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Unveiling the root causes and results of illegitimate tasks: A systematic literature review

Abstract

Aim/purpose – Employees are expected to perform duties consistent with their professional roles. However, they are often required to undertake tasks they perceive as unreasonable or unnecessary. The concept of illegitimate tasks has garnered increasing attention since its introduction. Illegitimate tasks have been found to account for unique variations in well-being and stress. A systematic narrative review of the literature on illegitimate tasks is necessary since the relevant literature is still in its infancy.
Design/methodology/approach – A systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted using Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) guidelines on three primary journal databases: Scopus, Web of Science, and EBSCOhost. The citations were screened out based on inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Findings – Illegitimate tasks represent the job designs and assignments of tasks within organizations. Various factors contribute to stress caused by illegitimate tasks among employees. This review encapsulates the antecedent factors of illegitimate tasks (leadership roles, psychological factors, workplace factors, individual characteristics, job factors) and results (emotions, cognition, work attitude, health, well-being, behavioral factors). Furthermore, this review provides insight into moderators and mediators associated with illegitimate tasks.

Research implications/limitations – One limitation of this SLR is the possibility of publication bias, as it primarily includes published studies, potentially overlooking unpublished and non-English studies. Furthermore, the included studies' quality and heterogeneity may compromise the review's generalizability, which could limit its scope.

Originality/value/contribution – This review also offers directions for future academic research. It suggests developing new stress measures for illegitimate tasks designed to the specific functions of organizational tasks rather than relying on a general illegitimate tasks scale.

1. Introduction

Employees are expected to perform duties consistent with their professional roles. However, they are sometimes pressured to undertake tasks that contradict their sense of fairness and judiciousness in their position. The concept of an "illegitimate task" is a good metaphor for this modern source of workplace stress. In this context, illegitimate tasks refer to those perceived as unnecessary or unreasonable (Semmer et al., 2010). Unnecessary tasks are those that could have been avoided or need not be done at all, whereas unreasonable tasks extend beyond the employees' occupational role (Semmer et al., 2019). Tasks seem legitimate when they conform to the job norms expected of a particular role, whereas illegitimate tasks violate the work norms (Semmer et al., 2010). The current literature on illegitimate tasks shows that several studies have revealed these undertakings to affect well-being and stress uniquely, even when controlling for conceptually related factors such as conflict of roles, social stressors, and distributive justice (Anskär et al., 2019; Semmer et al., 2015).

Illegitimate tasks are unique occupational stressors since they violate the behavioral norms of the employees. The theory of stress as an offense to self suggests that individuals perceive threats to self-esteem, which is central to the experience of stress. Irrelevant or useless tasks that undermine professional identity can reduce its perceived meaningfulness (Semmer et al., 2019; Kilponen et al., 2021). In addition, illegitimate stress threatens the self in several ways,

thus affecting employee performance. Furthermore, excessive, conflicting, and unclear work demands can create barriers to satisfactory performance. Failure to achieve performance standards may threaten the self, in terms of self-evaluation as a competent individual (personal self-esteem) and evaluation by others (often referred to as social esteem).

Empirical research has shown that employees often adopt escape strategies to avoid damaging their self-esteem, such as quitting their jobs (Zeng et al., 2021). Illegitimate tasks have adverse effects on burnout, work participation, and the sense of meaningful work among employees (Kilponen et al., 2021). They convey derogatory social messages and destabilize employees' work identification, potentially leading to emotional exhaustion (Koch & Adler, 2019) and work disengagement (Zong et al., 2022). Moreover, employees may employ appropriate coping mechanisms to preserve and protect their self-image, such as engaging in counterproductive work behaviors (Semmer et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2022).

These results suggest that illegitimate tasks possess specific characteristics, elevating them to a distinct conceptual status. Since introducing this concept, there has been a surge in the number of scholarly works on the topic. Illegitimate tasks may not only originate from different sources but may also have varied consequences. However, researchers have yet to consolidate the available data to assess how much we have learned about illegitimate tasks and what pressing concerns that remain to be answered.

Therefore, the ultimate goal of this paper is to provide a systematic narrative review of the literature and to offer recommendations to academic researchers on advancing our knowledge of illegitimate tasks. Advancing knowledge in this field is impossible without a rigorous literature review. The search strategy used in systematic reviews is crucial, as the completeness and representativeness of the studies identified affect the quality of the conclusions obtained from the review (Harari et al., 2020; Kepes et al., 2013). This paper aims to provide a systematic narrative review of the literature and make recommendations for academic scholars on advancing our knowledge of the determinants, antecedents, and outcomes of illegitimate tasks. To further disciplinary knowledge, a systematic literature review is essential. The current literature review aims to address the following questions:

RQ1. What are the determinants of illegitimate tasks?

RQ2. What are the outcome variables of illegitimate task stressors?

RQ3. What are the standard moderator variables that buffer the impacts of illegitimate tasks?

RQ4. What are the standard mediator variables that influence illegitimate tasks?

RQ5. How to measure illegitimate tasks in previous studies?

The subsequent sections of this work are structured as follows: Section 2 delineates the methodology utilized for this Systematic Literature Review, specifying the research question, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and search strategy. Section 3 presents the theoretical background. Section 4 provides the outcomes, offering insights obtained from the analyzed studies. Section 5 discusses the findings' implications and suggests future research directions. Section 6 concludes the paper with a summary of key findings and their significance.

2. Research methodology

2.1. Review approach

The search strategy was conducted according to the PRISMA checklist (Preferred Reporting Items for a Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis) (Page et al., 2021) and the recommendations of Harari and his fellow researchers (Kepes et al., 2013). An initial search was performed to identify relevant terms and assess the feasibility of this review. Online thesaurus and dictionaries were subsequently used to research the associated keywords. A professor at the National University of Malaysia endorsed these terms after extensive research. The search string of the applied keywords is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Search string

Databases	Search string
WOS	TS=(("Illegitimate stress*" OR "Illegitimate task*" OR "Unreasonable task*" OR "Unnecessary task*"))
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Illegitimate stress*" OR "Illegitimate task*" OR "Unreasonable task*" OR "Unnecessary task*")
EBSCOhost	TX ("Illegitimate stress*" OR "Illegitimate task*" OR "Unreasonable task*" OR "Unnecessary task*")

2.2. Search strategy

The quality of the conclusions derived from the data is highly dependent on the completeness and diversity of the search strategy employed in systematic reviews (Harari et al., 2020; Kepes et al., 2013), which utilized three databases – Scopus, Web of Science, and EBSCOhost. The selection was based on the extensive availability and accessibility of reputable journals focussed on determinants and outcomes of illegitimate tasks. Initially, a broad and open search using

various search terms was conducted. Subsequently, potentially relevant subject terms were then assessed from the search results. The final search strategies were constructed using a combination of keywords with applied geographical restrictions. However, only papers published in English were included while acknowledging possible issues related to cultural differences. The search was confined to studies published between 2018 and May 2024 to avoid outdated information and to concentrate on papers published within the last five years that dealt with illegitimate task stress.

