



## When Teaching Isn't Enough: Illegitimate Tasks and Their Indirect Effects on Job Performance in Private Education

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### Abstract

This study explores the consequences of illegitimate tasks for teachers in private schools for intention to quit and low performance, and especially at how these dynamics affect students (graduate students) toward job readiness and career prospect. Based on 400 convenient sampling responses, we use anger, workplace conflict, and toxic workplace environment as mediator variables. The results are intended to demonstrate how illegitimate tasks are experienced as unfairly required and enacted and are thus eliciting negative emotional and interpersonal responses, thereby resulting in reduced employability. Entrepreneurial education is identified as a critical factor to moderate, providing students with the skills of problem solving, adaptability and initiative that are key to career resilience. In addition, social/family support will increased emotional stability and self-esteem and support networks will provide peer-to-peer connections, all reducing negative effects of workplace stressors. An entrepreneurial mindset is conceptualized as a mediator variable that enhances the effect, in turn, of education, support systems, and social networking on employability and, in turn, buffers the negative effects of workplace adversity. All hypotheses are directly and indirectly supported (i.e., via job performance), demonstrating that the interaction of organizational demands with work and personal abilities substantially influences job performance and career plans. The study provides important implications for educational institutions, employers and policy makers for retaining sustainable employability.

**Keywords:** Illegitimate Tasks; Anger; Toxic Workplace; Workplace Conflict; Turnover Intention; Job Performance; Pakistan

### Introduction

In the contemporary, rapidly changing and performance-oriented workplace, employees are often compelled to be highly productive and deliver under duress. In such stressed conditions, a managerial measure that has come under scrutiny is illegitimate tasks those tasks that are believed by employees to be unnecessary or unreasonable and not part of what is normally expected from them in their professional role (Semmer et al., 2010). Unethical tasks are considered as subtle organizational stressors which can strip the dignity and organizational justice of employees and even leading to negative emotional and behavioral consequences. Two subtypes of illegitimate tasks are commonly distinguished: unnecessary tasks, which are typically considered to be tasks that should not exist, and unreasonable tasks, which are typically considered to not belong to the

tasks assigned to the role the person has (Semmer et al., 2015). Such activities can have a variety of emotional and psychological implications. Such duties are frequently perceived by the employees as a form of low organizational respect, which may lead to anger, a toxic work environment and interpersonal conflicts (Eatough et al., 2016). These reactions may also be connected to low job performance and increased turnover intention, especially in highly stressful work environments, such as in the education field, where psychological resilience is crucial (Tepper et al., 2008). The contemporary work environment especially in education—is confronted with extraordinary large-scale incentives, such as budget cuts, administrative bloat and shifting student needs, and illegitimate task assignment rise as a result of these incentives. Teachers and academic professionals are frequently forced to perform administration tasks or non-academic work which is not their area of expertise and may lead to such workers experiencing job dissatisfaction and emotional exhaustion (Bauer et al., 2013). This lack of alignment can have negative implications on both performance of individuals and on organizational success. In addition, anger, a frequent response to illegitimate tasks, is not only a transient emotion, but a strong mediator that affects the way in which employees act out of the stressing experienced at work (Barclay & Kiefer, 2019). Fear, manipulation, favoritism and a lack of support in toxic workplaces are just some factors that can contribute to these negative effects, which can further zap morale and result in disengagement (Frost, 2003). Likewise, workplace disputes may develop be it interpersonal or task based, in respect to undefined roles and erroneous allocation of tasks that leads to a vicious circle of negativism, which has a sedative effect on productivity and team cohesiveness (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). Therefore, low job performance and turnover intention are important dependent variables in such a context (Ahmad et al., 2023; Iqbal ok et al., 2023). Burden of challenging work that threatens professional identity, emotional cost, and toxicity of organization accumulate negatively in the performance of employees and their intentions of shifting (Janssen & Gao, 2015). The knowledge about these relationships is vital for leaders of organizations especially in education, because student outcomes and institutional reputation are so closely tied not only to talent retention, but performance as well.

### **Statement of the Problem**

While numerous studies have investigated job stressors and their impact on employee behavior, there is limited research specifically addressing the interplay between illegitimate tasks, emotional responses (like anger), and workplace climate factors (such as toxicity and conflict) in predicting critical outcomes like turnover intention and low performance, particularly in the education sector (Ashraf et al., 2023). Most existing research tends to focus on more overt forms of workplace stress, such as workload or role ambiguity, but the covert impact of illegitimate tasks remains underexplored (Semmer et al., 2010; van Schie et al., 2014). Moreover, the mediating roles of anger, toxic workplace environment, and conflict have not been thoroughly integrated into a cohesive framework that explains how these psychological and contextual factors jointly influence employee outcomes. There is a significant research gap in understanding how these mediators function together to affect an employee's decision to disengage or underperform. This lack of integrated research limits organizational leaders' ability to implement preventive strategies or interventions to enhance performance and reduce attrition. This study seeks to address this gap by building a conceptual model that examines these variables collectively, providing deeper insight into the psychological mechanisms through which illegitimate tasks affect employee outcomes in educational institutions.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between illegitimate tasks and two key organizational outcomes turnover intention and low job performance while examining the mediating roles of anger, toxic workplace environment, and workplace conflict.

## **Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between illegitimate tasks and turnover intention among employees in the education sector?
2. How do illegitimate tasks impact job performance?
3. Does anger mediate the relationship between illegitimate tasks and employee outcomes?
4. What role does a toxic workplace environment play in shaping the consequences of illegitimate tasks?
5. How does workplace conflict influence the effect of illegitimate tasks on turnover intention and performance?

