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Illegitimate Tasks and Employee Silence: A Moderated Mediation Model

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Illegitimate Tasks and Employee Silence: A Moderated Mediation Model

by
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Psychology
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We the undersigned committee hereby approve the attached thesis, “Illegitimate Tasks and Employee Silence: A Moderated Mediation Model,” by Timothy Andrew Davis.

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Abstract

Title: Illegitimate Tasks and Employee Silence: A Moderated Mediation Model

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This study investigated the relationship between illegitimate tasks and employee silence and examined the mediating role of job engagement and the moderating effect of agreeableness and conscientiousness. Grounded in justice theory, stress research, and the engagement literature, this study found illegitimate tasks to positively predict employee silence and negatively predict job engagement. Significant results were not found for the moderation and mediation analysis of personality traits and job engagement, respectively.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Illegitimate tasks are task-related stressors that impair one's professional identity when asked to be performed. Illegitimate tasks are related to a field of literature known as "identity relevant stressors" and the perceived associated with them conflict with employees' self-developed role identity (Semmer et al., 2007). Illegitimate tasks include two key dimensions of illegitimacy (Semmer et al., 2007). First, a task is perceived as illegitimate if the task is considered unnecessary. Unnecessary tasks are tasks that are performed due to some inefficient process or incompetency. Unnecessary tasks typically reveal themselves through a lack of streamlined business processes that often arise in complex organizations or through an unnecessary request from an overbearing supervisor. Second, a task is perceived as illegitimate if the task is considered unreasonable. Unreasonable tasks are tasks that are outside the job description of an individual.

Current research has confirmed the prevalence of illegitimate tasks and it is an unwanted phenomenon in the organizational setting. Illegitimate tasks have been found to positively predict counterproductive work behavior (Semmer, Tschan, Meier, Facchin, & Jacobshagen, 2010), job burnout and resentment (Semmer et al.,

2015), and turnover intentions (Apostel, Syrek, & Antoni, 2017). Illegitimate tasks have also been found to negatively predict job satisfaction (Eatough, Meier, Igitic, Elfering, Spector, & Semmer, 2016; Omansky, Eatough, & Fila, 2016; Stocker, Jacobshagen, Semmer, Norbert, & Annen, 2010), and self-esteem (Eatough et al., 2016; Sonnentag & Lischetzke, 2017). Additionally, several studies have examined the chronic effects of illegitimate tasks over time. Illegitimate tasks have been found to positively predict irritability over time (Semmer et al., 2015) and work-family conflict (Ahmed, Eatough, & Ford, 2018). There is also evidence to support that illegitimate tasks are positively related to adverse health outcomes such as higher cortisol levels (Kottwitz et al., 2013), and mental health (Madsen, Tripathi, Borritz, & Rugulies, 2014).

Studies to date have primarily focused on well-being and harmful active behavioral outcomes of illegitimate tasks. However, what is missing in the illegitimate task research is how illegitimate tasks could potentially affect communication and idea-sharing behaviors of employees, more specifically employee silence. Employee silence is categorized by a lack of upward communication with an organization about key processes, issues, or complaints (Brinsfield, 2013). There are underlying motivations or factors that influence the lack of upward discussions between subordinates and supervisors and the organization, and a lack of such upward communication can lead to drastic

reduction in process improvement initiatives and hinder organizations from implementing positive change initiatives, as they are not receiving feedback from employees on issues occurring (Morrison, 2014). To date, theoretical antecedents of silence behavior is incomplete, and more research is needed to understand why individuals choose to withhold information (see Brinsfield, 2013 for a suggested framework). Of specific interest in this study, is to determine if employee silence is a potential outcome of illegitimate tasks. The current study uses the stress-as-offence-to-self (SOS) framework as the primary model to conceptualize illegitimate task research (Semmer et al., 2007) and to theoretically explore the proposed notion of illegitimate tasks being related to employee silence.

