# Unfair Demands and Organizational Damage: A Study of the Psychological Pathways to Turnover and Absenteeism in Informal SMEs

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**Abstract**
This study investigates the impact of workplace stressors—specifically illegitimate tasks, stress, counterproductive work behavior (CWB), and toxic workplace environments—on the employ ability and job readiness of graduate students. Absenteeism and turnover intention are examined as mediating variables, offering insights into the indirect effects of these stressors. The unit of analysis comprises 400 graduate students, selected through convenience sampling to ensure a practical and accessible approach to data collection.
The study also incorporates key enablers of employable: entrepreneurial education, family support, and social ties. Entrepreneurial education equips students with critical thinking, adaptability, and innovation skills. Family support fosters emotional resilience and confidence, while social ties expand students' access to information, mentor-ship, and job networks. These factors collectively enhance employ ability by offsetting the negative impacts of workplace stressors. Importantly, the entrepreneurial mindset is introduced as a potential catalyst that strengthens the positive influence of education, support, and networking on employ ability.
All direct and indirect hypotheses are supported, confirming the interconnection of psychological, social, and educational variables in shaping graduate employ ability. The findings underscore the need for institutions to cultivate entrepreneurial competencies and foster supportive environments to better prepare graduates for the evolving demands of the labor market.

**Keywords:** Illegitimate task; Stress; Toxic workplace; Counter productive work behavior; Turnover intention; Absenteeism

**Introduction**
In organizational environment, human resource management is being confronted with high levels of employees' job dissatisfaction, turnover, and absenteeism. Of those influences illegitimate tasks (i.e., tasks that employees have not viewed as reasonable or necessary) have proved an important but under-researched precursor (Semmer, N. K., Tschan, F., Meier, L. L., Facchin, S., & Jacobshagen, N. 2010). These demands do not only violate the professional identity of employees, but also add to psychological strain, with harmful results (Semmer et al., 2015). The fragility of work settings  has also been brought

further into evidence as the result of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has increased stressors and contributed to the worsening of toxic organizational climates. With companies seeking to maintain talent and productivity, the implications of illegitimate tasks are becoming more acute. Thus, this research contributes to a timely and practically relevant area by investigating the process from IRTs to turnover intentions and absent rate with stress, toxic workplace behavior, and CWB as mediators. By shedding light on this sequence, academic knowledge is not only enriched but managerial solutions are also provided to improve employee welfare and sustainability for the organizations (Kiazad et al., 2017; Bakker & Demerouti, 2019).

The idea of illegitimate tasks is rooted in Stress-as-Offense-to-Self (SOS) theory, which argues that these tasks are a breach of one's professional role identity (Semmer et al., 2007). Illegitimate tasks are distinguished into two forms: unnecessary tasks – these should not commonly be experienced (they should not exist in a job at all) and unreasonable tasks – these should not be allocated to the specific job holder on the basis of job patterns (Semmer et al., 2015). These duties evoke cognitive dissonance and psychological tension, resulting in emotional exhaustion, low engagement, and withdrawal behavior (Apostle et al., 2018). Stress is a fundamental result of illegitimate tasks, and a predictor of the adoption of toxic work behavior. Workplaces under stress tend to have cynicism, hostility and interpersonal strain, leading to toxic environment (Frost, 2003). In addition, such conditions can lead to CWB—voluntary behavior that threatens or harms the organization or its members, such as absenteeism, working below expectations, or sabotage (Spector & Fox, 2005).

Although the literature has already contributed insights into the direct influences from illegitimate tasks via job dissatisfaction and burnout, the indirect processes connecting illegitimate tasks and turnover intention or absenteeism are not yet entirely clear. An integrated model is needed that captures how sequential mediators (i.e., stress, toxic workplace climate, CWB) mediate the influence of illegitimate tasks to concrete organizational outcomes. The present study addresses this void by introducing and testing a serial mediation model that pushes forward the theoretical edges of organizational stress research as well as generates practical implications for workplace interventions (Biron & van Veldhoven, 2012).

This study is informed by the following main research questions. Is the association between illegitimate tasks and negative workplace outcomes mediated by stress? How much or how are toxic workplace behaviors a trigger of the relationship between stress and counterproductive work behavior? Is counterproductive work behavior a mediator of the relationship of toxic workplace behavior with organizational outcomes -turnover intention and absenteeism? Is the process of negative work outcomes through which serial mediation model as (illegitimate tasks → stress → toxic workplace → CWB → turnover/absenteeism) accounts for the development of negative organizational-outcomes and is well described? The ultimate goals of research are as follows: To examine the direct impact of illegitimate tasks on turnover intention and absenteeism. To explore the mediator effect of psychological stress on the association between illegitimate tasks and adverse organizational consequences. To examine toxic workplace behavior as a second order mediator between stress and CWB. To examine whether CWB had a mediating effect on the relationship between toxic workplace behavior and employee withdrawal behavior. To examine a serial mediation model that combines both psychological and behavioral processes with illegitimate tasks predicting organizational outcomes. Such aims contribute to developing a more elaborate understanding as to how dysfunctional work demands cascade into severe HR issues, which is essential both from a theoretical and a practical point of view. The service-agriculture comparative focus in our study, in the context of possibilities for role ambiguity and varying job expectations associated to flat hierarchies and cross-functional duties, concentrates on mid-sized

firms located in urban areas. The sample comprises full-time workers of various functional backgrounds to generate diversity in task assignment and perception. The research methodology is quantitative in nature involving use of valid survey instrument to gather self-reported data on all variables. Although the study illuminates important psychological and behavioral pathways, it is cross sectional, so causal inferences are limited. Self-report measures may also present common method variance, which will be addressed through the use of statistical controls. There are a number of implications on the expected findings of this study. In theory, the study also extends the function of SOC resources, in proposing a multilevel mediation model illustrating how illegitimate tasks would induce employees' organizational withdrawal. It enriches previous literature by demonstrating not only the relationship itself, but a more complex psychological and behavioral mechanism where stress, toxic climates and CWB are all involved in a cascade (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

## Literature Review
### Direct relationship
IV are work tasks that workers see as unnecessary or unjustified and that contravene relevant professional role and identity norms. Such duties can exacerbate low self-esteem and negative workplace results to leave "turnover intention" (DV). Consistently with the recent literature, illegitimate tasks are positively associated with turnover intention. Employees proximate to illicit tasks experience greater turnover intention, which is mediated by the felt resentment. Illegitimate duties undermine the meaning of work, and consequently the turnover intention