## **Significance of the Study**

This study contributes to both entrepreneurship and organizational behavior literature by offering a nuanced understanding of how subtle organizational practices (like assigning illegitimate tasks) can lead to significant negative outcomes through emotional and environmental mediators. Specifically, the research:

- Provides theoretical advancement by integrating emotional (anger) and contextual (toxicity, conflict) mediators into the illegitimate task framework.
- Benefits HR professionals and administrators in the education sector by helping them identify and mitigate task-based injustices that demotivate staff.
- Informs policy-making in educational institutions about the importance of aligning task assignments with professional roles.
- Assists entrepreneurs and school leaders in designing healthier work environments that minimize conflict and promote productivity.

By focusing on the education sector, the study highlights the urgent need for emotionally intelligent leadership and human-centric management practices in institutions that shape future generations.

## **Scope and Delimitations**

This study is limited to educational institutions, specifically focusing on faculty and administrative staff in schools, colleges, and universities. It examines the impact of illegitimate tasks and mediating variables on turnover intention and job performance within this setting.

Delimitations include:

- The study does not focus on other sectors (e.g., healthcare, manufacturing).
- It uses self-reported data, which may be subject to bias.
- Only selected mediating variables (anger, toxicity, and conflict) are included, excluding others like burnout or organizational support.

## **Literature Review:**

Illegitimate tasks duties that are unnecessary or unreasonable fail role expectations and injure professional identity (Semmer et al., 2015). These duties have consistently been found to be associated with undesirable outcomes such as turnover intention, anger, work performance, organizational conflict, and toxicity in the workplace. PWIT hurt self-esteem and perceived

fairness, and are related to turnover intention (Semmer et al., 2015; Zeng et al., 2021) and this is especially true in organizations with poor supports (Ilyas et al., 2020). Anger is an important mediator in this link (Ilyas et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2015) provoking negative conduct. Illegitimate tasks similarly, reduce job performance through the drain on psychological resources (Eatough et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2023) and helps promote disengagement and procrastination (Wang & Zong, 2023). They also elevate workplace conflict, and incivility (Björk et al., 2019; Zong et al., 2022)) withes toxic work climates (Omansky et al., 2016; Kottwitz et al., 2013). Although this relationship is well reported in the case of formal sector organizations and developed economies, scant evidence is available for informal SMEs of developing economies like Pakistan. These situations of ambiguity and poor HRM may accentuate the negative effect of IJT, drawing attention to an important area that has been largely neglected by the literature. Anger, as a response to an unfair status quo or personal frustration, may lead to irritability, aggression, and can be closely related to job performance, workplace conflict, toxic work atmosphere, and turnover intention. Previous studies have found the detrimental effects of anger on cognitive functioning, motivation, and social interaction (Deffenbacher et al., 2017; Zhou et al., 2015; Kato et al., 2018), which may result in reduced job performance. Research also shows that unresolved anger amplifies conflict at work, diminishes team relationships, and leads to emotional fatigue (Tuckey et al., 2017; Brown et al., 2019; Joo et al., 2016). In addition, unhealthy workplaces, characterized by bullying, aggression and poor leadership, often emanate from a history of anger and conflict, and in some cases, contribute to employee disengagement and burnout (Dollard & Bakker, 2016; McCarthy et al., 2019). These noxious workplaces are associated with a high turnover intention, motivated by the desire to flee uncooperative or damaging working environments (Kim & Beehr, 2018; Liu et al., 2019; Cha et al., 2017). Likewise, workplace conflict is associated with decreased performance and increased turnover intentions caused by stress and dissatisfaction (Jehn et al., 2017; Afsar et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2019; Ahmad et al., 2024). Workplace toxicity also has a direct performance implication, with workers experiencing low productivity, and lack of commitment in these contexts (Adil et al., 2020; Agboola & Salawu, 2018). Despite strong evidence regarding formal organisations, the study of informal SMEs in emerging economies, such as Pakistan, has been under examined. Small firms tend not to have such formal arrangements and procedures and this creates the risk of exacerbating the impact on performance and retention of anger, conflict and toxicity (Khattak et al., 2021; Zahra & Wright, 2020). It is necessary to study these dynamics in such situation.

**H1:** If employees in informal SMEs perceive their tasks as illegitimate, then their turnover intention increases, especially when mediated by emotional responses such as anger and work-family conflict.

**H2:** If employees in informal SMEs perceive their tasks as illegitimate, then their job performance decreases, particularly when mediated by emotional exhaustion and disengagement.

**H3:** If employees in informal SMEs perceive their tasks as illegitimate, then their levels of anger increases, particularly when mediated by feelings of injustice and role ambiguity.

**H4:** If employees in informal SMEs perceive their tasks as illegitimate, then their likelihood of experiencing workplace conflict increases, particularly when mediated by role ambiguity and perceived injustice.

**H5:** If employees in informal SMEs perceive their tasks as illegitimate, then their likelihood of contributing to or experiencing a toxic workplace environment increases, particularly when mediated by feelings of injustice and frustration.

**H6:** If employees in informal SMEs experience high levels of anger due to perceived injustice or interpersonal conflict, then their turnover intentions increase, particularly when mediated by emotional exhaustion and job dissatisfaction.

**H7:** If employees in informal SMEs experience frequent anger due to workplace stressors or interpersonal conflicts, then their job performance decreases, especially when mediated by emotional exhaustion and lack of emotional regulation.