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, this study expands the known outcomes of illegitimate tasks by considering behaviors that are subtler in their destructiveness (e.g., employee silence) and have not been previously investigated in the literature. Using the SOS model, it is suggested illegitimate tasks might hurt employees identity, which might make people less likely to bond with organizations and more likely to withhold important information or suggestions. This is different from previously studied work on the effect of illegitimate tasks on counterproductive work behavior (CWB; Semmer et al., 2010; Zhou, Eatough, & Wald, 2018), where people actively engage in harmful behaviors. Thus, one way this study contributes to the literature is by further

delineating how illegitimate tasks affect employee passive work-related behaviors that are important to organizational functions.

Second, this study offers additional insight on the potential underlying mechanisms of the processes from illegitimate tasks to its outcomes. Previous researchers have encouraged new studies to examine mediators and moderators that could help bring added support to the SOS model and further conceptualize the boundary conditions of illegitimate tasks (e.g. Semmer et al., 2015). Following recommendations from Semmer et al. (2015), this study investigates how illegitimate tasks might affect job engagement and the mediating role of job engagement in predicting employee silence. Job engagement has been proven to be an important job attitude in the organizational context and has demonstrated incremental validity over related constructs such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment when predicting task performance (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011). Previous research has found illegitimate tasks to negatively predict job satisfaction (Omansky et al., 2016), and it is important to better understand how illegitimate tasks influence work attitudes other than just job satisfaction, and how engagement might help explain the potential effect of illegitimate tasks on employee silence.

Finally, this study contributes to the literature by proposing agreeableness and conscientiousness as potential moderators of the relationship between

illegitimate tasks and employee silence. Previous research has found personality traits to be significant moderators in work stressor-strain relationships (e.g., Bowling & Eschleman, 2010) and it is important to understand if these boundary conditions also apply when studying employee silence. Employee silence could be considered subtler than other intentional behaviors such as CWB. Researchers have noted the issues of studying employee silence because the absence of voice or extra-role behaviors does not mean a prevalence of employee silence (Brinsfield, 2013). Rather, employee silence occurs when individuals are motivated to remain silent on certain topics (Brinsfield, 2013; Morrison, 2014). Thus, it is important to understand if the boundary conditions of personality in work stressor-strain relationships remain relevant when studying the unique effects of illegitimate tasks on employee silence.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Illegitimate Tasks

Illegitimate task is an identify-relevant stressor categorized by work tasks that are perceived as unnecessary or unreasonable. The core notion of illegitimate tasks is that individuals feel insulted by the nature of the work requested of them. The concept of illegitimate tasks operates under the stress-as-offence-to-self model by Semmer et al. (2007, 2010, 2015) and the underlying theme is related to social norms and expectations. Illegitimate tasks are characterized by two dimensions (Semmer et al., 2007). First, a task is considered illegitimate when the task is unreasonable. Tasks that are unreasonable are considered outside the scope of one's job description or ability. For example, requesting an Industrial Organizational Psychologist to create financial reports for a public company may be perceived as unreasonable, as financial reporting is outside the scope of an IO psychologist's role in the workplace. Second, a task is considered illegitimate when the task is perceived as unnecessary. Tasks that are performed because of a lack of organization, poor processes, or unnecessary meticulous protocol are considered unnecessary. As an example, requesting a business analyst to resave several hundred excel files with a different name could be perceived as unnecessary if there is no direct reason for this task to be accomplished, other than the supervisor

having a naming convention that is desired. This lack of planning and redundancy with the file system could be considered unnecessary and thus, an illegitimate task. Illegitimate tasks threaten one's occupational identity and are often described as identity-relevant stressors (Thoits, 1991)

Tasks are classified as legitimate when role expectations are congruent with conformity to norms. That is, a task is legitimate when the task is reasonable in nature and does not deviate from generally accepted societal or workplace norms (Semmer et al., 2010). Likewise, a task is illegitimate if the work assigned is incongruent with social norms and is unreasonable to expect the person to perform. Illegitimate tasks can be legitimate for some and illegitimate for others; similarly, one person may perceive a task as illegitimate while another may not (Semmer et al., 2009). Semmer et al. (2015) states, "the core aspect of perceiving a task as illegitimate is that employees think they should have to carry out this task (p. 33). This perception of illegitimacy violates the incumbents' role expectations and deviates from the expected workplace norms. This incongruence creates a workplace stressor that violates the work expectations and creates role conflict which is then perceived as a threat to self (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; Illgen & Hollenbeck, 1991; Semmer et al., 2015; Thoits, 1991). This "threat to self" explains the model on task-related stressors and will be explained in more detail in pages to follow.

