

Summer 2014

Perceived Underemployment Among The Foreign-Born: Its Outcomes And The Moderating Role Of Psychological Empowerment And Perceived Organizational Support

Ayse Avcil Okuyucu
San Jose State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses

Recommended Citation

Avcil Okuyucu, Ayse, "Perceived Underemployment Among The Foreign-Born: Its Outcomes And The Moderating Role Of Psychological Empowerment And Perceived Organizational Support" (2014). *Master's Theses*. 4451.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.89vz-kvea>

https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/4451

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

PERCEIVED UNDEREMPLOYMENT AMONG THE FOREIGN-BORN:
ITS OUTCOMES AND THE MODERATING ROLE
OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AND PERCEIVED
ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of The Department of Psychology

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Ayse A. Okuyucu

August 2014

© 2014

Ayşe A. Okuyucu

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

PERCEIVED UNDEREMPLOYMENT AMONG THE FOREIGN-BORN: ITS
OUTCOMES AND THE MODERATING ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL
EMPOWERMENT AND PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

by

Ayşe A. Okuyucu

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2014

Dr. Megumi Hosoda Department of Psychology

Dr. Howard Tokunaga Department of Psychology

Dr. Ipek Yildir Intrepid

ABSTRACT

PERCEIVED UNDEREMPLOYMENT AMONG THE FOREIGN-BORN: ITS OUTCOMES AND THE MODERATING ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AND PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

by Ayse A. Okuyucu

In the present study the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes such as job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, and turnover intentions among foreign-born employees was examined. Underemployment occurs when employee education, skills, and previous job experiences are underutilized. Perceived underemployment was used as the specific type of underemployment to examine these relationships. Additionally, psychological empowerment and perceived organizational support (POS) were examined as potential moderators of the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes. Foreign-born employees perceived themselves as moderately underemployed. In addition, there was a significant and negative relationship between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction; but perceived underemployment was not related to affective organizational commitment and turnover intentions. Furthermore, psychological empowerment and POS did not moderate the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes but were directly related to these outcomes. These findings suggest that, as employees feel higher levels of underemployment, they are less satisfied with their jobs and perceive themselves to be less empowered and supported by their organizations. Organizational strategies to minimize the negative impact of perceived underemployment were suggested.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I present my deepest thanks to my thesis advisor, Dr. Megumi Hosoda, for her guidance and understanding throughout my thesis. Thank you Megumi, for helping me become a better researcher, and for your invaluable feedback. I would also like to thank Dr. Howard Tokunaga for helping me write a good thesis. A special thanks to my third reader, Dr. Ipek Yildir, for her assistance that came in a time when I was desperate, and to my cohort, Shama Arakeri, who helped me throughout this process.

My very special thanks to my husband, who endured with me in every step of the process. Thank you for assisting me in my hardest times and sharing my joy and happiness. Without your support, this thesis would not be accomplished...

Thank you, my mom and dad, for making me who I am. You are the most precious people in my life. Mom, your support was priceless when you took care of my baby to give me enough time to finish my thesis, and dad, your smiling face is my biggest support in my life.

Finally, my dear baby, your smile was the best motivator during this process. Please forgive me if I ever stole from your time while writing this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
Measurement of Perceived Underemployment	4
Theories to Explain Perceived Underemployment	5
Person-job fit theory	5
Relative deprivation theory.....	6
Effects of Perceived Underemployment on Work Attitudes and Behaviors	7
Job satisfaction.....	8
Affective organizational commitment	9
Turnover intentions.....	10
Moderating Roles of Psychological Empowerment and Perceived Organizational Support	11
Psychological empowerment	11
POS	13
METHOD	16
Participants	16
Procedure.....	19
Measures.....	20

Perceived underemployment.....	20
Job satisfaction.....	20
Affective organizational commitment	21
Turnover intention	21
Psychological empowerment	21
POS	22
Demographics	22
RESULTS	23
Descriptive Statistics	23
Pearson Correlations	23
Test of Hypotheses	25
Research Question	29
DISCUSSION.....	34
Implications of the Study.....	37
Strengths, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research	39
Conclusion.....	41
REFERENCES	42
APPENDIX.....	46
Survey Items.....	46

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for demographic variables	17
Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, Pearson Correlations, and Reliabilities	23
Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Job Satisfaction.....	27
Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Affective Organizational Commitment	28
Table 5. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Turnover Intentions	29
Table 6. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Job Satisfaction	31
Table 7. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Affective Organizational Commitment	32
Table 8. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Turnover Intentions	33

Introduction

Underemployment – “when workers are employed in jobs that are substandard relative to their goals and expectations” (Maynard & Feldman, 2011, p. 1) - is a pervasive problem faced by an increasing number of people. It is estimated that at least one in five workers experience underemployment in some form in the U.S. (Athey & Hautaluoma, 1994; Feldman & Turnley, 1995). However, compared to unemployment, underemployment has received much less attention from scholars and policy makers (Maynard & Feldman, 2011), mainly because politicians and the popular press consider an unemployment rate as the symbol of economic well-being (Zvonkovic, 1988). Underemployment has been associated with negative job attitudes, greater intentions to leave one’s job, and poorer mental and physical health (Feldman, 1996; Maynard & Feldman, 2011; Maynard, Joseph, & Maynard, 2006).

Although underemployment exists in every strata of society, some groups of people experience more underemployment than others (Maynard & Feldman, 2011). Foreign-born employees are highly susceptible to underemployment (Slack & Jensen, 2011). The foreign-born make up an important part of the population and labor force in the U.S. The 2010 American Community Survey estimated the foreign-born population to be nearly 40 million (U. S. Census Bureau, 2012), or 15.6 % of the American labor force (OECD, 2009). Despite their role in the American labor force, in 2009, 26.6% of first-generation foreign-born people were underemployed (Slack & Jensen, 2011).

Several potential reasons that foreign-born employees are subject to greater underemployment are that their credentials, previous training, and experiences outside of

a host country are not valued or recognized by employers in the host country (Hamilton, 2011), they do not have sufficient social and professional networks to find better jobs (Balogun, 2012), they have poorer language proficiency (Madamba & De Jong, 1997), and they are the victims of employment discrimination (Slack & Jensen, 2011).

Research on underemployment has mainly focused on native-born rather than foreign-born employees. Therefore, it is not known whether findings on the negative consequences of underemployment among native-born employees also generalize to foreign-born employees. Therefore, one purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between underemployment and job attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, and intentions to turnover) among foreign-born employees.

In order to identify factors that might ameliorate negative outcomes of underemployment, researchers have begun to examine variables that might moderate or mediate the relationships between underemployment and job attitudes, and mental and physical health (Anderson & Winefield, 2011). For example, Erdogan and Bauer (2009) studied psychological empowerment, defined as “a motivational construct that is based on individuals’ cognitions about themselves in relation to their work role and concept” (Spreitzer, 1995, p. 1443), as a potential moderator of the relationship between perceived overqualification and job outcomes, and showed that the negative outcomes (i.e., job dissatisfaction, intention to leave, voluntary turnover) of perceived overqualification were obtained only when employees did not feel empowered. Based on these findings, Erdogan and Bauer concluded that the negative consequences of perceived overqualification were avoidable. Therefore, Erdogan and Bauer and other researchers

(e.g., Anderson & Winefield, 2011) called for more research on the boundary conditions of underemployment. Although overqualification is one category of underemployment, psychological empowerment has not been investigated as a boundary condition of the relationship between underemployment and job attitudes among foreign-born employees.

