, 2021).

Overeducation of employees can be a problem because it alters communication within the team: too educated coworkers may feel incompatible with the colleagues with less education level or the overeducated people may take too many initiative and become leaders, which is not comfortable for other members of the team. As stated by Aliyu and Joseph (2021), based on the impression perceived by the other colleagues, they might be viewed as a threat or 'overqualified,' thus leading to tension between the two colleagues. From a performance perspective, overeducation may not necessarily have negative impacts only. The main problem with overeducation revolves around the fact that since the employee is overqualified, chances are high that he or she may become bored or demotivated because the tasks at hand do not challenge him/her, and this could result in a lower long-term productivity. However, Congregado et al. (2016) discovered that, if appropriately managed, overeducation has a positive relationship with team performance because employees in this category may propose improvements to processes or assume other duties. It is crucial to identify and manage the overeducated employees while addressing the potential issues related to skills overmatch to ensure a healthy workplace on both sides.

### 2.2. *Supermarket Chain Hiring of Highly Educated for Entry-Level*

Supermarkets that are operated by the international grocery chains are located in various

parts of the world and they normally experience some recruiting difficulties mainly in the entry-level positions which are frequently high turnover positions (Carré et al., 2010). Global supermarket chains are quite vast and is operated by multiple suppliers, distribution centres, wholesalers and hybrid retailers.

In order to counter this, many chains have had to diversify the recruitment process and employ highly skilled personnel at entry level. There are several reasons why this approach may be applied, including the interest in a stable and capable human capital and the possible long-term benefits of developing personnel with the potential for further growth in the organisation (Chun & Agarwala, 2016). The hiring of highly trained individuals in entry-level positions also means that supermarket chains are able to create a pool of human capital with the requisite skills and experience which can be very useful, given that customer service, problem solving, and flexibility are critical success factors in the supermarket industry. More qualified workers may introduce innovative ideas and better problem-solving skills that would come in handy to enhance performance (Tan, 2021).

Supermarket chains may recruit and place workers in entry-level positions that they are overqualified for, which helps in filtering and training those who show high productivity and dedication for a higher position or a better-fit position in the company. Furthermore, hiring overqualified employees can also increase brand image, as the presence of employees who are knowledgeable and educated can increase customer satisfaction and thus a positive perception of the company's brand (Razeena & Bhasi, 2019). However, this strategy also comes with some challenges as discussed below. Another disadvantage of having overeducated employees is that they may have high expectations in terms of career mobility, remunerations, and flexibility that can cause turnover if they are not met (Wang, Jiao & Wang, 2024). This means supermarket chains derive short term benefits in employing individuals with college education but face the long term problem of maintaining them.

### 2.3. *Challenges for Overeducated Employees in Retail Expansion*

Employees who have completed more education than required for their current job positions such as working at the company's cashier or as a cleaner, experience the following challenges, especially within the context of a supermarket chain expansion program. In their article, Hurst (2016) posited that

despite the fact that these employees meet the requirements and possess skills necessary for higher ranking positions, the constraints arising from the limited capacities offered by their junior positions result in a variety of personal and work-related issues. The fully endorsed employee may become bored through being overqualified, thus facing a feeling of stagnation or becoming too routine in their work. Furthermore, Grunau (2016) confirmed that such a misfit of skills and roles may cause emotions such as frustration and disengagement to arise, and ultimately can affect their satisfaction levels and overall worker productivity levels.

This social tension can lead to workplace dissatisfaction and difficulty in perceiving one as a member of the team (Verhaest & Verhofstadt, 2016). However, the overeducation of the workers may lead to lack of promotion, especially in massive organizations with many employees and many layers of hierarchy. They may find it difficult to balance their job aspirations with the lack of urgency of promotions common in retail careers. This is more so in an expansion program, where the need to expand the business forms the core of the chain, and not personal career advancement (Dafou, 2018). These employees have to balance between short-term security and long-term career satisfaction, which could be a major source of stress.

## **2.4. Theoretical Framework**

This research on overeducation in the retail sector's entry-level roles draws upon two key theories: Human Capital Theory and Person-Job Fit Theory.

