Literature Review on Illegitimate Task

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Abstract

In organizations, individuals often play their own professional roles. The role is usually determined by the characteristics of the occupation or employees' direct supervisors, and it provides individuals with a clear set of behavior norms or norms, namely role expectation. When the task is contrary to ones' professional role expectations, it further constitutes an offense to the individual role and is considered "illegitimate". This paper reviews recent literature on illegitimate task, in terms of definition, measurement, current researches and future research directions.

Keywords

illegitimate task; outcomes of illegitimate task; employee behavior

Introduction

In organizations, individuals often play their own professional roles. The role is usually determined by the characteristics of the occupation or employees' direct supervisors, and it provides individuals with a clear set of behavior norms or norms, namely role expectation. Individual role expectation is subject to one's evaluation and judgment, so it is subjective. For example, even in the same job, different employees may have different expectations (Björk, Bejerot, Jacobshagen, & Härenstam, 2013; Eatough, Meier, Igic, Elfering, Spector, & Semmer, 2016). One kind of task is generally considered legitimate when it meets an individual's subjective professional role expectations. On the contrary, when the task is contrary to ones' professional role expectations, it further constitutes an offense to the individual role and is considered "illegitimate". In short, illegitimate tasks are those that do not fit within the expected range of their job responsibilities and infringe on their professional identity, which are specifically expressed as tasks that should not be completed by themselves or that are unnecessary to be performed (Semmer et al., 2010).

Concept of Illegitimate Task

Illegitimate task has two kinds of core characteristics. On one hand, illegitimate tasks are out of the range of self-role. In organizations, roles are considered as what the organization expects of individuals and whether such expectations are legitimate (Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1991). Illegitimate tasks are often outside the scope of the roles defined by the organization and violate the normative role expectations. For example, when health care workers are assigned a cleaning task, they will see this task as an illegitimate task. On the other hand, illegitimate tasks offend employees' professional identities. An individual's professional identity reflects its own value and significance, and it is a crucial component of one's social identity (Schulte-Braucks, Baethge, Dormann, & Vahle-Hinz, 2019). A person's professional identity may be disrespected or offended by illegitimate tasks, which will bring tension and pressure to the individual and constitute the pressure source of threatening identity (Faupel, Otto, Krug, & Kottwitz, 2016).

Based on the aforementioned description, scholars identify two categories of illegitimate tasks: Unreasonable and unnecessary tasks (Semmer et al., 2015). Semmer et al. (2010) argue that unreasonable tasks mainly consist of the following four types: 1) Tasks are out of the scope of an individual's occupation, such as requiring security personnel to complete the lobby cleaning task; 2) Tasks that are in conflict with the professional status of individuals and should be completed by others, such as asking subordinates handle tasks that only leaders have the authority to handle; 3) The individual's professional identity is not reflected, excessive restrictions on the task. For example, back-office workers who do not have direct contact with customers are required to keep their desks clean at all times; 4) Tasks that put individuals in an awkward position, such as requiring employees to report absenteeism to their colleagues.

Semmer et al. (2010) also argue that unnecessary tasks refer to the tasks that should not be carried out in the work and waste time, including three types of tasks: 1) Meaningless tasks, such as asking English teachers to take art courses; 2) Tasks that can be avoided or reduced through reasonable scheduling, such as fussy formalities caused by a hierarchical and complicated organizational structure; 3) Tasks that satisfy the leader's preference or their own personal business, such as requiring employees to use slide presentations for daily routine reports. It should be noted that for the same post or job, the connotation and presentation of illegitimate tasks will change with different environments (e.g., individuals and situations; Semmer et al., 2015). Therefore, the perception of illegitimate tasks is subjectivity in a large part.

In addition, as a new form of work stressor, illegitimate tasks usually elicit negative emotional responses, especially when an employee perceives that he or she is frequently exposed to such tasks. To date, a large number of previous studies have conceptually established a negative relationship between the structure of illegitimate tasks (unreasonable tasks and unnecessary tasks) and negative mental health status, such as the association of illegitimate tasks with perceived injustice and low well-being (Barsky & Kaplan, 2007). Moreover, studies have shown that long-term exposure to illegitimate tasks seriously affects individual well-being (Semmer et al., 2010), and further results in anger, anxiety, depressive mood, and job burnout (Semmer et al., 2015).