2.3. Selection criteria

Articles were searched using the systematic review process depicted in Figure 1. First, the search began with articles comprising any of the following terms in any searchable field (e.g., topic, title, abstract, keywords): "illegitimate stress," "illegitimate tasks," "unreasonable tasks," and "unnecessary tasks." The initial literature search yielded 1287 articles. Of these, 873 were removed at this stage, marked as ineligible by the automation tool. A total of 414 articles remained, from which 329 were excluded after reviewing the titles and abstracts. Of the 85 remaining articles, 42 were excluded due to duplication across three databases, thus leaving 43 articles to be evaluated for eligibility. Second, the full text of each article was downloaded for review based on the potential relevance as indicated by the titles and abstracts. Third, the titles and abstracts were screened according to the study's inclusion and exclusion criteria and objectives.

The inclusion criteria comprised original full-text articles, open-access articles, final publication stage articles, articles in the English language, and those published within the last six years (2018-2024). The exclusion criteria in this search included (a) case study articles, (b) systematic and narrative review paper articles, (c) articles not addressing the concept of illegitimate tasks, (d) non--English articles, and (e) articles related to different disciplines (e.g., ecology, computer science, law). Each full article was meticulously checked to determine if it fulfilled the inclusion criteria and objectives. After careful checking, 13 articles were excluded, resulting in 30 articles considered relevant to our research purpose. The articles in our review included a combination of conceptual, qualitative, and quantitative studies.

Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram
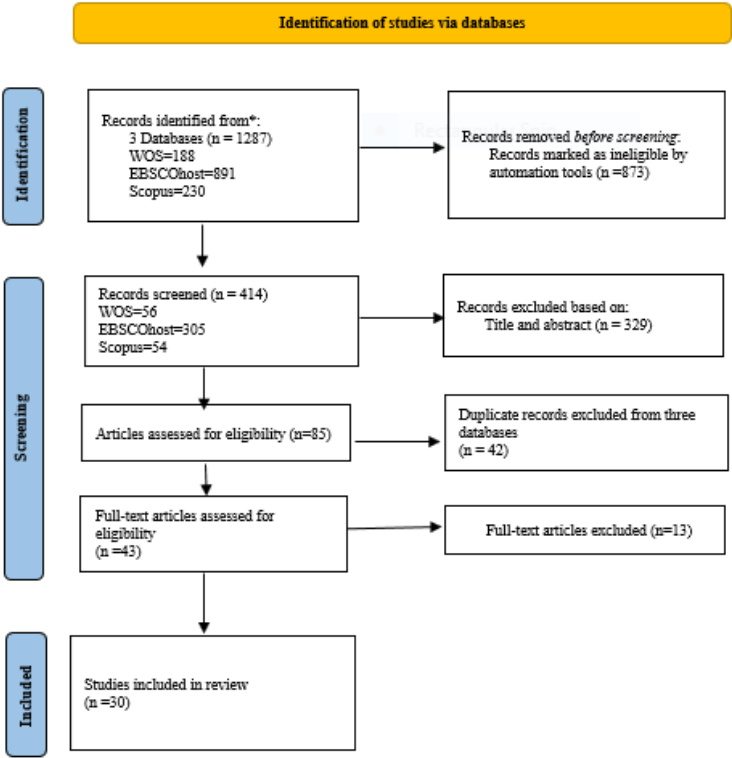
2.4. Data extraction tool

The researcher entered the data from the articles into an Excel spreadsheet. The data were then categorized based on their (a) number, (b) year, (c) author, (d) sample, (e) country, (f) research design, (g) theory, (h) antecedent factors, (i) results, (j) outcomes, (k) mediators/moderators, (l) how to measure illegitimate tasks.

2.5. Quality assessment tool

In this study, two independent reviewers critically evaluated the quality of all articles using the Mixed Method Assessment Tool (MMAT version 2018). This tool has proven helpful in systematic reviews encompassing various study designs (Hong et al., 2018). Articles were carefully chosen if both reviewers con-

sistently agreed on their quality. In the event of disagreement between the two reviewers, a third independent reviewer was employed to make the final decision. All MMAT checklist questions were answered unanimously for all included studies. As such, no articles were omitted from this evaluation due to poor quality. Cohen's kappa between the two raters was 0.77, indicating moderate agreement (McHugh, 2012).

3. Theoretical background

3.1. Illegitimate tasks: Concept and measurement

Illegitimate tasks are a relatively new construct in industrial and organizational psychology, attracting increasing attention in studies on occupational stress since these activities can substitute for actual stressors in the workplace. The concept of illegitimate tasks was based on the work of Semmer et al. (2010), and recent investigations demonstrated that they serve as an exceptional source of stress (Semmer et al., 2015; Semmer et al., 2019). When employees are asked to perform tasks that conflict with their roles and responsibilities, it is said to be an illegitimate task. Therefore, employees' essential professional function and identity are threatened when asked to perform illegitimate tasks (Semmer et al., 2019). Summer and his colleagues defined illegitimate tasks as unreasonable and unnecessary. Unreasonable tasks are those considered outside of one's job duties, and unnecessary tasks do not serve a real purpose (Semmer et al., 2010).

3.2. Stress as an offense to self-theory

The concept of illegitimate tasks is derived from the stress-as-offensive-to-self (SOS) theory, which posits that assigning an illegitimate task may trigger stress reactions (Semmer et al., 2019). According to SOS theory, maintaining a positive self-image is a fundamental need, and any threat to self-esteem can cause distress (Semmer et al., 2021). The SOS framework outlines two pathways that can lead to stressful experiences relating to self; the personal and social self (Semmer et al., 2019). The personal self relates to the extent to which one can achieve one's standards for performance and behavior. When such personal standards are unmet, one feels insufficient, known as Stress via Insufficiency (SIN).

In contrast, social self-relation relates to how socially accepted or respected one feels by others. One feels disrespect when perceiving threats to social esteem, referred to Stress as Disrespect (SAD). SAD shows how illegitimate tasks

induce stress through disrespect. Work environments, such as work characteristics, can convey positive or negative social messages to employees (Semmer et al., 2015). Assigning illegitimate tasks sends self-threatening messages that employees are neither valued nor respected. This theory, which is closely linked to self-esteem, also helps explain why self-esteem serves as a mediator for the impacts of illegitimate tasks. Several studies of daily diaries have discovered a negative association between illegitimate tasks and self-esteem (Eatough et al., 2016; Sonnentag & Lischetzke, 2018).