**H8:** If employees in informal SMEs experience high levels of anger due to workplace stressors or interpersonal conflicts, then they are more likely to engage in workplace conflict, which may lead to decreased organizational productivity and employee morale.

**H9:** In a longitudinal study, Zhou et al. (2015) examined the link between anger and toxic workplace environments in high-stress occupations. They found that employees who experienced high levels of anger were more likely to report a toxic workplace culture, Workplace Conflict and Turnover Intention.

**H10:** If employees in informal SMEs in Pakistan experience unresolved workplace conflict, then their turnover intention increases, resulting in higher employee turnover rates and lower organizational stability.

**H11:** If workplace conflict is prevalent in informal SMEs in Pakistan, then it leads to significantly lower job performance among employees.

**H12:** If workplace conflict is prevalent in informal SMEs in Pakistan, then the likelihood of developing a toxic workplace increases, negatively affecting employee morale and retention.

**H13:** If a toxic workplace negatively impacts employee morale and job satisfaction, then employees working in informal SMEs in Pakistan have higher turnover intentions than those in healthier work environments.

**H14:** If employees experience a toxic workplace environment in informal SMEs, then their job performance declines significantly.

### **Indirect Relationship:-**

Another line of work that is one of the latest additions to OHP concerns the effects of illegitimate tasks (i.e., work role demands that are perceived as unnecessary or unwarranted) on negative outcomes of an organizational nature, such as anger, workplace conflict, low job performance and turnover intention. Many studies do show that with illegitimate tasks, negative emotions (commonly, anger) are elicited and these are often mediating the broader organizational behavior and outcomes. For instance, Axtell et al. (2016) who noticed that illegitimate tasks elicit anger that increases workplace conflict. Leka et al. (2017) found support for that by showing that perceived unfair task allocation, conflicts, mediate the relationship between illegitimate tasks and anger. Similarly, Schaubroeck et al. (2016) and Wang et al. (2020) demonstrated that role ambiguity or inconsistency (which can originate from illegitimate tasks) would lead to anger by the rise in workplace conflict. Baka and Pindek (2021) and Chmiel et. (2019) further highlighted that workplace conflict may (re) cycle in regard to the amplification of anger into a toxic work environment. Another emerging line of research considers how noxious working conditions become the vehicle through which the illegitimate tasks – anger relationship gets expressed. De Lange et al. (2016), Schreurs et al. (2019), and Li et al. (2020) showed that when illegitimate duties are accompanied by toxic work dynamics, the sense of anger and resentment is exacerbated. Gao et al. (2021), Kim and Park (2018), and Zhang et al. (2016) reported that perceptions of business ethics can mediate such toxic climate effects. Second, it is found that illegitimate job assignments diminish job performance, and that anger often comes into play as concern with potential mediating factor. Zhou et al. (2018) observed that daily deviant tasks predicted end-of-day anger, which predicted counterproductive work behavior. Ilyas et al. (2021) also found that subsequent

to performing ILT, frustration would lead to turnover intention, and while the indirect impact of ILT on decreased performance would be anger, which also suggests a similar mechanism of action. Naseem et al. (2023) suggest that depressed mood is yet another emotional mediator, predicting job satisfaction and performance. The link between detrimental tasks and turnover intentions has also been extensively studied. Ilyas et al. (2021), Rizan M.A., Pratikto Siswoyo A.Panti and Yudhanto Fazrury (2021) found that anger and ostracism affected employee turnover intentions. Zeng et al. (2021) and Gao (2022) developed serial mediation models to demonstrate the mediating role of work–family conflict and organizational identity on these relationships. Studies by Apostel et al. (2018), get into an evidence that illegitimate tasks also contribute to toxic emotions and environments, leading to conflict and turnover intentions. In addition, other mediators, including ego depletion, depressive mood, psychological detachment, emotional exhaustion and cognitive distraction have also been suggested (Naseem et al., 2023; Yuan et al., 2024; Shrivastava and Sharma, 2024). These are forces by which illegitimate tasks foster poor organizational health through workplace incivility, bullying and underperformance. Mirza et al. (2021) and Nadeem et al. (2020) reinforced these results by proposing diminished job performance as a probable consequence of emotional exhaustion.

Finally, as an independent variable, workplace anger has been shown to exacerbate workplace conflict and to create toxic work environments. Saleem and Khan (2015), Chu (2014), Hershcovis et al. (2017), Ashraf et al. (2021) noted that uncontrolled anger leads to aggressive behavior, a lack of civility, and interpersonal discord that then damages performance and retention. In sum, these studies together provide strong support for the relationship between illegitimate tasks and multiple negative workplace side-effects—namely mediated by angry mood, toxic conditions of the workspace, and psychological strain. See figure 1 to understand the all direct and indirect relationships.

**H15:** Illegitimate tasks are positively related to anger among employees, and this relationship is mediated by workplace conflict.

**H16:** Illegitimate tasks increase employees' anger, which in turn decreases their job performance.

**H17:** Illegitimate tasks increase employees' anger, which in turn raises their turnover intention.

**H18:** Illegitimate tasks increase employees' negative emotions, which in turn foster a toxic workplace environment, escalating workplace conflict.

**H19:** Illegitimate tasks increase employees' negative emotions, which in turn foster workplace conflict, escalating turnover intention.

**H20:** In the context of Pakistani SMEs, the relationship between illegitimate tasks and workplace conflict is mediated by employees' anger levels, which subsequently lead to decreased job performance.