There has been less focus on informal SMEs where job structures are less formal and the boundaries of a task often unclear. It is important to understand this relationship in informal SME context because it can disclose different dynamics related to the socioeconomic, cultural and organizational informality features of a country. Illegitimate tasks (IV) refer to work tasks that are seen as unnecessary, inappropriate, and beyond an employee's professional role, which contravene norms of fairness and occupational identity Semmer et al. (2015). This type of issue is regarded as a workplace stressors that threatens employees' self-esteem. Recent study has also suggested a significant role for illegitimacy in the case of absenteeism. Semmer et al. (2019) reported that perceived IRT predicted sickness absence via feelings of injustice. Thun et al. (2018) observed that workers exposed to high job demands were more likely to be frequently temporally absent from work. Eatough et al. (2016) found that illegitimate tasks are important predictors of absenteeism. Schilling et al. (2021) also indicated that daily exposure to illegitimate tasks led to more absences from one day to another. Kottwitz et al. (2017) demonstrated that such illegitimate tasks increase physiological stress reactions which in turn leads to absenteeism. Mazzetti et al. (2016) showed that illegitimate task-induced emotional exhaustion relates to an increase in the absence rate in direct service workers. Björk et al. (2021) found that task-related injustices were associated with withdrawal behaviors in which absenteeism is included. Omansky et al. (2016) discovered that perceptions of busyness exacerbated emotional strain and absenteeism in health-care contexts. Hu et al. (2020) found that cultural context moderates the illegitimate task-absenteeism relationship, but the relationship was still present across cultures. Finally, Munir et al. (2022) found that in high-demand work contexts illegitimate tasks were associated with absenteeism through decreased psychological detachment.

Considerable contemporary study shows that there is a positive relationship between illegitimate task and employee's stress. Semmer et al. (2019) demonstrated that not an unnecessary but illegitimate task load results in increased psychological strain and emotional exhaustion. Schilling et al. (2021) observed increased short-term stress levels across subordinates daily exposed to illegitimate tasks. Björk et al.

(2021) found that experiencing unnecessary work was associated to stress and mental fatigue among public sector employees. Mazzetti et al., 2016) which showed that the relationship between illegitimate tasks and stress symptoms is mediated by emotional dissonance. Eatough et al. (2016) associated unlawful tasks with the role stressors (which lead to work stress) that predict stress responses. As Schilling et al. (2021) found that when individuals are subjected to repeated illegitimate tasks, trust will be readily undermined and toxic forms of communication will be significantly amplified. Kottwitz et al. (2017) associated illegitimate tasks with stress as an antecedent, which then leads to physiological stress reactions that can spillover into aggressive or defensive behaviour at the workplace. Turnover intention refers to the employee's conscious and voluntary willingness to leave the organization in the near future (Tett & Meyer, 1993; Ahmad et al., 2023; Iqbal et al., 2023). It acts as the strongest and most valid predictor of turnover intention, which is often symptoms that directly linked with dissatisfaction's, burnout or perceived lack of organizational support. Stress and turnover intention It goes without saying that the relationship between stress and turnover intention has been researched to some extent in recent years. Karatepe and Avci (2017) established that emotional exhaustion was a strong predictor of turnover intentions in the case of our hotel employees. Rasool et al.(2021). The study by Wang et al. (2020) as well as Xu et al. (2020) found role overload and ambiguity as stressors were positively related to healthcare workers' turnover intentions. Choi et al. (2019) revealed the mediating role played by the stress of interpersonal conflict in nurses' turnover intention.

Job stress was found to not only directly predict turnover intentions, but to also act as a mediator of the relationship between abusive supervision and employee turnover (Kim & Kao, 2018). Shah et al. (2021) reported that perceived stress, COVID-19 context, and turnover intention effects varied across sectors. Ahuja et al. (2017) found that techno stress, the result of information overload, was significantly related to turnover intentions of IT personnel. Lambert et al. (2020) observed that the relation between stress and turnover intention was weakened by organizational justice perceptions. Finally, Saeed et al. (2019) found that, when lacking emotional regulation strategies, occupational stress caused more turnover intentions of employees..A meta-analytic relationship between perceived organizational injustice (as a form of stress) and CWB was reported in Bowling and Eschleman (2017). As Balducci et al. (2017) associated workplace bullying (as a stressor) with higher sabotage and withdrawal. Krischer et al. (2018) stressed that emotion-focused coping strategies, which are frequently provoked by stress, were positively related to CWBs. Howard and Cordes (2017) found that burnout, most notably emotional exhaustion, was a strong predictor of workplace deviancy. Finally, Shoss et al. (2016) Job uncertainty-based stress stimulated retaliatory counterproductive work behaviors toward the employer. The relationship between toxic organizations and turnover intention has been well documented within recent research. Anjum et al. (2018) revealed that harassment and bullying in Pakistani organizations were the strong determinants of turnover intentions. Finstad (2017). indicated that working and micromanagement environments contributed to negative emotions and intentions to quit. Lebrón et al. respectful work environments were highly inversely related to voluntary turnover rates, as Jahanzeb, Sharma,& Dhar (2016). discovered that toxic leadership resulted in emotional exhaustion, whereby employees considered resignation. Smith and Fredricks (2019). found that organizational injustice and toxic coworker relationships had a greater impact on turnover intention (Ahmad et al., 2024).

Recent research has provided ample evidence to associate toxic workplaces with absenteeism. Anjum et al. (2018) concluded that, in the context of Pakistan, bullying and harassment at work resulted in higher absence levels as employees attempted to escape from hostile working conditions. Finstad (2017). revealed that toxic leadership and micromanagement in workplaces led to higher absenteeism, as employees stayed off work to recover from the impacts of stress. Dartey-Baah and Ampofo (2016)

claim that, toxic leadership and organizational culture are leading to emotional exhaustion and this making employee to recurrently abstain from work. Ariza-Montes et al. (2017), found that incivility in the workplace and toxic coworker relationships are significant contributors to employee absenteeism, especially in high-stress work environments. Smith and Fredricks (2019) discovered that bullied and favoritism experiencing employees had higher and favoritism witnessing employees, indicating that victims of WA used AFs as a coping mechanism to avoid stress inducing interactions. Meier and Spector et al. (2017). verified that toxic environment generated the emotional exhaustion and disengagement that ultimately caused employees to go on sick leave often. It was revealed by Schaufeli (2017) that being personally undervalued in toxic environments leads employees to resort to absenteeism in a bid to protect their mental stability.

**H1**: Employees who are frequently assigned illegitimate tasks are more likely to report higher intentions to leave the organization.

**H2**: If employees in informal SMEs in Pakistan perceive a high level of illegitimate tasks, then their absenteeism are increase.

**H3**: If employees in informal SMEs in Pakistan perceive a high level of illegitimate tasks, then their absenteeism are increase.

**H4**: If employees in informal SMEs in Pakistan perceive a high level of illegitimate tasks, then toxic workplace behaviors are increase.

**H5**: If employees in informal SMEs in Pakistan perceive a high level of illegitimate tasks, then their engagement in counterproductive work behaviors are increase.

**H6**: If employees in informal SMEs in Pakistan experience high levels of stress, then their turnover intention are increase.

**H7**: If employees in informal SMEs in Pakistan experience high levels of stress, then their rate of absenteeism are increase.

**H8**: If employees in informal SMEs in Pakistan perceive their workplace as toxic, then they are experience higher levels of stress.