The present study also identifies perceived organizational support (POS) as a potential boundary condition because it may help to diminish the negative consequences of perceived underemployment among foreign-born employees. POS refers to employees' general beliefs that their organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986). POS is considered as assurance that help will be provided by the organization when it is needed to deal with stressful situations and to carry out one's job effectively (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002). POS functions to help employees believe that their company values them and cares about their well-being, is proud of their accomplishments, and recognizes and rewards their performance (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011).

POS might help employees deal with negative situations in the workplace and perform their duties effectively and hence act as a factor that might ameliorate the negative outcomes of underemployment. When employees feel supported from their organization, the consequences of perceived underemployment may not be as negative even if they perceive themselves to be underemployed. Therefore, POS is suggested as a potential moderator variable of the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes among foreign-born employees.

To the best of the author's knowledge, there are no studies that have examined psychological empowerment and POS as boundary conditions of the relationship between underemployment and job attitudes among foreign-born employees in the U.S. Therefore, the second purpose of the present study is to examine whether psychological empowerment and POS moderate the relationship between underemployment and job attitudes among foreign-born employees.

The following sections provide the definition and measurement of underemployment, review of the literature on the consequences of perceived underemployment, the identification of moderators of such relationships, and the hypotheses that were tested in the present study.

Measurement of Perceived Underemployment

Underemployment refers to a situation in which there is a discrepancy or deviation between individuals' characteristics and those of their jobs, and this discrepancy stems from some standard of comparison (e.g., one's past achievements, desires, or expectations) (Feldman, 1996; Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2011).

Underemployment has been measured in different ways, with the major distinction being the objective measurement versus subjective measurement (Feldman, 1996; Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2011).

Objective underemployment relies on relatively verifiable indicators (e.g., employee education level vs. established educational requirements for a job through job analysis), whereas subjective (i.e., perceived) underemployment taps into employees' perceptions of their employment situations (Maynard & Feldman, 2011). The distinction

between objective and perceived underemployment is important because individuals who do not seem to be underemployed objectively still perceive themselves as underemployed (Maynard et al., 2006; Maynard & Feldman, 2011).

Despite the different approaches to measuring underemployment, researchers in social sciences have most often taken the subjective approach to measuring underemployment and examined employee perceptions in greater detail (Maynard & Feldman, 2011). Maynard and Feldman also assert that “attitudinal, emotional, and behavioral consequences of underemployment are best predicted by subjective experiences rather than objective measures” (p.4). Therefore, in the current study, underemployment is measured as the extent to which employees believe their education, skills, and previous work experience are underutilized compared to the employment situation of others with the same educational background, skills, and work experience or to their own past employment situations (Li, Gervais, & Duval, 2006).

Theories to Explain Perceived Underemployment

There exists many theories that explain perceived underemployment; however, the most frequently used theories to explain perceived underemployment are person-job fit and relative deprivation theory.

Person-job fit theory. Person-environment (P-E) fit theory provides a framework for the interaction between individuals and their fit to organizations, groups, supervisors, and job (Prottas, 2011). Person-job (P-J) fit is a category of P-E fit theory and is broadly defined as the compatibility between individuals’ characteristics and the attributes of their organizations (Kristof, 1996). It is comprised of two types: needs-

supplies fit and demands-abilities fit. Needs-supplies fit captures how well the environment fulfills an individual's psychological needs such as desires, values, goals, and aspirations. Demands-abilities fit is characterized by the compatibility between individuals' knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and formal job requirements (Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, 2006; Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2011). In the first type, misfit occurs if an organization cannot satisfy employee needs, desires and preferences, whereas in the second type, misfit occurs when the KSAs of an employee do not meet job demands. According to the P-J fit theory, needs-supplies misfit indicates a lack of organizational support in satisfying underemployed employee desires and needs. Similarly, demands-ability misfit indicates that underemployed employees have more KSAs than a job requires and these surplus competencies represent P-J misfit (Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2011). Research has consistently shown that poor P-J fit leads to negative outcomes to both individuals (e.g., job dissatisfaction, poorer organizational commitment) and organizations (e.g., turnover intentions, less prosocial behaviors) (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005).

Relative deprivation theory. Relative deprivation theory is based on the idea of equity and individuals' comparison of themselves to some standard (e.g., past experiences, present co-workers, expected job conditions) (Feldman, Leana, & Bolino, 2002; Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2011). Relative deprivation is a result of a social comparison process in which individuals believe that they are deprived of something they should rightfully have depending on their expectations (Tiraboschi & Maass, 1998). This theory assumes that employee reactions to a situation depend on subjective evaluations of

some standards such as past gains or other individuals and they compare themselves with these standards (Tiraboschi & Maass, 1998). Feelings of deprivation occur depending on what individuals want to have rather than how little they have compared to their reference groups (Morrison, 1971). As a result of these comparisons, they experience a sense of deprivation when they find themselves in a job situation that is lower than their expectations (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009). Feelings of relative deprivation then affect attitudes such that the greater the perceived deprivation, the more negative employee reactions will be, which then leads to more negative job attitudes.

According to this theory, employees perceive underemployment if their current job conditions are incongruent with their expectations, based on their standard of comparison such as their past gains or other individuals with similar KSAs (Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2011). Feldman (1996) argues that the negative relationship between both perceived and objective underemployment and job attitudes is due to a perceived discrepancy between rewards individuals expect and what they actually receive. Underemployed workers may perceive themselves as receiving fewer intrinsic and extrinsic rewards from their jobs than satisfactorily employed workers and this sense of deprivation leads to the experience of negative job attitudes (Feldman, 1996). Therefore, underemployed employees may have poorer attitudes toward work than those who do not perceive themselves underemployed.

Effects of Perceived Underemployment on Work Attitudes and Behaviors

There has been a considerable amount of research on the outcomes of perceived underemployment. Perceived underemployment has been linked to job attitudes (e.g., job

satisfaction, organizational commitment), job behaviors (e.g., turnover, absenteeism, performance), overall psychological well-being, and marital, family, and social relationships (Hamilton, 2011). Researchers have mainly examined work outcomes of perceived underemployment because of its significant implications for employees and organizations. The most frequently studied outcomes of perceived underemployment are job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction has been shown to be the most examined outcome of perceived underemployment (Hamilton, 2011). For example, Khan and Morrow (1991) empirically examined the relationship between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction and found a negative relationship between job satisfaction and perceived underemployment. Burris (1983) also reported that feelings of underemployment were negatively associated with job satisfaction in her sample of clerical workers.

Peiro, Agut, and Grau (2010) explored the relationships between perceived overeducation and three facets of job satisfaction (extrinsic, intrinsic, social facet) in a sample of young Spanish employees. As expected, there were negative relationships between overeducation and these three facets of job satisfaction. These findings suggest that underemployment is related to job satisfaction negatively, regardless of age and/or position of employees.

The majority of studies investigating the relationship between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction focus on native-born employees such that research on this topic among foreign-born employees is scarce. An exception to this is a study by

Hamilton (2011), who conducted a comprehensive study of examining the predictors and outcomes of perceived underemployment using three different samples of immigrants in Canada. Hamilton found a significant negative relationship between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction. The current study examined this relationship among foreign-born employees in the U. S. in order to find whether a similar relationship exists in the target sample. Therefore, the following hypothesis was tested.

Hypothesis 1. Perceived underemployment will be negatively related to job satisfaction among foreign-born employees.

Affective organizational commitment. Affective organizational commitment is defined as one's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997). When employees perceive themselves to be underemployed due to perceived misfit or perceived relative deprivation, they may not feel emotionally attached to the organization and react by psychologically distancing themselves from their organizations and lowering their involvement with their organizations (Feldman et al., 2002).