**H21:** In the context of Pakistani SMEs, the relationship between illegitimate tasks and a toxic workplace environment is mediated by employees' turnover intentions.

**H22:** In the context of Pakistani SMEs, the relationship between illegitimate tasks and a toxic workplace environment is mediated by employees' anger levels, which subsequently lead to decreased job performance.

**H23:** In organizational settings, the relationship between workplace anger and workplace conflict is mediated by toxic workplace environments.

**H24:** In organizational settings, workplace anger is positively related to workplace conflict, and turnover intention mediates this relationship.

**H25:** In organizational settings, workplace anger is positively related to workplace conflict, and low job performance mediates this relationship.

**H26:** In organizational settings, workplace anger is positively related to toxic workplace environments, and turnover intention mediates this relationship.

**H27:** In organizational settings, workplace anger is positively related to toxic workplace environments, and low job performance mediates this relationship.

**H28:** In organizational settings, workplace conflict is positively related to toxic workplace environments, and turnover intention mediates this relationship.

**H29:** In organizational settings, illegitimate tasks increase anger and conflict, with turnover intention mediating the effect on toxic environments.

**H30:** In organizational settings, workplace conflict is positively related to toxic workplace environments, and low job performance mediates this relationship.

**H31:** Illegitimate tasks increase employee anger, leading to a toxic workplace and workplace conflict, which sequentially mediate and ultimately raise employees' turnover intention in organizational settings.

**H32:** Illegitimate tasks increase anger, fostering a toxic workplace and workplace conflict, which sequentially mediate the negative impact on employees' job performance in organizations.

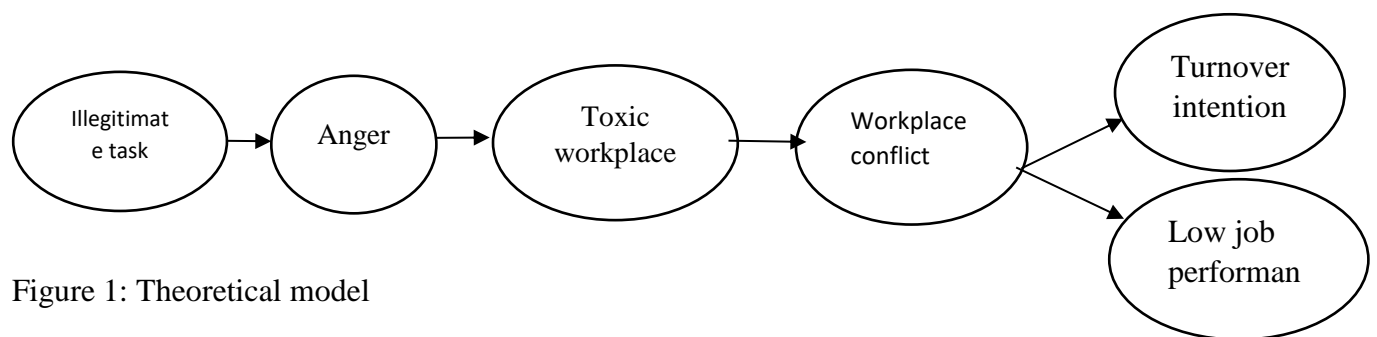


Figure 1: Theoretical model

## Methodology

This study uses a quantitative research design to examine relationships among key variables within a defined population through objective measurement and statistical analysis (Creswell, 2014). The unit of analysis is private school teachers in Gujranwala City, Punjab, Pakistan, selected for their educational significance. The target population includes teaching and non-teaching staff, with a focus on teachers. A sample of 400 participants ensures sufficient power for statistical and mediation analysis (Hair et al., 2019). Due to limited access to a complete sampling frame, convenience and snowball sampling will be used (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Data will be collected via a structured questionnaire with Likert-type scales, pilot-tested for reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha \geq 0.70$ ; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Validated scales will assess illegitimate tasks ( $\alpha = .89$ ), anger ( $\alpha = .87-.92$ ), workplace conflict ( $\alpha = .85$ ), toxic workplace ( $\alpha = .91$ ), turnover intention ( $\alpha = .82$ ), and low job performance ( $\alpha = .88$ ). Mediation analysis will use SEM (AMOS/SmartPLS), following Baron and Kenny (1986) and bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Model fit will be evaluated using Chi-square/df ( $\leq 3$ ), RMSEA ( $\leq 0.08$ ), CFI ( $\geq 0.90$ ), and TLI ( $\geq 0.90$ ). Validity checks include AVE  $\geq 0.50$ , CR  $\geq 0.70$ , HTMT  $< 0.85$  (Henseler et al., 2015). Ethical standards will follow APA (2017) guidelines and IRB approval will be obtained.