### **2.4.1. Human Capital Theory**

According to Becker (1964)'s Human Capital Theory, human investments which include education and training enhance productivity of a worker therefore improving their wages and job opportunities. Yet, in the case of overeducation, the theory is not straightforward; individuals with high levels of "human capital" remain unemployed or stuck in low-skill positions such as in retail stores. They remain underemployed, hence dissatisfaction, high turnover rates, and loss of skilled and knowledgeable employees (Pérez & Benito, 2022). This case can be described as one of the paradoxes of the Human Capital Theory, given the fact that educational investments cannot be effective in cases where job markets offer no suitable high skill posts.

### **2.4.2. Person-Job Fit Theory**

Person-Job Fit Theory proposed by Kristof (1996)

aims at understanding to which extent person's attributes characterizing him or her as an employee are suitable to the characteristics of the job and the organizational context. When such a discrepancy is present, for example, over education, the employee may be dissatisfied with his or her job, develop stress, and even under-perform. In a retail context, overqualified employees may experience role dissatisfaction and disidentification, while overqualified employees create tension in the team (Qu & Lee, 2019). Person-Job Fit Theory shows that the qualifications of a person should match the requirements of the job to enhance productivity and motivation, which is crucial in reflecting on the effects of overeducation in global supermarket chains.

## **2.5. Literature Gap**

The current literature shows that overeducation has implications for job satisfaction, team cohesiveness, and productivity, but it does not provide detailed information on the retail industry, more so within expanding international supermarket firms. Scarce literature investigates the impact of overeducation in relation to these young employees at the beginning of their career or how these organisations tackle the issue of having a highly educated labour force in low skill positions.

## **2.6. Research Method: Qualitative**

The study adopts a phenomenological research method within the qualitative approach to explore 'overqualified' workers' experiences in low-skill employment. Qualitative methods provide richer understanding of challenging aspects associated with overeducation because they examine non-numerical information better than quantitative methods. The research collects data using semi-structured interviews to directly learn about overeducation experiences from personnel who work for a worldwide global supermarket chain that shows rapid expansion. The paper utilizes phenomenology to understand the direct experiences of employees who face overeducation within this specific employment context.

## **2.7. Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interviews**

The main tool of data collection for this study is the semi-structured interviews. This approach integrates a set plan with a more open-ended approach to discussing specific issues, enabling the researcher to encourage the respondent or participant to expand on the given topic or provide further explanations. A list of questions was

constructed bearing in mind the research questions; nevertheless, some areas of focus like job satisfaction, team work, and perceived career advancement were espoused, but the interviewees were given the freedom to express their real life experience. The interviews were face-to-face or conducted online based on the participants' availability and preference for remote communication, and each interview lasted between 10 and 15 minutes.

### **2.8. Research Design: Primary Research**

The collection of data is exclusively primary since it enables the researcher to gather information directly from the participants who are currently serving in the first-line jobs in the supermarket chain. This primary research approach was chosen because there is very limited secondary research about effective overeducated employees in this context and specifically related to the use of a multinational expansion program. Data collection from these individuals makes the results realistic, specific and up to date with issues affecting the industry.

### **2.9. Sampling Technique and Sample Size**

Purposive sampling is used to recruit participants who possess characteristics relevant to the study. The subjects included six individuals who worked at the supermarket chain and had their tertiary education in excess of what is needed for their jobs as employed(factory). This small sample size was purposefully selected to allow for detailed examination of each participant's experiences; as is the nature of qualitative research involving smaller and more focused samples. The participants were chosen to comprise professionals of different educational levels, age, and years of service in retail firm, giving a broad insight into the issue of overeducation.

### **2.10. Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis**

For the data analysis in this particular research, thematic analysis is deemed most appropriate. This process entails categorizing, comparing, and drawing conclusions on aspects referred to as themes within the data. The interviews were then read and reread to ensure that all concepts were not missed in developing initial codes. These codes were then category into broader themes that corresponded with the research question. Thematic analysis is suitable for this research as it provides an opportunity to be as creative as possible when analyzing the qualitative data while at the same time following a procedure in identifying patterns concerning the participants' experiences of overeducation.