3.3. Job demands-resources model

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model is frequently cited in empirical research (Ahmad et al., 2021; Koch & Adler, 2019; Ouyang et al., 2022). The core assumption of the JD-R model is that working conditions can be classified into job resources and demands. Job demands become burdensome when employees are expected to perform tasks beyond their capabilities, resulting in significant stress. Job resources are physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job and can support employees' personal and professional growth (Bakker et al., 2007). Illegitimate tasks can be considered job demands since these additional tasks deplete employees' physical or psychological resources. As a result, illegitimate tasks may adversely affect work attitudes and behaviors (Ahmed et al., 2018). According to the JD-R model, job resources can mitigate the negative effects of job demands on job stress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In line with this, various job resources, such as leader appreciation and support from colleagues and supervisors, have alleviated the adverse outcomes of illegitimate tasks (Fila & Eatough, 2020; Ilyas et al., 2020; Kottwitz et al., 2019).

In summary, the concept of illegitimate tasks is derived from the theoretical framework (Semmer et al., 2015). In addition to their figurative implications, numerous scholars have emphasized the energy-related features of illegitimate tasks and their related consequences (Semmer et al., 2019). Therefore, from this perspective, illegitimate tasks can also be seen as job demands that require substantial worker effort.

4. Research results

We summarize the findings from the reviewed articles, focusing on the determinants/antecedents, outcomes, and mediators/moderators of illegitimate tasks. The appendix contains a comprehensive illustration of the reviewed studies.

4.1. Determinants of illegitimate tasks

To answer RQ1, "What are the determinants of illegitimate tasks?" We identi-
fied and summarized several factors that can affect how tasks are perceived as
illegitimate or illustrate the determinants that contribute to illegitimate tasks as
stress factors.

4.1.1. Leadership role

Leaders play a crucial role when it comes to delegating tasks to employees.
Nylén et al. (2018) demonstrated that providing managers with intervention pro-
grams to lessen employee demands and significantly increase job resources
could reduce the growth of unnecessary tasks. The intervention program, how-
ever, does not have any effect on unreasonable tasks. Conversely, abusive su-
pervision can portray disrespect and devaluation towards their employees by
assigning illegitimate tasks (that is, unnecessary and unreasonable) (Nylén et al.,
2018). The findings of Stein and his colleagues (2020) suggested that abusive
supervision was positively related to unreasonable tasks, indicating that the latter
may not be limited to mistreatment at the interpersonal level alone.

4.1.2. Psychological factors

Four interconnected psychological elements are considered antecedents of ille-
gitimate tasks. First, Van Niekerk et al. (2021) found that employees cannot
express their views on illegitimate tasks. Second, employees' belief systems also
play a crucial role in executing unnecessary/unreasonable tasks, with both per-
sonal and religious beliefs being important. When employees sense that their
employers' standards have declined, they tend to perform illegitimate organiza-
tional tasks. Third, personality characteristics and, fourth, perception of authority
and obligation also contribute to the experience of unnecessary and unreasonable
daily tasks at the workplace (van Niekerk et al., 2021).

4.1.3. Workplace factors

Workplace factors may also contribute to the prevalence of illegitimate tasks,
and organizational structure and functioning are crucial elements in performing
such tasks. The findings indicate that organizational culture contributes to expe-

riencing illegitimate tasks. For example, employees are not involved in decision-making because management assigns duties, leaving them to perform unnecessary or unreasonable tasks (van Niekerk et al., 2021).

Anskär and his co-workers (2022) demonstrated that a lack of resources is a significant root-cause of illegitimate tasks among nurses and physicians. Examples include shortage of staff, lack of time, and insufficient space or facilities. A lack of physical resources, such as materials and supplies, was positively correlated with illegitimate tasks (van Niekerk et al., 2021) since employees had to work harder due to insufficient resources and increased pressure on them. Illegitimate tasks are closely linked to excessive work demands (Anskär et al., 2019; van Niekerk et al., 2021).

In a randomized controlled trial, Framke and his colleagues (2018) implemented intervention activities to enhance the psychological working environment in Danish preschools, focussing on core jobs. The results showed a statistically significant increase in the number of unreasonable tasks and the overall score of illegitimate tasks. This suggests that employees can be protected from an upsurge in these tasks through a participatory organizational-level intervention targeting core job functions.

4.1.4. Individual characteristics

A study examined the effects of individual characteristics on illegitimate tasks. The results showed no difference between male and female workers performing illegitimate tasks. Furthermore, one's attribution bias affects one's perspective on illegitimate tasks. Those with a hostile attribution bias perceive more illegitimate work because they are more likely to attribute adverse events to the intentional actions of others who seek to harm them (Stein et al., 2020). In addition, hostile attribution bias was found to moderate the relationship between illegitimate tasks and negative emotions, particularly to unreasonable tasks. This supports the theoretical foundation of illegitimate tasks since unreasonable tasks potentially threaten the employee's self-worth more than unnecessary tasks, which are often assigned randomly (Pindek et al., 2019).

4.1.5. Job factors

Finally, job features can serve as a proxy for the prevalence of illegitimate tasks. In particular, having an excessive number of subordinates can lead to an increased workload and lower-level administrative tasks that managers consider

inappropriate. For example, research has shown that employees perceive tasks as unreasonable when the time and energy spent on administrative duties diverts their focus from core responsibilities (Anskär et al., 2019; Thun et al., 2018). Furthermore, the study found that Swedish physicians who report higher levels of illegitimate tasks experience more conflict, stress, and work-life imbalance (Anskär et al., 2019).

4.2. Outcomes of illegitimate tasks

To address our RQ2, "What are the outcome variables of illegitimate task stressors?" Our literature review indicated various outcomes associated with illegitimate tasks, drawing on recent studies to comprehensively understand their effects. Employees perceive illegitimate task as unnecessary and unreasonable tasks that lead to various outcomes.

4.2.1. Emotions

Illegitimate tasks are often perceived as a breach of personal and professional boundaries. These tasks are occupational stressors that elevate negative emotions. Emotional exhaustion or chronic fatigue is associated with illegitimate tasks (Kilponen et al., 2021; Koch & Adler, 2018; Mihelič et al., 2024). Employees develop negative feelings toward their jobs and perceive themselves as unfavorable within the organization (van Niekerk et al., 2021). Illegitimate tasks are positively related to negative emotions such as dislike, sadness, rejection, and depressive mood because employees often perceive themselves as devalued. When employees experience ongoing injustice, they may develop anger, resentment, and a desire for revenge. These feelings can be exhibited in a passive form of retaliation (Pindek et al., 2019; Semmer et al., 2021).

4.2.2. Cognition and work attitude

The illegitimate task is inextricably linked to various attitudes and cognitive processes. These tasks can cause negative cognition related to moral values. Kilponen et al. (2021) and Mauno et al. (2022) demonstrated that illegitimate tasks are associated with cynicism. Cynical workers no longer invest emotionally in their work and often exhibit coldness or irritation when interacting with customers and clients. Cynicism positively relates to unnecessary and unreason-

able tasks (Kilponen et al., 2021). Mauno et al. (2022) also supported this connection, with their study further exploring the negative relationship between illegitimate tasks and cynicism after introducing the mediating role of living a calling. For instance, as illegitimate tasks increase, employees exhibit more cynical behavior (Mauno et al., 2022).

