

Illegitimate Tasks and Counterproductive Work Behavior: Exploring the Mediating Effects of Toxic Workplace Culture and Employee Relationship Conflict

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Abstract

This research study identifies the role of illegitimate tasks on counterproductive work behavior (CWB) in Gujranwala based washing machine industry by mediating role of toxic workplace and employee relations conflict. Illegitimate tasks are considered unreasonable or inappropriate demands that employees face, impacting their job satisfaction and overall productivity, which has been shown to lead to higher CWB as well. It further explores the relationship between illegitimate tasks and CWB, considering the toxic workplace, marked by poor communication, lack of trust and negative organizational culture, as a moderator. It also investigates employee relations conflict as a possible mediator that amplifies the effects of illegitimate tasks on CWB. Cashing a sample of 400 employees from the washing machine industry in Gujranwala, this study has the significance of bringing attention to aspects of task illegitimacy, workplace toxicity and interpersonal conflicts, and ultimately how task illegitimacy breeds of workplace toxicity and interpersonal conflicts which contribute to negative workplace outcomes. Management and HR managers should consider this information in their respective settings and use it to lessen the effect of both in organizations to ensure the well-being of employees but also discourage CWB across the broader industry.

Introduction

Illegitimate tasks, typically described as work-related demands employees hold to be irrelevant, unnecessary, or outside their basic obligations (Semmer et al. 2010) have garnered attention for its links to strain and dysfunction in the workplace. Such acts can contribute positively to a toxic workplace environment, that refers to negative interpersonal relations, lack of support and overall sense of dissatisfaction of employees (Hershcovis et al, 2007). Conversely, organizations with poor work conditions lead to health unhappiness (e.g., stress, emotional exhaustion, burnout) amongst employees (Leiter & Maslach, 2009) The stress of these experiences can lead to counterproductive work behavior (CWB), a series of dysfunctional behaviors that can include absenteeism, hostility or even sabotage which can hinder the achievement of organizational goals (Spector & Fox, 2005). A Conflict towards employee relation is one of the significant mediators in

this process (i.e., conflict), which takes place when employees face interpersonal tension, role ambiguity, or communication breakdowns at the workplace (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). Greater levels of strife in work relationships enhance feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction in the workplace (Giacalone & Greenberg, 1997), which means the presence of illegitimate tasks will further compound the chances of CWB. Illegitimate task should not be directly linked with counterproductive behaviors but employee relation conflict is a dominating mediator in this chain. When given the opportunity, employees may respond to such adversity by engaging in behaviors that undermine the functioning of the organization, whether as a form of coping or by virtue of a waning commitment to the organization (Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2014). The need to comprehend the linkages between deviant behavior and workplace dynamics is particularly pertinent given the reliance on illegitimate tasks as a harmful measure that may underlie several conditions, promoting workplace toxicity and conflict, and ultimately resulting in CWB. Vardi & Weitz (2004) argue that effective management and support systems are needed to remedy these issues, which will decrease conflict and improve employee health and organizational productivity. Reading about illegitimate tasks, toxic workplace dynamics, employee well-being, and counterproductive work behavior (CWB) matters because these phenomena have far-reaching consequences for both organizational performance and employees' health. Typical misbehaviors also include illegitimate tasks — work demands that employees consider to be unreasonable or irrelevant — which are a key stressor capable of leading to a chain of thwarting consequences in organizations (Semmer et al., 2010). These tasks are often associated with a toxic workplace environment, which includes harmful interactions, role ambiguity, and adequate organizational support, leading to higher degrees of job dissatisfaction, burnout and emotional exhaustion in employees (Leiter & Maslach, 2009). These employees may suffer negative consequences regarding their well-being, such as stress and reduced job satisfaction, which may lead to CWB; actions that harm organizational objectives (including absenteeism, theft, or sabotage; Spector & Fox, 2005). This is an important mediating mechanism, as conflict can be amplified by employee relations, in which conflicts and unresolved issues between colleagues and peers negatively impact each other (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). Therefore, the relationship between illegitimate tasks, toxic work environment, and CWB is crucial for the organizations to comprehend, with a view to enhance employee job satisfaction, decrease dysfunctional behavior among their employees, and create a better working-environment which could be more productive (Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2014). The significant gap that exists in between as no researched instance to understand the influence of illegitimate task on counterproductive work behavior (CWB) and that too through the mediating effect of toxic workplace environment and employee relation conflict. Previous work has established individual stressors, such as role ambiguity and workload, in relation to CWB (Leiter & Maslach, 2009); however, the relationship between illegitimate tasks as a potent stressor and CWB, to the best of our knowledge, has been neglected in studies to date. Moreover, while negative behaviors in an employee's context such as toxic work environment and interpersonal conflicts influence an organization's outcomes negatively (Spector & Fox, 2005; Hershcovis et al., 2007), the converging factor of illegitimate tasks is less contemplated. This gap gives rise to significant research questions: what is the role of illegitimate tasks in building a toxic workplace? How do employee relation conflicts mediate the relationship between illegitimate task and CWB? How do dynamics like these affect overall employee well-being and job satisfaction? Research questions arise from these gaps: 1) How do illegitimate tasks relate to CWB? 2) Does employee relation conflict have a mediation impact on the association between illegitimate tasks and CWB? 3) How does the toxic workplace factor into this? Objectives: This study aims to explore how and under what conditions illegitimate tasks lead to CWB. Mediating effects of toxic workplace dynamics and