Perceived underemployment has been shown to be negatively related to affective organizational commitment (e.g., Hamilton, 2011; Johnson, Morrow, & Johnson, 2002). For example, Johnson et al. found a negative relationship between overqualification (i.e., mismatch) and affective organizational commitment among three different samples: nurses, railroad workers and postal workers. They considered overqualification as excessive education and experience (mismatch) and limited opportunities for job growth

(no growth) perceived by employees and found that no growth had greater negative consequences for affective organizational commitment than mismatch.

Apart from the previous research mentioned above, which investigated the relationship between perceived underemployment and affective organizational commitment among native-born employees, Hamilton (2011) investigated this relation among immigrant employees in Canada and found that perceived underemployment was negatively related to affective organizational commitment. However, such a relationship has not been tested among foreign-born employees in the U.S. Therefore, the following hypothesis was tested.

Hypothesis 2: Perceived underemployment will be negatively related to affective organizational commitment among foreign-born employees.

Turnover intentions. Research has shown that there is a consistent and negative relationship between perceived underemployment and intentions to leave a job.

Employees who perceived themselves as underemployed reported greater turnover intentions and wanted to leave their jobs sooner than those who did not perceive to be underemployed (Hamilton, 2011). For example, Burriss (1983) reported that underemployed employees with a college degree intended to leave their jobs and did not plan to stay in their current job for more than a year. Feldman et al. (2002) have found that downsized managers who were re-employed in lower level jobs felt underemployed and reported higher turnover intentions.

Hamilton (2011) found that there was a significant relationship between perceived underemployment and turnover intentions among immigrant employees in Canada such

that higher perceived underemployment was associated with higher levels of turnover intentions. The present study investigated this relationship among foreign-born employees in the U.S. Based on the above findings, the following hypothesis was tested.

Hypothesis 3: Perceived underemployment will be positively related to turnover intentions among foreign-born employees.

Moderating Roles of Psychological Empowerment and Perceived Organizational Support

Although there is compelling evidence that perceived underemployment is related to negative job attitudes, an important gap in the literature is the relative lack of attention to variables that might moderate or mediate such relationships in order to understand factors that might ameliorate these negative outcomes (Anderson & Winefield, 2011). Identifying such variables might help organizations use their underemployed employees' KSAs and talent more effectively, while reducing the negative consequences of perceived underemployment on employees. In this section, two potential variables that might moderate the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes are discussed.

Psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment is defined as “a motivational construct that is based on individuals' cognitions about themselves in relation to their work role and concept” (Spreitzer, 1995, p. 1443) and consists of four cognitions which are meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Meaning refers to the value of a work goal in relation to an individual's standard; competence is an individual's belief in his or her capability to perform a task; self-determination is an

individual's sense of having choice in initiating and regulating actions; and impact is defined as the degree to which an individual can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work (Spreitzer, 1995). These four components of psychological empowerment together reflect an active orientation in shaping individuals' work role (Spreitzer, 1995), and empowered employees have control in shaping organizational activities, have the ability to determine job outcomes, and can influence organizational activities (Spreitzer, 1995).

Erdogan and Bauer (2009) were the first ones who tested psychological empowerment as a moderator of the relationship between perceived overqualification and work attitudes and behaviors. They argued that because psychological empowerment creates a work environment that provides autonomy and signals to employees that organizations trust their competence and judgment, it might alleviate the sense of deprivation that overqualified employees feel. They hypothesized that the negative relationship between perceived overqualification and work outcomes might be reduced, especially when employees feel high levels of empowerment.

Using a sample of 244 sales associates of retail chain stores in Turkey, Erdogan and Bauer (2009) found that psychological empowerment moderated the relationship between perceived overqualification and turnover intentions such that when psychological empowerment was low, perceived overqualification was positively related to turnover intention; however, there was no relationship between perceived overqualification and turnover intentions when psychological empowerment was high. These findings indicate that employees experience negative consequences as a result of

feeling overqualified only when they are not psychologically empowered and suggest that the negative consequences of perceived overqualifications are avoidable (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009).

Despite the call for more research on boundary conditions for the negative consequences of perceived underemployment (e.g., Anderson & Winefield, 2011), to the author's knowledge, Erdogan and Bauer (2009) is the only study that has examined employee empowerment as a moderator of the relationship between perceived overqualification and work attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, more studies are needed on this moderator.

Based on the above findings, the following hypothesis was tested.

Hypothesis 4: Psychological empowerment will moderate the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, and turnover intention) among foreign-born employees such that when psychological empowerment is low, there will be a negative relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes; however, when psychological empowerment is high, there will be no relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes.

POS. POS refers to employees' general beliefs that their organizations care about their well-being and value their contributions (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). According to organization support theory, employees view the organization as having humanlike characteristics and take their favorable treatment or unfavorable treatment as an

indication that the organization favors or disfavors them as an individual (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

POS serves several functions. POS invokes the norm of reciprocity that produces a felt obligation to care about the organization's welfare and to help it reach its objectives (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). Employees reciprocate POS with positive outcomes such as increased in-role and extra-role performance, reduced turnover, and increased job satisfaction (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Riggle, Edmonson, & Hansen, 2009). POS also serves a socio-emotional function in that it meets employees' needs for esteem, affiliation, and emotional support (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). For example, POS conveys to employees that (a) the organization judges them as superior performers and is proud of their accomplishments, which is likely to meet the need for esteem, (b) it is committed to them and accepts them as welcome members, which is likely to meet the need for affiliation, and (c) it provides understanding and material aid to employees to deal with stressful situations at work or home, which is likely to meet the need for emotional support. Finally, POS strengthens employees' beliefs that the organization recognizes and rewards increased performance. Favorable opportunities for rewards convey the organization's positive valuation of employees' contributions and thus contribute to POS, which in turn, increases employees' expectations that high performance will be rewarded (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011).

Given these functions of POS, if employees believe their organizations value them and care about their well-being, are proud of their accomplishments, and recognize and reward their performance, POS might ameliorate the negative consequences of

perceived underemployment. However, to the author's best knowledge, this assertion has never been tested empirically. Thus, POS was explored as a potential moderator and a research question was posited.

RQ1: Will POS moderate the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes and turnover intentions?

Method

Participants

A total of 108 foreign-born employees participated in the study. However, data from 18 participants were excluded from analyses as they failed to respond to many items. The participants needed to be foreign-born and employed in the United States at the time of data collection as inclusion criteria.

Table 1 presents the demographic information of the participants. The sample consisted of 48 females (53.3%) and 42 males (46.7%). A majority of the participants were aged between 30-39 years (43.3%, $n = 39$), 40-49 years (24.4%, $n = 22$), and 20-29 years (20%, $n = 18$). Participants were from a wide range of countries such as Turkey (35.6%, $n = 32$), India (25.6%, $n = 23$), Iran (8.9%, $n = 8$), and Japan (6.7%, $n = 6$). On average, the participants have been in the U.S. for 14.5 years with a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 37 years. Most participants identified themselves as White (46.7%, $n = 42$), followed by Asian (33.3%, $n = 30$) and East Indian (12.2%, $n = 11$). Twenty-eight participants (31.1%) obtained a bachelor's or college degree in the U.S., 33 participants (36.7%) indicated that they obtained a master's degree in the U.S., and 18 participants (20%) stated that they obtained a doctorate degree in the U.S. Forty-eight participants (53.3%) reported that they obtained their bachelor's degree outside of the U.S. and 15 participants (16.7%) reported that they obtained their master's degree outside of the U.S. In terms of employment, 69 participants (76.7%) had a permanent job and 18 participants (20%) were contractor/temporary employees.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics for demographic variables (n = 90)