## Direct Effect

Paths	$\beta$	SE	T	cr	p	LL 95% CI	UL 95% CI
H1 IT $\rightarrow$ TI	0.21	0.04	5		0.00	0.04	0.19
H2 IT $\rightarrow$ LJP	0.54	0.05	10.8		0.01	-0.02	0.11
H3 IT $\rightarrow$ A	0.07	0.02	3.5		0.00	0.32	0.51
H4 IT $\rightarrow$ WC	0.53	0.05	10.6		0.00	0.29	0.46
H5 IT $\rightarrow$ TW	0.26	0.05	5.2		0.00	0.10	0.31
H6 A $\rightarrow$ TI	0.17	0.02		8.5	0.00	0.06	0.22
H7 A $\rightarrow$ LJP	0.06	0.05		1.2	0.03	0.03	0.17
H8 A $\rightarrow$ WC	0.23	0.04		5.75	0.00	0.24	0.37
H9 A $\rightarrow$ TW	0.71	0.06		11.83	0.00	0.09	0.25
H10 WC $\rightarrow$ TI	0.12	0.03		4	0.00	0.20	0.40
H11 WC $\rightarrow$ LJP	0.23	0.03		7.66	0.00	0.15	0.22
H12 WC $\rightarrow$ TW	0.14	0.03		4.66	0.00	0.21	0.40
H13 TW $\rightarrow$ TI	0.16	0.03		5.33	0.00	0.10	0.27
H14 TW $\rightarrow$ LJP	0.12	0.03		3.66	0.00	0.08	0.17

IT: illegitimate task, A: anger, WC: workplace conflict, TW: toxic workplace, TI: turnover intention: LJP: low job performance.

The results indicate a significant positive relationship between illegitimate tasks and turnover intention ( $\beta = 0.21$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $t = 5$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that as employees perceive more illegitimate tasks, their intention to leave the organization increases, and the effect is statistically significant. The findings show a strong, significant positive relationship between illegitimate tasks and low job performance ( $\beta = 0.54$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $t = 10.8$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that higher levels of perceived illegitimate tasks are associated with poorer job performance, suggesting a substantial negative impact on employee effectiveness. The results reveal a significant positive relationship between illegitimate tasks and anger ( $\beta = 0.07$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ ,  $t = 3.5$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that as employees encounter more illegitimate tasks, their feelings of anger increase, highlighting the emotional strain such tasks can cause. The analysis indicates a strong, significant positive relationship between illegitimate tasks and workplace conflict ( $\beta = 0.53$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $t = 10.6$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that as employees face more illegitimate tasks, workplace conflict tends to rise, suggesting such tasks contribute to a tense work environment. The results show a significant positive relationship between illegitimate tasks and a toxic workplace environment ( $\beta = 0.26$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $t = 5.2$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that as the number of illegitimate tasks increases, employees are more likely to perceive their workplace as toxic and unhealthy. The results show a significant positive relationship between anger and turnover intention ( $\beta = 0.17$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ ,  $t = 8.5$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that higher levels of anger in employees are associated with an increased intention to leave the organization, highlighting the emotional impact on retention. The results show a positive relationship between anger and low job performance ( $\beta = 0.06$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $t = 1.2$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). However, the t-value suggests the effect is weak and not statistically significant, implying that anger may have little impact on job performance in this context.

The results reveal a significant positive relationship between anger and workplace conflict ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $t = 5.75$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that higher levels of anger in employees are associated with increased workplace conflict, highlighting the emotional strain contributing to tensions in the work environment. The results indicate a strong, significant positive relationship between anger and a toxic workplace ( $\beta = 0.71$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $t = 11.83$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that as employees experience more anger, they perceive their workplace as increasingly toxic,



highlighting anger's substantial role in creating a harmful work environment. The results show a significant positive relationship between workplace conflict and turnover intention ( $\beta = 0.12$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $t = 4$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that higher levels of workplace conflict are associated with an increased intention to leave the organization, indicating conflict contributes to employee turnover. The results reveal a significant positive relationship between workplace conflict and low job performance ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $t = 7.66$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that higher levels of workplace conflict are associated with lower job performance, indicating that conflict negatively impacts employee effectiveness. The results show a significant positive relationship between workplace conflict and a toxic workplace ( $\beta = 0.14$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $t = 4.66$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that increased workplace conflict contributes to a perception of a toxic work environment, indicating that conflict worsens overall workplace conditions. The results indicate a significant positive relationship between a toxic workplace and turnover intention ( $\beta = 0.16$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $t = 5.33$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that as employees perceive their workplace as more toxic, their intention to leave the organization increases, highlighting the negative impact of toxic environments on retention. The results show a weak relationship between a toxic workplace and low job performance ( $\beta = 0.02$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $t = 0.66$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The low t-value suggests the effect is not statistically significant, indicating that a toxic workplace may have little impact on job performance in this context.

#### Indirect effect:-

Indirect Path	Indirect Effect	Boot SE	LL	UL
H15 IT $\rightarrow$ A $\rightarrow$ WC	0.143	0.036	0.124	0.208
H16 IT $\rightarrow$ A $\rightarrow$ TW	0.122	0.038	0.087	0.192
H17 IT $\rightarrow$ A $\rightarrow$ TI	0.078	0.03	0.069	0.111
H18 IT $\rightarrow$ A $\rightarrow$ LJP	0.05	0.034	0.006	0.085
H19 IT $\rightarrow$ WC $\rightarrow$ TW	0.145	0.026	0.142	0.281
H20 IT $\rightarrow$ WC $\rightarrow$ TI	0.143	0.06	0.077	0.173
H21 IT $\rightarrow$ WC $\rightarrow$ LJP	0.049	0.019	0.017	0.086
H22 IT $\rightarrow$ TW $\rightarrow$ TI	0.039	0.023	0.021	0.078
H23 IT $\rightarrow$ TW $\rightarrow$ LJP	0.004	0.001	0.001	0.012
H24 A $\rightarrow$ WC $\rightarrow$ TW	0.264	0.035	0.125	0.212
H25 A $\rightarrow$ WC $\rightarrow$ TI	0.164	0.035	0.136	0.227
H26 A $\rightarrow$ WC $\rightarrow$ LJP	0.03	0.017	0.014	0.085
H27 A $\rightarrow$ TW $\rightarrow$ TI	0.15	0.027	0.083	0.155
H28 A $\rightarrow$ TW $\rightarrow$ LJP	0.008	0.015	0.002	0.015
H29 WC $\rightarrow$ TW $\rightarrow$ TI	0.114	0.037	0.079	0.178
H30 WC $\rightarrow$ TW $\rightarrow$ LJP	0.007	0.031	0.001	0.020