Additionally, when employees are involved in unnecessary and unreasonable tasks, their positive work attitudes may be weakened. Numerous empirical studies have unearthed the negative association between illegitimate tasks and work engagement (Cheng et al., 2022; Kilponen et al., 2021). Another study also discovered that illegitimate tasks were positively correlated with job disengagement (Zong et al., 2022) and attention residue. Attention residue occurs when people switch tasks, causing them to still think about the original task. This can harm their performance on the new task since their focus is divided (Parker et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Ahlstedt and his colleagues (2023) revealed a significant correlation between illegitimate tasks and the levels of work motivation among registered nurses. They described the dimensions of work motivation in terms of work engagement, opportunities to provide high-quality care, employer satisfaction, and intention to remain in the workplace. Findings showed that reducing the illegitimate tasks in healthcare could decrease nurse turnover.

In addition, illegitimate tasks entail activities not included in an employee's job description. Consequently, employees may perceive unnecessary and unreasonable tasks as less meaningful, thus leading to a lack of achievement or satisfaction in completing them. On the contrary, wasting time on such tasks can impede the sense of meaning resulting from work. Kilponen et al. (2021) observed a negative relationship between illegitimate tasks and the meaningfulness of work (Kilponen et al., 2021). The literature also indicated that illegitimate tasks are positively related to work withdrawal behaviors, with employees expressing dissatisfaction with the organization through engaging in withdrawal-related activities, which manifest as distinct unproductive behaviors in reaction to these tasks (Fan et al., 2023).

Moreover, empirical studies showed that illegitimate tasks negatively affect job satisfaction (Kottwitz et al., 2019; Werdecker & Esch, 2021). A three-wave study also discovered a negative correlation between unnecessary tasks and living a calling at work the following year. They noted that calling at work indicates that one's identity is strongly related to tasks, while identity-threatening work is often perceived as unnecessary (Mauno et al., 2022b). Lastly, quantitative and qualitative research found a strong correlation between illegitimate work and higher employee turnover (Ilyas et al., 2020; Zeng et al., 2021). This

trend is due to employees' reasonable expectations of their jobs not being met when asked to perform illegitimate tasks. Due to this risk to their employment, workers may consider leaving their current positions to seek something better.

In addition, employee creativity also encompasses innovative and pragmatic ideas, views, or thoughts by employees. This is essential for any organization to maintain its adaptability and competitiveness. A recent study revealed the negative relationship between creativity and illegitimate tasks, revealing that such tasks reduce employee creativity (He et al., 2024).

4.2.3. Behavioral factors

A growing body of literature has found that illegitimate tasks can lead to personal and work-related behaviors, such as the relationships between illegitimate tasks and work attitudes.

Van Niekerk and his colleagues (2021) demonstrated some behavioral outcomes. For example, employees experience impatience because they neglect their home duties due to illegitimate tasks, which negatively affects their interpersonal relationships. They also experience demotivation, deflation, and emotional overload at home. Another study showed a negative relationship between perceived illegitimate tasks and work procrastination among employees. For instance, when employees are involved more in illegitimate tasks, they work like active couch potatoes (Wang & Zong, 2023).

Using time-lagged research, Mauno and his colleagues (2022) found that illegitimate tasks were negatively related to employees' organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). They stated that unnecessary tasks impaired OCB by destroying a sense of calling. In a previous study, Ouyang and his colleagues (2022) disclosed that illegitimate tasks are the antecedents of job burnout. Illegitimate tasks bring counterproductive work behavior, creating a sense of workplace ostracism. Ostracism in the workplace occurs when a worker is deliberately excluded from group activities or is mistreated and ignored by their co-workers. Unreasonable and unnecessary tasks positively correlated with workplace ostracism (Ahmad et al., 2022). Werdecker and Esch (2021) also conducted a cross--sectional study on German general practitioners, revealing that illegitimate tasks are positively associated with personal, work-related, and patient-related burnout.

4.2.4. Health and well-being

Occupational stress has been associated with both physical and mental health. Numerous researchers have discovered that illegitimate work can be hazardous to health and safety (Semmer et al., 2021). Since illegitimate tasks are considered a job demand that requires emotional and mental effort, they result in adverse affective reactions (van Niekerk et al., 2021), emotional exhaustion (Kilponen et al., 2021), job burnout (Ouyang et al., 2022), irritability, and reduced self-esteem (Kilponen et al., 2021). Regardless of the research context, numerous cross-national studies have shown a consistently stable relationship between illegitimate tasks and burnout (Werdecker & Esch, 2021). Moncayo--Rizzo and his colleagues (2024) also explained the positive relationship between burnout and illegitimate tasks among healthcare professionals.

Furthermore, workers will experience physical and mental exhaustion when they are asked to complete tasks that are not directly related to their job responsibilities. Multiple studies have shown that illegitimate tasks deplete emotional and mental energy, resulting in emotional exhaustion (Kilponen et al., 2021; Koch & Adler, 2019; Mihelič et al., 2024).

Illegitimate tasks are perceived as risk factors for employees' well-being. When unreasonable and unnecessary work demands are made, mental health is negatively impacted. Additionally, unreasonable tasks also affect employees' psychological well-being and innovation (Koch & Adler, 2019). Moreover, there is also evidence of an inverse relationship between illegitimate tasks and life satisfaction (Werdecker & Esch, 2021).

Another study indicated that performing illegitimate tasks can intensify depressive symptoms (sadness or low mood), nervousness, anxiety, and feelings of resentment (Semmer et al., 2021; Fila & Eatough, 2020). Illegitimate work does not make people feel valued in their social circles, undermining their social self--esteem. Summer and his colleagues hypothesized that illegitimacy would predict low social self-esteem, and stressfulness would predict low self-esteem and other general strain reactions. Illegitimate tasks based on Semmer's self-offence to the self-theory indicate a desire for revenge (Semmer et al., 2021).

Illegitimate tasks might be hazardous to employees' physical health. Thun et al. (2018) conducted a study on 545 Norwegian physicians. The results showed that unreasonable and unnecessary tasks indicate a higher probability of sickness presenteeism.

The detrimental effect of illegitimate tasks can sometimes extend beyond the workplace context. Studies conducted in Switzerland and Germany to investigate the relationship between illegitimate tasks and musculoskeletal pain re-

vealed a positive association between the two (Faes & Elfering, 2021; Kottwitz et al., 2021). In their exploratory qualitative research, Van Niekerk and his colleagues (2021) found that physical illness, exhaustion, fatigue, and insomnia are adverse behavioral outcomes related to illegitimate tasks. Elfering et al. (2018) conducted a cross-sectional study on home caregivers in Switzerland. The results indicated that unreasonable tasks positively correlate with occupational injuries, such as slips, trips, and falls, as these tasks create more work interruptions. In conclusion, physical and mental well-being are equally important to employees and the organization.