Current Studies on Illegitimate Tasks

Illegitimate tasks were first investigated using interview studies by Jacobshagen (2006) and Semmer et al. (2006). In these studies, 159 participants reported on over 3,500 tasks, and approximately one third were perceived as illegitimate. More interestingly, it was theorized that secondary tasks would have reportedly less legitimacy compared to core tasks. These studies revealed illegitimate tasks to be reported only 10% among core tasks but close to two thirds among reported secondary tasks (Semmer et al., 2007). Considering the resulting interviews, the Bern Illegitimate Task Scale (BITS) was developed (Jacobshagen, 2006). The BITS contain seven questions which ask about the frequency of work tasks that are performed. Example items include, “Do you have work tasks to take care of which keep you wondering if they have to be done at all,” and “Do you have work tasks to take care of which you believe should be done by someone else.” All items use a 5-point response scale ranging from never (1) to frequently (5).

Antecedents of Illegitimate Tasks

The concept of illegitimate tasks is relatively new in the literature and investigation of the antecedents of illegitimate tasks are even less studied. To date, only Bjork et al. (2013) set out to understand if the variance in illegitimate tasks

can be attributed to organizational factors. The authors hypothesized that organizational variance would exist at the manager level and illegitimate tasks would be associated with resources and organizational control deficits. Using a multilevel design, Bjork et al. (2013) found that about 10% of the variability in illegitimate tasks is attributed to the department where managers work.

Organizational control deficits were positively related to illegitimate tasks. More specifically, when organizations were in competition for resources managers were more likely to report the occurrence of illegitimate tasks. Likewise, span of control was positively related to illegitimate task. That is, managers who had a larger number of subordinates to coordinate with reported higher on illegitimate tasks. Additionally, Bjork et al. (2013) found differences in gender on illegitimate tasks reporting. Specifically, female managers reported more illegitimate tasks than male. This study establishes some preliminary determinants of illegitimate tasks, though additional research is needed to understand the organizational factors that contribute to the prevalence of illegitimate tasks.

Outcomes of Illegitimate Tasks

Between-person designs

Job Attitudes

Stocker, Jacobshagen, Semmer, and Annen (2010) examined whether appreciation at work could mediate the relationship between illegitimate tasks and

job satisfaction and found that illegitimate tasks were negatively related to job satisfaction. In addition, Stocker et al. (2010) found appreciation at work mediates the effect of illegitimate tasks on job satisfaction. These results are aligned with the SOS model (Semmer et al., 2007) as appreciation could be considered a boost to self-esteem and thus reduce the adverse effects of illegitimate tasks.

Additional support has been found that illegitimate tasks are negatively related to job satisfaction. Omansky, Eatough, and Fila (2016) found illegitimate tasks negatively related to job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation. Omansky, Eatough, and Fila (2016) also examined the roles of gender and effort reward imbalance in this relationship, and found that males reacted stronger to illegitimate tasks and effort reward imbalance exacerbated the effect of illegitimate tasks on job satisfaction.

There is also evidence to suggest illegitimate tasks and turnover intentions are negatively related. Apostel, Syrek, and Antoni (2017) found that illegitimate tasks positively predicted turnover intentions and together, illegitimate tasks and appreciate leadership explained an additional 4% of variance above and beyond job control, time pressure, and job satisfaction. Apostel, Syrek, and Antoni (2017) also tested the moderating effect of appreciative leadership on illegitimate tasks and turnover intentions and found the relationship to be significant, explaining an additional 2% of the variance of turnover intentions.