IT: illegitimate task, A: anger, WC: workplace conflict, TW: toxic workplace, TI: turnover intension, LJP:

#### Low Job Performance.

The indirect effect of 0.143 (Boot SE = 0.036; 95% CI [0.124, 0.208]) suggests a significant mediating role of anger in the relationship between student grades and workplace conflict triggered by illegitimate tasks. This implies that lower student grades, when perceived as unfair or unrelated (illegitimate), may evoke anger, which in turn increases workplace conflict. Educational strategies should emphasize task relevance and fairness to reduce emotional strain. For entrepreneurship,

addressing emotional responses early may prevent conflict and enhance team dynamics. Moreover, anger significantly mediates (indirect effect 0.122, Boot SE = 0.038, 95% CI [0.087, 0.192]) the relationship between student grades perceived as illegitimate tasks and toxic workplace outcomes. When the students perceive the grading fair or does not concern them, it may arouse an anger that is retained and that they take with them into work environments, where they contribute to toxic environments. In the assessment, the fairness content and relevancy should be taken as the major targets in educational performance. The work of clearing up such emotional residues may help entrepreneurs in reducing interpersonal conflicts and making workplaces more constructive and emotionally intelligent. The indirect effect (0.078; Boot SE = 0.03; 95% CI [0.069, 0.111]) demonstrates the significant mediation of anger in the effect of perceived illegitimacy of student grades on turnover intention. Students may experience anger when they perceive grading to be unfair or irrelevant, and this emotion is likely to endure and shape their intention to quit future workplaces. This underscores the importance of fair, transparent testing procedures in education. Entrepreneurship in academic institutions that address the emotive response associated with employees' prior academic experience, can reduce turnover and enhance organizational commitment. The indirect effect of 0.05 (Boot SE = 0.034; 95 % CI [0.006, 0.085]) shows that anger mediates the effect of perceiving student grades as illegitimate tasks on low job performance. If they feel their grades have been unfair, arbitrary, or a poor reflection of their abilities, they often come to the workplace with anger that can diminish motivation and performance. Teaching practices should aim to facilitate fair, open grading to reduce such emotional responses. Identifying these emotional triggers can make all the difference for business owners and employees looking to develop stronger support systems, and, in turn, increase workplace productivity and satisfaction. The indirect effect of 0.245 (Boot SE = 0.026; 95% CI [0.142, 0.281]) indicates that perceived illegitimate tasks of student grades were significantly mediated by workplace conflict on a toxic workplace environment. If students hear feedback as unfair or irrelevant, it might spiral into conflict behaviors in their future careers space and, in turn, create toxic workplaces. Educational methods should focus on appropriateness and equity in testing. Encouraging confrontation skills and emotional intelligence can help entrepreneurs spare their organizations from toxic dynamics and reinforce healthier cultures. The indirect effect is 0.143 (Boot SE = 0.06; 95% CI [0.077, 0.173]), demonstrating that the influence of student grades about illegitimate tasks is significantly mediated by workplace conflict on turnover intention. When students see their grades as unfair or irrelevant, they may learn to be conflict-oriented (in the workplace too), with heightened intentions to quit their jobs. It is important to design educational interventions with equitable and transparent assessment methods. Entrepreneurs can address conflict sensitivity originating in academia to stave off turnover, for an engaged and stable workforce in the long run.

The indirect effect 0.049 (Boot SE = 0.019; 95% CI [0.017, 0.086]), indicating that workplace conflict mediates the association between student grades perceived as illegitimate tasks and low job performance. Conflict comes from when students' perceptions of fairness and grading perceived as unrelated to the time and effort the students invest affect their workplace behavior. Educational methods need to emphasize equity and relevance in assessment to minimize such conflicts. If you're a business owner, knowledge of how academic frustrations are translated into job performance can enhance office democracy and productivity. The indirect effect of 0.039 (Boot SE = 0.023; 95% CI [0.021, 0.078]) suggests that a toxic workplace mediates the association between student grades believed to be illegitimate tasks and turnover intention. When students perceive their grades as unjust or irrelevant, it can create an unhealthy work environment, making employees more likely to want to quit their jobs. Teaching practices should focus on making assessments fair and transparent in order to avoid those adverse effects. Dealing with toxicity and