### **2.11. Ethical Considerations**

Ethics were upheld from the time the research started to the end to respect the rights, privacy and welfare of the participants. Each participant was asked for consent before the interview with detailed description of the research objective, their participation being voluntary and their freedom to withdraw at any time for whatever reason without being forced to give justification for their actions. Participants' identities were protected during and after the study: their names and other specific details were excluded from transcripts and reports.

## **3. DATA ANALYSIS**

These interview transcript files were measured by means of a method of qualitative data analysis identified as thematic analysis, an approach formulated and popularized by (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach is considered to be effective in a phenomenological inquiry since it provides a systematic identification and reporting of patterns or so-called themes in the stories of the participants. Theoretically, the approach to the thematic analysis, offered by Braun and Clarke, allows a wide variety of qualitative contexts, and it would be correct to utilize it to study the complex experience of overeducated retail employees in the present case. It helps the researcher to go beyond the individual anecdote and find some general lessons, which makes it easier to abstract the usual findings like job dissatisfaction or career development shortage of interviewees.

**Framework and Attribution** The paper used the six-phase thematic analysis framework by Braun and Clarke when carrying out the analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is the method containing the following definition: a method of identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data, which is said to be the process that to the minimum, organizes and describes your data set in a rich detail. Credit is given to them in terms of formalizing this method in qualitative research, and coming up with straight rules to make it rigorous. The application of this well-formulated structure makes the analysis systematic and believable. Six major steps of the Braun and Clarke model have been listed below, and their use in the current study has been discussed as well.

The researcher started with a close encounter with the data itself conducting the transcription of six transcriptions of the semi-structured interviews and reading them several times. Such acquaintance allowed obtaining a rough understanding of how well-above-qualified employees viewed their working lives at the earliest stage. Thereafter, they

used line-by-line coding to isolate major concepts including unutilized talents and boredom. Pattern recognition was subsequently used to group these initial codes into larger themes, e.g. boredom and lack of challenge made up a theme of job dissatisfaction and feeling stuck participated in a theme of career stagnation. During the reviewing phase, the researcher retested the data in order to clarify, combine, or eliminate themes in a manner that was congruent and precise. The already established themes were then defined and were given distinct names to demonstrate their central meanings; this led to the results of eight major themes; among numerous others, there is the theme named Career Advancement Expectations as well as the Retention and Turnover Intentions. At last, the

findings section recorded the analysis with the help of the quotes of participants and theoretical context to create a coherent narrative regarding overeducation in the retail industry.

These eight interrelated themes will reveal the vital information on the impact of overeducation on job-related satisfaction, career development, utilization of skills, engagement, and teamwork. Both themes are the mirror of patterns repeated through interviews, showing the intricate nature of overqualified retail workers and their desires and needs. The following table 1 provides a general idea of the main topics that were revealed with the help of thematic analysis of the experience of overeducated employees working in the sphere of retailing.

*Table 1: Extracted Themes.*

Theme Number	Theme Title
1	Workplace Dynamics and Job Satisfaction
2	Career Advancement Expectations
3	Skill Utilization and Underemployment
4	Retention Concerns and Turnover Intentions
5	Suggested Changes for Job Engagement
6	Challenges of Overeducation
7	Alignment with Long-Term Career Goals
8	Impact on Team Relationships

### **3.1. Theme 1: Workplace Dynamics and Job Satisfaction**

This theme addresses the role of workplace relations in job satisfaction of overeducated workers in retail service. It also points out their feelings about the relevance of tasks, intellectual challenge, and using their qualifications. There was also a clear disrelation between the education obtained by the participants and the tasks they are assigned to, which points to the repeated discontent based on the repetitive work which falls short of the abilities and professional expectations of the participants.

Respondent 1: "The tasks are not very demanding compared to what I did in school, at least based on my view. Much of my duties are simple tasks such as putting out stock and ringing through customers, tasks that do not necessitate my knowledge of business. I feel like my skills are not being utilized at all."