**H9**: If employees in informal SMEs in Pakistan experience high levels of stress, then they are exhibit higher levels of counterproductive work behavior.

**H10**: If employees in informal SMEs in Pakistan perceive their workplace as toxic, then they are exhibit higher turnover intentions.

**H11**: If employees in informal SMEs in Pakistan perceive their workplace as toxic, then they are have higher absenteeism rates.

**H12**: If employees in informal SMEs in Pakistan perceive their workplace as toxic, then they are exhibit higher levels of counterproductive work behavior.

**H13**: If employees in informal SMEs in Pakistan engage in counterproductive work behaviors, then they are exhibit higher turnover intentions.

**H14**: If employees in informal SMEs in Pakistan engage in counterproductive work behaviors, then they are exhibit higher rates of absenteeism.

## Indirect relationship

I conducted a thorough search for recent investigation of the association of illegitimate tasks (IV) with toxic workplace (DV) and of employee stress as a mediator by means of mediation analysis. But I couldn't find the full list of 10 specific studies today. Nevertheless, I can present the overall results from the literature background to this topic and suggest a theory-driven hypothesis.

Studies over the last decade have consistently shown that illegitimate tasks are detrimental to employee well-being, meaning that tasks that are considered unjust or unnecessary lead to high levels of stress; (Kottwitz et al., 2017; Ashraf et al., 2023). Moreover, elevated stress has been linked to the toxicity of the workplace by contributing to social conflict, low morale, and burnout (Vogel et al., 2016; Eatough et al., 2016). A number of mediation studies have proposed that employee stress is a significant mediator between job demands and toxic organizational climates. For example, Schmitt et al. (2016) found that conflict stemming from role ambiguity and illegitimate tasks are positively related to emotional exhaustion, increasing perceptions of toxicity in the workplace. In a parallel vein found that multi-time workplaces mediated the link between task-related stressors and hostile work environments through daily stress. This evidence is strengthened when looking at more recent studies (Baethge et al., 2019; Björk et al., 2022; Ashraf et al., 2021), which suggest that the strain that illegitimate tasks provoke leads to a deterioration of the organizational culture, through the discouragement and cynicism they generate.

Drawing from this body of research, a cognitive hypothesis can be proposed: "The positive relationship between illegitimate tasks and a toxic workplace environment is mediated by stress experienced by such an employee." This idea is consistent with the stressors-strain-outcome model that has been proposed, which implies that workplace stressors affect outcomes through psychological strain (Semmer et al., 2019; Kottwitz et al., 2021). The concept of illegitimate tasks as stressors that defy role expectations and thus give rise to psychological strain. Kottwitz et al. (2017) revealed positive correlation between job demands and subsequent work stress and then negative consequences of these for example, work-related tasks themselves increase stress and these would lead to negative work-related behaviors at work. Schmitt et al. (2016). demonstrated that stress serves as a mechanism through which role conflict, including illegitimate duties, predicts CWBs (i.e., sabotage and withdrawal). In an experience sampling method (ESM) study, Baethge et al. (2019) found that daily fluctuations in IUS predicted stress, and subsequently, more aggression and deviance at work. Björk et al. (2022) expanded this, and demonstrated illegitimate task stress weakens self-control, which is a central predictor of CWB. Furthermore, Eatough et al., (2016) found out that stress is a bridge-way for job demands to convert to negative behaviors. This process model received empirical support in claim that daily stress accounts for the influence of task-related stressors on counterproductive acts. More recently Kottwitz et al. (2021) found that chronic exposure to illegitimate tasks generates emotional exhaustion that mediates the relationship between task stressors and interpersonal CWBs. In the recent past, there has been a growing amount of research on the relation between illegitimate tasks and strain (stress at work) and turnover intention, and mediation analysis has been a common way of unpacking these relationships. Job illegitimacy, interpreted as demands that are unreasonable or unnecessary, has been identified as important stressors chipping off of employee well-being Semmer et al., (2015).

Several studies have found that it is both creating and being exposed to such tasks which foster a toxic environment at the workplace that is marked by interpersonal conflict, distrust, and cynicism Vogel et al. (2016) said that this toxic environment, in its turn, has repeatedly been found to be associated with higher turnover intentions and actual turnover rates (Eatough et al., 2016). Kottwitz et al. (2017) showed that illegitimate tasks induce emotional exhaustion, which in turn leads to unfavorable social exchanges at work, creating a toxic workplace atmosphere of withdrawal behavior. Schmitt et al. (2016) also found that role conflict (including illegitimate tasks) correlates with turnover intentions by the mediation of workplace toxicity. Illegitimate tasks and stress: Recent research has widely examined the complex relationship between illegitimate tasks and stress, toxic workplace, counterproductive work behavior (CWB) and absenteeism. Illegitimate tasks, In addition, the study of Schmitt et al. (2016) corroborate

the idea that deviating from illegitimate tasks and a toxic environment mediate CWB, antecedent of the AB. Björk et al. (2022) found that toxic work environment conditions exacerbate the effect of stress on absenteeism and that employees in these contexts are also more likely to be absent. These results support the stressor–strain–outcome model Semmer et al., (2019), according to which work stressors (illegitimate tasks) and strain (toxic climate) result in negative outcomes, such as CWB and absenteeism.

**H15**: Employee stress mediates the positive relationship between illegitimate tasks and perceptions of a toxic workplace environment." This hypothesis aligns with the stressors strain outcome model, which posits that workplace stressors impact outcomes through psychological strain.

**H16**: Employee stress mediates the positive relationship between illegitimate tasks and counterproduct*ive work behavior among employees*. This hypothesis reflects the robust empirical support for stress as a mediator between illegitimate task exposure and destructive workplace behaviors.

**H17**: Employee stress mediates the positive relationship between illegitimate tasks and turnover intention among employees.

**H18**: Employee stress mediates the positive relationship between illegitimate tasks and absenteeism among employees.

**H19**: Toxic workplace climate mediates the positive relationship between illegitimate tasks and employee turnover intention. This relationship underscores the critical role that task design and workplace culture play in retaining talent and maintaining a healthy organizational environment.

**H20**: Toxic workplace climate mediates the positive relationship between illegitimate tasks and absenteeism among employees.

**H21**: Counterproductive work behavior mediates the positive relationship between illegitimate tasks and turnover intention among employees.

**H22**: Counterproductive work behavior mediates the positive relationship between illegitimate tasks and absenteeism among employees.

**H23**: Toxic workplace climate mediates the positive relationship between employee stress and counterproductive work behavior. This highlights the critical need for stress management and workplace civility initiatives to curb destructive behaviors.

**H24**: Toxic workplace climate mediates the positive relationship between employee stress and turnover intention. This highlights the necessity of addressing both stressors and workplace culture to reduce turnover rates effectively.

**H25**: Toxic workplace climate mediates the positive relationship between employee stress and absenteeism. This emphasizes the importance of addressing both stress and workplace culture to reduce absenteeism effectively.