employee relation conflict, and investigating the current dynamics of CWB with respect to employee well-being. In response to these gaps, the present study seeks to contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon of illegitimate tasks and their impact on workplace dynamics, as well as the ways in which organizations can counteract their negative effects (Semmer et al., 2010; Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2014). This paper will be organized as follows to analyze illegitimate tasks, toxic work dynamics, employee well-being, and counterproductive work behavior (CWB) in a structured fashion. In the introduction, we will present theoretical backgrounds and define poorest tasks, toxic FWs, and CWBs. Finally, the objectives of the paper and the gap will be addressed. Eventually, through summarizing existent literature about the effect of workplace stressors on employees, the literature review will look at the influence of illegitimate tasks on employee outcomes and toxic work environments (Semmer et al., 2010; Hershcovis et al., 2007). It will also indent the employee relation conflict as a mediating influence between illegitimate tasks and CWB (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). The methods section of the article describes the research design, sampling methods, data collection techniques used to test the proposed relationships. The analysis part will provide the direct and indirect impact of illegitimate tasks on CWB in which toxic workplace dynamics and employee relation conflict will play the mediation role. The results will then be discussed in relation to current theories and practical recommendations to organizations concerning how to mitigate the detrimental influences of illegitimate tasks will be offered. The conclusion will summarize the main findings and point towards avenues for future research. In an effort to better understand how excessive legitimate or illegitimate tasks, and the conflict in workplace, lead to dysfunctional behavior and reduce employee well-being (Leiter & Maslach, 2009; Spector & Fox, 2005). Research has not yet fully explored how illegitimate tasks affect CWB through toxic workplace and employee relation conflict. Indeed, previous studies have explored the effects of stressors such as role ambiguity and workload on employee well-being (Leiter & Maslach, 2009), but not enough studies have highlighted that illegitimate task is an important source of stress and it leads to CWB directly. Furthermore, while toxic work environments and relationships been demonstrated to adversely affect organizational outcomes (Spector & Fox, 2005; Hershcovis et al., 2007), the overlap between these variables as they relate to illegitimate tasks remains under-researched. This gap creates critical research questions: to what extent do illegitimate tasks contribute to the creation of a toxic workplace? How much do employee relation conflicts mediate between illegitimate tasks and CWB? How does this dynamic impact employee well-being and job satisfaction? The research questions then arise from these gaps: 1) What is the relationship between illegitimate tasks and CWB? 2) What is the mediating role of employee relation conflict in the link between illegitimate tasks and CWB? 3) Where does the toxic workplace fit into this process? Research objectives of this study are to understand the effect of illegitimate tasks on CWB, examine the mediating roles of toxic workplace dynamics (TWD) and employee relation conflict (ERC), and to explore how these two mediate roles affect employee well-being. Hence, this research addresses these gaps and seeks to deliver important insights about: how organizations can alleviate the detrimental impact of illegitimate tasks, enrich work settings, decrease CWB and increase productivity and job satisfaction (Semmer et al., 2010; Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2014). This paper is structured to systematically investigate the interplay between illegitimate work tasks, toxic work environment, employee wellbeing and counterproductive work behavior (CWB). This introduction will elaborate on the key concepts, like illegitimate tasks, toxic workplaces and CWB, and set the stage for a description of the gap we aim to fill and the objectives of this research. The literature review will provide examples of previous studies on workplace stressors, and highlight how illegitimate tasks affect employee outcomes and how they facilitate toxic work environments (Semmer et al.,

2010; Hershcovis et al., 2007). In addition to that, it will portray conflict in employee relation as mediation between illegitimate tasks and CWB (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). This section will explain the methodology used to test the proposed relationships, including the research design, sampling methods, and data collection procedures. The methods section will use statistical methods to test the direct and indirect pathways of illegitimate tasks leading to CWB, mediated by toxic workplace processes and employee relation conflict. Based on the results, the discussion will be focused on interpreting these in light of existing theories, and practical advice for organizational practices to avoid the negative externalities of illegitimate tasks. The conclusion will encapsulate key findings and articulate directions for further research. It is rewarding to strive for a better comprehension of purpose in this subject, and this paper tries in this direction which can 'spill over' to the workplace setting, and may lead to dysfunctional behaviors, together with negative (in this case, burnout) and dysfunctional effects (on well-being and organization systems) (see: Leiter & Maslach, 2009; Spector & Fox, 2005).

Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

This study is theoretically rooted in Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, Stressor- Emotion model and Social Exchange Theory to investigate the relationship between illegitimate tasks and counterproductive work behavior (CWB) through toxic workplace dynamics and employee relation conflict. The JD-R model proposed by Bakker & Demerouti (2007) suggests that job demands [e.g., illegitimate tasks] deplete employees' emotional and cognitive resources, resulting in burnout, stress, and negative behaviors, including CWB. Illegitimate tasks are perceived as unnecessary, irrelevant, or unreasonable by employees, and their perception of unfairness causes emotional exhaustion and lower well-being (Semmer et al., 2010). The Stressor-Emotion model (Spector & Fox, 2005) highlights that negative work stressors, like illegitimate tasks, elicit high arousal negative emotions (e.g., frustration, anger), and these strong emotional responses are the antecedent of CWB as they drive further avoidance or retaliatory behaviors as part of CWB. Moreover, these emotions can be intensified in toxic workplaces where support, helpfulness, and organizational behaviors are lacking, as they only serve to further diminish well-being while perpetuating CWB (Leiter & Maslach, 2009). As one of the main mediators of this study, employee relation conflict is an interpersonal relationship conflict of employees which presents itself at work as the content of the role becomes ambiguous or breaks down due to poor communication (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003) and heightens the adverse effects of illegitimate tasks. Cropanzano & Mitchell (2005) in their Social Exchange Theory argue that employees form reciprocal relationships with their employers, expectations in a workplace are, thus, high, when they are provided with illegitimate tasks they tend to retaliate through CWB. This theory draws connections among aversive demands such as task demands, interpersonal conflict, and toxic work environments, and illuminates the complex interplay of task and social dynamics to foster negative behaviors, thus providing insight for reducing adverse work culture and improving organizational wellness.

Workplace toxic and illegitimate Jobs

The existing research on illegitimate tasks and toxic work environments indicates that both have a substantial impact on employee behavior, health, and job outcomes. Tasks that are not legitimate, according to Semmer et al. (2010), refers to workload features that workers identify as not necessary, irrelevant or beyond their role, and triggering negative feeling responses such as frustration, resentment, and stress. In this context, according to Job Demands- Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), these illegitimate tasks constitute job demands, sapping