Respondent 2: "In some aspects, I think that the responsibilities are not very demanding. Given my previous experience in economics, I was expecting to be able to perform more analytical roles. At the present time, it seems like my education isn't contributing much to what I am doing here."

Respondent 3: "Well, let me start by saying that I

believe that the tasks are quite basic and very routine at that. As for the questions about occupation, I do my job well, but it does not engage me much. Still, it is rather irritating at times as I understand that I can do more than merely restacking shelves or sorting stocks."

The responses indicate a common theme of dissatisfaction with the simplicity and repetitive nature of tasks. Respondent 1 feels particularly underutilized, noting that the tasks don't require their business education. Similarly, Respondent 2 finds the responsibilities unchallenging, expressing disappointment that their background in economics isn't being put to use. Respondent 3 echoes this sentiment, describing the work as "mundane" and "irritating" due to its lack of stimulation. The lack of intellectual engagement seems to be a significant factor contributing to job dissatisfaction among overqualified employees.

All in all, the interviews show that there is a lot of frustration on the part of being overqualified and sometimes wastes talents to use thereby on overqualified employees. It is not only the lack of motivation but also the decrease in job satisfaction caused by the routine character of their work. This implies that there is an urgent need to change the roles so that the tasks could become more student-

friendly to their level of education and career plans.

### **3.2. Theme 2: Career Advancement Expectations**

This theme addresses the participants' expectations regarding career growth and whether they feel their qualifications are recognized for promotion.

Respondent 4: "My expectations are low. It appears that there is little chance to progress and my vocational skills are not recognized. It got me thinking, 'this is a dumb job for a person like me.'"

Respondent 5: "I would like to secure a promotion within the company, and yet it was not discernible to the writer how they might achieve this. In the course of my work, I have not received any encouragement or impression that my qualifications are being recognized or appreciated so far, let alone promotions."

Respondent 2: "I want a promotion, perhaps to a managerial level, but sometimes I do not get a sense that my skills and education are properly appreciated. Promotions here seem to be earned more by time in service than by merit or competency in the specific posts applied for."

The responses highlight a lack of optimism regarding career advancement. Respondent 4 expresses frustration, feeling that their skills are not recognized and that the role is beneath their capabilities. Respondent 5 would like to advance but has not received any indication that their qualifications are valued for promotion. Respondent 2 similarly desires promotion but feels that advancement is based more on tenure than on skills or education. This indicates that overqualified employees feel their career growth is limited, contributing to feelings of being undervalued.

### **3.3. Theme 3: Skill Utilization and Underemployment**

This theme examines whether participants feel their skills and qualifications are being effectively utilized in their roles, or if they experience underemployment due to overeducation.

Respondent 6: "It is mundane work, and I often have the feeling I am doing more than is required of me. While I believe that there are certain areas in the process where my MBA skills could be applied to deliver some efficiency gains, in this role, there is nothing more one can do than complete the set of tasks given."

Respondent 1: "The tasks are not very demanding compared to what I did in school... I feel like my skills are not being utilised at all."

Respondent 4: "Based on the self-assessment data, I could infer that my skills are not utilised at all. At

my previous jobs, I was involved in computer-related work, but here I work as a customer service representative and perform some clerical work."

The responses reveal a strong sense of underemployment among participants. Respondent 6 finds the work "mundane" and feels limited by the role, despite recognizing areas where their MBA skills could add value. Respondent 1 echoes this feeling, noting that the tasks are undemanding and do not require their knowledge. Similarly, Respondent 4 contrasts their current role with previous, more relevant positions, emphasizing the lack of utilization of their skills. This suggests that overqualified employees are left feeling under-challenged and unfulfilled in entry-level retail roles.

### **3.4. Theme 4: Impact on Team Relationships**

This theme explores how overeducation affects participants' relationships with their colleagues and team dynamics.

Respondent 2: "I get along well with my co-workers, but I guess I am a bit out of touch. They sometimes tease me saying that I am the 'smart' one; this causes me to feel slightly outcast. Again, it is all in good humor, though it does have implications on how close or distant one feels."