Demographics	N	%
Gender		
Female	48	53.3%
Male	42	46.7%
Age		
20-29 years	18	20.0%
30-39 years	39	43.3%
40-49 years	22	24.4%
50-59 years	9	10.0%
60 years and over	2	2.2%
Country of birth		
Turkey	32	35.6%
India	23	25.6%
Iran	8	8.9%
Japan	6	6.7%
Years in the U.S.		
0-5 years	7	11.7%
5-10 years	22	36.7%
10-15 years	17	28.3%
15-25 years	9	15.0%
25-40 years	5	8.3%
Ethnicity		
White	42	46.7%
Asian	30	33.3%
East Indian	11	12.2%
Latino/a	2	2.2%
Other	5	5.6%
Education level in the U.S.		
High school diploma or under	10	11.1%
Bachelor's or college degree	28	31.1%
Master's degree	33	36.6%
Doctorate degree	18	20.0%
Other	1	1.1%

Education level outside the U.S.		
High School Diploma or under	23	25.5%
Bachelor's or College Degree	48	53.3%
Master's Degree	15	16.6%
Doctorate Degree	3	3.3%
Other	1	1.1%
Employment status		
Permanent	69	76.7%
Temporary/contract	18	20.0%
Other	3	3.3%
Sector		
Business	63	70.0%
Education	16	17.8%
Government	5	5.6%
Non-profit	5	5.6%
Job category		
Engineering	33	36.7%
Other	17	18.9%
Business/Marketing	10	11.1%
Education	8	8.9%
Finance	8	8.9%
Research	7	7.8%
Medical	4	4.4%
Human resources	3	3.3%
Salary		
Less than \$20,000 year	8	8.9%
\$20,001 - \$30,000 year	4	4.4%
\$30,001 - \$40,000 year	11	12.2%
\$40,001 - \$50,000 year	3	3.3%
\$50,001 - \$60,000 year	7	7.8%
\$60,001 - \$70,000 year	5	5.6%
\$70,001 - \$80,000 year	5	5.6%
\$80,001 - \$90,000 year	5	5.6%
\$90,001 - \$100,000 year	5	5.6%
More than \$100,000 year	36	40.0%

Marital status			
Married	64	71.1%	
Single	18	20.0%	
Divorced	5	5.6%	
Separated	1	1.1%	
Widowed	1	1.1%	
Immigration status			
Naturalized citizen	42	46.7%	
Immigrant	30	33.3%	
Non-immigrant	17	18.9%	
Other	1	1.1%	

Participants' employment sector also changed. A majority of the participants ($n = 63$) worked in business, 5.6% of them ($n = 5$) worked in non-profit, 17.8% ($n = 16$) worked in education, and 5.6% ($n = 5$) of participants worked in government.

Thirty-three participants (36.7%) indicated that they were engineers, 8 (8.9%) were teachers, and 7 (7.8%) were researchers. Thirty-six participants (40%) earned more than \$100,000 a year, 27 participants (30.2%) stated that they earned between \$50,000-\$100,000 a year, and 18 participants (16.6%) earned between \$20,000- \$50,000 a year.

Twenty-nine participants (32.2%) stated that they had somewhat strong accent, whereas 28 participants (31.1%) stated that their accent was moderately strong. Only 6 participants (6.7%) considered their accent very strong.

Procedure

Data were collected using an online survey. The online survey link was accompanied by an introductory message that was sent via e-mail to employees meeting the criteria using personal contacts, professional networks, and mailing links.

Participants were shown a brief description of the study and were asked to provide their consent for the study after they selected the survey link. The survey started with questions asking about demographic information such as age, sex, country of origin, and educational background. The next section inquired about participants' attitudes towards their current job. This section consisted of items about participants' perceptions of underemployment, overall job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, turnover cognitions, psychological empowerment, and POS. At the end of the survey, the participants submitted their survey online and were thanked for their participation.

Measures

Perceived underemployment. Perceived underemployment was measured with six items on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Items were adapted from Hamilton (2011). Sample items include "I am overeducated for this job," "I feel overqualified for my current job," and "This job lets me use my ability." Higher scores indicate that participants perceive themselves more underemployed. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was .81, indicating that the scale had high internal consistency.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured with three items from Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh (1979). The items were on 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) and include "All in all I am satisfied with my job," "In general, I don't like my job," and "In general, I like working here." Higher scores indicate that participants are more satisfied with their jobs. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was .88 and the scale had high internal consistency.

Affective organizational commitment. Affective organizational commitment was measured with six items on 5-point Likert-type scale from Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993). Sample items include “I really feel as if my organization’s problems are my own,” “My organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me,” and “I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization” and responses for these items ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicate that participants are more committed to their organization. Cronbach’s coefficient alpha was .85, indicating that the scale had high internal consistency.

Turnover intentions. Turnover intentions were measured with four items on 5-point Likert-type scale from Adams and Beehr (1998). Sample items include “I am planning to leave my job for another in the near future,” and “I frequently think of quitting” and responses for these items ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicate that participants have more intentions to quit their jobs. Cronbach’s coefficient alpha was .94, indicating the high internal consistency of the scale.

Psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment was measured with 12 items from Spreitzer (1995). Participants were instructed to respond to the items on a 5-point Likert-type scale with 1 indicating ‘*strongly disagree*’ and 5 indicating ‘*strongly agree*.’ Sample items include “My job activities are personally meaningful to me,” “I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job,” “My impact on what happens in my department is large,” and “I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department.” Higher scores indicate that participants feel more

empowered by their organizations. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .88 and the scale had good internal consistency.

POS. POS was measured with 12 items from Eisenberger et al. (1986) on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The items were adapted from the short version of the original perceived organizational support scale and an additional four items were taken out from the short version that contained 16 items. Sample items are "The organization strongly considers my goals and values," "The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work," "The organization shows very little concern for me," and "The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work." Higher scores indicate higher levels of POS and Cronbach's coefficient alpha was .92 with the high internal consistency of the scale.

Demographics. Participants were asked to answer 20 items regarding their demographic information. Items included general items such as age, sex, ethnic background, marital status, and wage. In addition to these general items, some specific items relevant to foreign-born employees were included such as country they were born, years in the U.S., immigration status (non-immigrant, immigrant, and naturalized citizen), and highest level of education obtained in the U.S. and outside of the U.S., English proficiency, and the degree of foreign accentedness.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, Pearson correlations, and reliabilities of the measured variables. Overall, participants somewhat perceived themselves as being underemployed ($M = 2.53$, $SD = .86$). Participants believed that they were psychologically empowered ($M = 3.82$, $SD = .58$) and were supported by their organizations ($M = 3.46$, $SD = .73$). Furthermore, they were relatively satisfied with their jobs ($M = 3.71$, $SD = .80$), were affectively committed to their organizations ($M = 3.13$, $SD = .77$), and had moderate levels of turnover intentions ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 1.08$).

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, Pearson Correlations, and Reliabilities

Demographics	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Perceived underemployment	2.53	.86	(.81)					
2. Psychological empowerment	3.82	.58	-.22*	(.88)				
3. Perceived organizational support	3.46	.73	-.36**	.54**	(.92)			
4. Job satisfaction	3.71	.80	-.26*	.51**	.67**	(.88)		
5. Affective organizational commitment	3.13	.77	-.05	.64**	.64**	.69**	(.85)	
6. Turnover intentions	2.74	1.08	.18	-.35**	-.56**	-.75**	-.55**	(.94)

Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$.

Reliability coefficients (alpha) appear on the diagonal.

n varied from 83 to 90.

Pearson Correlations

As can be seen from Table 2, perceived underemployment was negatively related to job satisfaction ($r = -.26$, $p < .05$). That is, the more underemployed foreign-born employees felt, the less they were satisfied with their jobs. However, perceived

underemployment was not significantly related to affective organizational commitment ($r = -.05, p > .05$) and turnover intentions ($r = .18, p > .05$). Perceived underemployment was negatively related to psychological empowerment ($r = -.22, p < .05$) and POS ($r = -.36, p < .01$) such that the more underemployed foreign-born workers perceived, the less psychological empowerment and organizational support they felt.