employees' emotional resources, and thus lead to burnout, job dissatisfaction, and counterproductive work behaviors (CWB). Perceived injustice related to illegitimate work results in injustice, and reduces organizational commitment which could lead to deviance as a coping mechanism for employees (Spector & Fox, 2005). Concurrently, toxic workplace environments with poor interpersonal relationships, lack of support, and negative organizational culture exacerbate the consequences of illegitimate tasks (Leiter & Maslach, 2009). Illegitimate tasks can hit harder in a toxic workplace where employees are already susceptible to negative emotions and job dissatisfaction, and therefore, the force of illegitimate tasks will be more potent in such an environment. As per Social Exchange Theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), receiving illegitimate task assignments that constitute negative treatment or injustice can lead to employees reciprocating by enacting CWB as a means of voicing their frustration and balanced reciprocity. In a toxic environment, this process is exacerbated due to increased stress and interpersonal conflicts (Hershcovis et al., 2007), leading to a vicious cycle of dissatisfaction and deviance. Hypotheses on the association between illegitimate tasks and a toxic workplace are derived from the literature on job demands, employee well-being and counterproductive work behavior (CWB). Tasks that are illegitimate, which are defined as being unnecessary, not reasonable/appropriate, or irrelevant from the employee's viewpoint, are a type of job demand that can produce emotional exhaustion and dissatisfaction (Semmer et al., 2010). When employees encounter high job demands (e.g., illegitimate tasks), their personal resources are depleted, resulting in burnout and other negative consequences, according to the Job Demands- Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Since toxic workplaces involve bad interpersonal relationships, lack of social support, and negative organizational practices, they can worsen the negative consequences of the illegitimate tasks. In such environments, employees are prone to feeling their work is not supported, thus, elevate the emotional impact of illegitimate tasks and contribute to negative responses, such as counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) (Leiter & Maslach, 2009). Moreover, a toxic environment is likely to intensify the emotional burden of illegitimate tasks, by increasing frustration and conflict with others, which in turn facilitates deviance (Hershcovis et al., 2007). Based on these theories, the hypotheses are:

H1: Illegitimate tasks will positively correlate with the toxic workplace.

Toxic Workplace and Employee Relation Conflict

Several important theories, including the Social Exchange Theory (SET), Stressor-Emotion Model, and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, underpin the theoretical background regarding the association between toxic work environments and conflict in employee relations. Leiter and Maslach (2009) indicate that by definition a toxic workplace is characterized by relatively poor leadership skills, lack of support, too much stress, conflict among employees and negative culture. SET (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) states that, one of the core concepts of the theory is the expectation of reciprocity from the organization, meaning that when employees exert effort for their organization, they expect fairness, support, respect, etc. If organizations do not provide employees with a positive work environment, characterized by fair treatment and support, employees may perceive this as a violation of social exchange, which can lead to negative emotional responses. Interpersonal conflicts amongst employees often express these, such as frustration and resentment. According to the Stressor-Emotion Model (Spector & Fox, 2005), workplace stressors, such as being in a toxic environment, trigger negative emotions in the employees, resulting in behaviours like conflict, hostility and disengagement. When employees are

experiencing negative work situations and have emotional burden, there are more chances of interpersonal conflict occurring between them when there is a shortfall of resources (support communication, etc) The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2001) suggests that people seek to sustain, preserve, and acquire resources, such as social support and social ties. These are often depleted in a toxic work environment, which causes increased levels of stress and the chance of conflict among employees. When employees lack support and experience excessive work demands their emotional resources are depleted, resulting in escalating interpersonal friction and an increased likelihood of conflict (e.g. Hershcovis et al., 2007). Theory of Toxic Workplaces The theory posits that toxic workplace environments are interactive and conflict-rich which degraded the health of both the member and the organization. Organizational behavior literature has covered the links between toxic workplace relations and that of employee relation conflict, demonstrating how a dysfunctional work environment breeds interpersonal strife and perpetuates workplace disputes. A toxic workplace is one where everybody engages in negative interpersonal dynamics, poor communication, lacking support and an overall unhealthy organizational culture (Leiter & Maslach, 2009). As explained in the Social Exchange Theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), employees feel entitled to fair treatment and reasonable mutual obligation from employers, and the failure to fulfill these obligations (such as in the case of a toxic work culture) can negatively impact employee morale and lead to emotional distress such as stress and frustration. This, in turn, which leads to more conflict within employees. More specifically, social support (e.g., the absence of social support and presence of negative exchange) within a toxic work environment sets the stage for employees to engage with one another in unresolved interpersonal disputes (i.e., silos and dysfunctional working) (Spector & Fox, 2005). According to the Stressor- Emotion model (Spector & Fox, 2005), "Negative emotions are reactions to these stressors which frequently, but not always, appear in the form of interpersonal conflict between co-workers or between workers and management." This battle can scale from just a hatch of misunderstanding to face of full-fledged tussles, which create a terrible ambience around the workplace. Toxic work environments increase the risk of interpersonal conflict as employees begin to feel unsupported and are more likely to respond with defensive or aggressive behaviors (Hershcovis et al., 2007). Extending this body of literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: A toxic workplace will be positively related to employee relation conflict.

Employee Relation Conflict and Counterproductive Work Behavior

Several key psychological and organizational theories underpin the theoretical framework explaining the connection between employee relation conflict and counterproductive work behavior (CWB), such as the Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Stressor-Emotion Model. Conflict over employee relations is the tension, disagreements, and discontent in the workplace between employees and management or between employees. Based on SET (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), conflict denotes that employees perceive asymmetry if the flow of resources (especially, trust and support) in the work context. This inequity creates negative feelings like resentment and frustration, resulting in counterproductive work behavior as employees try to balance equity. The Stressor-Emotion Model (Spector & Fox, 2005) suggests that work- related stressors (e.g., interpersonal conflict) lead to negative emotional reactions that trigger a higher propensity for CWB, which is represented through aggression, sabotage, or withdrawal behaviors. Interpersonal conflict also considers a toxic work environment that affects cooperation and trust, leading to increased negative emotional states in employees (Hershcovis et al., 2007). Additionally, Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) indicates that workplace conflicts stimulate intense emotional reactions, leading to counterproductive work behavior

(CWB) as expressions of dissatisfaction by the employee. These two theories together indicate that another important antecedent of CWB is employee relation conflict, as interpersonal tension may result in deviance, which harms both the individual and the organization. Employee relation conflict to counterproductive work behavior CWB literature Employee relation conflict to counterproductive work behavior CWB literature the critical role of employee relations conflict in counterproductive work behavior. Employee relational conflict, which is defined as disagreements, bickering, and a lack of communication among workers or between workers and management, is considered an important form of workplace stress (Spector & Fox, 2005). In case of conflict, employees perceive the breakdown of reciprocity in workplace relationships which Tutt (2013) claims results in feelings of frustration towards the workplace and a sense of injustice that has to be resolved as the Social Exchange Theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) suggests. These negative emotions can increase the likelihood of employees attempting to express dissatisfaction or retaliate against perceived unfair treatment. The Stressor- Emotion Model (Spector& Fox,2005) further claims that such conflicts generate emotional strain which may amplify deviant behaviors such as aggression, sabotage, or withdrawal. Research also indicates that workplace conflict erodes trust, impedes cooperation, and intensifies negative emotions, which consequently can lead to counterproductive behaviors (Hershcovis et al., 2007). Consequently, we hypothesized that employee relation conflict will positively affect CWB, where the interpersonal conflict may be considered as an accelerator for deviant behaviors. This hypothesis is rooted in the knowledge that negative work relationships foster an aversive environment wherein retaliation and hostile behaviors ensue leading to a rupture of individual and organizational functioning (Rocks. &Warrens,2010).