The differences between illegitimate tasks between role conflict or extra-role behavior

In-role conflict is generally regarded as a disagreement between two or more roles, which mainly includes two forms, and the emphasis of both forms is different from that of illegitimate tasks. The first form refers to the conflict between an individual's self-standards or values and defined role behavior (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). This concept is concerned with a broad scope. The individual's role conflict may result from the violation of any type of individual standards or values, such as moral standards. In contrast, illegitimate tasks focus on more specific standards, mainly based on task requirements and significance (Semmer et al., 2019). The second form refers to the conflict between individual time, resources or abilities (Rizzo et al., 1970), such as taking on a task that doesn't have enough people to do it. However, illegitimate tasks do not indicate that individuals lack the time, resources or ability to perform them, but that they are unwilling to perform them because they do not meet the reasonable expectations of employees.

Although both illegitimate tasks and extra-role behaviors are beyond the scope of role justice, there are some differences between them (Semmer et al., 2010). First of all, extra-role behaviors are usually prosocial, which

refers to general behaviors with the characteristics of politeness, loyalty and helpfulness (Morrison, 1994). However, illegitimate tasks not only do not have these characteristics, but also lead to identity violation. Secondly, extra-role behavior usually reflects voluntariness, that is, the actor engages in the behavior voluntarily (Morrison, 1994), while illegitimate tasks usually reflect non-voluntariness, involving the involuntary tasks assigned to employees. In other words, if an employee voluntarily performs a task, there is no illegitimate in the task (Eatough et al., 2016). Sias and Duncan (2019) confirms that employees can distinguish between out-of-role tasks and illegitimate tasks.

Theoretical Perspectives on Illegitimate Task

Stress-As-Offense-To-Self Theory (SOS)

Drawing on the tents of SOS, illegitimate tasks are proposed (Semmer et al., 2015). This theory is based on the need of individuals to maintain and protect their own positive image, and regards threats to positive self-image as a source of stress. It takes self-threat as the starting point, emphasizing that individuals will feel pressure when their self-image is threatened (Lazarus, 2006), and pointing out that threats come from social information that others do not respect. Based on this, Semmer et al. (2015) find and point out that illegitimate tasks convey a social message to employees that organizations or leaders do not respect them, which will cause stress and threaten individuals' sense of self-worth and self-esteem. Specifically, when an individual is assigned an illegitimate task, the positive image is threatened by disrespectful information, which leads to a decline in the level of one's self-esteem and may further lead to negative effects that are difficult to control. According to the previous studies, almost all studies explicitly or implicitly draw on the tenets of stress-as-offense-to-self theory, or integrate it with other theories to explain the effect of illegitimate tasks.

Affective Events Theory

This theory indicates that working environment characteristics can cause negative or positive work events, it is worth noting that stressful work situations might lead to negative emotional reactions for individuals, and then affect individual attitudes and behaviors (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). This process is influenced by individual traits and job characteristics. In a word, work events will trigger emotional responses of employees, and emotional responses are the bridge between work events and behavioral results. Based on this theory, the main focus of this research is on how illegitimate tasks and negative emotions are positively correlated, as well as how these negative emotions affect employees' attitudes and behaviors at work. For instance, Eatough et al. (2016) explored the emotional connection between illegitimate tasks and employees' job satisfaction. The findings demonstrated that illegitimate tasks further contribute to employees' dissatisfaction with their work by arousing unpleasant feelings like resentment and anger. A recent study by Naseem, Hamza and Rehman (2020) also looked at the moderated effects of depressive mood on the relationship between illegitimate tasks, job burnout, and job satisfaction. In view of this, the negative emotional response to negative work events is a common explanatory mechanism of illegitimate tasks negatively affecting employees' work attitudes, behaviors and job burnout.

Justice Theory

According to Folger and Cropanzano (2001), an individual would perceive an event as unfair if they believe it shouldn't have happened or that a different course of action could have resulted in a better outcome. Distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactive justice are all parts of organizational justice (Cropanzano,

Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001). When employees are assigned to do unreasonable or unnecessary tasks, employees may perceive illegitimate as a sign of distributive injustice. Employees may also consider illegitimate tasks as assignment decisions that are being made in an unfair manner, making them feel disrespected and putting their self-esteem, social status and professional identity at risk. In this case, Semmer et al. (2015) also regard illegitimate tasks as procedural and interpersonal injustice. According to a previous research, illegitimate tasks will lessen employees' awareness of organizational unfairness due to their unfair attributes, and thus trigger negative emotions and burnout (Munir, Jamil, & Ehsan, 2017). In addition, the effort-reward imbalance model is a practical theoretical model that may be used to explain illegitimate tasks. This model contends that activities and positions with high effort (i.e., responsibilities or obligations at work) and low reward (i.e., an inequity in pay, respect, and career chances) cause stress and poor happiness in the employees (Siegrist, 1996). Illegitimate tasks just have such characteristics: They are outside of the essential components of their work responsibilities and do not fall within their in-role performance obligation. Furthermore, completing the task often fails to allow individuals to obtain relationship values (Semmer et al., 2007), so employees will think that there is an imbalance between effort and return. Individuals will attempt to achieve equilibrium in this situation by altering their work attitudes and behaviors, that is, reducing efforts or maximizing returns, thus bringing negative reactions to organizations (Omansky, Eatough, & Fila, 2016; Schmitt, Brakus, & Zarantonello, 2015).

Cognitive-Affective Processing System Framework

According to this theory, situations trigger a variety of cognitive and affective responses, which lead to stable and significant behavioral patterns in individuals (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). As a situational factor in the workplace, the characteristics and attributes of illegitimate tasks will undoubtedly have an impact on the cognition and emotion of employees, and ultimately affect their behaviors. But existing researches on the effects of illegitimate tasks have been only examined from only one perspective, which makes it difficult to fully comprehend the explanatory mechanism of illegitimate tasks. In order to make up for this deficiency, scholars introduced employee cognition and emotion from the dual perspective to further explore the underlying mechanism of illegitimate tasks on employee behavior. On the one hand, the influence of illegitimate tasks on employees' work behavior may be due to the change of employees' emotion at work, that is, illegitimate tasks will provoke employees' negative emotion responses (Sonnentag & Lischetzke, 2018). On the other hand, it may also be due to the change of employees' work cognition. That is, illegitimate tasks will hinder employees from building positive work cognition and reduce their sense of work meaning (Allan, Owens, & Duffy, 2017). According to Zhao et al. (2023), based on the cognitive-affective processing system framework, illegitimate tasks have a negative impact on employees' proactive customer service performance, and perceived insider status (a cognitive path) and contented work passion (an affective path) mediate the above relationship.

Job Demands-Resources Model

This model is a classical theoretical perspective to explain job burnout (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), which divides job characteristics into job requirements and job resources and points out two core paths: Employees' stress and health problems are caused by job demands and job resources motivate employees to work and perform well. Illegitimate tasks are a type of job requirement in organization that drain employees' physical and mental resources to complete. The more resources employees have (e.g., job autono-

my), the more effective they will be in dealing with illegitimacy. However, when there is a disparity between high demands and low resources, high job demands can lead to negative emotions (Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2003). The accumulation of these emotions will lead to job burnout and emotional exhaustion (Fila & Eatough, 2020) and further lead to negative work behaviors (e.g., sick presenteeism, Thun et al., 2018). Additionally, employees will not have enough resources to cope with non-events due to the loss of resources brought by illegitimate tasks, which will lead to work-family conflict (Ahmed et al., 2018).

Job Characteristics Model

This model argues that the characteristics of tasks (such as the importance and diversity of tasks) affect the meaning of one's work (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). Due to its unreasonable or unnecessary characteristics, illegitimate tasks tend to distract employees from meaningful or challenging work and reduce their perception of the meaning of their work. In turn, the decreases in work significance will impede employees' work enthusiasm and negatively affect an individual's job satisfaction (Eatough et al., 2016). At the same time, job characteristics model also suggests that meaningful work is associated with higher intrinsic motivation. Illegitimate tasks are often considered peripheral to the job and may be incompatible with the job role or seen as unnecessary, so are unlikely to be considered meaningful. As a result, those who perform illegitimate tasks seem to be more inclined to be less intrinsically motivated, and the impression of an imbalance between work and material rewards mediates this relationship (Omansky et al., 2016).

In general, many theoretical perspectives can offer an explanation for the mechanisms through which illegitimate tasks affect employees' feelings, attitudes and behavioral outcomes. However, the single theoretical explanation is still limited in the existing research. On the one side, the simultaneous existence of multiple effects cannot be accounted for. On the other side, it cannot reflect the influence of the interaction between various factors. Therefore, the multiple theoretical perspectives should be fully considered when explaining the influencing mechanism of the effects of illegitimate tasks. Based on that, it is essential to combine two or more theoretical perspectives in order to investigate how illegitimate tasks affect employees' work performance. This study integrates conversation of resource theory and self-determination theory to examine how illegitimate tasks affect employees' innovative work behavior through ego depletion (self-control resources as an explanatory path of resource) and thriving at work (self-determination motivation as an explanatory path of motivation). By doing so, this study makes up for the above deficiency of explanatory power from a single theoretical perspective.