Well-being and health outcomes

Semmer et al., (2015) examined various well-being outcomes of illegitimate tasks above and beyond traditional justice measures. The study found that illegitimate tasks negatively predicted self-esteem and positively predicted resentment, and burnout, explaining 9%, 6%, and 12% of their variances, respectively. Controlling for justice measures, illegitimate tasks predicted self-esteem, resentment, and burnout, explaining 18%, 31% and 35% of the variance, respectively. Additionally, Sonnentag and Lischetzke (2017) found that illegitimate tasks predicted negative affect and low self-esteem at the end of the workday which, in turn, led to poor psychological detachment after work thus affecting affect and self-esteem into after hours.

Illegitimate tasks have also been linked to mental health and physiological health outcomes. Kottwitz et al. (2013) found cortisol levels were lower among employees who experienced more illegitimate tasks. Results indicated illegitimate tasks to be significantly related to cortisol levels if perceived health and resources were low. This is the first study to relate biological outcomes to illegitimate tasks. Madsen et al. (2014) used a longitudinal design spanning over two-year intervals and found that after controlling for baseline mental health, unnecessary work tasks was negatively associated with mental health.

Work behavior

Illegitimate tasks might also affect employee work behaviors. Using a cross-sectional design, Semmer et al. (2010) found illegitimate tasks to correlate with counterproductive work behavior (CWB). Controlling for effort-reward imbalance, Semmer et al. (2010) found illegitimate tasks positively predicted CWB against supervisors and CWB against colleagues. After controlling for organizational justice, conscientiousness, and agreeableness, Semmer et al. (2010) found illegitimate tasks positively predicted CWB towards the organization and interactional CWB. These results suggest illegitimate tasks can incur serious organizational problems.

Nonwork outcomes

Strains from illegitimate tasks might affect outcomes outside of work. Pereira, Semmer, and Elfering (2014) investigated the short-term effect of illegitimate tasks on sleep quality. The strength of this study is that sleep devices (e.g actigraphy) were used to measure sleep quality and duration over traditional self-report measures. Sleep fragmentation pertains to the number of times participants woke up during the night. Sleep-onset latency was defined as the amount of time it took participants to fall asleep once going to bed. Illegitimate tasks were positively related to sleep fragmentation and to sleep-onset latency.

However, illegitimate tasks were not significantly related to sleep efficiency, and to sleep duration. This study provides initial evidence that task-related stressors, specifically illegitimate tasks, can impair sleep quality.

Ahmed et al. (2018) examined how illegitimate tasks in the workplace relate to changes in work-to-family conflict and enrichment. Results from latent change score modeling suggested that changes in illegitimate tasks were associated with changes in work interference with family and work to family enrichment, through changes in interactional justice. These results suggest that the prevalence of illegitimate tasks also affect interpersonal outcomes outside of the workplace.

Within-person designs

Well-being and health outcomes

Eatough et al. (2016) utilized two daily diary studies to understand how illegitimate tasks affected individual's state self-esteem over time. Results indicated that illegitimate tasks negatively related to state self-esteem reported in the evening. Additionally, illegitimate tasks had a negative relationship with state self-esteem in the evening among employees with low trait self-esteem but not among employees with high trait self-esteem. They also found that illegitimate tasks was negatively related to job satisfaction and positively related to depressive mood and anger. In study 2, the same hypotheses were tested but illegitimate tasks were measured in the morning, afternoon, and aggregated to across the day.

Eatough et al. (2016) reported that illegitimate tasks across the day predicted evening state self-esteem, anger, depressive mood, and job satisfaction. These two diary studies bring further evidence to support illegitimate tasks as a predictor of well-being outcomes in the workplace.

Work behavior

Zhou et al. (2018) investigated the within-person relationship between daily illegitimate tasks and next-day counterproductive work behavior (CWB). Results showed that within individuals, daily illegitimate tasks positively predicted next-day CWB, and the relationship was mediated by daily end-of-work anger. Their results also found daily time pressure moderated the relationship between daily illegitimate tasks and daily end-of-work anger with the relationship being stronger when daily time pressure was high. These results support previous research identifying illegitimate tasks as a positive predictor of CWB while also strengthening the argument that illegitimate tasks have adverse effects that can manifest into short-term unwanted outcomes, such as CWB.