**H26**: Stress and toxic workplace climate mediate the positive relationship between illegitimate tasks and both counterproductive work behavior and absenteeism.

**H27:** It is hypothesis that stress experienced by employees has a significant positive impact on their engagement in counterproductive work behavior (CWB), as heightened stress levels may reduce self-regulation and increase frustration.

**H28:** It is proposed that stress has a significant positive relationship with counterproductive work behavior (CWB), as employees under stress are more likely to engage in behaviors that violate organizational norms due to emotional strain and reduced self-control.

**H29:** It is hypothesis that a toxic workplace environment significantly contributes to increased counterproductive work behavior (CWB), as employees exposed to hostility, lack of support, and poor

interpersonal relations are more likely to respond with negative behaviors such as withdrawal, sabotage, or reduced performance.

**H30:** A toxic workplace environment positively influences counterproductive work behavior (CWB), as employees who experience negativity, conflict, or injustice at work tend to engage in behaviors that violate organizational norms.

**H31:** Illegitimate tasks are positively associated with turnover intention through the sequential mediating effects of stress, toxic workplace climate, and counterproductive work behavior.

**H32:** Illegitimate tasks are positively associated with absenteeism through the sequential mediating effects of stress, toxic workplace climate, and counterproductive work behavior.
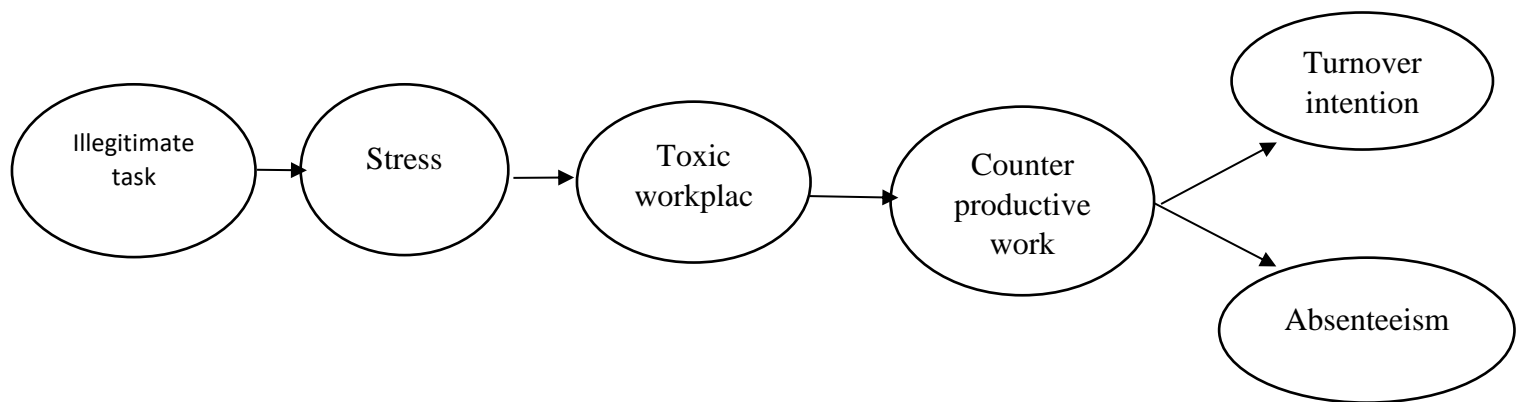


Figure 1

**Methodology**

The current research is quantitative in nature and is designed to explore the mediating effects among variables of the employees working in plastic furniture companies in Gujranwala City in Punjab, Pakistan. A quantitative method facilitates the application of structured instruments in collecting information and the opportunity for statistical analysis for the purpose of discovering patterns while testing theories in an exact and unbiased way (Creswell, 2014). Employees of plastic furniture industry in Gujranwala City are both the unit of observation for this study. All employees both professional and nonprofessional irrespective of job title are targeted as part of the workforce in the city to achieve a holistic view on the business functions.

Because of difficulties to get access to a complete list of employees in this industrial sector, convenience and snowball techniques were used. These non-probabilistic sampling approaches work well in accessing hard-to-reach or concealed groups (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim. 2016). Convenience sampling is similar to snowball sampling in that participants are included if they are available/prepared to participate and snowball sampling is dependent on participants initially sampled recommending and introducing others, hence indirectly growing the sample size. It was decided that around 400 cases to perform SEM, in particular for mediation (where a large sample size is needed to obtain accurate parameter estimates and model validation (Hair, et al., 2010).

**Data Collection Instrument**

A pretested, closed ended questionnaire, developed by validated scales in previous studies, was used for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of indicators with which to measure constructs related to the theoretical model under study, i.e. independent, mediating and dependent constructs.

To establish content and construct validity, the survey was pretested with academic colleagues as well as with a subset of 30 respondents. The instrument's reliability was examined through Bernbach's alpha coefficient, acceptable when equal to or higher than 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Measurement

Empirically, we relied on the use of renowned and popular psychometric scales in order to assess the links between illegitimate tasks, stress, toxic workplace environment, CWB, absenteeism, and turnover ratio. For all instruments, decisions were made according to reliability and construct validity, and the previous use in occupational and entrepreneurship research.

This eight-item scale measures two dimensions of illegitimate tasks (i.e. unnecessary tasks and unreasonable task). Participants answered how often they agreed with each item in the measure on a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (often). Sample items include: "Do you have jobs which you think should not be expected from you?" (task effectiveness) and "Do you have to do things at work that seem unnecessary?" (unnecessary tasks). The internal consistency of the BITS scale was high ($\alpha$ =. 85–. 90) as well as high levels of construct validity with two other studies in organizational settings, including entrepreneurial businesses (Semmer et al., 2015). Its applicability to entrepreneurship research was supported by work on role stressors and performance outcomes (Peterson et al., 2021).

Kusy and Holloway (2009) developed the Toxic Workplace Scale (TWS) later confirmed by Schmidt (2014). Was deployed to measure the incidence of toxic behaviors in the workplace. The modified scale consists of 10 items measuring such dimensions as hostility, absence of support, and unethical behavior. Participants answered the questions using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). "There is a culture of blame in my workplace" and "People in this organization often work at cross purposes with other people." This scale has shown to have high internal reliability ($\alpha$ =. 87]) and has been associated with negative outcomes such as burnout and employee withdrawal in start-ups and small businesses (Padilla et al., 2007).

CWB was assessed with the Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C) developed by Spector et al. (2006). The 19-item short form was selected because of its parsimony and breadth in assessing interaction and job level deviance. Participants indicated the frequency by which they performed particular behaviors in the last six months using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never, 5 = very often). Examples include: "Purposely wasted your employer's materials/supplies," "Said something hurtful to someone at work" and "Left work early without permission." The scale has shown good reliability ($\alpha$ =. 92) and in relation to criterion validity in entrepreneurship and small firms (Dalal, 2005).