4.3. Moderator variables of illegitimate tasks

To answer RQ3, "What standard moderator variables buffer the impact of illegitimate tasks?" We found that several studies shed light on the resources that alleviate the influence of illegitimate tasks. In contrast, others failed to buffer connections between illegitimate tasks and adverse outcomes.

4.3.1. Interpersonal relationships

The definition of supervisor support is "the extent to which an employee feels that his or her supervisor values his or her work contribution and cares about his or her well-being." Supervisors play a crucial role in influencing how employees perceive the legitimacy of tasks. A two-wave study confirmed the moderating effect of supervisor support on the relationship between unethical tasks and work engagement (Cheng et al., 2022). Another study established that supervisor support moderates the effect of illegitimate tasks on employees' intention to leave, with employees who feel they have strong supervisor support at work being less likely to leave their jobs than those who do not. According to the findings, small and micro businesses cannot reduce or eliminate workplace stress without the help of their supervisors (Ilyas et al., 2021).

Co-worker emotional support can provide people with the external resources they need, allowing them to relax mentally and alleviating the depletion of their self-control resources in a given situation. Additionally, co-worker emotional support negatively moderates the indirect effect of illegitimate tasks on work disengagement through ego depletion (Zong et al., 2022). Another study stated that the perception of overqualification moderates the relationship between illegitimate tasks and work withdrawal behavior. High overqualification can amplify the negative impacts of illegitimate tasks.

4.3.2. Work behavior

Leisure crafting is an individual's initiative to engage in leisure activities based on goals, such as building interpersonal relationships, learning, and personal growth. This effectively increases self-control resources and positively influences the individual's subsequent involvement at work (Zong et al., 2022). A study revealed that psychological detachment moderates the relationship between illegitimate tasks and emotional exhaustion. Psychological detachment does indeed serve as an effective way to cope with increased job demands and combat exhaustion (Mihelič et al., 2024).

4.3.3. Organizational culture

The collective climate refers to a value shared by organizational members that focuses on collective interests and goals and follows collective norms. In highly collectivist cultures, individuals form attachments to in-groups through socialization processes. When individuals enter an organization, they translate these attachments into connections with the work teams they belong to, leading to higher levels of organizational commitment, a greater focus on organizational goals and interests, and a willingness to contribute to the organization. A strong collective climate that advocates selfless contributions to the organization helps alleviate employees' perception of injustice caused by illegitimate tasks. This alleviates their sense of psychological entitlement, thereby attenuating the effect of illegitimate tasks on employee burnout (Ouyang et al., 2022).

4.3.4. Individual characteristics

Pindek et al. (2019) found that individuals with a more hostile attribution bias experienced a stronger negative correlation when investigating the link between illegitimate tasks and negative emotions.

Furthermore, it was discovered that hostile attribution bias moderates the connection between illegitimate tasks and negative emotions, especially regarding unreasonable tasks. Unreasonable tasks can be more detrimental to an employee's sense of self-worth than the largely unnecessary tasks assigned arbitrarily, lending credence to the theoretical basis for illegitimate tasks.

4.3.5. Leadership

Wang and Zong (2023) empirically demonstrated that aspects of paternalistic leadership moderate the relationship between illegitimate tasks and procrastination among Chinese employees. Benevolent leadership played a negative moderating role, whereas virtuous and authoritative leadership played a positive moderating role. Benevolent leadership reduces the likelihood of procrastination. Leaders in Chinese companies who wish to reduce the number of employee procrastination should consider their employees' attitudes and make an effort to improve their leadership style to be more benevolent and less controlling.

4.4. Mediator variables of illegitimate tasks

To address our RQ4, "What are the standard mediator variables that influence illegitimate tasks?" We identified some mediator variables of illegitimate tasks that help us understand how and why illegitimate tasks influence employees' attitudes and behaviors. Although current studies have examined several mediators, they can be classified into various categories.

4.4.1. Emotional factors

Anger, anxiety, disgust, and fear are all examples of negative affect and a common type of emotion. Cheng and his colleagues (2022) noted that negative emotions (e.g., anger) signal workers' emotional responses to work-related stress when faced with unreasonable tasks. As external contextual factors, such tasks can divert workers' attention from their primary responsibilities, consume their time and resources, and convey a sense of injustice. These factors can lead to negative emotions such as anger and disgust, posing a challenge for workers to engage with their jobs entirely. Given the significance of employees' responses to work stress and adverse work events, negative affect acts as a mechanism through which unreasonable tasks affect work participation. Another study indicated that negative emotions mediate the relationship between illegitimate tasks and employee procrastination. Employees may resort to procrastinating as a coping mechanism when faced with illegitimate tasks, which serve as a stressor in the workplace and can provoke strong negative emotions (Wang & Zong, 2023).

4.4.2. Self- and identity-related factors

Mauno et al. found that living a calling mediated the relationship between unnecessary tasks (time-wasting work) and socio-contextual work performance. The stress-as-offense-to-self model suggests that unnecessary tasks can threaten an employee's occupational self-concept, thus harming their ability to live a calling since an individual's sense of self is an inherently important component of their sense of purpose in their work. Perceived appreciation is another mediator in this category, as it reflects the social self. Unreasonable and unnecessary tasks negatively impacted the perception of appreciation, which affected employees' satisfaction (Kottwitz et al., 2019). A study also revealed that work pace mediates the relationship between illegitimate tasks and emotional exhaustion. Employees should understand the work pace to manage unreasonable and regular job obligations. Elderly employees, for example, should not be encouraged to work at a fast speed or be reprimanded for failing to do so (Mihelič et al., 2024).

4.4.3. Organizational factors (moral-related variables)

In addition to posing a threat to organizational justice, employees forced to perform illegitimate work also risk eroding their moral compass (moral disengagement). Illegitimate tasks lead to counterproductive work behavior, such as work incivility, and mediate between such tasks and workplace ostracism. Illegitimate tasks negatively correlate with workplace ostracism (Ahmad et al., 2022). Qualitative job insecurity is also a mediator. People may experience qualitative job insecurity if they worry about a future decline in their working conditions, career prospects, or salary. A study suggested that illegitimate tasks are positively associated with insecurity in job quality (Kottwitz et al., 2021).