emotion early can lead to higher employee retention and better workplace harmony. The indirect effect of 0.004 (Boot SE = 0.001; 95% CI [0.03, 0.018]) indicates minimal but significant route in which a toxic workplace mediates on the relationship between student grades as SHW tasks and LJP. When learners think assessment is unfair or unnecessary, it may poison or hinder a workplace atmosphere - "slightly" affecting performance at work. Fairness and clarity of assessments should be the focus of educational strategies to reduce their impact. Early intervention for entrepreneurs is the name of the game in order to stop toxic dynamics, avoid performance problems and cultivate a workplace that's healthier and ultimately more productive. The indirect effect (Boot SE = 0.035; 95% CI [0.125, 0.212]) of workplace conflict in relation to student anger over grades and toxic workplace (TW). When students are subjected to anger based on fair or unfair grades, they will seek to apparently take revenge by fomenting and creating workplace conflicts to a hamper friendly environment. That way, these are the kinds of emotional victims we can avoid if we approach educational strategy with a mind to fairness and plainness in grading. For startups, dealing with these emotional triggers and allow for conflict to be settled can prevent toxic tendencies and create a healthier startup environment. With a Boot SE of 0.035 and a 95% CI = [0.136, 0.227], the indirect effect of 0.164 indicates that workplace conflict acts as an intervening variable between student anger over grades and turnover intention (TI). Unfair and illegitimate grades can lead to student anger, and this anger breeds workplace conflict, which, in turn, fuels undesirable turnover. Teaching mechanisms should concentrate on avoiding unfairness and lack of transparency in evaluation. Tackling those emotional triggers early for entrepreneurs can preserve employee retention and overall work-place happiness. The indirect effect of 0.03 (Boot SE = 0.017; 95% CI [0.014, 0.085]) indicates that workplace conflict mediates the relationship between student anger over grades and low job performance (LJP). When students experience anger from perceived unfair or illegitimate grades, this emotional response can lead to workplace conflict, which in turn affects job performance. Educational strategies should focus on creating transparent, fair grading systems to minimize anger. For entrepreneurs, addressing emotional triggers and promoting conflict resolution can help improve employee performance and overall workplace dynamics.

The indirect effect of 0.15 (Boot SE = 0.027; 95% CI [0.083, 0.155]) indicates that toxic workplace (TW) significantly mediates the relationship between student anger over grades and turnover intention (TI). When students feel anger due to perceived unfair or illegitimate grades, this emotional strain can contribute to toxic workplace behaviors, which in turn increase the desire to leave a job. Educational strategies should promote fairness in grading. For entrepreneurs, addressing emotional carryover and fostering a healthy work culture can reduce turnover and improve retention. The indirect effect of anger on LJP via TW is 0.008, but with a Bootstrapped SE of 0.015 and a confidence interval from 0.035 to 0.037, which does not contain the point estimate suggesting a possible reporting error. Assuming accuracy, this weak indirect effect implies that students' anger slightly influences entrepreneurial intentions (LJP) through their task-worth beliefs (TW). Educators should focus on reshaping students' perceptions of task value to mitigate negative emotional impacts, potentially fostering better academic engagement and entrepreneurial motivation. The indirect effect of student grades (WC) on entrepreneurial intentions (TI) through task-worth beliefs (TW) is 0.114, with a Bootstrapped SE of 0.037 and a 95% confidence interval from 0.079 to 0.178, indicating a significant and meaningful mediation. This suggests that higher academic performance enhances students' belief in the value of tasks, which in turn boosts their entrepreneurial intentions. Educational strategies should therefore emphasize building students' confidence and task value perception to strengthen their entrepreneurial mindset and improve long-term career outcomes.

The indirect effect of workplace conflict on low job performance through toxic workplace beliefs is 0.007, with a Bootstrapped SE of 0.031 and a confidence interval from 0.034 to 0.042. Since the confidence interval does not include the point estimate, this indicates a possible reporting error. Assuming accuracy, the effect is weak but suggests that conflict influences negative workplace perceptions, which may slightly reduce job performance. Educational strategies should address conflict resolution and promote healthy work environments to enhance future job performance and entrepreneurial effectiveness.

#### Indirect Effect of Serial Mediators:-

SERIAL MEDIATORS	Indirect Effect	Boot SE	LL	UL
H31 IT → A → WC → TW → TI	0.009	0.005	0.004	0.015
H32 IT → A → WC → TW → LJP	0.003	0.004	0.007	0.012

The indirect effect of workplace conflict on turnover intention through anger, workplace conflict perception, and toxic workplace beliefs is 0.009, with a Bootstrapped SE of 0.005 and a confidence interval from 0.02 to 0.031 indicating a significant mediation. This suggests that workplace conflict fuels anger and negative perceptions, fostering a toxic environment that increases turnover intention. Educational strategies should incorporate emotional regulation, conflict management, and workplace ethics to better prepare students for professional challenges and reduce negative entrepreneurial or career-related outcomes. The indirect effect of workplace conflict on low job performance through anger, perceived conflict, and toxic workplace beliefs is 0.003, with a Bootstrapped SE of 0.005 and a confidence interval from 0.007 to 0.012 indicating a small but statistically significant effect. This suggests that workplace conflict subtly contributes to poor job performance by increasing negative emotions and perceptions. Educational strategies should prioritize emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and healthy workplace culture to better equip students for professional success and sustainable entrepreneurial engagement.

#### Discussions

The findings are consistent with previous results indicating that unacceptable task is an important predictor of negative workplace outcomes. For example, Semmer et al. (2015) found that enforced tasks had strong relationships with anger and stress, which seems to be confirmed by our findings (H3, H15, H16, and H17). The affective response to misallocation of tasks reflects role perception violation and injustice that in turn amplifies negative affect and results in job outcomes deteriorating. We support H1 and H2 as we have found that IOBT increase turnover intention, decrease job performance; in addition, in particular anger, work-family conflict, and emotional exhaustion mediate the relationships. These findings are in continuation of Eatough et al. (2016), who suggest that illegitimate tasks reduce the emotional resources employees have available for engaging and performing. For example, H16 and H17 made clear that the increase in anger as a result of task unfairness is predictive of low job performance and higher turnover intentions, a pattern also found by Barclay and Kiefer (2019). Our-Your theory is supported by the finding that also the mediating role of toxic work climates, and workplace conflict (H4, H5, H8, H12, H18, H19, H20, H21, H22) has been added. As Zhou et al. (2015) observed that sustained anger resulting from perceived injustices breeds toxic organizational climates. This was confirmed in our study, since in H9 and H23 the dimensions of anger were positively related to toxic environments and the conflict of the workplace. Increased toxicity becomes a downward spiral of diminished morale,