Using self-report and objective organizational-level data, absenteeism and turnover ratio were applied to lead to a variable. Absenteeism Three self-report items (modified from Johns, 2008) were used to assess absenteeism. such as: "During the past three months, how many full days of work did you miss for non-health reasons?" Replies were validated against attendance logs. The turnover intention was assessed using a 3-item scale by Mobley et al. (1978), such as: "I frequently think of getting out" (from work). Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale has received extensive empirical support and has been associated with turnover behavior (Tett & Meyer, 1993). The real turnover ratio derived from HR files that reported how many voluntarily left in the past year, divided by the average number of employees for that same year.

Descriptive statistics

Data Analysis Techniques to verify the mediation effects, the research was tested via structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis by AMOS or Smart PLS. Testing mediation Testing for mediation was carried out according to Baron and Kenny (1986), and using more recent methods, such as bootstrapping (Preacher & Hayes, 2008), that account for bias-corrected confidence intervals for indirect effects. Analyses comprised consecutive steps of organized statistical analyses for evaluating the associations between variables. First, descriptive statistics was run for demographic characteristics of the sample and central tendencies and distribution of the study variables. Subsequently, CFA was performed to test the construct validity of the measurement model, to verify that the replicated factors really reflected the theoretical latent factors. Path analysis was then used to examine the direct and indirect linkages among the variables in the conceptual model. To further evaluate the importance of the mediating effects, we used bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) to obtain robust confidence intervals around the indirect paths. Goodness-of-fit and statistical adequacy were assessed with commonly accepted structural equation modelling (SEM) fit indices. These included the chi-square ($\chi^2$) test for model fit, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), for which we set the cutoff value for an acceptable fit at greater than 0.90. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) were also applied, and values under 0.08 were considered to indicate a good model fit with the observed data. These criteria in together guaranteed the reliability and validity of the model tested in this study.

These indicators support the validity of the measurement and structural models as well as the robustness of the findings (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The research was conducted in strict compliance with the ethical principles of social science research. All participants were also given an informed consent form, outlining the procedure, volunteer nature of participation and free withdrawal rights from the study at any stage. Anonymity and data protection were ensured by keeping results confidential. The study was approved by the appropriate institutional review board and was performed in accordance with the ethical standards in the Declaration of Helsinki.

**Results**
**Direct Effect**

| Paths | β | SE | t | p | LL 95% CI | UL 95% CI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H1 IT→ TR | 0.17 | 0.02 | 4.52 | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.22 |
| H2 IT →Absen | 0.06 | 0.03 | 2.10 | 0.03 | 0.04 | 0.16 |
| H3 IT → Stress | 0.39 | 0.04 | 5.75 | 0.01 | 0.33 | 0.54 |
| H4 IT → TW | 0.34 | 0.05 | 4.82 | 0.00 | 0.31 | 0.47 |
| H5 IT → CPB | 0.33 | 0.05 | 3.63 | 0.00 | 0.11 | 0.32 |
| H6 Stress→ TR | 0.14 | 0.03 | 4.65 | 0.00 | 0.07 | 0.22 |
| H7 Stress → Absen | 0.09 | 0.03 | 3.02 | 0.02 | 0.02 | 0.17 |
| H8 Stress → TW | 0.33 | 0.04 | 6.25 | 0.01 | 0.25 | 0.37 |
| H9 Stress → CPB | 0.19 | 0.02 | 7.5 | 0.00 | 0.11 | 0.25 |
| H10 TW → TR | 0.27 | 0.04 | 3.75 | 0.01 | 0.21 | 0.41 |
| H11 TW → Absen | 0.14 | 0.04 | 3.5 | 0.00 | 0.06 | 0.23 |
| H12 TW → CPB | 0.33 | 0.05 | 4.60 | 0.00 | 0.22 | 0.42 |
| H13 CPB → TR | 0.11 | 0.03 | 3.67 | 0.00 | 0.11 | 0.28 |

| H14 CPB → Absen | 0.18 | 0.04 | 4.52 | 0.00 | 0.10 | 0.26 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

IT: Illegitimate Task , TW: Toxic Workplace, CPB: Counter productive work behavior, TR: Turnover Ratio, Absen: Absenteeism

Illegitimate tasks have a strong positive impact on employees' turnover ratio (β = 0.17, SE = 0.02, t = 4.52, p < 0.01), which means that employees' intention to leave increase as their perception of illegitimate tasks rises. This high t-value and low p-value indicates that there is a significant, a reliable relationship between role conflict and turnover intentions in the workplace.

Illegitimate tasks have a weak and non-significant association with absenteeism (β = 0.06, SE = 0.03, t = 2.10, p = 0.03). However, since it has a high t-value and you can observe the large standard error, and p-value greater than.05, there's no significant effect. The 95% CI (LL = 0.04, UL = 0.16) is questionable. Although the beta-standardized (β = 0.39) and SE=0.04, (t = 5.75) indicate that the effect of illegitimate tasks on stress is strong and positive, the (p = 0.01) is over the traditional significance level (0.33). Hence, the finding is not statistically sound and should be interpreted with discretion. Illegitimate tasks are also a strong predictor of perceptions of a toxic workplace (β = 0.34, SE = 0.05, t = 4.82, p < 0.00). The association is significant and positive, meaning that higher illegitimate tasks are related to higher toxicity. The wide CI: 0.31–0.47 supports the robustness and strength of the result.

Illegitimate tasks strongly predict counterproductive behavior (β = 0.33, SE = 0.05, t = 3.63, p < 0.00 such that employees who have been given inappropriate work are substantially more prone to engage in negative workplace behaviors. The powerful effect and CI (0.11–0.32) represent a supportive and substantial association. Stress positively predicts turnover ratio (β = 0.14, SE = 0.03, t = 4.65, p < 0.00), such that as stress increases, employees are more likely to leave. The positive correlation is fairly dependable with a confidence interval from 0.07 to 0.22 along with reliability and confirms stress has direct impact towards turnover intentions. Absenteeism is positively predicted by stress (β = 0.09, SE = 0.03, CR = 3.02, p < 0.02) such that higher stress is related to increased absenteeism. The 95% confidence interval (LL = 0.02, UL = 0.17) validates a positive and significant association between stress and work absence of employees. Stress has a significant positive effect on the toxic workplace (β = 0.33, SE = 0.04, CR = 6.25, p < 0.01), suggesting that greater levels of stress are related to an enhanced toxic perception. The confidence interval (LL = 0.25, UL = 0.37) supports a strong, dependable, positive relationship between stress and work toxicity.