Employee Silence

Employee silence is categorized by a lack of upward communication with an organization about key processes, issues, or complaints (Brinsfield, 2013).

Employee silence literature has remained minimal because it is difficult to measure, as employee silence is categorized as the absence of behavior (Dedahanov, Lee, & Rhee, 2016). Despite the measurement dilemma, organizational literature generally agrees that employees do withhold information from the organization and the information withheld damages organizations goals and processes improvement initiatives (Morrison, 2014).

Withholding of information is not only critical to organizations because employee silence can also lead to higher levels of stress, and job dissatisfaction (Morrison, 2014; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Morrison (2014) revealed several antecedents as to why employees may choose not to voice their concerns and remain silent. Several examples include individual dispositions such as achievement orientation, job attitudes such as detachment or powerlessness, leader behaviors such as abusive supervision, and other contextual factors such as job and social stressors.

Relevant to this study, several contextual factors related to prosocial behaviors and political skill were discussed. That is, employees may choose to speak up or remain silent for two core reasons. First, the individual may be inclined to naturally suggest improvements to the organization as part of a core sense of self to engage in prosocial behaviors (Ashford & Barton, 2007). Second, the individual may also be motivated to gain favor from leadership for promotional opportunities

and thus feel choosing to remain silent would not be a politically savvy career move. These contextual factors may help explain the complexity of inner reasoning when employees choose to remain silent or voice their thoughts and feelings.

Employee silence is an important variable to study as an outcome of illegitimate tasks for several reasons. First, it expands the known outcomes of illegitimate tasks and further validates illegitimate tasks as a negative phenomenon at work. Second, employee silence is a covert behavior that is often engaged in passively. It is important to understand how illegitimate tasks affect passive work behaviors that are negative to organizations in addition to traditionally studied CWB that is an active work behavior. Finally, more research is needed to understand the theoretical underpinnings as to why employees choose to remain silent. This study attempts to answer this question by suggesting illegitimate job tasks can influence employee's decisions to remain silent through reduced engagement.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

Illegitimate tasks threaten one's occupational identity and are often described as identity-relevant stressors (Thoits, 1991). Identity relevant stressors relate to social status and how individuals of varying social status naturally create a hierarchy of roles they identify with as most important. First, individuals place value on certain roles above and beyond others; typically, roles that provide high social status and economic stability are valued over others (Thoits, 1991). These critical roles become core to one's identity and great lengths are taken to protect these roles from being challenged or eliminated. These roles become merged with one's identity and, thus, an integrated part into a person's self-concept (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2008). What cripples this process is when an *identity relevant stressor*, such as illegitimate tasks, threatens or challenges one's occupational role, this process creates an incongruence in one's social identity and challenges the norms associated with the social status of the role in question (Semmer et al., 2010; Thoits 1991). Thus, illegitimate tasks are hypothesized as stressors that threaten one's professional identity, therefore, inducing adverse psychological, physiological, and organizational outcomes.

According to the framework by Semmer et al., (2015) the concept of illegitimacy is related to the issue of “peripheral vs. core tasks.” Central tasks are core to one’s role and are typically considered legitimate. Whereas, peripheral tasks are generally secondary tasks that intrude or distract from one’s core tasks. Peripheral tasks are not always considered illegitimate tasks but are more routinely viewed as illegitimate compared to core tasks central to one’s role (Semmer, Jacobshagen, & Meier, 2006). Illegitimate tasks lead to one feeling insulted by the stressor of performing illegitimate tasks. When employees feel that stressful tasks are demeaning, or insulting, employees are more likely to take offense and view the stressor as a threat to self.