4.4.4. Psychological factors

Psychological factors have a crucial influence on organizations. For example, a high sense of psychological entitlement leads to inflated work expectations and a tendency to attribute success to one's efforts, leading to exhaustion in the workplace. These findings confirm the positive relationship between illegitimate tasks and employee psychological entitlement, shedding new light on the role of such tasks in causing adverse workplace effects (Ouyang et al., 2022). Furthermore, Zong et al. (2022) confirmed in their study that the cognitive load caused

by illegitimate tasks could lead to negative self-perceptions and emotions, which may result in ego depletion and make it difficult for individuals to focus on their work, and in consequence resulting in work disengagement (Zong et al., 2022). According to He and his colleagues (2024), job crafting mediates the connection between employees' creativity and illegitimate task assignments. Employees actively seek assistance and support from their superiors, modify their attitudes and perspectives, adjust and create their work assignments, engage in more job crafting, and reduce the resource depletion caused by illegitimate activities. Through job crafting, workers can better connect with their work, gain insight into its purpose, build strong relationships with co-workers, and ultimately develop a positive sense of identity. Workers might benefit from this process by enhancing their creative abilities. Therefore, illegitimate tasks encourage job crafting, elevating employee creativity.

4.4.5. Cognitive factors

Work alienation refers to an individual's distancing and disengagement from self, work, and the relevant environment. The work environment reflected in unreasonable tasks characteristically represents injustice in the organization, where tasks and resources are not fairly distributed, and employees are not equally rewarded, thus leading to disengagement from their jobs (Cheng et al., 2022). Attentional and cognitive failure mediate the relationship between unreasonable tasks and body balance among caregivers at home (Elfering et al., 2018). Another study examined the mechanisms by which illegitimate tasks prompt withdrawal behavior, linking perceived insider status to work withdrawal. Employees whose sense of internal identity feels disrespected, ignored, or unfairly treated by their employer are more likely to withdraw from work. As a symptom of unfairness, illegitimate tasks reflect traits of unequal treatment, making employees feel as if they are being treated differently (Fan et al., 2023). Work withdrawal mediates the relationship between illegitimate tasks and employee creativity. As a defense mechanism, employees may resort to work withdrawal if they feel their leaders disdain them for being assigned illegitimate tasks. This, in turn, may cause them to become dissatisfied with the organization and lodge complaints. Employees go through a "work withdrawal" period when they stop caring about their jobs, become less invested in their work, and eventually lose their sense of belonging to the organization. Worker's creativity is diminished by this process, thus resulting in work withdrawal caused by illegitimate tasks (He et al., 2024).

4.4.6. Psychosocial factor

Some psychosocial factors strongly relate to illegitimate tasks, adversely affecting employee productivity. The effort-reward imbalance and work-family conflict were identified as mechanisms by which illegitimate tasks increase workers' intention to quit their jobs (Zeng et al., 2021).

4.4.7. Miscellaneous buffer variables

Findings from a past study have shed light on numerous mechanisms (e.g., attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, environmental factors) that can mitigate the harmful effects caused by illegitimate tasks. Although employees must perform these tasks, they should adopt various coping mechanisms to manage the demands of such tasks. The task, for instance, may be a sense of calling/working with children, voicing their opinions, maintaining work-life balance, commitment to the organization, and perceived learning experience and developmental opportunities (van Niekerk et al., 2021).

This lends credence to the idea that illegitimate tasks may pose risks beyond their symbolic significance due to energy-related characteristics (Semmer et al., 2019). The central theoretical frameworks discussed above are reflected in these mediators, helping us understand illegitimate tasks' workings. However, most empirical analyses include only a single mediator, limiting our ability to investigate how effective various mediating mechanisms are and whether they interact.

4.5. Measurement tools for illegitimate tasks

To address our RQ5, "How to measure illegitimate tasks in previous studies?" We identified that generally, all previous studies used reliable and valid Bern illegitimate tasks scale (Semmer et al., 2010). However, few studies employed a self--administered scale of illegitimate tasks for school teachers (Framke et al., 2022).

Illegitimate tasks are usually measured using the Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (BITS) developed by Semmer et al. (2010). It is an eight-item scale with two dimensions widely used to measure illegitimate tasks. The BITS evaluates unnecessary tasks with four items, starting with the introduction, "Do you have work tasks to take care of, which keep you wondering if…" followed by (1) "they have to be done at all?;" (2) "they make sense at all?;" (3) "they would not exist (or could be done with less effort), if it were organized differently?;"

(4) "they just exist because some people simply demand it this way?." Four items on unreasonable tasks are introduced with, "Do you have work tasks to take care of, which you believe…" followed by (1) "should be done by someone else?;" (2) "are going too far, which should not be expected from you?;" (3) "put you into an awkward position?;" (4) "are unfair that you have to deal with them?" A five-point Likert scale is used, with "never" (1) and "frequently" (5) being the two extremes. BITS has been subsequently adopted in many studies across different cultural contexts, including in China (Cheng et al., 2022), Switzerland (Faes & Elfering, 2021a), South Africa (van Niekerk et al., 2021), Sweden (Nylén et al., 2018), Pakistan (Ahmad et al., 2021) and Finland (Mauno et al., 2022). Evidence from empirical research indicates that BITS has good psychometric qualities, suggesting that it has adequate cross-cultural applicability. However, despite BITS' popularity as a scale for measuring illegitimate tasks, some scholars employ alternative methods. For example, Framke et al. (2018) used two direct questions to determine unnecessary and unreasonable tasks.

For unnecessary tasks, Framke asked, "How often do you have to do something at work that appears unnecessary to you?" for unreasonable job tasks, "How often is your work time spent on activities outside your central job tasks?" Both items had six response categories, from 1 (at no time) to 6 (all the time) (Framke et al., 2018). Thun et al. (2018) focused on the actual workload of illegitimate tasks, quantifying unreasonable tasks by asking participants which percentage of their workload comprises unreasonable tasks. However, since multi-item measures are typically more reliable and valid than single-item measures, research has demonstrated that single-item assessments can represent a variety of reliable and accurate constructs (Matthews et al., 2022). To capture both constructs of illegitimate tasks, it is acceptable to utilize single-item measures is acceptable, such as asking, "How often do you have to spend time on tasks that are unreasonable or unnecessary for you?" One way to reduce the burden and prevent measurement contamination is to use single-item measures in studies that require extensive data collection, such as diary studies (Faes & Elfering, 2021; Semmer et al., 2021). In conclusion, BITS remains the standard tool for measuring general illegitimate tasks among employees.

5. Discussion

Current systematic narrative reviews help to understand the antecedent factors of illegitimate tasks, which can serve as a foundation for developing new illegitimate task stress scales for different organizations. Every organization faces dif-

ferent stressors based on the nature of its work. For example, Van Niekerk et al. (2021) developed a specific questionnaire to measure illegitimate tasks among teachers. Similarly, Anskär and his colleagues (2022) also constructed illegitimate task measurements explicitly related to physicians and nurses. Pindek and his colleagues (2019) identified five distinct categories of illegitimate tasks: (1) tasks that are unnecessary to do at all, (2) tasks resulting from poor work done by others, (3) tasks that fall under another employee's job description (non-demoting), (4) tasks that fall under another employee's job description (demoting), and (5) tasks that are unethical or illegal. They identified the first category as unnecessary tasks, while the others as unreasonable tasks, except for unethical or illegal tasks, which were not categorized under either sub-dimension.