Psychological empowerment was positively related to job satisfaction ($r = .51, p < .01$) and affective organizational commitment ($r = .64, p < .01$), but it was negatively related to turnover intentions ($r = -.35, p < .01$). The similar pattern was obtained with POS. POS was positively related to job satisfaction ($r = .67, p < .01$) and affective organizational commitment ($r = .64, p < .01$), but it was negatively related to turnover intentions ($r = -.56, p < .01$). These findings show that the more foreign-born workers felt psychologically empowered and supported by the organization, the more they were satisfied with their jobs and committed to their organizations, but the less they intended to quit. However, POS was more strongly related to these criterion variables than psychological empowerment.

The correlations among job satisfaction, affective commitment, and turnover intentions were moderate to strong. Job satisfaction had a strong relationship with turnover intention ($r = -.75, p < .01$) and affective organizational commitment ($r = .69, p < .01$). Affective organizational commitment was also negatively related to turnover intentions ($r = -.55, p < .01$)

Test of Hypotheses

Hypotheses 1 and 2 stated that perceived underemployment would be negatively related to job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment, respectively, and Hypothesis 3 stated that perceived underemployment would be positively related to turnover intentions among foreign-born employees in the U.S. Pearson correlations were used to test these hypotheses. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, results showed that perceived underemployment was significantly and negatively related to job satisfaction ($r = -.26, p < .05$). This finding shows that as foreign-born employees felt more underemployed, they were less satisfied with their jobs.

Contrary to Hypothesis 2, perceived underemployment was not significantly related to affective organizational commitment ($r = -.05, p > .05$). Although the direction of the relationship was consistent with the Hypothesis 3, perceived underemployment was not significantly related to turnover intentions ($r = .18, p > .05$). Therefore, Hypotheses 2 and 3 were not supported.

Hypothesis 4 stated that psychological empowerment would moderate the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes such that when psychological empowerment is high, there would be no relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes, but when psychological empowerment is low, the relationship between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment would be negative, and the relationship between perceived underemployment and turnover intentions would be positive among foreign-born employees. In order to examine the potential moderating role of psychological

empowerment, a hierarchical regression analysis was performed for each variable. In each hierarchical regression analysis, perceived underemployment was entered in Step 1, psychological empowerment in Step 2, and finally, the product of perceived underemployment and psychological empowerment as the interaction term was entered in Step 3.

The first model evaluated whether psychological empowerment moderated the relationship between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction. Table 3 shows the results of the hierarchical regression analysis. The analysis revealed that perceived underemployment was a significant predictor of job satisfaction and accounted for 7% of the variance in job satisfaction, $R^2 = .07$, $R^2_{adj} = .06$, $F(1, 84) = 6.17$, $p < .05$. Next, psychological empowerment accounted for an additional 23% of the variance in job satisfaction above and beyond the variance explained by perceived underemployment, $\Delta R^2 = .23$, $\Delta F(1, 83) = 27.48$, $p < .001$. Foreign-born employees who perceived that they were psychologically empowered in their organizations were more likely to be satisfied with their jobs above and beyond feeling underemployed. Results of Step 3 in the hierarchical regression analysis showed that the interaction term did not account for the additional significant variance in job satisfaction above and beyond the variance explained by perceived underemployment and psychological empowerment, $\Delta R^2 = .01$, $\Delta F(1, 82) = 1.62$, $p = .20$. Therefore, psychological empowerment did not moderate the relationship between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction.

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Job Satisfaction

Steps and Predictor Variables	R ²	ΔR ²	R	β
Step 1:				
Perceived underemployment	.07*	.07*	-.26*	-.26*
Step 2:				
Psychological empowerment	.30***	.23***	.52***	.49***
Step 3:				
Perceived underemployment x Psychological empowerment	.31***	.01	-.01	-.69

Note: * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$. Betas reported at time of entry.

The second model assessed the moderating effect of psychological empowerment on the relationship between perceived underemployment and affective organizational commitment. Table 4 presents the results of the hierarchical regression analysis. The analysis showed that perceived underemployment was not a significant predictor of affective organizational commitment and did not account for any variance in affective organizational commitment, $R^2 = .00$, $R^2_{adj} = -.01$, $F(1, 84) = .18$, $p = .67$. However, psychological empowerment was a significant predictor of affective commitment and accounted for 43% of the variance in affective commitment above and beyond the variance explained by perceived underemployment, $\Delta R^2 = .43$, $\Delta F(1, 83) = 61.24$, $p < .001$. These findings show that employees' perceptions of underemployment were not related to their affective commitment but employees who were psychologically empowered were more likely to be affectively committed to their organizations above and beyond their perceptions of underemployment. In the third step of this hierarchical regression analysis, the interaction term did not account for an additional significant proportion of the variance in affective organizational commitment above and beyond the variance explained by perceived underemployment and psychological empowerment, ΔR^2

= .00 $\Delta F(1, 82) = .81, p = .37$. Thus, the answer to the second part of Hypothesis 4 is that psychological empowerment did not moderate the relationship between perceived underemployment and affective organizational commitment.

Table 4
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Affective Organizational Commitment

Steps and Predictor Variables	R ²	ΔR^2	r	β
Step 1:				
Perceived underemployment	.00	.00	-.05	-.05
Step 2:				
Psychological empowerment	.43***	.43***	.64***	.67***
Step 3:				
Perceived underemployment x Psychological empowerment	.43***	.00	.25	-.43

Note: *** $p < .001$. Betas reported at time of entry.

The third model assessed the moderating role of psychological empowerment on the relationship between perceived underemployment and turnover intentions. Table 5 shows the results of the hierarchical regression analysis. Results of the analysis revealed that perceived underemployment was not a significant predictor of turnover intentions and accounted for only 3% of the variance in turnover intentions, $R^2 = .03, R^2_{adj} = .02, F(1, 85) = 3.00, p = .09$. However, psychological empowerment was a significant predictor of turnover intentions and accounted for an additional 10% of the variance in turnover intentions above and beyond the variance explained by perceived underemployment, $\Delta R^2 = .10, \Delta F(1, 84) = 9.64, p < .01$. These findings suggest that perceived underemployment was not related to turnover intentions but psychological empowerment was related to turnover intentions. Results of Step 3 showed that the

interaction term did not account for an additional significant proportion of the variance in turnover intentions above and beyond the variance explained by perceived underemployment and psychological empowerment. $\Delta R^2 = .01$, $\Delta F(1,83) = 1.08$, $p = .30$. Therefore, psychological empowerment did not moderate the relationship between perceived underemployment and turnover intentions. All of these results show that H4 was not supported. Psychological empowerment did not moderate the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, and turnover intentions).

Table 5
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Turnover Intentions

Steps and Predictor Variables	R ²	ΔR ²	r	β
Step 1:				
Perceived underemployment	.03	.03	.19	.19
Step 2:				
Psychological empowerment	.13**	.10**	-.35**	-.32**
Step 3:				
Perceived underemployment x Psychological empowerment	.14**	.01	.03	.62

Note: ** $p < .01$. Betas reported at time of entry.

Research Question

In addition to the hypotheses, one research question was posited to examine whether POS would moderate the relationship between perceived underemployment and each of the three criterion variables: job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. POS functions to help employees believe that their organization values them and cares about their well-being, is proud of their accomplishments, and recognize and reward their performance. These functions might ameliorate the negative consequences of perceived underemployment, and therefore, POS

is believed to moderate the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes. Three separate hierarchical regression analyses were performed to examine the moderating role of POS. In each of the hierarchical regression analyses, perceived underemployment variable was entered in Step 1, POS in Step 2, and finally, the interaction term of perceived underemployment and POS was entered in Step 3.