How to Measure Illegitimate Tasks

The first to methodically create measurement tools is Jacobshagen (2006), this study develops items for evaluating illegitimate tasks and confirmed their existence through 11 separate investigations (totaling more than 3,000 samples). The two-dimensional structure of illegitimate tasks and its assessment items are determined in this study using both exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis: unreasonable tasks (4 items, $\alpha = 0.79$-0.82) and unnecessary tasks (5 items, $\alpha = 0.76$-0.86). This tool is called the Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (BITS). Jacobshagen (2006) examined BITS for internal consistency, re-test reliability and validity, and the results showed that the scale had good psychometric properties. Then, Semmer et al. (2010) analyzed and deleted the fourth item from the dimension of unnecessary task according to the load value of confirmatory factor analysis, and finally got 8-item BITS. An example of unreasonable tasks is "Do you have

work tasks to take care of, which keep you questioning if they even need to be done at all?", an example of unnecessary tasks is "Do you have work tasks to take care of that you believe are going too far and should not be expected of you" (Björk et al., 2013).

At present, the most used scale in studies on illegitimate task is an 8-item version. First, the scale is highly consistent with Semmer and his colleagues' definition of illegitimate tasks. Secondly, the scale has good reliability and stable factor structure. Finally, recent studies have tested the reliability and validity of BITS scale in countries other than Europe and America, such as China and India (Ma & Peng, 2019). These results suggest that the two-dimensional structure of illegitimate tasks may have cross-cultural applicability. This study also employed the 8-item BITS (Semmer et al., 2010).

Measurement subjects. This refers to the reporting source of illegitimate tasks. According to the literatures already in existence, the study mostly emphasizes employee self-report (Minei, Eatough, & Cohen-Charash, 2018), only a few studies combined self-assessment with other form of assessment to rate the perception of illegitimate tasks (Meier & Semmer, 2018). Although self-assessment is the key to identifying stressful experiences (Lazarus, 2006), it can also reflect the illegitimate tasks experienced by individuals and reduce the possible common method variance (CMV) in the research. In general, due to different roles and different views on task evaluation, evaluation methods (self-evaluation vs. other evaluation) will affect the reporting degree or frequency of illegitimate tasks. Employees report higher levels and more frequent scenarios with illegitimate tasks than others (Meier & Semmer, 2018). In addition, there was only a moderate correlation between self-assessment and other forms of assessment on illegitimate tasks (Meier & Semmer, 2018), again indicating that individuals' perception of illegitimate tasks was subjective.

Empirical Research

Since the construct of illegitimate tasks was proposed, scholars have conducted a number of studies to investigate the antecedents and outcomes of illegitimate tasks as well as related moderators and mediators. Ding and Kuvaas (2022) review the literature on illegitimate tasks to help us to understand what we have known about it and what critical research questions need to be explored in future. They have concluded the research framework of illegitimate tasks (shown as Figure 2) based on the accumulating publications recent years. Given that the current study tends to examine how illegitimate tasks affect employees' innovative work behaviors and pay more attention to the mediators and moderators, we review the empirical researches on outcomes and moderators of illegitimate tasks.

The Outcomes of Illegitimate Tasks. First, as a kind of negative work event, illegitimate task will trigger an individual's negative emotional response. According to previous studies, resentment and anger will occur when employees think the task is not legitimate to arouse negative emotions (Eatough et al., 2016; Zhou et al., 2018). For example, Semmer et al. (2015) conduct three surveys on employees in various industries in Switzerland, all of which found that illegitimate tasks would trigger resentment among employees. Eatough et al. (2016) find a strong correlation between daily perceived illegitimate tasks and employee rage. This result is also supported by Zhou et al. (2018) and Naseem et al. (2020). Other research has investigated the integrated negative emotions, and generally find that illegitimate tasks will cause employees' negative emotions, and then bring other negative reactions (Sonnentag & Lischetzke, 2018; Pindek, Demircioğlu, Howard, Eatough,

& Spektor, 2019).