H3: Employee Relation Conflict will be positively related to Counterproductive Work Behavior.

Illegitimate Tasks and Counterproductive Work Behavior

The connection between illegitimate tasks and counterproductive work behavior (CWB) is theoretically grounded in these psychological theories: Social Exchange Theory (SET); Stressor-Emotion Model; Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. Illegitimate tasks refer to tasks that employees believe are unreasonable, irrelevant, or beyond the scope of their job description, and can lead to frustration and emotional distress (Kübler et al., 2016). As a result, when such tasking is imposed on employees the organization is perceived to violate the norms of reciprocal justice, which consequently generate negative emotions such as anger and resentment (SET; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). If these emotions do not dissipate, they can escalate into Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB), as employees attempt to restore equity lost to the organization, or seek to manage their emotional challenges through acts of retaliation, such as aggression or refusing to cooperate (Spector & Fox, 2005). According to the Stressor-Emotion Model (Spector & Fox, 2005), illegitimate tasks are regarded as stressors that deplete emotional resources for employees and enhance the probability of deviant behavior. Moreover, Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2001) indicates that employees seek to conserve their resources, such as emotional resources. This leads employees to feel that their emotional resources have been wiped out, which may drive CWBs in order to shield themselves from further emotional fatigue (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). Hence, it was assumed that these theories, taken together, imply that illegitimate tasks are positively related to CWB via emotional strain and resource depletion. Indeed, research on illegitimate tasks and CWB shows that tasks seen as unreasonable or multitude lead to undesirable consequences, like deviance. Illegitimate tasks are defined as irrelevant, excessive, or inappropriate tasks for employees which impact their feelings of frustration and stress (Kübler et

al., 2016). The Social Exchange Theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) states that employees feel an unbalance in a codependent relationship, when asked to perform such tasks in a professional environment, leading to negative feelings such as resentment and anger. These emotions can lead to CWB, including behaviors that range from aggression, sabotage, or withdrawal from the work environment (Spector & Fox, 2005). The Stressor–Emotion Model (Spector & Fox, 2005) suggest that illegitimate tasks are stressors that drain employees’ emotional resources, consequently raising the probability of employees engaging in counterproductive behaviors. Another cause of CWB is that, when employees are being assigned inappropriate tasks, they feel unfairly treated, whereupon they resort to CWB to retaliate or deal with their emotional distress (Hershcovis et al., 2007). Adopting this theoretical perspective, it is anticipated that illegitimate tasks are related to CWB positively, such that employees are driven to practice deviant behaviors as a result of agitating and stressful tasks.

H4: Illegitimate Tasks will be positively related to counterproductive work behavior.

The sequential mediation model of illegitimate task

The sequential mediation model that connects illegitimate tasks with counterproductive work behavior (CWB) through toxic workplace and employee relation conflict is built upon Social Exchange Theory (SET), the Stressor-Emotion Model, and the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. Illegitimate tasks, which employees feel are unreasonable or irrelevant to their role, cause emotional strain and frustration (Kübler et al., 2016). As per the SET (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), when employees come to be assigned such tasks, then there is a perceived disruption in the reciprocated exchange with the organization, leading to negative feelings. This type of frustration can increase employee relation conflict (Hershcovis et al., 2007), as this frustration can result from unfair assignment of tasks and this eventually leads to tension between employees and conflict between interpersonal relationships. Stressor-Emotion Model (Spector & Fox, 2005) advocates such conflict forms a developing hazard, increasing the level of stress and adding to an evil work environment having tension, poor correspondence, and less supportive workplace (Leiter & Maslach, 2009). According to the COR theory (Hobfoll, 2001) when employees lose resources due to these types of stressors, they use CWB as a coping mechanism. Toxic environment conditions and employee relation conflict deplete emotional and social resources, making deviant behaviors, such as aggression, absenteeism, or sabotage, more probable as employees attempt to re-establish control and safeguard their well-being (Spector & Fox, 2005). Accordingly, we theorize that illegitimate tasks trigger CWB through a serial mediation process: first, work toxicity → relationship conflict → CWB (Fig. 1).

H5: The toxic workplace mediates the relation between illegitimate tasks and employee relation conflict.

H6: Employee Relation Conflict will mediate in the relationship of toxic workplace and counterproductive work behavior.

H7: Toxic workplace & employee relation conflict will serially mediate the relationship between illegitimate tasks and deviant work behavior.

Method

Sample and data collection procedure

The sample of this study consists of 400 washing machine industry employees in Gujranwala, Pakistan. The target population is workers in different levels/ departments including production, quality control, maintenance as well as administration from washing machine manufacturing industry. A stratified random sampling strategy will be used to guarantee that employees from various strata in the organization are included, for example, different job functions, work experience, and levels of exposure to different workplace stressors (Cohen, 1992). So, we do not expect that there will be a good whether the sample is representative or not. The employee sample size of 400 is commonly accepted as an appropriate number of respondents to attain statistical power and reliability that still adheres to earlier recommendations for organizational behavior studies (Fowler, 2014). This way we can provide results that can be generalized within the industry by representing a balanced mix of demographic and professional traits. The employees in their workplaces will be administered structured questionnaires to collect data. These questionnaires will contain established, validated scales of the independent variable, illegitimate tasks (e.g., the Illegitimate Task Scale: Semmer, Tschan, et al., 2015), the mediator variables, toxic workplace (e.g., Leiter & Maslach, 2009), and employee relation conflict (e.g., the Conflict Resolution Styles Scale: Rahim, 2001), and the dependent variable, counterproductive work behavior (e.g., the CWB scale: Spector & Fox, 2005) will be included. The questionnaires will be distributed in employees' work hours to obtain the maximum response rate as well as to assure participants of the confidentiality of the responses to encourage honesty in responding to the questions. Also, the data will be collected from a small sample in advance of the survey in a pilot test (Saunders et al., 2012). The robust methodology, utilizing a highly structured survey, ensures that the data collected is systematic and robust, allowing for nuanced analysis of inter-variable relationships. Since the sample was taken from a high-reliability source (Pollfish), the encountered low-quality data have been so few they actually can be discarded. The Total scores are required for use of scales across individuals and were therefore computed using listwise deletion as per Hair et al. (2018), the analysis was conducted on 241 usable questionnaires, as data were removed from those participants that either responded with the same answer too many consecutive times, who completed the survey 4 times faster than the average respondent, who provided incorrect responses to attention-check questions and/or responded that they had not worked for a minimum of 6 months. According to Hair et al. recommendations, the sample size is also consistent with 15 observations per independent variable and the preferred sample size of 90 observations to conduct the analysis in this study. (2018). The final sample was composed of 55% male and 45% female. The participants were mainly in the group 3 age group between 36 and 45 years old. 46% of participants had university degrees; 33% had a graduate degree. Demographic information of the sample is shown in