Respondent 4: "It's not that we don't go through the same experiences, but I do think that my education level does leave a barrier a bit. As for some of my co-workers, I am photographed as overqualified and they even believe that I can quit at any time."

Respondent 3: "It does not matter with whom I have to work; I get along well with my peers, and I do not believe that my education is problematic. They regard me as one of them I always ensure that I do not show off or brag myself as coming from a special status or class."

The responses indicate varying experiences with team relationships. Respondent 2 feels somewhat isolated, noting that colleagues tease them about being the "smart" one, which makes them feel out of place. Respondent 4 experiences a similar disconnect, as they are seen as someone likely to leave the job due to their qualifications. In contrast, Respondent 3 manages to fit in well with the team by downplaying their educational background. This suggests that while overeducation can create barriers to social integration, some individuals adapt by consciously aligning with team norms.

### **3.5. Theme 5: Alignment with Long-Term Career Goals**

This theme explores whether participants feel

their current roles align with their broader career aspirations.

Respondent 1: "This position has absolutely nothing to do with what I want to do in my career. I suggest that one day I will be able to find a job relevant to my degree, so in the meantime I do not plan on staying in this position or even within this line of work for too long."

Respondent 2: "I realized it was not the right job for me because I am an economics graduate who would rather be in a position that involved more analyzing skills. I am using this job as a springboard to a greater position, but I expect that I will not be here for more than one or two years."

Respondent 6: "This job doesn't align with my career goals. My MBA is geared toward corporate roles, and retail isn't where I see myself. I'm only staying here until I find something that better matches my ambitions."

The responses reflect a clear conflict of interest between the participants' positions and their career aspirations. Respondent 1 clearly mentions that the job is unrelated to their choice of employment and career preferences, while Respondent 2 regards it as a transitional position. Similar to other respondents, Respondent 6 also plans to turnover as soon as a better opportunity comes up since they do not see retail as part of their MBA career. This underscores that overqualified workers are likely to use these low level retail jobs as a short-term fix which may result to more turnover.

### **3.6. Theme 6: Challenges of Overeducation**

This theme narrates about certain difficulties participants experience because of overeducation, such as social isolation and boredom.

Respondent 1: "Yes, it can be frustrating when I feel under-challenged. I sometimes try to take on extra tasks, but those opportunities are limited, and I end up feeling stagnant because my qualifications aren't needed for this role."

Respondent 3: "I was frustrated with my manager because he did not appreciate me when I was giving my opinions and suggestions in the meetings. It is as if they felt that I am attempting to undermine them as I attempt to make small improvements as per my perception of how the job ought to be done."

Respondent 6: "Others tend to avoid me because they think I am overqualified. Some of them perceive me as their rival and that I may 'steal' assignments that are not necessarily in my area of responsibility, which is friction-inducing."

The responses reveal various challenges associated with overeducation. The problem that is

bothering Respondent 1 is the absence of stimulating problems and few opportunities to demonstrate abilities. Respondent 3 experiences tension with their manager when offering suggestions, feeling that their ideas are unwelcome. Respondent 6 faces social isolation, as colleagues view them as a competitor. These responses illustrate the negative consequences of overeducation, including frustration, social tension, and lack of intellectual engagement.

### **3.7. Theme 7: Suggested Changes for Job Engagement**

This theme captures the participants' suggestions for making the job more engaging and utilizing their skills better.

Respondent 1: "I would like to have more diversified tasks or several minor assignments where I can apply analysis. Perhaps, introducing some development opportunities or providing some job swaps in the given organisation may have an impact on making the role more satisfying for individuals such as myself."

Respondent 2: "Ideally, I believe the company could consider implementing a mentorship program or give opportunities for more work to those who seek them. That way, overqualified employees could feel a sense of purpose and job satisfaction rather than boredom and disengagement."

Respondent 5: "Perhaps providing training in such fields as management, or customer relations could be interesting and assist employees with a college education not to get bored. It states that the role could be extended with other tasks and obligations that relate to it."