Current studies have discovered a variety of outcomes of illegitimate tasks, from effects on emotions to health and well-being. Future research could benefit from expanding the scope of theoretically possible outcomes. Illegitimate work is often associated with feelings of shame and guilt due to the stigma attached to it (Semmer et al., 2015). Employees may be compelled to engage in emotional work when performing illegitimate tasks while managing their negative emotions in social situations. Regarding cognition and work attitudes, illegitimate tasks might deteriorate employees' attitudes toward the organization as they are linked to cynicism. We predict that illegitimate tasks may be related to lower affective commitment (Shaya et al., 2024) and reduced organizational identification. Illegitimate tasks elicit negative emotions and deplete resources, making it difficult for employees to maintain good health and job satisfaction.

Illegitimate tasks may also have some beneficial outcomes. Li et al. (2020) observed that almost every job stressor faces challenges and obstacles. Illegitimate tasks can lead to promotion or demotion (Minei et al., 2018). In some cases, the need for competence can be satisfied by having challenging tasks outside their job description since their supervisor may trust the employee's ability to complete them (Pindek et al., 2019). Researchers have considered unreasonable tasks to be more challenging than unnecessary tasks. We propose that future researchers focus on the positive effects of promoting tasks on work attitudes and behavior instead of health and well-being since negative relationships between illegitimate tasks, stress, and well-being are already well established. For instance, when employees view their job duties more broadly, they may complete their tasks more optimistically, leading to improved performance, positive work attitude, and behavior. Since different people react differently to the same stressors, as proposed by stress assessment theories, future research could consider implementing appraisal measures for illegitimate tasks (Li et al., 2020). Another potential area is examining employees' stress mindset in the context of

illegitimate tasks. A stress mindset refers to the employee's belief about how stress contributes to or mitigates the adverse effects of stress-related outcomes (Crum et al., 2013). In conclusion, employee perception is critical whether they view illegitimate tasks as a challenge or hindrance since it may explain such tasks' positive and negative effects.

Furthermore, more attention should be given to the moderating variables related to illegitimate tasks since these can explain the relationship between such tasks and their outcomes. Recent studies overlook the importance of employee's personality traits, which are critical in predicting the outcomes of unreasonable and unnecessary tasks. Individuals with some specific traits are more likely to perceive illegitimate tasks. For instance, supervisors may assign illegitimate tasks to highly agreeable employees because they are confident that these workers will grant their requests. Meanwhile, some individuals may perceive some extra-role tasks as illegitimate. However, employees highly agreeable employees may report fewer perceptions of illegitimate tasks, as they believe that taking on additional tasks is their responsibility (Hughes et al., 2022). In addition, the cultural context of organizations and countries, regarding collectivism and individualism, plays an essential role in predicting illegitimate tasks. Future research should focus on these variables.

Fostering a sense of belonging and responsibility towards the organization among employees can help reduce their work withdrawal behaviors. From a leadership perspective, one suggestion is to establish a harmonious interpersonal environment and organize employee welfare activities to enhance their sense of belonging and identification. From an organizational perspective, fostering a fair and caring corporate culture and enhancing employees' development and work experience are key to making them feel cared for and respected in the organization.

To mitigate the negative impact of overqualification, organizations should prioritize the job-person fit during the recruitment process. Conversely, in view of the inevitable phenomenon of overqualification, regular psychological counseling services should be provided to employees to alleviate their sense of injustice due to overqualification (Fan et al., 2023).

In addition, increasing the level of supervisor support can minimize the negative impact of unreasonable tasks and work alienation, as it acts as a conditional boundary moderator (Cheng et al., 2022).

Our study also illustrates that illegitimate tasks have negative associations with novel concepts of occupational well-being (Kilponen et al., 2021). Zong and his colleagues (2022) noted that strong emotional support from co-workers can mitigate the impact of illegitimate tasks on ego depletion. This SLR high-

lights the importance of practical, unfair work distribution among employees by moderating and mediating factors.

Empirical studies on illegitimate tasks considering multiple mediators would significantly advance the field. Integrating different mediators can help explore their potential interactional effects, such as the interplay between cognition and emotion. Such studies shed light on the stressor-stain relationship in the context of cognition and emotions. Anger over illegitimate assignments can result in feelings of social exclusion at work (Ahmad et al., 2022).

Conversely, it may help evaluate different theories and hypotheses. For example, two common approaches to understanding illegitimate tasks are mechanisms based on emotion and cognition. However, the predominant mechanism for explaining the effects of illegitimate tasks has not been established. Therefore, it is essential to control established mediators when introducing new ones. Furthermore, it is important to investigate the possibility that the dominant explanatory mechanism may shift in different contexts.

Finally, we suggest that psychological capital is a critical factor in motivation, effective cognitive processing, and achievement. This involves the positive evaluation of a given situation and the drive to succeed, making it a valuable mediator and a personal resource in managing the most unpleasant situations. These findings would be beneficial in developing organizational strategies and policies to address the issues arising from illegitimate tasks.

6. Conclusions

Therefore, we conclude that illegitimate tasks negatively impact employees' well-being and warrant more attention, both in research and decisions regarding task assignments.

This current review builds upon and extends the knowledge established in the previous paper by Ding and Kuvaas (2023). Their research provides significant insights into the existing literature, particularly in identifying broad trends and outcomes related to illegitimate tasks. The current review synthesizes and expands upon this body of work, highlighting the measurement tools for illegitimate tasks used in previous studies. Our review identifies a critical gap in the literature: the need to develop new illegitimate task scales tailored to specific occupations. Every occupation has its unique set of responsibilities, challenges and work environment. Tasks considered illegitimate in one profession might be entirely appropriate in another. Literature highlights that occupation-specific

measures enhance construct validity by considering the circumstances and expectations exclusive to a particular employment (Johns, 2006).

The current review paper argues that, rather than using a universal scale for illegitimate tasks, new stress measures should be developed according to each occupation's specific organizational tasks.

There are some limitations to this review. It is constrained by the predominance of studies from specific cultural contexts and potential publication bias, which may impact the generalizability of the results. In the future, this type of systematic literature review should broaden its inclusion criteria, for instance, by considering demographic variables, unpublished articles, and studies conducted in all languages to minimize the effect of bias.