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Demographic Variables	Frequency (N = 241)	Percentage (%)
Gender Male	224	64
Female	217	56

Age		
19–25 years	24	6
26–35 years	71	34
36–45 years	87	51
46–55 years	38	28
55+ years	31	8
Education High		
School College	42	32
Degree	220	57
Graduate Degree	68	42

Measures

All measures used in this study were derived from the literature and had high Cronbach's α scores, as presented in Table 2. A five-point Likert-type scale was employed for participants to respond to. Illegitimate tasks was measured using an 8-item scale ($\alpha = 0.82$) developed by Renko et al. (2015). A sample item is “Comes up with radical improvement ideas for the products/services we are selling.” Illegitimate tasks was measured on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). Toxic Workplace was measured using a 16-item scale ($\alpha = 0.82$) developed by Scott & Bruce (1994). A sample item is “Creativity is encouraged here.” Toxic workplace was measured on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Employees' relation conflict was measured using a 15-item scale ($\alpha = 0.93$) developed by Alavi et al. (2014). A sample item is “I look for the opportunities to make improvements at work.” Employees' relation conflict was measured on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). Finally, counterproductive work behavior was measured using a 6-item scale ($\alpha = 0.79$) developed by Hu et al. (2009). A sample item is “At work, I come up with innovative and creative notions.” Counterproductive Work Behavior was measured on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). For more information about the constructs, see Appendix 1. In terms of control variables, existing literature suggests that some individual and organizational characteristics may affect the relationship between independent and dependent variables and thus need to be controlled to achieve an adulteration-free relationship between observed variables (Delery & Doty, 1996; Liu & Almor, 2016). Thus, in this research, we controlled for three demographic variables: gender, age, and education. Gender was dummy coded (0= “male” and 1= “female”). Age was measured using five categories (1= “19 - 25 years” to 5= “55+ years”). Finally, education was measured using three categories (1= “high school,” 2= “college degree,” 3= “graduate degree”).

Analysis

Hypothesis 1: The direct effect was assessed by the use of hierarchical multiple regression analysis on illegitimate tasks, toxic workplace, employees' relation conflict, and counterproductive work behavior. A test was performed through the PROCESS macro (v4.0; Hayes, 2018) to assess the mediation effect. SPSS 28 software using the bootstrap sampling method (sample size = 400) recommended by Hayes (2013), which has been used by various other scholars (Bajaba et al., 2022b; Naqshbandi & Jasimuddin, 2022; Salam & Bajaba, 2021). Asymmetric confidence intervals (CIs) of mediating effect were chosen through bootstrap sampling method.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

Descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and zero-order correlations are displayed in Table 2. All hyperlinks among the proposed paths were significant at $p = .001$. Illegitimate tasks were positively correlated with a toxic workplace ($r = 0.45$, $p < .001$). That explains 64.45% of the total variance. Additionally, the first (and the most prominent) factor only explained 26.11% of the total variance, which is less than 50% (i.e., minimum cut-off to check CMB using Harman's single factor test Podsakoff et al., 2012). CMB was unlikely to have significantly confounded the interpretations of the present study's results, as more than one factor emerged, and a single factor did not explain a great amount of total variance.

Common method bias analysis

As all indicators were self-reported, the effect of CMB needs to be examined to address the extent of the problem of common method bias (CMB). Established recommendations were followed to prepare for elimination or minimization of CMB (Podsakoff et al., 2003). For controlling method variance using a marker variable that is theoretically unrelated to the substantive variables in the research, this study applied the correlational marker approach developed by Lindell & Whitney (2001) (Williams et al., 2010). Partial correlation describes the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two continuous variables while controlling for the effect of a marker variable of our own choosing (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). This research studies one of the newer social sciences marker variables: the attitude toward the Color Blue. This marker variable was assessed on a 7-item scale ($\alpha = 0.94$) by Miller & Simmering (2022).

TABLE 3.

Summary of the hierarchical regression results (unstandardized coefficients) ($N = 241$)