Second, illegitimate tasks can affect employees' cognitive response, especially lowering their perception of self-esteem and organizational justice. No matter at the individual level or at the daily level, studies have found that illegitimate tasks will reduce individuals' self-esteem (Schulte-Braucks et al., 2019). Ma and Peng (2019) also find that illegitimate tasks threaten employees' work identity, resulting in the reduction of their job identity. Some scholars point out that the assignment of illegitimate tasks implies the disrespect for employees in the organization; In this case, employees will also feel unfair (Ahmed et al., 2018), thus they believe that their efforts do not get corresponding rewards, resulting in effort-reward inequality (Omansky et al., 2016). Additionally, when given illegitimate tasks, employees may feel underappreciated by their organization and leaders (Kilponen, Huhtala, Kinnunen, Mauno, & Feldt, 2021; Stocker et al., 2010).

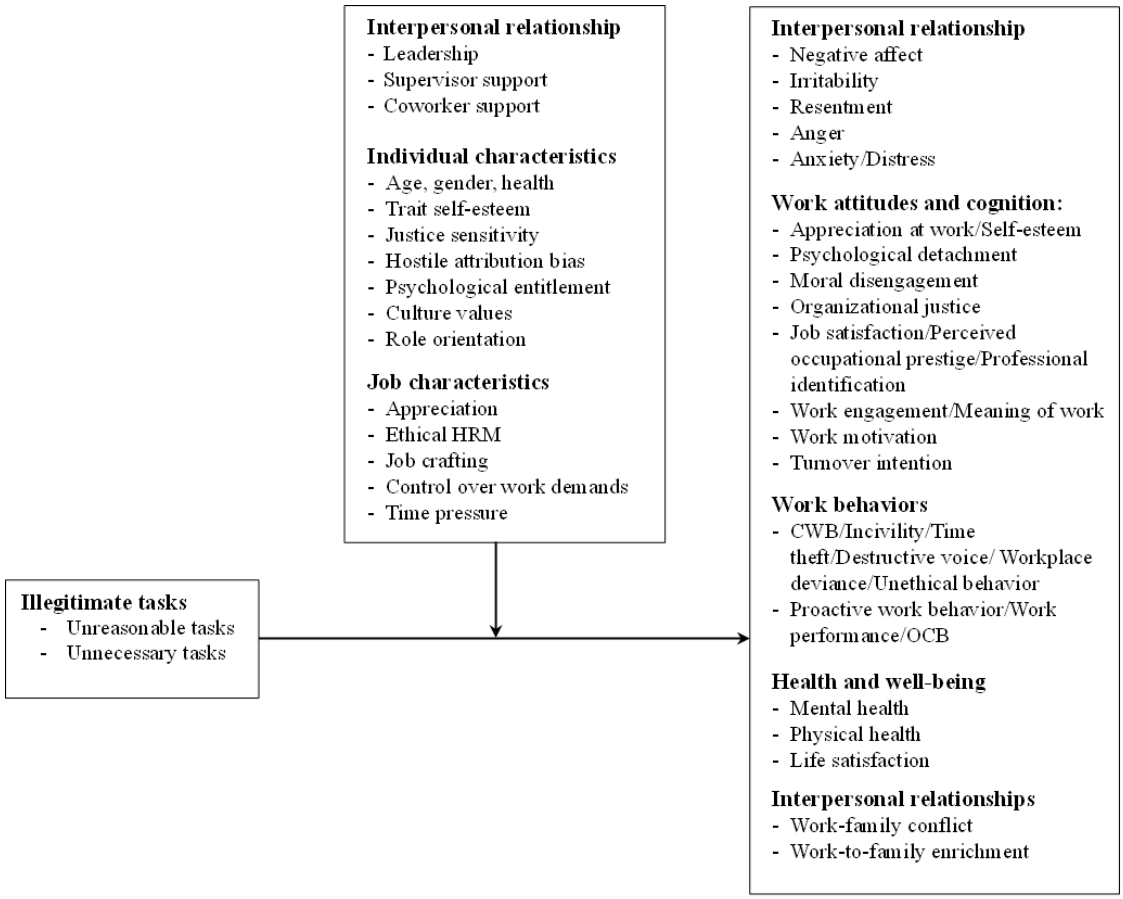


Figure 3. Empirical Research Involving Illegitimate Tasks

Source: Adapted from Ding and Kuvaas (2022)