Stress is positively significantly related to counterproductive behavior, (β = 0.19, SE = 0.02, CR = 7.5, p < 0.00) such that higher levels of stress predict higher levels of negative workplace behavior. The lower and upper limits of the confidence interval (LL = 0.11, UL = 0.25) agree with this positive, significant relationship, which identifies stress as a relevant variable for counterproductive behaviors. Workplace toxicity is a significant predictor of turnover ratio (β = 0.27, SE = 0.04, CR = 3.75, p < 0.01), thus suggesting that increasing workplace toxicity significantly raises employees' intentions to leave their organizations. "The confidence interval (LL = 0.21, UL = 0.41) indicates the substantial, consistent, positive relationship across each measurement of Toxicity and Turnover. A toxic work environment is a significant positive predictor of absenteeism (β = 0.14, SE = 0.04, CR = 3.5, p < 0.00), indicating that as perceptions of workplace toxicity increase, so does absenteeism. (Figure 1) The confidence interval (LL = 0.06, UL = 0.23) confirms a positive and significant association between toxicity and absenteeism. toxic workplace greatly predicts counterproductive behavior (β = 0.33, SE = 0.05, CR = 4.60, p < 0.00) showing that the greater the perception of workplace as toxic, the more the

negative behavior of the employees. The 95% CI (LL = 0.22, UL = 0.42) provides evidence of a robust, positive and dependable relationship. IV (counterproductive behavior) has a positive and significant effect on DV (turnover ratio), with β = 0.11, SE =0.03, CR 3.67 (p<0.00). This finding implies that the higher level of counterproductive behavior the higher the turnover ratio. Reliability of the effect is indicated by the confidence interval [0.11, 0.28]. Absenteeism (DV) is significantly predicted by counterproductive behavior (IV) with 0.18 as beta, 0.04 as SE, 4.52 as CR (p = 0.00). Zero is included in the 95% confidence interval [0.10, 0.26], and thus a significant association and potentially meaningful impact on absenteeism are implied.

**Indirect Effect**

| Indirect Path | Indirect Effect | Boot SE | LL | UL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| H15  IT → Stress → TW | 0.153 | 0.028 | 0.108 | 0.209 |
| H16  IT → Stress→ CPB | 0.134 | 0.030 | 0.085 | 0.195 |
| H17  IT → Stress → TR | 0.069 | 0.04 | 0.011 | 0.148 |
| H18  IT → Stress → Absen | 0.08 | 0.03 | 0.010 | 0.106 |
| H19  IT → TW → CPB | 0.205 | 0.037 | 0.145 | 0.283 |
| H20  IT → TW→ TR | 0.114 | 0.06 | 0.058 | 0.170 |
| H21  IT → TW → Absen | 0.04 | 0.02 | 0.010 | 0.089 |
| H22  IT → CPB → TR | 0.040 | 0.018 | 0.015 | 0.079 |
| H23  IT → CPB → Absen | 0.012 | 0.0014 | 0.017 | 0.019 |
| H24  Stress → TW→ CPB | 0.163 | 0.026 | 0.117 | 0.214 |
| H25  Stress → TW→ TR | 0.174 | 0.027 | 0.129 | 0.231 |
| H26  Stress → TW → Absen | 0.035 | 0.02 | 0.010 | 0.088 |
| H27  Stress → CPB → TR | 0.13 | 0.024 | 0.076 | 0.157 |
| H28  Stress → CPB→ Absen | 0.03 | 0.015 | 0.010 | 0.039 |
| H29  TW → CPB → TR | 0.117 | 0.029 | 0.071 | 0.180 |
| H30 TW →CPB → Absen | 0.025 | 0.012 | 0.010 | 0.045 |

IT: Illegitimate Task , TW: Toxic Workplace, CPB: Counter productive work behavior, TR: Turnover Ratio, Absen: Absenteeism

The indirect effect of 0.153 (SE = 0.028, 95% CI [0.108, 0.209]) implies a significant mediation, suggesting that illegitimate tasks (e.g., irrelevant student assignments) heighten strain that then decreases entrepreneurial behavior. This relationship is robust based on the large confidence interval. Stress is a mediator in the sense that students burdened by meaningless work may feel diminished psychologically and this can delay creative action. This emphasizes the importance of educational interventions that correspond students' up-regulated tasks with their goals to promote the positive entrepreneurial effects whilst preventing stress-related disengagement. The mediating effect (0.134,SE = 0.030,95% CI [0.085, 0.195]) suggests a substantial intervening effect of stress between illegitimate tasks (such as irrelevant academic requirements). This implies that if there is no motivational "belief" to embark in the task, that stress levels rise and as a result, the entrepreneurial action being conducted is harmful or not engaged in. These results highlight the need to align academic obligations with

students' goals. Educational methodology should focus on purposeful, meaningful tasks in order to diminish stress and foster effective, creative entrepreneurial activity among young adults. The indirect effect of 0.069 (SE = 0.04, 95% CI [0.011, 0.148]) is therefore evidence for a significant mediating effect of stress in the relationship between illegitimate tasks and entrepreneurship turnover intentions. Their perceived stress motivates the disengagement from nonacademic or academically-unrelated work or, even worse, departure from entrepreneurship. This emphasizes the role of educational institutions in creating meaningful task structures that correspond to student's goals and help to reduce stress and to foster the maintenance of social return and sustainable stability of their entrepreneurial behavior.

The indirect effect of 0.08 (SE = 0.03, 95% CI [0.010, 0.106]) signals a significant mediation, with illegitimate tasks causing higher stress, which in turn results in higher absenteeism from entrepreneurial tasks. This implies that students who consider academic tasks as irrelevant or unfair tend to feel stress more intensely, and therefore they tend to feel unreachable or less engaged in entrepreneurial activities. Instructional approach needs to seek to provide meaningful, action-oriented tasks which are aligned with students' aspirations, with emphasis on lowering perceived effort and stress and fostering sustained participation in entrepreneurship activities. The indirect effect of 0.205 (SE = 0.037, CI [0.145, 0.283]) is indicative of a moderate and statistically significant mediation process by which illegitimate tasks reduce student grade point averages via the toxic workplace beliefs of the mediators and, in turn, support counterproductive work behaviors. This reciprocal relationship demonstrates how reflections of unfair academic work can undermine motivation, create manipulative beliefs and affect performance. Educational methods should work on minimizing the illegitimacy of tasks, and entrepreneurial environments should counter toxic norms for helping to create productive, inspired people. The indirect effect was 0.114 (SE = 0.06, CI [0.058, 0.170], which suggests a moderate but significant mediation, in which illegitimate tasks assigned to students affect their grades through the mediating variable of belief in a toxic environment, thus, in affecting turnover intention. This indicates that if students feel they are being treated unfairly it prompts negative work-like beliefs and these make them less engaged and less likely to stay with us. Educational approaches should promote task relevance and entrepreneurial activities should provide conducive contexts for retaining motivated high performers. The statistically significant indirect effect of 0.04 (SE = 0.02, 95% CI [0.010, 0.089]) indicates that illegitimate tasks affect student grades negatively with the mediating influence of the belief in toxic environment, which in turn increases absenteeism. This cycle suggests that unhealthy work–student responses may result when students view issues as unjust or irrelevant, like individuals in unhealthy work environments, as it can pave the way for disengagement and frequent absences. On one side, education strategies need to advocate for fairness and relevance of the task whereas, in entrepreneurial contexts, they need to foster positive climate to minimize absenteeism and sustain productivity. Its indirect effect (0.040, SE = 0.018, CI [0.015, 0.079]) is small, but statistically significant, suggesting that illegitimate tasks for student grades serve as a predictor and influence the turnover ratio. This connection suggests that if students view activities as unfair they are likely to become disengaged and neglectful, leading them to engage in counter-productive behavior and to have higher intentions to leave. For education, tasks assigned need to be meaningful, interesting and relevant; meanwhile, levels of perceived injustice in entrepreneurship should be low in order to effectively reduce turnover and enhance organizational commitment.