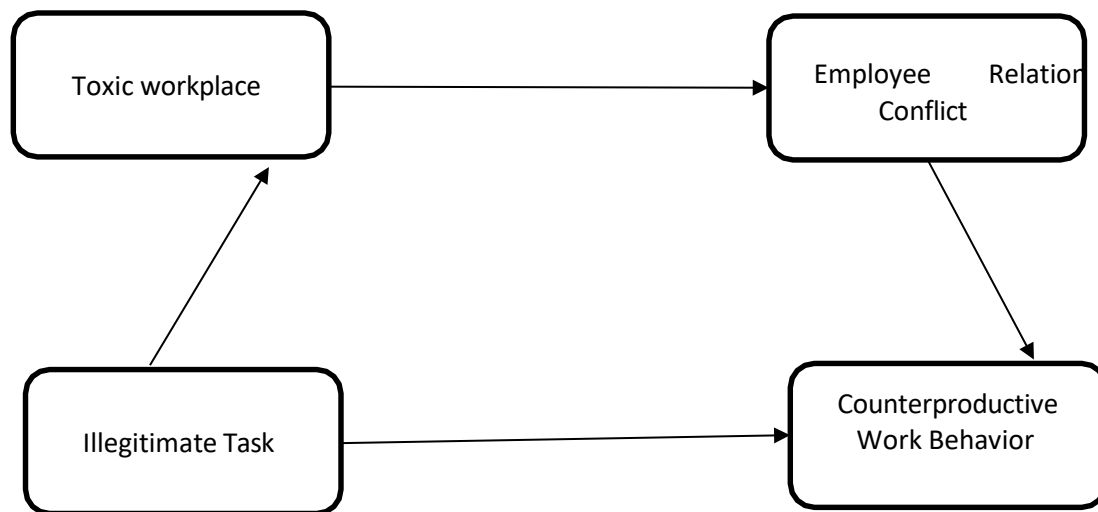
Empty	Toxic Workplace		Employees' Relation Conflict				Counterproductive Work Behavior					
Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
Intercept	2.58	3.42	4.94	1.88	3.86	3.16	2.58	2.82	2.37	.49	.02	.114
Gender	-.31	-.24	-.22	-.06	-.02	.02	-.28	-.38	-.15	-.41	-.34	-.15
Age	-.08	-.03	-.02	.05	.02	.06	-.27	-.21	-.24	-.27	-.26	-.22
Education	.25	.18	.18	.12	.12	-.12	.46	.13	.39	.21	.37	.33
IT		.21		.36		.24		.54				.38
TW					.48	.28			.75		.26	.27
ERC										.89	.68	.58

R²	.22	.43	.14	.39	.19	.42	.34	.53	.49	.54	.36	.63
ΔR²	-	.35	-	.26	.34	.22	-	.28	.26	.19	.18	.14
F	8.63	41.95	1.48	23.75	34.23	32.89	32.49	51.72	46.72	55.88	32.46	53.12
df	326	125	348	347	247	346	148	347	236	327	144	345

An example item is “Blue is a beautiful color.” The marker variable was assessed on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Results however, as can be seen above, diagonal, Table 2, indicate that removing the technique variance in such manner (partial ling-out) did not change the originally demonstrated correlation among substantive variables, nor did it alter its significance ($P < 0.05$). These enuns account for 64.45% of the total variance. In addition, the first (and most dominant) factor explained only the 26.11% of the total variance, which is well below 50% (the minimal threshold for testing for CMB using Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Because stereotype endorsement could be defined by more than one factor and a single factor could not significantly explain the majority of total variance, CMB was less likely to have significantly confounded the interpretations of the results of the present study (Podsakoff et al., 2003). (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Hypothesis testing

Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4: The Regression Analysis Outputs can be seen in Table 3. As all models had tolerance values well above 0.2 and Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) well below 5, none of the models were susceptible to multicollinearity (Bowerman & O'Connell, 1990). Hypothesis 1 remained supported; Model 2 revealed illegitimate tasks to significantly and positively predict toxic workplace ($b = 0.21$, $p < 0.01$). Likewise, Hypothesis 2 was supported again; toxic workplace positively predicted employees' relation conflict in Model 5 ($b = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$). In Model 10, employees' relation conflict positively predicted counterproductive work behavior, supporting hypothesis 3 ($b = 0.89$, $p < 0.01$). Finally, hypothesis 4 was confirmed further following the observation that illegitimate tasks positively predicted counterproductive work behavior in Model 8 ($b = 0.54$, $p < 0.01$; refer to Fig. 2).



Mediation analysis

To test hypotheses 5, 6, and 7, Hayes's (2013) PROCESS add-on was utilized. Hypothesis 5 assessed the mediating role of toxic workplace on the relationship between illegitimate tasks and employees' relation conflict. The analysis showed that impact of illegitimate tasks had an indirect effect on employee's relation conflict ($b = 1.23$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% BCa CI [1.16, 1.29]), thus providing support for hypothesis 5. Moreover, the mediating effect of illegitimate tasks on employees' relation conflict in the presence of mediator was also significantly significant ($b = 1.24$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, the toxic workplace was a partial mediator between illegitimate tasks and employees' relation conflict. In addition, they revealed the indirect effect of toxic workplace on counterproductive work behavior through employees relation conflict was statistically significant ($b = 1.18$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% BCa CI 1.31, 1.48), thus supporting hypothesis 6. Finally, the result validated that the serial mediation as stated in hypothesis 7 that the indirect effect ($b = 1.29$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% BCa CI [1.13, 1.11]) of illegitimate tasks on counterproductive work behavior via toxic workplace and employees' relation conflict was significant statistically. Table 4 shows a summary of the mediation analysis.

Table 4.
Summary of the mediation analysis results ($N = 241$).

Relationship	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Confidence interval		T statistics	Conclusion
				Lower bound	Upper bound		
IT → TW → ERC	1.14	1.24	1.23	1.16	1.29	8.16	Partial Mediation

TW → ERC → CWB	1.73	1.44	1.18	1.31	1.48	8.88	Partial Mediation
IT → TW → ERC → CWB	1.54	1.36	1.27	1.13	1.11	8.14	