The first model evaluated whether POS moderated the relationship between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction. Table 6 shows the results of this hierarchical regression analysis. The analysis revealed that perceived underemployment was a significant predictor of job satisfaction and accounted for 7% of the variance in job satisfaction, $R^2 = .07$, $R^2_{adj} = .06$, $F(1,77) = 5.88$, $p < .05$. These results show that the more underemployed participants felt, the less satisfied they were with their jobs. Next, POS accounted for additional 39% of the variance in job satisfaction above and beyond the variance explained by perceived underemployment, $\Delta R^2 = .39$, $\Delta F(1,76) = 55.18$, $p < .001$. Foreign-born employees who perceived that they were supported by their organizations were more likely to be satisfied with their jobs above and beyond feeling underemployed. Results of Step 3 in the hierarchical regression analysis revealed that the interaction term did not account for an additional significant variance in job satisfaction above and beyond the variance explained by perceived underemployment and POS, $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $\Delta F(1, 75) = 1.98$, $p = .16$. Therefore, POS did not moderate the relationship between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction.

Table 6

Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Job Satisfaction

Steps and Predictor Variables	R ²	ΔR ²	r	β
Step 1:				
Perceived underemployment	.07*	.07**	-.27**	-.27**
Step 2:				
Perceived organizational support	.46***	.39**	.68***	.67***
Step 3:				
Perceived underemployment x Perceived organizational support	.48***	.02	-.03	.27

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Betas reported at time of entry.

The second model assessed the moderator effect of POS on the relationship between perceived underemployment and affective organizational commitment. Table 7 presents the results of the second hierarchical regression analysis. The analysis showed that perceived underemployment was not a significant predictor of affective organizational commitment, $R^2 = .00$, $R^2_{adj} = -.01$, $F(1, 79) = .11$, $p = .74$. However, POS was a significant predictor of affective organizational commitment and accounted for 46% of the variance in affective commitment above and beyond the variance explained by perceived underemployment, $\Delta R^2 = .46$, $\Delta F(1, 78) = 65.25$, $p < .001$. These findings show that foreign-born employees' perceptions of underemployment were not related to their affective commitment but those who were supported by their organization were more likely to be affectively committed to their organizations above and beyond their perceptions of underemployment. In Step 3, the interaction term did not account for an additional significant proportion of the variance in affective organizational commitment above and beyond the variance explained by perceived underemployment and POS, $\Delta R^2 = .00$, $\Delta F(1, 77) = .56$, $p = .46$. Thus, the answer to the second part of this

research question is that POS did not moderate the relationship between perceived underemployment and affective organizational commitment.

Table 7
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Affective Organizational Commitment

Steps and Predictor Variables	R ²	ΔR ²	r	β
Step 1:				
Perceived underemployment	.00	.00	-.04	-.04
Step 2:				
Perceived organizational support	.46***	.46***	.64***	.72***
Step 3:				
Perceived underemployment x Perceived organizational support	.46***	.00	.36	-.23

Note. *** $p < .001$. Betas reported at time of entry.

The third model assessed the moderating role of POS on the relationship between perceived underemployment and turnover intentions. Table 8 shows the results of the hierarchical regression analysis. Results showed that perceived underemployment was not a significant predictor of turnover intentions and accounted for only 3% of the variance in turnover intentions, $R^2 = .03$, $R^2_{adj} = .02$, $F(1, 80) = 2.48$, $p = .12$. However, POS was a significant predictor of turnover intentions and accounted for additional 29% of the variance in turnover intentions above and beyond the variance explained by perceived underemployment, $\Delta R^2 = .29$, $\Delta F(1,79) = 32.97$, $p < .001$. Results of Step 3 showed that the interaction term did not account for an additional significant proportion of the variance in turnover intentions above and beyond the variance explained by perceived underemployment and POS, $\Delta R^2 = .00$, $\Delta F(1,78) = .35$, $p = .56$. These results show that POS did not moderate the relationship between perceived underemployment

and turnover intentions. These results show that POS did not act as a moderator of the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes.

Table 8
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Turnover Intentions

Steps and Predictor Variables	R ²	ΔR ²	R	β
Step 1:				
Perceived underemployment	.03	.03	.17	.17
Step 2:				
Perceived organizational support	.32***	.29***	-.56***	-.57***
Step 3:				
Perceived underemployment x Perceived organizational support	.32***	.00	-.20	-.21

Note. *** $p < .001$. Betas reported at time of entry.

In sum, results of the correlations and hierarchical regression analyses revealed that the more underemployed foreign-born employees felt, the less they were likely to be satisfied with their jobs and the less they felt psychologically empowered and supported by their organizations. Perceived underemployment was not related to affective organizational commitment or turnover intentions. Moreover, the relationships between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, and turnover intentions were not moderated by psychological empowerment or POS. Results showed that psychological empowerment and POS had a direct effect on job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, and turnover intentions rather than a moderating effect and their effects were stronger than perceived underemployment in predicting these job attitudes.

Discussion

Underemployment is a pervasive problem and has negative ramifications for employees and organizations (Maynard & Feldman, 2011). Foreign-born employees have been suggested to be susceptible to underemployment (Maynard & Feldman, 2011). However, research on the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes among foreign-born employees in the U.S. is scarce. The investigation of such relationships among foreign-born employees is essential because foreign-born employees play an important role in U.S. labor force, representing 15.6% of the U.S labor force (OECD, 2009), and it is important to understand the experiences of foreign-born employees in the workplace. Therefore, the current study was conducted to examine the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes in a sample of foreign-born employees. This study also examined psychological empowerment and POS as potential moderators of the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes because it was argued that employees who experience psychological empowerment at work and who believe that they receive support from their organization may not suffer from the negative consequences of perceived underemployment (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009).

It was hypothesized that perceived underemployment would be negatively related to job satisfaction (H1) and affective organizational commitment (H2); but positively related to turnover intentions (H3) among foreign-born employees in the U.S. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, foreign-born employees who perceived themselves as more underemployed had lower levels of job satisfaction. This finding was consistent with

Hamilton (2011) who examined the relationship between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction among foreign-born employees in Canada. According to Feldman (1996), the negative relationship between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction might be due to a perceived discrepancy between absolute and relative rewards that employees who perceive themselves as underemployed receive. They believe that they receive fewer extrinsic and intrinsic rewards from their job than satisfactorily employed workers do and hence, they feel less satisfied with their jobs.

It was hypothesized that perceived underemployment would be negatively related to affective organizational commitment among foreign-born employees in the U.S. (H2); however, this hypothesis was not supported. The lack of relationship between perceived underemployment and affective organizational commitment might be due to the fact that employees might have been committed to their jobs rather than to their organization. Employees may feel committed towards their jobs or specific duties they perform in the organization and this commitment does not necessitate commitment to the organization (Koslowsky, 1990). If employees perceived themselves to be underemployed, they may be less committed to their jobs, but not necessarily to their organization.

Hypothesis 3 stated that perceived underemployment would be positively related to turnover intentions, but this hypothesis was not supported. This is inconsistent with past studies that consistently found perceived underemployment to be positively related to turnover intentions (e.g. Burris, 1983; Feldman et al., 2002; Hamilton, 2011; Maynard et al., 2006). Perhaps one reason for this finding is that even if foreign-born employees thought that they were underemployed, they may not have intentions to leave their

company because of their perceptions that they may not be able to find a better job if they quit from their current job. Alternatively, given that the direction of the relationship between the two was consistent with Hypothesis 3, the lack of the relationship between the two was simply due to a small sample size.