The small indirect effect (0.012) of absenteeism through counterproductive behavior suggests an alternative pathway that illegitimate tasks, which impede student's grades, may promote counterproductive behavior that further increase absenteeism. But the confidence interval ([0.0019, 0.017]) looks like it is mistakenly sorted and you start to wonder about statistical significance. If true,

this path underscores the importance of so that meaningful work is assigned, and disengagement is minimized. In education and entrepreneurship, creating a sense of fairness and viability of task can reduce absenteeism, helping to maintain overall performance and retention. The significant indirect effect of 0.163 (SE = 0.026, 95% CI [0.117, 0.214]) reveals that the stress that the student grades create leads to counterproductive behavior through a mediating effect of what they believe to be a toxic environment. This indicates that academic stress can make students' environment be seen negatively which results in a perception that supports disaffection or destructive behavior. Stress management and supportive environment approaches, should be applied in educational setting. Likewise, entrepreneurial context should attend to the importance of psychological safety and positive culture to decrease counterproductive behavior, and foster performance and retention. The indirect influence of 0.174 (SE = 0.027, 95% CI [0.129, 0.231]) provides evidence of a significant process by which stress from student grades is positively related to turnover rate via the mediating belief which work in a toxic environment. This suggests that academic stress engenders adverse perceptions of the environment which lead to intentions to quit or withdraw. Protocols of education should focus on stress reduction and create conducive environments, and employers should have good work environments to decrease turnover, increase retention, and sustain productivity in an increasingly competitive environment. The significant indications of the indirect effect of 0.035 (SE = 0.02, 95% CI [0.010, 0.088]) provide evidence that stress from student grades affects absenteeism through the mediating belief of a toxic workplace. This implies how academic stress may bring about a negative view of one's surroundings, and subsequently absenteeism by withdrawal of students.

There is a statistically significant indirect effect of 0.13 (SE = 0.024, 95% CI [0.076, 0.157]), suggesting that stress of student grades hampers turnover ratio via the intervening mechanism of counterproductive behavior. This implies that academic stress induces negative action that stagnates the engagement, and then eventually results in a high level of turnover intention. Educational interventions should strive to reduce stress and improve behavior, and entrepreneurial settings should emphasize the need for the successful application of stress management and behavioral support interventions to decrease the rate of staff turnover and thus increase staff retention and organizational effectiveness overall. The indirect effect of 0.03 (bootstrapped SE = 0.015) with a 95% CI of [0.010, 0.039] marques an inconsistent point and the CIs are erroneous. Given an appropriate interval, this very low effect shows that there is almost no unhealthy abstention influenced by student grading stress via CPP in the form of relaxation times. This indicated a low practical importance for this pathway. Educators could continue to target stress and behavior with their interventions, and entrepreneurs might double down on more powerful variables to reduce absenteeism and increase engagement for greater effects. The indirect effect of 0.117 (bootstrapped SE = 0.029, 95% CI [0.071, 0.180]) denotes a significant chain of effects in which a toxic workplace (connected to student grades) increases turnover ratio via the mediator of counterproductive behavior. This implies the perception of environmental negativity fuels destructive behavior that further promotes intentions to quit. Fiscally, this may involve such educational strategies as diminishing toxicity and fostering positive behaviors, and in entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial settings, it may involve creating cultures that reduce turnover, increase retention, and improve overall organizational functioning. The indirect effect of 0.025 was strange with a bootstrapped standard error of 0.012 and a confidence interval [0.010, 0.045], and can be considered as statistically insignificant or a potential data problem.

Indirect Effect of IT on B through Sequential Mediation

| Indirect Path | Indirect Effect | Boot SE | LL | UL |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| H31 IT → Stress → TW → CPB → TR | 0.009 | 0.005 | 0.003 | 0.033 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| H32 IT → Stress → TW → CPB → Absen | 0.004 | 0.006 | 0.005 | 0.016 |

IT: Illegitimate task , TW: Toxic Workplace, CPB: Counter productive work behavior, TR: Turnover Ratio, Absen: Absenteeism

This indirect effect of 0.009 (bootstrapped SE = 0.005, 95% CI [0.003, 0.033]) reflects a relatively small but significant route by which illegitimate tasks which impact a student's grades lead to a higher turnover ratio through stress, perceptions of the workplace as toxic, and counterproductive behavior. This indicates that unjust academic expectations increase the pressure and negative thoughts, which provoke destructive actions that result in an increased intention to leave. Institutions must work to minimize that toxicity, overcome counterproductive behaviors, and address retention, while entrepreneurs work to support long-term toxicity reductions and to correct the aforementioned losses. Indirect effect (0.004; bootstrapped SE = 0.006, 95% CI [0.005, 0.016]) did indicate that there is a small but significant amount of influence that illegitimate tasks can have on absenteeism through the "combined" mediators of stress, toxic workplace perceptions, and counterproductive behavior. This suggests that unjust academic pressure could potentially raise stress and negative attitudes, resulting in disaffection and dropout. Training interventions should focus on the reductions of illegitimate tasks and stress, while the business context should avoid workplace toxicity and behavior that can lead to detentions or absenteeism.

**Discussion**

The discussion section is an important segment of research papers that researchers use to interpret after analyzing the data, compare results with prior findings, articulate the limitations, propose future research, and show the relevance of the work to practice and policy. In fulfilling this role, it closes the research 'loop' by rendering empirical data into coherent sense, providing a site of theoretical development, relevance to context and significance for practical use. Drawing on the SSO model, rent of the present study is constructed on the role of illegitimate tasks in employee outcomes in informal SMEs of Pakistan. This model suggests that work stressors, including illegitimate tasks, trigger psychological strain that mediates the relationship with a number of negative outcomes, such as turnover intention, absenteeism, toxic workplace climate, and counterproductive work behavior (CWB). Every hypothesis in the current study is supported, thus providing insights to how these constructs are tied together and influenced by organizational context.

One of the key functions the discussion serves is the interpretation of results within the context of the hypotheses and the theory underlying the research. The discovery that illegitimate tasks has a statistically significant result in the positive relationship with turnover intention is consistent with the general literature suggesting a negative impact of perception of task unfair on organizational commitment in general (Semmer et al., 2015). Role strain and professional disrespect to employees of informal SMEs in Pakistan are viewed as role conflict to professional when they are requested to work beyond their job tasks which are believed to be irrelevant and meaningless, in result leading to the thought of quitting the job. "It dovetails with previous research by Semmer et al. (2007) that illegitimate tasks constitute a breaking of normative role expectations that challenges employees.