Discussion

This research investigates the role of illegitimate tasks on counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) through toxic workplace culture and employee relation conflict as mediators. Irresponsible work tasks constitute a strong predictor of CWBs, especially in toxic environments or when there is Lyla conflict in the workplace. To explain this phenomenon, the current paper develops the role of both the direct and indirect situation in allowing for fairness in task allocations to manifest itself in behavioral terms as negative behavioral outcomes in the workplace. Illegitimate tasks are work demands that employees consider as unreasonable, unnecessary, or seem unrelated to their core work duties (Hanssen et al., 2017). Such tasks are frequently unsubmitted (Semmer et al., 2015; Ashraf et al., 2023), there is no obvious justification for requiring, and are seen as a violation of the employee's time and effort. As per the Job Demands-Resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001), work-related demands without equal amounts of resources → burnout, disengagement, and thus CWBs. Counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs) are defined as harmful behaviors that are intentional and are directed at the organization or its members (e.g., lateness, absenteeism) or more serious CWBs (e.g., sabotage, theft). These behaviors are directly related to illegitimate tasks because employees experiencing unfair or meaningless work are more likely to resist in ways that can undermine organizational goals (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). For instance, which a given employee para a task are seen assign semantics not to a irrelevant consideration of work, such a as premature stress at work in effort inequality in phospholipids levels per perusal human reform (Martins et al., 2019). Negative interactions, distrust, lack of support, and poor communication characterize toxic workplaces (O'Boyle et al., 2011). In a toxic work environment, employees aren't just doing things they deem illegitimate, they are also feeling unsupported and undervalued. In consequence, staff in such climates are more disposed to react with actions promoting self-interest, sometimes at the cost of the firm (Pearson & Porath, 2009). An unhealthy organizational culture exacerbates the mental burden of illegitimate tasks, with studies showing employees who feel their contribution is undervalued (Fox & Spector, 2005). This scenario cultivates hostility and disengagement that fuels CWBs. Previous studies demonstrate that employees who feel toxic workplace are more motivated to engage in aggressive behaviors such as workplace bullying, interpersonal conflicts or deviance to mitigate dissatisfaction (Zhao et al., 2013). Moreover, the combination of illegitimate tasks from the work department and a toxic workplace culture could indicate that workers experience not only the burden of redundant or unnecessary tasks but are also relatively isolated from each other and cut off from resources to tackle the challenges that they do face. This makes the conditions ripe for more CWB. In work environments where toxic behavior is normalized, such as at workplaces where dysfunctional behavior is neither addressed nor countered, this can lead to slipping further away from normal organizational norms and counterproductivity increasing (Tepper, 2000). The third critical mediator between illegitimate tasks and CWBs is employee relation conflict, which is frequently evoked from interpersonal conflict or competition of resources. When workers see activities as illegitimate, it is related to conflict with other workers, especially when workloads are allocated wrongly (Colquitt et al., 2001). Prediction of CWBs may be exacerbated by interpersonal conflicts occurring between employees, contributing to tension and animosity in teams. This causes coworkers to collaborate

less and become less likely to help one another, further causing coworkers to view each other as competition. This makes the workplace even more complex and fosters negative behaviors of gossiping, information hoarding, and sometimes even sabotage (Jeung et al., 2018; Ahmad et al., 2024). For those employees who find themselves at odds with others, one has to imagine that their attention strays from the objectives of the organization, with a greater tendency to carry out behavior that diminishes the workplace be it stealing time, working less or revenge on someone they deem unfair (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Mediation between employee relation conflict Employees is faced with illegitimate tasks and employee relation conflict leads to their interpersonal conflict, which manifests as frustration in the face of work environment and reflects their control needs over the organization. In this way, CWB serves as a mechanism for workers to communicate their dissatisfaction, defend their interests, or counteract their feelings of helplessness and powerlessness within the workplace (Spector & Fox, 2005). The results of this study have important consequences for organizational practice and motivation research. On the one hand, it suggests that managers need to be intentional about the kinds of tasks they assign, and make sure that employees recognize the appropriateness and value of the work they are being asked to do. Because role ambiguity can lead to illegitimacy in the workplace (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), however, transparency in communication and adequately defining the role of the crisis team can also help reduce the perception of illegitimacy and therefore CWBs. Second, addressing Identifying workplace toxicity is the key to building a healthy work culture. A message for organizations is to create systems that minimize the negative behavior, create supportive leadership, and promote positive supportive relationships among people. At organization level offering training for conflict resolutions and fostering environment of respect and inclusiveness can help mitigate ER conflicts which subsequently minimize the likelihood of CWBs (Kelloway & Barling, 2010). Ultimately, organizations need to understand the need for employee engagement, but they also need to be sure that they address fundamental dynamics in the workplace. Communication improvement and conflict reduction training can alleviate the negative impact of toxic cultures and illegitimate tasks on behaviors (Zohar & Luria 2004). Our findings emphasize the vital mediating role of toxic workplace cultures and conflict with employees, when it comes to understanding the association between illegitimate tasks and counterproductive work behaviors, respectively. It highlights the need to focus on these organizational and interpersonal factors in order to lower the risk of CWBs and create a more productive, positive working environment. More research is needed to investigate additional mediating variables and test these relationships in other industries and organizational contexts.

Implications

Theoretical and practical implications

This study offers several theoretical contributions to organizational behavior discourse, specifically on the interaction between illegitimate tasks and counterproductive work behaviours (CWB) and the mediating role toxic workplace culture and employee relation conflict. The existing literature has indeed examined direct connections between different stressors and CWBs; yet this study adds to that exercise by considering illegitimate tasks becoming a relevant antecedent. Specific to CWBs, previous research (Fox & Spector, 2005; Bennett & Robinson, 2000) have been able to show associations between work stressors and role ambiguity, but few have attempted to show the unique role of illegitimate tasks. Focusing on the demand for this particular type of work in the workplace, this study proposes that employees perceive tasks that are not undertaken for organizational reasons as unjust or irrelevant and therefore exhibit more counterproductive behavior than they otherwise would — an area that has received less research attention, to date. The