Hypothesis 4 stated that psychological empowerment would moderate the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes such that when psychological empowerment is low, there would be a negative relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes; however, when psychological empowerment is high, there would be no relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes. The second potential moderator relationship was posited through a research question regarding whether POS moderates the relationship between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. The hypothesis and the research question were not supported in that psychological empowerment and POS did not act as a moderator of the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes. An explanation for these findings could be that foreign-born employees did not feel highly underemployed in this sample; therefore, it did not matter whether or not they were highly empowered and supported by their organization, they still felt satisfied with their jobs.

The demographic characteristics of the sample seem to be important for the perceived underemployment level in the study. The employees in this sample already earned good salaries, with 40% earning more than \$100,000 a year. The sample also attained good education levels both in their home country and in the U.S. Fifty three

percent of the employees had bachelor's degree and 20% had graduate education in their home country, whereas 31% of employees had bachelor's or college education, 37% of them had master's degree, and 20% of them had doctorate degree in the U.S. Because a majority of the sample earned good salaries and attained high education levels, they did not feel highly underemployed and, therefore, the moderating role of psychological empowerment and POS were not supported between perceived underemployment and job attitudes. However, psychological empowerment and POS were found to be negatively related to perceived underemployment.

Implications of the Study

The current study provided support for the relationship between perceived underemployment and job satisfaction. Perceived underemployment was negatively related to job satisfaction such that foreign-born employees who perceived themselves as underemployed experienced lower levels of job satisfaction. This finding implies that perceived underemployment reduces foreign-born employees' job satisfaction.

Although, the moderating role of psychological empowerment and POS on the relationship between perceived underemployment and job attitudes was not supported, psychological empowerment and POS were found to be negatively related to perceived underemployment. Foreign-born employees who experienced lower psychological empowerment and perceived that they received less support from their organizations felt higher levels of perceived underemployment.

One of the most important implications of the current study is that the negative relationship between perceived underemployment and psychological empowerment and

POS might affect employees negatively. As employees perceive less support from the organizations and experience less psychological empowerment, they tend to perceive high underemployment levels. Companies could increase their support to their foreign-born employees and psychologically empower them to decrease perceptions of underemployment.

The current study also has some practical implications for organizations and companies that employ foreign-born employees. The current study found that perceived underemployment was negatively related to job satisfaction, and organizations should better understand the negative implications of perceived underemployment and take measures against it. They need to find out the reason of job dissatisfaction for underemployed foreign-born employees and try to improve those areas to maximize potentials of their foreign-born employees.

Second, perceived underemployment was found to be negatively related to psychological empowerment and POS, which advocate that perceived underemployment might negate positive efforts done by companies. Moreover, psychological empowerment and POS were negatively related to turnover intentions. If companies invest in practices that will enhance psychological empowerment of employees and support them, they can retain employees better. Employee retention is highly important as companies compete for talented employees in today's business world. Furthermore, companies can employ practices that will enhance four components of psychological empowerment. For example, companies should present job activities that are personally meaningful to their employees (meaning) as well as help them master the skills necessary

for the job (competence), provide autonomy and freedom in determining how to do the job (self-determination), and the opportunity to impact over what happens in their department (impact) (Spreitzer, 1995). These kinds of practices will help companies psychologically empower their foreign-born employees, who are inclined to perceived underemployment.

Strengths, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research

One strength of this study is that perceived underemployment was examined among foreign-born employees in the U.S. Foreign-born employees carry the potential of being underemployed more than native-born employees due to their communication difficulties (Balogun, 2012), their credentials, previous training and experience outside of the host country not being valued or recognized (Hamilton, 2011), insufficient language skills (Madamba & De Jong, 1997), lack of adequate social and professional networks, being ethnically different, and because of cultural differences. However, research on perceived underemployment among foreign-born employees is scant (e.g. Balogun, 2012; Guerrero & Rothstein, 2012; Hamilton, 2011). The most significant contribution of this study is that it generalizes the previous findings and adds upon them in a sample of foreign-born employees, whereas most of the previous studies on perceived underemployment and job outcomes have focused on native-born employees.

The current study also reveals the relationships among perceived underemployment, psychological empowerment, and POS. Although, Erdogan and Bauer (2009) provided support for the relationship between perceived underemployment

and psychological empowerment, this study supports the above-mentioned relation among foreign-born employees.

Despite its strengths, this study also holds some limitations like any other research. First, 30% of the employees in the sample were engineers working in Silicon Valley. They have high levels of education and language skills, and they might have willingly migrated to this area to work at the best hi-tech companies of the world. Therefore, they did not perceive high levels of underemployment. It would be better to gather data from a sample of employees in different sectors that employ foreign-born employees. Perceived underemployment can be more evident among other job types as well. Moreover, the sample mainly consisted of foreign-born employees originally from Europe, India and Japan. Foreign-born employees from other nationalities such as South America and Africa could be exposed to perceived underemployment in differing levels. Therefore, a sample that is more varied in terms of demographics could yield better results in examining perceived underemployment among foreign-born employees.

Second, data were gathered through a self-report survey and the use of self-report measures may cause common method variance (Proenca, 2014; Spreitzer 1996). However, some constructs in the study such as perceived underemployment and perceived organizational support are inherently dependent on perceptions of employees rather than objective measures and are supposed to be tested through self-report. Another weakness is that the sample size was small. The lack of significant findings and the interaction effects might be due to small statistical power associated with a smaller sample size. The future study should use a large sample size. Finally, this study was not

intended for examining causality between the constructs; therefore, lack of causality is another weakness of this study. It is not known whether perceived underemployment causes lower psychological empowerment or POS or whether the lack of psychological empowerment or POS lead to perceived underemployment.

Future research can focus on moderator variables and it is likely that the relations between perceived underemployment and job attitudes could be moderated by other variables (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009). It would be useful for perceived underemployment research to find moderator variables that might act to diminish the negative effects of perceived underemployment on job attitudes.

Conclusion

This study sought to examine the relations between perceived underemployment and job attitudes, and posited psychological empowerment and perceived organizational support as possible moderators of these relations among foreign-born employees. Findings from this study revealed that the sample perceived underemployment in moderate levels, and perceived underemployment was negatively related to job satisfaction, psychological empowerment, and POS. An important implication of this research is that perceived underemployment might have negative consequences for both employees and employers. Organizations can look for the fit between open positions and KSAs of prospective foreign-born employees and can take actions to assign challenging and motivating job duties for those foreign-born employees who are already underemployed in their current job.

References

- Adams, G. A., & Beehr, T. A. (1998). Turnover and retirement: A comparison of their similarities and differences. *Personnel Psychology, 51*(3), 643–665.
- Anderson, S., & Winefield, A. H. (2011). The Impact of Underemployment on Psychological Health, Physical Health, and Work Attitudes. In D. C. Maynard & D. C. Feldman (Eds.), *Underemployment: Psychological, economic, and social challenges* (pp. 35–56). New York, NY: Springer.
- Athey, T. R., & Hautaluoma, J. E. (1994). Effects of applicant overeducation, job status, and job gender stereotype on employment decisions. *Journal of Social Psychology, 134*, 439-452.
- Balogun, A. T. (2012). *Occupational underemployment: A phenomenological study of professional legal immigrants in The United States* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/dissertations/docview/1426425668/E4459F4C723840B9PQ/2?accountid=10361>
- Burris, B. H. (1983). The human effects of underemployment. *Social Problems, 31*, 96-110.
- Cammann, C., Fichman, M., Jenkins, G. D., & Klesh, J. R. (1983). Assessing the attitudes and perceptions of organizational members. In S. E. Seashore, E. E. Lawler III, P. H. Mirvis, & C. Cammann (Eds.), *Assessing organizational change: A guide to methods, measures and practices* (pp. 71–138). New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Edwards, J., Cable, D., Williamson, I., Lambert, L., & Shipp, A. (2006). The phenomenology of fit: Linking the person and environment to the subjective experience of person environment fit. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 91*, 802–827.
- Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 71*, 500-507.
- Eisenberger, R., & Stinglhamber, F. (2011). *Perceived organizational support: Fostering enthusiastic and productive employees*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Books.
- Erdogan, B., & Bauer, T. N. (2009). Perceived overqualification and its outcomes: The moderating role of empowerment. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 94*, 557-565.