The stress-as-offense-to-self (SOS) framework is the primary model utilized to conceptualize illegitimate tasks research (Semmer et al., 2007, 2015). This theoretical framework is centered on the idea that individuals view stressful stimuli as threats to their self-esteem, values, and role identity (Semmer et al., 2007). The notion of the SOS model is that stress prevents individuals from accomplishing goals. Specifically, the SOS model posits maintaining both high personal and social self-esteem is a primary goal of individuals (Semmer et al., 2007). Furthermore, stressful stimuli, in this case illegitimate tasks, elicit interruptions in the goal of preserving self-esteem. More specifically, when individuals are assigned what they perceive as illegitimate tasks it is considered a social stressor that leads to lower

self-esteem. This is because individuals feel devalued by the illegitimacy of the requests of performing such tasks and become concerned with what their peers may think of them (Semmer et al., 2007). Moreover, individuals value the respect and appreciation of others. When this valuation is threatened individuals may begin to feel disrespected. This is because there is a lack of congruency between the self-concept an individual has, and the perceived self-concept the individual has interpreted from an offending party. For example, a supervisor asking an employee to perform a task that is perceived as illegitimate may lead the employee to feel disrespected. A continued prevalence of assigned illegitimate tasks from the supervisor may lead the employee to have lower self-esteem. The SOS model would say the interaction with the supervisors is a threat-to-self that leads the employee to feel devalued, thus lowering his self-esteem.

In the SOS model, illegitimate tasks are considered a specific type of “stress as disrespect” (SAD) which further fall under an umbrella of “illegitimate behaviors”. In this model, it is understood that all professional roles contain stressful or harsh aspects. However, these stressful events are not illegitimate if they affirm one’s identity. For example, an office worker may encounter stressful working environments during a financial closing period and be tasked with balancing the budget for the year-end. However, this financial task would not be considered illegitimate if the employee viewed the task as a core part of the work

role. Work tasks that are typical of one's role are affirming to one's professional identity (Semmer et al., 2007). Tasks become illegitimate when they threaten the self and are atypical to the work role. For example, the same office worker who spent long hours balancing the year-end budget may become resentful when asked to help file paperwork in the administration office. Such tasks are unreasonable to request the office worker to perform. The SOS model helps explain why employees may become stressed with illegitimate tasks by highlighting the disrespect and insulting nature of asking employees to perform work that they consider to be unreasonable or unnecessary. More specifically, tasks that are considered peripheral to one's core job role may be viewed as annoyances or petty distractions at best. The illegitimacy of these peripheral tasks causes employees to feel disrespected and ultimately insult an employee's professional identity.

In the same reasoning, illegitimate tasks could predict employee silence. Tasks that are perceived as illegitimate could cause employees to feel insulted and thus threaten their professional identity. This continued insult could lead to the employee feeling disrespected and contempt toward the illegitimate tasks and the job role. Employee's could then become hopeless, disengaged, or deviant, and choose to engage in employee silence. The decision to remain silent could be a more passive decision, where employees feel disengaged or hopeless. Alternatively, employees could choose to remain silent for more active reasons,

such as a deviant decision to withhold information from the organization to jeopardize the mission and strategy of the company. Either way, the SOS framework would support a stressor-strain framework where employees who are experiencing or perceiving a prevalence of illegitimate tasks are more likely to engage in employee silence.

Chapter 4

Hypothesis Development

Illegitimate Tasks and Employee Silence

If individuals view illegitimate tasks as a threat to their professional identity, thus reducing their self-esteem and leaving them feeling disrespected, it makes sense that employees would begin to withhold information out of resentment. Individuals may also begin to feel disengaged about work from the chronic devaluation of receiving tasks that are perceived as illegitimate. Brinsfield (2013) found that 13.3% of silence incident types were concerning operational processes and/or an idea for improvement, and 21% of silence incidents were concerning experiences of unfair treatment. These results suggest employees are choosing to remain silent surrounding topics they perceive to be unfair or issues that could be remedied through process improvement. Illegitimate tasks might be such a reason for employee to remain silent.

Illegitimate tasks anger employees and lead to counterproductive work behavior (Zhou et al., 2018). Intuitively, these feelings of anger could over time be perceived as unfair treatment from the supervisor. Current research supports that illegitimate tasks are primarily assigned by supervisors or some formal superior (Bjork et al., 2013; Semmer et al., 2015). Additionally, Brinsfield (2013)

discovered that 40.6% of respondents reported that they were withholding information from upper management and 27.9% of respondents were engaging in silence with their direct supervisor. According to the SOS model (Semmer et al., 2007), illegitimate tasks could be leading to employees feeling disrespected and lacking the self-esteem to speak up concerning tasks that may be perceived as unfair treatment. Whereby, employees begin to resent their job and boss from the strain brought on by the illegitimate tasks. Thus, it seems reasonable that one of the reasons discussed by Brinsfield (2013), namely unfair treatment, could be attributed to the prevalence of illegitimate tasks.