theoretical framework regarding CWB antecedents follows the Job Demands-Resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001), stating that unmet demands (low-probability, illegitimate work assignments) result in stress responses, which evaluate in CWBs. By investigating the mediators worsening the association between illegitimate tasks and CWBs, the study highlights the theoretical importance of identifying these mechanisms. By identifying toxic workplace culture and employee relation conflict as important mediators, the study contributes to the literature about workplace toxicity and interpersonal dynamics. Other studies have considered these concepts independently (Tepper, 2000; Jeung et al., 2018), whilst the current research advances the literature by investigating each of the three mediators considered here in tandem, and thus collectively mediate the relationship between perceived task illegitimacy and employee behavior. This theoretical perspective moves beyond the existing understanding of context, offering context-specific insights into how a negative environment amplifies the damaging effect of illegitimate tasks. What we know little about is the role of organizational climate in shaping employee responses, and this is also a theoretical contribution of the study. In this sense, a toxic workplace culture exacerbates the damaging impact of illegitimate tasks - leading military personnel to experience feelings of alienation, frustration and withdrawal (Pearson & Porath, 2009). This highlights the significance of organizational culture in driving behavioral outcomes of employees, which has received increased attention in the field of organizational behavior research (O'Boyle et al., 2011). Moreover, by incorporating employee relation conflict as a mediator, this study links individual perceptions of task illegitimacy with larger, organization-wide behavioral patterns, underscoring the importance of addressing CWBs through a multi-level lens. This research contributes several useful recommendations for organizations and for those wishing to reduce CWBs and enhance the performance and well-being of workers. The results show that as employees view tasks as illegitimate, this may result in frustration that does not team at the end. Such scenarios necessitate that organizations focus on designing jobs in a way that brings clarity on task and definition of role. To reduce the likelihood of CWBs, managers should ensure that task assignments are seen as relevant and fair to employees' roles. This can be achieved through the behavior of involving employees in planning their tasks and definition the purpose of each and every responsibility, what to expect from them. Where work can also be assigned to a manager their training not to allocate irrelevant or unnecessary tasks can help to prevent accumulation of frustration that contributes to disengagement or sabotage (Semmer et al., 2015). In such a context, a toxic work environment serves as a catalyst that exacerbates the detrimental impact of illegitimate tasks on employees' behavior. Organizations need to build a great organizational culture so they can avoid this problem. In an effort to mitigate toxicity in the workplace, leadership must advocate for open channels of conversation, trust, and interpersonal relationships. Approaches like conflict resolution programs, emotionally intelligent leadership, and regular feedback mechanisms help facilitate a workplace climate where employees feel appreciated and respected. Organizations can prevent CWBs and foster a positive work environment through eliminating toxic behaviors and encouraging supportive behaviors (Kelloway & Barling, 2010; Ashraf et al., 2023). They play an important mediating role between illegitimate task and CWBs. Interpersonal conflicts amplify the stress of perceived illegitimacy of task, leading to counterproductive behavior. Organizations should also invest in training for conflict resolution and ensure that managers have the tools to fix disputes both fast and fair. Without accessible channels for raising issues, small disagreements can spiral into much larger problems. Furthermore, organizing activities for the team will promote teamwork and collaboration, which will create positive relationships and decrease interpersonal conflicts that in turn will reduce the risk of CWBs (Zhao et al., 2013). A clear need for workplace interventions that promote employee well-being.

Illegitimate tasks are prone to cause stress and dissatisfaction among employees, and therefore the provision of adequate resources, including counseling services, stress management programs, and skill development opportunities will help to alleviate the negative consequences. For example, providing people enough autonomy, professional development opportunities, and work-life balance programs can act as sufficient mitigators to reduce work pressure effects, resulting in reduced levels of CWBs and greater job satisfaction (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Creating a play-it-forward work environment in which the employees feel safe sharing their views and they are also encouraged to identify opportunities for process and procedure improvements (including how tasks are assigned to them). On a wider, organizational policy scale, companies should have clear and transparent processes for allocating tasks and resources. This, in turn, avoids illegitimacy in organizations—fairness among employees in the division of labor, and that work given aligns with their skillset. Nor should policies that address such behavior be seen as incremental or contrived at best; rather, the policies should foster inclusivity, mitigating toxic behavior and supporting venues for conflict resolution. Implementing these measures can not only minimize the incidence of CWBs in the workplace but also improve the overall performance of an organization.

This paradigm highlights the need to further disentangle the complex interplay of illegitimate tasks, toxic workplace cultures and employee relation disputes. By presenting a novel stressor—illegitimate tasks—and explaining the mediators, our study provides theoretical contributions to CWB studies. Key Takeaway: In order to reduce CWBs while increasing employee engagement, organizations need to improve task legitimacy, mitigate workplace toxicity, and manage conflict from a practical perspective. Future studies could build on these findings by additional mediators or moderators and investigating long-term effects.

Limitations and Future Direction

A key limitation of this study is its cross-sectional nature, limiting claims of causality among illegitimate tasks, CWB, and the mediating variables of toxic workplace culture and employee relation conflict (Maxwell et al., 2011). Since data were collected at cross sectional, directionality of relationships are unclear, and longitudinal studies are needed to determine whether and how these variables influence one another over time and to identify causal links (Kelloway & Barling, 2010). Third, this study employs self-reported data, which can be subject to social desirability bias and common source bias that can systematically distort CWB scales and scales of the perception of workplace toxicity (Podsakoff et al., 2003). A multi-source approach (e.g., supervisor ratings, peer evaluations) for future studies may help mitigate this concern, as such data would more accurately capture employee behavior and the workings of the organizational ecosystem. Second, findings may not be representative across multiple scenarios, as the focus on specific groups or stages in the research process might make it difficult to extrapolate results from one context to another (Harrison & Kelley, 2005). Future research should attempt to replicate this study between other industries and cultures to determine the strength of the suggested relationships. Additionally, as this research noted toxic workplace culture and employee relation conflict mediators, there were no explorations of other potential mediators or moderators impacting the relationship between illegitimate task and CWBs. Specific characteristics of individuals, for example, personality traits or coping skills and capabilities that the given organizations either promote or combat, may moderate or mediate (Spector & Fox, 2005) those effects; this would be similar for organizational level interventions like leadership training, external consulting and employee well-being programs. This study opens the potential for more future research to take into account the additional variables that contribute to these findings in order to give a more comprehensive perspective on how organizational stressors impact employee behavior. Lastly, an intervention study could assess how

implementing strategies to reduce the negative effects of illegitimate tasks or toxic work environments is effective. Interventions that focus on task legitimacy, workplace culture, and interpersonal conflict need to be examined further as they might help us understand how we can mitigate CWBs and create healthy workplaces (Tepper, 2000). Based on several limitations, future directions need to be suggested in order to improve in-depth detailed theoretical insights as well as practical implications in organizational behavior research.

Conclusion

Reinforcing the understanding of CWB: This investigation appraises how illegitimate tasks, as a prominent type of workplace stressor, translate into CWB. The research reveals organizational context as a driving force behind negative behaviors in response to illegitimate tasks by emphasizing toxic workplace culture and employee relation conflict as two major mediators between the two variables. We highlight the need to focus on not just task-related stressors but on the broader workplace environment when trying to understand employee behavior (Tepper, 2000). Despite the contributions of the present work in clarifying the link between illegitimacy of a task and CWB, the current cross-sectional design, the use of self-reported data, and the deliberate exclusion of other potential mediators or moderators represent limitations not to be overlooked. In future research, using longitudinal designs, including multi-source data and examining more contextual factors (and individual characteristics) as potential moderators or mediators of these effects should help to address these limitations (Maxwell et al., 2011). Moreover, broader research on different organizational contexts and cultural settings would increase the generalizability of the findings (Brett et al., 2006). They must include consideration of the complex interplay between different work stressors and the potential for CWBs in order to address and reduce the prevalence of these harmful behaviors in the workplace.

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