The respondents provided several suggestions that would assist them in making their roles more engaging. Respondent 1 searches for a broad range of activity and situations that require skills; Respondent 2 suggests to introduce a coaching program to make existent activity meaningful and avoid boredom. Respondent 5 feels that more training could help enhance the job. These responses indicate an interest in the implementation of Job Enrichment strategies that are in sync with employees' educational achievements.

### **3.8. Theme 8: Retention Concerns and Turnover Intentions**

This theme addresses participants' plans on staying in their current positions with relevant organizations and the prospect of turnover due to overeducation.

Respondent 1: "This position has absolutely nothing to do with what I want to do in my career... so in the meantime I do not plan on staying in this



position or even within this line of work for too long.”

Respondent 2: “I am using this job as a springboard to a greater position, but I expect that I will not be here for more than one or two years.”

Respondent 6: “This job doesn’t align with my career goals... I’m only staying here until I find something that better matches my ambitions.”

The responses suggest that the participants have high turnover intentions as they do not consider themselves permanent employees in their jobs. Respondent 1 and Respondent 2 view their positions as a means to an end career, while Respondent 6 plans to look for a better job as soon as he can. This implies that overeducation results in higher turnover intent since such employees will continue working at the retail beginner roles until they find other suitable positions.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

This research exposes findings showing that retail employees who possess higher qualifications than requirements of their jobs are dissatisfied with their jobs because their skills are not utilized. Participants voiced their dissatisfaction with monotonous and low-level tasks that are far from their educational achievements, similar to Bhasi and Rasheed (2018) who claimed that over-educated employees lack challenge and interest in their work. Employers risk have a wasted potential and, therefore, their level of job satisfaction is reduced this is especially significant if the tasks that are provided to employees are not requiring the level of knowledge and expertise they possess this is especially the case in a retail context (Zhang, Bolino and Yin, 2023). García-Mainar and Montuenga-Gómez (2020) observe that overeducation negatively impacts employee satisfaction because workers cannot meaningfully apply their skills. This implies that there could be a need to redesign jobs in order to allow the incorporation of tasks that are more suitable for overeducated individuals, hence enhance commitment and productivity within organizations.

The data collected also supports the assertion that overqualified employees are bound to experience low career mobility within their occupation, which makes them feel demotivated due to perceived lack of recognition within their workplace. Many of them complained that their Human Resources qualifications do not translate into any form of promotion, what is evident is that career advancement seems to be a product of longevity in the job rather than productivity or achievement. This is in line with Wiedner (2020) who noted that

employees working in the human resources department in occupations that required more education and training but only offered low-skill jobs described their jobs as “dead-ends” which only offered minimal promotions. Lack of growth opportunities within the organization is another factor that might lead to higher turnover because employees are unlikely to be committed to the company in the long run. According to Vera-Toscano and Meroni (2021), having clear promotion opportunities, especially for the highly educated, improves retention as it indicates the opportunities that are available after passing the probation period. This means that organizations could consider changing their promotion policies to include competency and proactivity to enhance meritocracy in organizations.

Finally, the findings reveal that being overqualified poses social implications within the workplace; employees may feel lonely or out of touch with their counterparts. Several participants also described how colleagues saw them as ‘outsiders,’ and even as ‘overqualified,’ which negatively impacted interpersonal relations at the workplace. In line with these findings, Khan, Zhang and Salameh (2024) opined that overqualified workers suffer from social isolation due to dissimilar educational attainment and career objectives. Such over qualification leads to an “us vs them” situation and the remaining members of the large team may feel uncomfortable, vulnerable, or threatened as pointed out by Gong, Sun and Li (2021). This notion is supported by Person-Job Fit Theory developed by Kristof in 1996 which posits that lack of correspondence between an individual’s skills and the position assigned to him/her in an organization may destabilize team cohesiveness and demoralize employees. To tackle this, organizations could promote cross-functional interactions, group collaborations and effective communication to ensure that overqualified employees feel wanted and needed in their new companies improving workplace integration.