Author contributions

Disclosure statement

Appendix

Table 1. Study characteristics

Year	Author	Sample	Country	Research design	Theory	Determinant factors	Outcomes	Moderator/ mediator	Supplementary information	How to measure illegitimate
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
2018	Koch & Adler	320 employees	Germany	Two waves (12-month time lag)	The job demands-resource model		Emotional exhaustion (+), individual innovation (n.s.)		Only unreasonable tasks were investigated	Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2018	Elfering et al.	125 home caregivers	Switzerland	Cross-sectional			slips, trips, and falls (+)	Attentional cognitive failure (+, Me)	Only unreasonable tasks were investigated	Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2018	Nylén et al.	40 employees; 4 managers; 58 employees (referents)	Sweden	Intervention experiment (6-month time lag)	Job Demands – resources model	Occupational intervention programs targeting managers (+/n.s.)			Differences were significant for unnecessary tasks but not for unreasonable tasks	Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2018	Thun et al.	545 physicians	Norway	Cross-sectional	Self-offense to self-theory	Administrative tasks (+), role conflict (+)	Sickness presenteeism (+)		Only unreasonable tasks were investigated	Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2018	Framke et al.	634 employees	Denmark	Cluster randomized controlled trial (2-year time lag)		Participatory organizational-level workplace intervention (–/n.s.)			Differences were significant for unreasonable and overall scores of illegitimate tasks but not for unnecessary tasks	Two self-administered questions
2019	Anskär et al.	391 primary care professionals	Sweden	Cross-sectional		Role conflict (+), psychosocial work environment (quantitative demands (+), stress (+), quality in work (+), conflict between work and personal life (+), various work tasks (+/n.s.)			Results were different for unreasonable and unnecessary tasks	Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2019	Kottwitz et al.	50 psychologists (study 1), 67 employees (study 2), and 183 employees (study 3)	Germany (Study 1), Switzerland (studies 2 and 3)	Two waves (1-year time lag)	Self-offense to self-theory		Job satisfaction (–)	Perceived appreciation (–, me)		Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)

Table 1 cont.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
2019	Pindek et al.	432 engineers	United States	Cross-sectional	Self-offense to self-theory		Negative emotions (+);	Hostile attribution bias (+)		Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2020	Ilyas et al.	420 employees	Pakistan	Cross-sectional	Self-offense to self-theory		Turnover intention (+)	Supervisor support (Mo)		Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2020	Stein et al.	268 employees	Germany	Cross-sectional	Self-offense to self-theory	Abusive supervision (+)			The hierarchical level buffered the link between abusive supervision and unreasonable task	Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2020	Fila & Eatough	214 early-career employees	United States	Cross-sectional	Self-offense to self-theory		Anxiety (+), depressive symptoms (+)		Results were different for unreasonable and unnecessary tasks	Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2021	Kilponen et al.	1024 healthcare employees	Finland	Mix method approach (Theory-driven qualitative content analysis, The STROBE statement – checklist for cross-sectional studies)	Self-offense to self-theory, Job Demands-Resources model		Emotional exhaustion (+), Cynicism (+), Work engagement (–), Meaningfulness of work(–)			Bern Illegitimate Task Scale (Semmer et al., 2010) with open-ended questions.
2021	Zeng et al.	474 employees	China	Cross-sectional	Self-offense to self-theory		Turnover intention	Effort–reward imbalance (–, Me), work-family conflict (–, Me)		Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2021	Faes & Elfering	55 employees	Switzerland	Daily dairy study (across five weeks)			Musculoskeletal pain (+/n.s.)		Unnecessary tasks, not unreasonable tasks, predicted the daily musculoskeletal pain	Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2021	Kottwitz et al.	109 employees	Germany	Tow wave studies (6-week time lag)			Musculoskeletal pain	Qualitative job insecurity (Me)		Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2021	Van Niekerk et al.	10 primary school teachers	South Africa	Exploratory qualitative research, Cross-sectional qualitative research design	The job demands-resource model	**Psychological factors:** Inability to voice opinion, beliefs, personality, characteristics, obligation to execute tasks.	**Emotional outcomes** Feelings towards teaching as occupation • Unfavorable employee states. **Physical outcomes**• Physical illness • Exhaustion	**Mechanisms that buffer the effects of illegitimate tasks:** • Sense of calling/working with children • Work-life balance		

Table 1 cont.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
						Environmental factors: organizational structure and functioning, curriculum demands, lack of resources, learner characteristics, parental support	• Fatigue • Insomnia. **Behavioral outcomes.**• Behavioral outcome at home • Behavioral outcomes at work	• Voicing of opinion • Organizational commitment • Perception of the learning experience		
2021	Semmer et al.	117 employees (study 1), 137 employees (study 2)	Switzerland	Two diary study (2 observation per week in 6-month time lag)	Self-offense to self-theory		Situational well-being (nervousness, anxiety, sadness, feelings of resentment, depressive mood), threat to social self-esteem, desire for revenge			
2021	Werdeker & Esch	548 general practitioners	Germany	Cross-sectional			Life satisfaction (–), job satisfaction (–), burnout (+)		Work-related sense of coherence (–), recovery experience (–)	Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2022	Cheng et al.	427 employees of different organizations	China	Two-wave study (1-2 week lag)	Job demands-resources model		Work engagement	Supervisor support (Mo). work alienation, negative affect (Me)	It only measures unreasonable tasks.	Bern Illegitimate Task Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2022	Ahmad et al.	208 university faculty member	Pakistan	Cross-sectional	Job demands-resources model		Workplace ostracism	Workplace incivility(Me)		Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2022	Ouyang et al.	459 employees	China	Cross-sectional	Job demands-resources model		Job burnout	Psychological entitlement (Me), Collective climate (Mo)		Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2022	Zong et al.	260 employees	China	Two-wave study (2-week lag)	Stress-as-offense-to-self, Ego depletion theory		Work disengagement	Coworker emotional support (Mo), leisure crafting (Mo), ego depletion (Me)		Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)

Table 1 cont.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
2022	Mauno et al.	518 employees	Finland	Three wave studies (1-year time lag)	Stress-as-offense-to-self theory, conservation of resources model		Living a calling (−), Cynicism (−), OCB (n.s)	Living a calling (Me)		Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2022	Anskär et al.	11 physicians and 13 nurses from primary care	Sweden	Qualitative study. Semi structured interview		Poor/ delayed communication between staff (+), electronic documentation(+), lack of resources(+)				
2023	Ahlstedt et al	2333 registered nurses	Sweden	Cross-sectional	Self-offense to self-theory		Work motivation (−)			Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2023	Fan et al.	283 Generation Z employees	China	Survey	Equity theory model		Work withdrawal behavior (+)	Perceived insider status (Me), perceived overqualification (Mo)		
2023	Wang & Zong	278 employees	China	Survey	Temporal motivation theory		Work procrastination (+)	Negative emotions (Me), paternalistic leadership (authoritative, benevolent, and virtuous leadership) (Mo)		Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2024	Moncayo-Rizzo et al.	562 healthcare professionals	Guayaquil, Ecuador	Cross-sectional	Self-offense to self-theory		Burnout syndrome (+)			Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2024	Mihelič et al.	245 employees	Europe	Online survey	The job demands-resource model		Emotional exhaustion (+)	Psychological detachment (mo)	Only unreasonable tasks were investigated	Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)
2024	He et al.	271 pairs of employee-supervisor	China	Survey	Self-offense to self-theory		Employee's creativity	Job crafting (+) Me and work withdrawal (−)(Me),supervisor developmental feedback (Mo)		Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (Semmer et al., 2010)

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