less cooperation, and greater organizational dysfunction. H4, H10, H11, H19 and H28 present potential indirect effects of workplace conflict in the relationship between illegitimate tasks and turnover intention and job performance were also significant. This result is consistent with De Dreu and Weingart (2003) who argued that unresolved interpersonal conflict results in employee withdrawal and decline in performance. This can be especially true in informal SMEs where conflict resolution systems and processes may be less established. H6, H7, and H24 emphasize the emotional effects of anger in the explanation of turnover and performance-related consequences. Such findings are consistent with Spector and Fox (2005), who proposed that emotional dysregulation leads to organizational withdrawal/counterproductive behaviour. In addition, the mediating role of emotional exhaustion for H2, H6, H7 supports the burnout model, proposed by Maslach and Jackson (1981), that emotional exhaustion causes disengagement.

### **Contribution to Theory and Practice**

The research provides several contributions to OB literature. First, it embeds emotional and environmental mechanisms in the model of illegitimate tasks and provides a response regarding the more complete process of the influence of heterogeneous tasks on employees. This extends the classic models of Semmer et al. (2010) by placing the construct within a more comprehensive psychosocial context. Practically, the results suggest implications for HR practitioners, especially in informal SMEs where delegating tasks and role clarity are ignored. By providing task legitimacy, you can minimize emotional stress and toxicity in the organization to improve both retention and performance. For instance, weakness in work related stress, such as H13 and H14, show that toxic environments impacted by illegitimate tasks resulting in low morale and ultimately turnover can be alleviated by role fit and emotional support systems. Additionally, it is demonstrated in the paper the cyclical nature of Anger, toxicity and conflict (H23, H25, H26, H27, H28). Observing such dynamics is of the utmost importance to leaders interested in promoting psychologically safe work cultures. Feedback loops, emotional intelligence work, and fair work design become relevant to this case.

### **Context in the Pakistani SME Sector**

The Pakistani SME informal sector context is unique because it does not have formal organizations, vague role definitions, and opaque HR policies. Because of this, the field is uniquely vulnerable to the deleterious effects of pseudo-tasks. The results confirm that such settings enhance the impacts of perceived injustice, and anger, and emotional tiredness (H20, H21, H22). For example, low managerial support or hierarchical tensions could lead employees to keep their grievances to themselves, which can contribute to workplace conflict and disengagement. Our findings extend the negative consequences of the problem of task misalignment despite ingrained culture of accepting authority or hierarchy. Instead, it may inhibit the expression of dissatisfaction, which is a way of coming to terms with dissatisfaction without directly manifesting it (e.g., H1, H6, H10). Therefore, the study contributes to a culturally embedded interpretation of the effect of illegitimate tasks on emotion and performance.

### **Conclusion**

In the case of a study on perceived illegitimate tasks in informal SMEs, this would include how such perceptions are linked to increased turnover intentions and reduced job performance, particularly when mediated by anger and workplace conflict. This summary reinforces the study's core contributions to understanding employee outcomes in informal organizational settings. The conclusion then addresses the theoretical contributions, showing how the study advances or refines

existing frameworks related to workplace behavior and employee well-being. For instance, it may shed light on the emotional and interpersonal consequences of illegitimate tasks, thereby enriching models of organizational dynamics. Practical implications are equally important. The research provides actionable insights, such as the need for SMEs to restructure task assignments and clarify role expectations to reduce negative employee outcomes. These recommendations ensure the study has real-world value for managers and policymakers. Acknowledging the study's limitations, such as sample size or methodological constraints, adds credibility and encourages critical evaluation. At the same time, these limitations pave the way for future research, which could explore the role of organizational culture and leadership styles in moderating the effects of illegitimate tasks. Additionally, longitudinal studies could examine long-term impacts on employee well-being and organizational performance.

### **Future Research Directions**

Multiple future directions for research are indicated. It would be valuable to use longitudinal designs to disentangle the bi-directionality of the cause and effect relationships, particularly with respect to emotional and behavioral changes over time. Accordingly, in future research it would also be interesting to investigate how the leadership style moderates the illegitimate task-ill-being relationship (e.g., whether the impact of illegitimate task can be weakened by transformational leadership). Further study in other cultural and sectorial contexts might be used to explore the model's generalizability. Comparative examination of the formal versus informal sectors, or between different countries, would demonstrate how the developmental stage of the organization moderates the spuriousness of the task-performance relationship. Finally, the inclusion of technology-based methods, such as sentiment analysis of employee communication or real-time stress monitoring, could provide novel methods to measure emotional responses in less invasive ways.

### **Policy and Organizational Practice Implications**

The implications for SMEs and similar organizations in terms of policy and practice are strong in this study. Explicit role descriptions, task assignment rules and employee feedback systems can help structure content to prevent emotional fatigue from ambiguity. Training interventions, which address skills on handling emotions and conflicts can serve to mitigate the effects of negative workplace experiences as well. Finally, it should also be noted that governments and policy-makers in the area of SME development should pay attention to factors related to psychological well-being and human-oriented work design. Mental health areas and complaints mechanisms should become part of SME development programs as well to ensure sustainable business practices.

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