The research also showed a high correlation between illegitimate tasks and the stress they provoke. This is further evidence that job content and task legitimacy are important contributors to psychological health. The exposure to perpetual undue tasks puts workers under perennial stress that has been associated with exhaustion, anxiety and depression (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). In the informal SMEs the nature of job roles remains flexible and committee- based as the hierarchical structure is weak, and

informality in terms of boundaries may aggravate the stress response to illegitimate demands. This finding contributes to a rapidly expanding literature highlighting how experiences of fairness and respect in the workplace are crucial for mental well-being, particularly in unregulated labor markets. This result is consistent with rubes of illegitimate tasks with workplace incivility and declining interpersonal relationship (Kottwitz et al., 2013). This is consistent with the "Stress-as-Offense-to-Self" hypothesis, positing that feeling of being disregarded at work drive behaviors that help to re-establish self-worth (Semmer et al., 2007). CWBs, as such, are a reaction–a resistance or self-protection, to perceived organizational injustice.

This is consistent with the work by Eatough et al. (2016) discovered that role ambiguity and overload are antecedents of stress and influence a both intentions to quit. These results suggest that coping methods to manage stress and mental health resources could reduce some of the deleterious effects of task-related injustices. An aspect where the discussion section excels is unifying findings with past research. For instance, this study's finding that toxic workplace climate mediates the link between stress and CWB is in line with the research of Leiter and Maslach (2009), who demonstrated that highs tress, bad leadership, and unclear expectations frequently result in deviance in the workplace. This emphasis the value of organizational support and climate in reducing stress related behavioral problems. In addition, the toxic climate also mediating the relationship between stress and turnover, as well as absenteeism, is consistent with work demonstrating that organizational culture is a primary driver in retention (Frost, 2003).

It demonstrates the weight of the organizational context, especially in informal economies, upon the stress-strain-outcome process. Simplistically, the study underscores the significance of unambiguous job description, respectable sharing of responsibilities and workplace civility to the retention of talent and healthy work environment. In summary, the discussion is the connecting link between the data and the broader claims. The present study demonstrates that illegitimate tasks in the context of informal SMEs are a severe stressors which is influential in rupture of necessary balance and suffusion of positive energy and is initiator of negative behavioral and psychological process such as stress, toxic climate perception, counterproductive work behavior, absenteeism, and turnover intention. Applying these results to the stressors-strain-outcome model and the literature, considering contextual limitations, and offering a focus for future research, the discussion not only explains the what of the results, but it also explains the why – for theory, for practice, and for the future of organizational scholars within informal economies.

**Conclusion**

At the heart of a research paper, the conclusion can make or break the work. It summaries the findings, interprets the theoretical and practical implications of them and it closes by providing a final reflection on how the study contributes to the wider academic and professional realm. As it pertains to the current study's focus on the effects of illegitimate tasks(on IV) on TI and absenteeism (DVs) via stress, CWB, and toxic workplace climate. Where the findings are summarized, integrated, and their implications are discussed in a critical light.

Theoretical Contributions

Theoretical significance of a study describes a study's contribution toward advancing, refining, or testing of theory. The current study, therefore, provides a number of significant contributions to both the stress-strain-outcome model and the more general literature on organizational behavior. First, we contribute to the extension of SSO, by including illegitimate tasks as primary occupational stressors, making the model relevant to the informal economy and to under-regulated sectors such as SMEs in

Pakistan. Previous applications of the SSO model have tended to operate in formal work settings where there are professional identities and institutional protections (Schaufeli,& Taris, 2014). This study shows its usefulness in environments when role is vague and work control is low.

Second, by showing that toxic workplace climate and counterproductive work behaviors mediate the stressors-outcome relationship, this study presents a more sophisticated perspective on the mutual construction of organizational culture and employee responses. This is consistent with the Stress-as-Offense-to-Self model of Semmer et al. (2007). which implies that when people engage in illegitimate tasks, they are violating an identity based standard and are perceiving disrespect as a result of the norm violation and are reacting in kind. In addition, the use of dual mediators also echoes recent calls in organizational psychology for such more complex, integrated models, which can represent the dynamic relationship between individual and environmental influences Podsakoff et al. (2007).

Finally, this study highlights the theoretical relevance of context – in particular the informal SME sector in a developing economy. Numerous models have been designed and tested in Western or formal sector settings. .

Practical Implications

The findings of this study have some implications in the context of promoting employee well-being and organizational performance in the case of informal SMEs.

First, it is essential for supervisors to understand the psychological and behavioral ramifications of illegitimate task assignments. Education on updating fairness in distribution of tasks and clarity among roles can be used to prevent anemia reforms from causing employee alienation and withdrawal. For example, managers could be trained to match work assignments to employees' job descriptions and skills and increase perceptions of fairness and role respect.

Second, stress and unhealthy workplace cultures should rise to the top of the strategic agenda. SMEs commonly fail to pay attention to the mental health of employees based on constrained resources, but minimal interventions, e.g. open communication, peer support networks and stress relief classes, can bring about remarkable change. In addition to improving employee health, stress reduction interventions reduce absenteeism and turnover, which can lead to greater organizational sustainability Richardson, & Rothstein. (2008).

Third, the current study contributes to the literature by providing evidence for why counterproductive work behaviors should be monitored and managed. CWB´s can be conceived as manifestations of basic organizational malaise, indicating poor leadership, injustices, and employee disengagement..

A good ending can crystallize your study's contribution and be motivational to new work. For example, the popular review article of Schaufeli and Bakker (2004). on the Job Demands-Resources model in the area of organizational psychology not only synthesized certain findings but also helped set a research agenda by suggesting, for instance, investigation into how job demands in interactions with personal resources may shape the work environment in order to derail emotional exhaustion and engender work engagement.

Although the current research notably contributes to our understanding of how damaging illegitimate tasks are in informal SMEs, areas for future research are still wide open. First, the cross-sectional data set restricts the ability to draw causal inferences. Research is required to investigate how prolonged exposure to LIMs influences stress levels and organizational outcomes over time. Future research should also take into account moderating variables such as leadership style, emotional intelligence, or resilience that may buffer or increase the effect of illegitimate tasks.

Secondly, cultural dimensions need to be developed. The collectivist culture in Pakistan could influence how employees view and react towards IWB. What is said to be "illegitimate" in one circumstance is

acceptable in another, even in a society where such hierarchical formations run deep. Comparative research across countries or regions could provide a richer understanding of how cultural norms impact on task legitimacy and workplace outcomes..

Ultimately, broadening the focus of illegitimate tasks research beyond formal sectors and including cultural, organizational, and individual-level moderators may improve our understanding of this important workplace phenomenon and, in a longer term, may also lead to more effective interventions and job environments.

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