Third, illegitimate tasks have an impact on employees' intrinsic motivation and self-determined motivation. Gagné and Deci (2005) argue that self-determination motivation is closely related to individual perceived task autonomy. illegitimate tasks interfere with employees' demand for autonomy and weaken their incentive for self-determination. van Schie, Güntert and Wehner (2014) take Red Cross volunteers as research subjects and find that illegitimate tasks would reduce volunteers' self-willingness and choice in volunteer activities, resulting in hindering employees' autonomy and thus reducing self-determination motivation. Similarly, illegitimate tasks are generally identified as peripheral tasks that are incongruent or meaningless with work roles,

and individuals' intrinsic motivation to complete tasks will be inhibited (Muntz & Dormann, 2020).

Fourth, illegitimate tasks usually have a detrimental effect on employees' positive work attitude. Stocker et al. (2010) find that illegitimate tasks make them feel unappreciated and job dissatisfaction with a survey of 228 Swiss male military officers. Numerous studies have supported this conclusion (Eatough et al., 2016; Kottwitz, Pfister, Elfering, Schummer, Igic, & Otto, 2019; Omansky et al., 2016), but some studies also point out that employees' dissatisfaction may lead them to recognize the illegitimacy of work tasks (Muntz, Dormann, & Kronenwett, 2019). Further, illegitimate tasks also have impact on employees' work engagement (Schmitt, Ohly, & Kleespies, 2015) and turnover intention (Apostel et al., 2018). van Schie et al. (2014) find that unnecessary tasks would weaken employees' motivation level, thus reducing their work involvement and retention intention.

Fifth, one cannot disregard how illegitimate tasks affect individuals' work behaviors, in particular, such as negative behaviors. A 5-workday diary study conducted by Schulte-Braucks et al. (2019) find that illegitimate tasks are positively correlated with employees' counterproductive work behaviors. The unfairness and pressure of illegitimate tasks will cause employees' negative emotions, such as anger and resentment, in turn affecting ones' behavior patterns and promoting their negative behaviors, involving counterproductive behavior, sick attendance, and workplace deviant behavior and so on (Thun et al., 2018). Meanwhile, Ma and Peng (2019) contend that job identity mediates the detrimental effects of illegitimate tasks on employees' proactive behaviors and task performance. However, some scholars find that when employees' tasks are out of their work roles, they often try to change the status quo and narrow the differences through task crafting. Furthermore, this relationship is jointly influenced by justice sensitivity and growth need strength (Liu et al., 2019).

Sixth, negative emotions caused by illegitimate tasks are difficult to vent immediately, and will accumulate and evolve into pressure, which is detrimental to the emotional and physical well-being of employees. With a survey of 1351 Danish human resource service workers, Madsen, Tripathi, Borritz and Rugulies (2014) discovered that unnecessary tasks have a detrimental effect on employees' mental. Kottwitz, Meier, Jacobshagen, Kälin, Elfering, Hennig and Semmer (2013) find that illegitimate tasks increase cortisol levels of employees with a survey of 107 male employees. Illegitimate tasks make it challenging for employees to leave work on time, as Pereira, Semmer and Elfering (2014) shown, in turn leading to a decline in sleep quality. In addition, employees may devote their mental and emotional effort continuously to complete illegitimate tasks. Furthermore, this implies that illegitimate tasks can result in health issues like anxiety, irritation, sadness, emotional exhaustion, and burnout (Meier & Semmer, 2018).

Seventh, illegitimate tasks also have spillover effect, which is particularly bad for employees' work-family relationship. According to Meier and Semmer (2018), based on 166 matched samples (supervisors, employees and partners), illegitimate tasks may result in work-family conflict, because illegitimate tasks can cause employees' resource loss, in turn making it difficult for them to meet their family responsibilities. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2018) further verify that illegitimate tasks have a positive influence on work-family conflict via the loss of interpersonal justice in the workplace and negative emotions interaction of fairness in the workplace (interactional justice) loss and negative emotions and also have a negative impact on work-family enrichment.