- Feldman, D. C. (1996). The nature, antecedents, and consequences of underemployment. *Journal of Management*, 22, 385-409.
- Feldman, D. C., Leana, C. R., & Bolino, M. C. (2002). Underemployment and relative deprivation among re-employed executives. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 75, 453-471.
- Feldman, D. C., & Turnley, W. H. (1995). Underemployment among recent business graduates. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 16, 691-706.
- Guerrero, L., & Rothstein, M. G. (2012). Antecedents of underemployment: Job search of skilled immigrants in Canada. *Applied Psychology*, 61(2), 323-346. DOI: 10.1111/j.1464-0597.2011.00470.x.
- Hamilton, L. K. (2011). *A model of perceived underemployment among immigrants in Canada* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://library.sjsu.edu/>
- Johnson, W. R., Morrow, P. C., & Johnson, G. J. (2002). An evaluation of a perceived overqualification scale across work settings. *The Journal of Psychology*, 136, 425-441.
- Khan, L. J., & Morrow, P. C. (1991). Objective and subjective underemployment relationships to job satisfaction. *Journal of Business Research*, 22, 211-218.
- Kristof, A. L. (1996). Person-organization fit: An integrative review of its conceptualizations, measurement, and implications. *Personnel Psychology*, 49, 1-49.
- Kristof-Brown, A. L., Zimmerman, R. D., & Johnson, E. C. (2005). Consequences of individuals' fit at work: A meta-analysis of person-job, person-organization, person-group, and person-supervisor fit. *Personnel Psychology*, 58(2), 281-342. DOI: 10.1111/j.1744-6570.2005.00672.x.
- Koslowsky, M. (1990). Staff/line distinctions in job and organizational commitment. *Journal of occupational Psychology*, 63, 167-173.
- Li, C., Gervais, G., & Duval, A. (2006). *The dynamics of overqualification: Canada's underemployed university graduates*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-621-MIE. Ottawa. Analytical Paper. No. 039. Retrieved October 18, 2013, from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-621-m/11-621-m2006039-eng.pdf>
- Luksyte, A., & Spitzmueller, C. (2011). Behavioral science approaches to studying underemployment. In D. C. Maynard & D. C. Feldman (Eds.),

- Underemployment: *Psychological, economic, and social challenges* (pp. 35–56). New York, NY: Springer.
- Madamba, A. B., & De Jong, G. F. (1997). Job mismatch among Asians in the United States: ethnic group comparisons. *Social Science Quarterly*, *78*(2), 524-542.
- Maynard, D. C., Joseph, T. A., & Maynard, A. M. (2006). Underemployment, job attitudes, and turnover intentions. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *27*, 509–536. doi:10.1002/job.389.
- Maynard, D. C., & Feldman, D. C. (Ed.). (2011). *Underemployment: Psychological, economic, and social challenges*. New York: Springer.
- Meyer, J. P., Allen, N. J., & Smith, C. A. (1993). Commitment to organizations and occupations: Extension of the three-component conceptualization. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *78*, 538–551.
- Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1997). *Commitment in the workplace: Theory, research, and application*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Morrison, D. E. (1971). Some notes toward theory on relative deprivation, social movements, and change. *The American Behavioral Scientist*, *14*(5), 675-691.
- OECD (2009). Stocks of Foreign-born Labour Force in Selected OECD Countries, available at: www.oecd.org/dataoecd/38/52/43185487.xls (accessed September 1, 2013).
- Peiro, J. M., Agut, S., & Grau, R. (2010). The relationship between overeducation and job satisfaction among young Spanish workers: The role of salary, contract of employment, and work experience. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *40*(3), 666–689.
- Proenca, J. (2014). Perceived organizational support as a moderator of empowerment practices. *Academy of Business Research Journal*, *1*, 139-153.
- Prottas, D. (2011). Person-environment fit and self-employment: Opportunities and needs for achievement, affiliation, autonomy, and dominance. *North American Journal of Psychology*, *13*(3), 403-426.
- Rhoades, L., & Eisenberger, R. (2002). Perceived organizational support: A review of the literature. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *87*, 698–714.

- Riggle, R. J., Edmondson, D. R., & Hansen, J. D. (2009). A meta-analysis of the relationship between perceived organizational support and job outcomes: 20 years of research. *Journal of Business Research*, 62, 1027-1030.
- Slack, T., & Jensen, L. (2011). Underemployment Among Minorities and Immigrants. In D. C. Maynard & D. C. Feldman (Eds.), *Underemployment: Psychological, economic, and social challenges* (pp. 35–56). New York, NY: Springer.
- Spreitzer, G. M. (1995). Psychological empowerment in the workplace: Dimensions, measurement, and validation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(5), 1442-1465.
- Spreitzer, G. M. (1996). Social structural characteristics of psychological empowerment. *Academy of Management Journal*, 39(2), 483–504.
- Tiraboschi M., & Maass A. (1998). Reactions to perceived deprivation in ingroups and outgroups: A cross-cultural comparison. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 28, 403-421.
- US Census Bureau (2012). *The Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2010* (American Community Survey Reports No. ACS-19). Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/acs-19.pdf>
- Zvonkovic, A. M. (1988). Underemployment: Individual and marital adjustment to income loss. *Lifestyles, Family and Economic Issues*, 9, 161-178.

Appendix

Survey Items

Perceived underemployment (Hamilton, 2011)

1. I am overeducated for this job.
2. This job lets me use my ability.
3. I have more formal education than this job requires; that is, someone with less formal education could perform my job well.
4. I feel overqualified for my current job.
5. This job lets me use skills from my previous experience and training.
6. I feel underemployed on this job.

Overall job satisfaction (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh, 1979)

1. All in all I am satisfied with my job.
2. In general, I don't like my job.
3. In general, I like working here.

Affective commitment (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993)

1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in my organization.
2. I really feel as if my organization's problems are my own.
3. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization.
4. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to my organization.
5. My organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
6. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.

Turnover cognitions (Adams & Beehr, 1998)

1. I am planning to leave my job for another in the near future.
2. I often think of quitting this job and finding another.
3. I frequently think of quitting.
4. I would like to quit this job and find another in the near future.

Psychological Empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995)

1. The work I do is very important to me.
2. My job activities are personally meaningful to me.
3. The work I do is meaningful to me.
4. I am confident about my abilities to do my job.
5. I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities.

6. I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.
7. I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.
8. I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work.
9. I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job.
10. My impact on what happens in my department is large.
11. I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department.
12. I have significant influence over what happens in my department.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) (Eisenberger et al., 1986 Short version)

1. The organization strongly considers my goals and values.
2. The organization would ignore any complaint from me.
3. The organization disregards my best interests when it makes decisions that affect me.
4. Help is available from the organization when I have a problem.
5. The organization really cares about my well-being.
6. Even if I did the best job possible, the organization would fail to notice.
7. The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.
8. If given the opportunity, the organization would take advantage of me.
9. The organization shows very little concern for me.
10. The organization cares about my opinions.
11. The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.
12. The organization tries to make my job as interesting as possible.