#### 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sought to establish the effects of overeducating in entry-level jobs within a supermarket chain worldwide, especially when considering its expansion strategy. It was therefore established that overeducating is a condition that has effects on both the employees and the organization using data collected from semi-structured interviews of overqualified employees. These include some perceived skills-demand mismatch at the workplace,

lack of promotion opportunities, perceptions of interpersonal work isolation, and turnover intentions. All these factors combine to result in job dissatisfaction and short-term tenure among overqualified workers within low-skill positions such as retail jobs. The research outcomes point to a clear gap between the increasing availability and opportunities of tertiary education and the retail sector employees' requirements, supporting previous research that shows that overeducation leads to underemployment, job satisfaction, and withdrawal. From a theoretical perspective, it supports the application of Human Capital Theory and Person-Job Fit Theory in exploring the overeducation issue. According to the Human Capital Theory, education investments should increase productivity and earnings; nevertheless, when employees who are highly skilled are put in positions that do not fit their abilities, the value of such investments is reduced. This situation goes well with the theory even though it will be appropriately applicable to the places where high skill jobs are scarce.

Likewise, the Person-Job Fit Theory posits that qualification oftentimes should match the demands of a particular job. In this research study, lack of fit led to the following: social conflict and demoralization of workers overqualified workers experience psychological stress from perceived underutilization. The study also shows that despite certain advantages related to over qualification, the practice of hiring overly qualified candidates for vacancies that can be filled by people with less experience does not contribute to long-term successful outcomes and may lead to various problems when implemented as a regular strategy. Employees who have more skills than what is required for their job are bound to suffer from boredom due to lack of growth in the positions they are given, which makes them leave in large numbers in organizations – this is extremely costly. Based on these challenges, supermarkets chain and other retail businesses across the globe should consider the overeducation problem as a key area of concern and modify their employment practices, job design, and career advancement patterns. If organizations pay respect to and acknowledge the education achievements of their employees, it will mean that employees will be more committed to their work resulting in increased productivity and reduced turnover.

### 5.1. Recommendations

Following are the recommendations of this

research

**Develop Career Advancement Paths** Promotion strategies should be clearly established so that talented employees are motivated based on their training and expertise and not the time spent working for the firm.

**Job Enrichment Programs** Encourage the creation of assignments which require the employees to use their abilities; this can be analysis of data or customers' behavior.

**Implement Mentorship and Training Programs** Give career development and other forms of training such as management training, to ensure that overqualified employees are occupied.

**Encourage Cross-Departmental Roles** Permit capable employees to work in other departments on a temporary basis with a view of performing the duties for which they may be better suited.

**Improve Social Integration** Since overqualified employees may feel socially isolated, arrange for social activities that are intended for team building.

**Create Fast-Track Promotion Programs** Offer promotions for employees with postgraduate degrees to reduce turnover rates and to show that the company has opportunities for qualified workers.

**Conduct Regular Feedback Sessions** Permitting overqualified employees to provide feedback regarding their career objectives and issues that they might have on a routine basis minimizes the misallocation of jobs in accordance to their expertise and also ensures that their career goals are well understood.

### 5.2. Limitations

The validity of this research is a major concern since the number of respondents interviewed was six, which is far from an ideal number of participants in a study. Moreover, the study involves an analysis of results from a single global supermarket chain, which might not effectively generalize the findings to other types of retailing companies. In addition, the flexibility of the interviews allowed personal prejudices and misconceptions to distort the respondents' answers, and it is challenging to quantify the effects of overeducation on job satisfaction and productivity impartially.

### 5.3. Future Directions

Further research in this context may involve increasing the sample size and/or including participants from different retail chains for increased generalizability. Moreover, quantitative approach could be applied to assess the effects of overeducation on certain outcomes like turnover

rates, job satisfaction scores or productivity levels. Future studies could also examine how overeducation affects other industries aside from retail as other industries like the hospitality and customer services industry have also been found to

experience serious issues on overeducation. Last but not the least, there is scope for future research through longitudinal studies that could look into the impact overeducation might have on career advancement and job satisfaction.

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