In general, illegitimate tasks will not only have a negative impact on an employee's emotion, cognition, but also can further affect employees' work attitudes, behavior, physical and mental health, and the interaction between their work and family lives, and ultimately damage the normal operation and overall performance of the organization. According to studies that have been done on the topic of how illegitimate tasks affect employees' work behaviors, the majority of these studies concentrate on how illegitimate tasks have a positive impact on employees' negative work behaviors, such as incivility against supervisor (Meier & Semmer, 2018), counterproductive behavior (Zhou et al., 2018), unethical behavior (Chen et al., 2022), destructive voice and time theft (Zhao et al., 2022) and so on. While, studies on the detrimental consequences of illegitimate tasks on employees' positive work behaviors are still inadequate. Currently, there are only a few studies on proactive behavior (Ma & Peng, 2019) and proactive customer service behavior performance (Zhao et al., 2023). This study examines the relationship between illegitimate tasks and employees' innovative work behavior to determine how illegitimate tasks affect individual innovation, which makes contribution to expanding the outcome variables of illegitimate tasks.

The moderators of illegitimate tasks. Recent studies have started to look at the boundary conditions of the effect of illegitimate tasks as study on these tasks has developed. These researches attempt to reveal who and under what circumstances illegitimate tasks are more harmful, and what methods and means can reduce or avoid the destructive effect of illegitimate tasks. There are two types of moderators: reinforcing factors and weakening factors.

1) Reinforcing factors. First, men are more likely to have a stronger negative response when facing with illegitimate tasks. Due to differences in the social division of labor, women in the workplace are often vulnerable to career ceilings or workplace prejudices. Therefore, female employees expect to obtain resources, recognition and status by being given more work tasks, so as to have less negative perception of illegitimate tasks. Conversely, men are often seen as active, assertive, and dominant (Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000), and when they are treated unfairly or disrespected, their dominant gender roles are threatened, and imbalances are triggered. Based on this, Omansky et al. (2016) proposed that individuals with different genders have different perceptions of illegitimate tasks. As pointed out by gender role theory and SOS theory, illegitimate tasks not only violate male employees' professional roles, but also threaten their gender roles. Through an effort-reward imbalance, gender moderated the indirect effects of illegitimate tasks on intrinsic motivation and work satisfaction, that is to say, male employees are more likely to have negative outcomes than female employees (Omansky et al., 2016). In addition to looking at the detrimental consequences of illegitimate tasks on employees' physical and mental health, several studies have also looked at the moderating role of personal health. Kottwitz et al. (2013) find that the assessment of individual health could effectively suppress the negative effects of illegitimate tasks. When employees' subjective health is good, there is little correlation between illegitimate tasks and cortisol. Furthermore, the multi-time point study by Madsen et al. (2014) find that employees with good initial health has relatively little negative impact on their mental health from illegitimate tasks.

Second, justice sensitivity is a stable personality trait, which describes the degree of difficulty in perceiving injustice and the intensity of response to injustice (Schmitt, Neumann, & Montada, 1995). According to social comparison theory, individuals acquire cognition of their own tasks by comparing their own tasks with reference individuals. Compared with individuals with weak justice sensitivity, individuals with strong justice

sensitivity will be more sensitive to the difference when comparing the illegitimate task with their own role range, and thus have stronger reactions. In addition, illegitimate tasks can affect individuals' self-esteem in a more subtle way than direct insults and belittling. For individuals with high justice sensitivity, the association between illegitimate tasks and self-esteem threat and counterproductive work behavior is relatively stronger (Schulte-Braucks & Dormann, 2019). In addition, attribution is the process by which individuals interpret the cause of an event. When an employee is assigned an illegitimate task at work, in order to understand the reason for the task assignment, the employee is likely to initiate an attribution process. hostile attribution bias describes the tendency of individuals to view other's motives or intentions as hostile when the situation is unclear (Spector, 2011). Individuals with high hostile attribution bias are more likely to regard some tasks that are not in line with their own professional roles as illegitimate tasks with negative intentions, thus more likely to generate hostility or feel pressure, and thus have negative emotions (Pindek et al., 2019).

Third, situational characteristics also affect the effect of illegitimate tasks. Researchers have looked at the detrimental effects of illegitimate tasks in terms of time pressures. Research has shown that time pressure plays a crucial role in the connection between illegitimate tasks and anger because time pressure reflects a stronger conflict or inconsistency between legitimate responsibilities and illegitimate tasks. For instance, when employees are required to complete the tasks, they are supposed to complete within a limited time, the assigned illegitimate tasks will cause conflicts between legitimate and illegitimate tasks, and consume the resources required for the work (Kronenwett & Rigotti, 2019), making employees' feelings of disrespect intensify. Under high time pressure, individuals are in a state of tension and anxiety for a long time. Such a state makes it easier for illegitimate tasks to arouse employees' anger and promote their counterproductive behaviors (Zhou et al., 2018). As a result, time pressure positively moderates the association between illegitimate tasks and anger as well as the indirect impact of illegitimate tasks on counterproductive work behaviors via anger. This relationship is particularly significant when the time pressure is greater.

2) Weakening factors. Firstly, individual personality traits can moderate the relationship between work events and emotional responses, work attitudes such as job satisfaction (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Current studies have confirmed that trait self-esteem can weaken the negative response to illegitimate tasks. Trait self-esteem is a type of self-esteem that is stable and does not fluctuate in the short term. It is only sensitive to intense pressure experience (Kuster, Orth, & Meier, 2013). When individuals encounter situations that challenge their identity, individuals with high trait self-esteem have stronger ability to protect resources and suffer less pain (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007). Based on this, Eatough et al. (2016) reveal the buffering effect of trait self-esteem on the relationship between illegitimate tasks, anger and job satisfaction, that is, illegitimate tasks provide less of a threat to individuals with a high trait self-esteem.

Secondly, flexible role orientation describes the degree that individuals understand their job roles broadly (Parker, Wall, & Jackson, 1997). Employees with highly flexible role orientation tend to consider broader goals and responsibilities as part of their job roles, and are able to deliver on each goal and work task, not only achieving in-role work performance, but also benefiting the team and organization through out-of-role work performance. Employees with low flexible role orientation are less likely to accept tasks outside of their job obligations and are even less likely to devote time and effort to extra-role behaviors. This is because they have a tendency to define their job roles and responsibilities narrowly (Parker et al., 1997). Ma and Peng (2019) looked at how employees' flexible role orientation moderating the effects of illegitimate tasks on job identifi-

cation in light of this. Employees with a high level of flexible role orientation identify a larger variety of tasks than those with a low level of flexibility, perceive illegitimacy to a lesser extent, and have a weaker negative association between illegitimate tasks and job identification. Additionally, for employees with strong flexible role orientation, the detrimental effects of illegitimate tasks on employees' task performance and proactive job identification are also lessened. However, some studies have not found that flexible role orientation can mitigate the negative effects of illegitimate tasks, and even found that flexible role-oriented employees are more attuned to illegitimate tasks (van Schie et al., 2014).

Thirdly, leaders are usually the direct assigner of tasks in organizations, and leadership style can moderate the detrimental effects of illegitimate tasks. For example, appreciative leadership can effectively alleviate the threat of illegitimate tasks to subordinates' self-esteem by praising and recognizing their achievements and qualities and appreciating their subordinates' efforts (Semmer et al., 2007). The existing studies also confirm that the positive appreciation of the leader can offset the "disrespected" caused by illegitimate tasks, and put it into a meaningful work context through appreciation, thus reducing the positive relationship between unreasonable task and resignation intention and as well as internal motivation. Therefore, under high appreciation leadership, the association between illegitimate tasks and turnover intention as well as internal motivation will be effectively inhibited (Muntz & Dormann, 2020).

Muntz et al. (2019) find that when supervisors communicate illegitimate tasks more transparently and explain the assignment of tasks, employees are more capable of comprehending and putting their judgments into action, which lessens the detrimental effects of illegitimate tasks on employee job satisfaction. Relational transparency is a dimension of authentic leadership. Such leaders share information with subordinates, emphasize the disclosure of information and the expression of true feelings (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), and explain frankly to subordinates why illegitimate tasks must be completed, so as to help subordinates better understand the importance of performing these tasks. This study will investigate the moderating effect of authentic leadership on the relationship between illegitimate tasks, thriving at work and innovative work behavior.

Conclusion

To sum up, the effect of illegitimate tasks will be affected by individuals and situations. At present, researches on the boundary conditions of illegitimate tasks are still in infancy, there is a lack of the discussion on other moderating factors. Future work might examine the joint impact of individual factors and situational factors and show when and how illegitimate tasks have particular effects on certain types of employees. From a practical point of view, it will also help organizations better carry out job design and human resource management. In general, existing studies have shown that illegitimate tasks attract more attention from scholars. Illegitimate tasks will have a significant influence on employees' job and personal lives as a new source of stress. Although illegitimate tasks exist widely in the workplace, it has only been concerned as an independent concept for more than ten years, and there are still many problems to be further promoted and improved in future research.

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