Employees who continually feel strains from the deleterious effects of illegitimate tasks over time may grow resentful and burnout on the job (Semmer et al., 2015). This is because employees might have perceived the task as illegitimate and grown to feel disrespected from the continuous threat to role identity. Drawing from the SOS model it is believed illegitimate tasks create negative internal processes that lead to employees choosing to remain silent. This process makes sense as previous studies have shown individuals high in negative affect or emotional exhaustion are more likely to engage in employee silence (Madrid, Patterson, & Leiva, 2015; Xu, Loi, & Lam, 2015). Drawing from theoretical arguments and existing research the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Illegitimate tasks will positively predict employee silence

The mediating role of Job Engagement

Job engagement is defined as how individuals express themselves cognitively, emotionally, and physically during role performance work (Kahn, 1990). In this framework, individuals are considered to be engaged expressing high cognitive energy, positive emotions, and physical exertion. Understanding how job engagement interacts with illegitimate tasks and silence behavior is relevant for researchers and practitioners alike. As previously stated, the SOS framework views task-related stressors as a personal attack on one's role identity at work. Additionally, Demerouti et al. (2011) found tasks perceived as disgusting or devaluating positively related to disengagement. The SOS model would also support these findings. For example, if an individual is repeatedly given tasks that are either unnecessary or unreasonable in nature, the employee could become disgusted and insulted by the task and feel disgusted towards the work role. This disgust could then lead the employee to no longer feel engaged to the job. Similarly, it has already been defined that tasks perceived as illegitimate threaten one's self-esteem and role identity (e.g. Eatough et al., 2016). This threat to self could also be described devaluating to both the perceived contribution of the role and the work itself. Thus, it makes sense that illegitimate tasks, which have characteristics that perpetuate feelings of disgust and devaluation, would negatively relate to job engagement. Schmitt et al. (2015) found that illegitimate tasks

moderated the effect of time pressure on job engagement such that time pressure did not improve engagement with tasks that were unreasonable. Additionally, the authors found both unnecessary and unreasonable tasks to negatively predict job engagement. Given the existing research and theoretical arguments the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Illegitimate tasks will negatively predict job engagement

Existing research has theorized that one of the reasons employees choose to withhold ideas, information, or communicate upwards is disengagement (Brinsfield, 2013). Theoretically, if an employee is disengaged with his/her job then there is no motivation to voice concerns or process improvements and the employee enters into what Brinsfield (2013) calls, “disengaged silence.” Disengaged silence accounted for 6.63% of the variance in employee silence motivations (Brinsfield, 2013). Additionally, Morrison (2014) theorized engagement and employee silence should be related. This makes sense as employees who are engaged with their job would be more likely to voice suggestions and improvements because of their willingness to engage in contextual performance domains, such as organizational citizenship behavior (Saks, 2006). In contrast, employees of low job engagement may grow tired of their work and feel no need to voice opinions or work improvements, thus opting to engage in silence. Preliminary research has found empirical evidence that job engagement negatively

predicts employee silence (Knoll & Redman, 2015). Furthermore, other researchers have theorized job engagement and employee silence would be related and called for action to study these variables together (e. g. Morrison, 2014). Given the existing empirical evidence and the theoretical arguments made, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Job engagement will negatively predict employee silence

Combining the aforementioned hypotheses, it is theorized that job engagement will mediate the relationship between illegitimate tasks and employee silence. Drawing from the SOS model (Semmer et al., 2007), illegitimate tasks is likely to lead to employees feeling insulted and strain towards their job role. Employees who feel disrespected from the prevalence of illegitimate tasks will begin to feel disengaged about the work they perform. Following this disengagement, employees would then have little motivation to voice concerns or suggestions of improvement and choose to remain silent. It is argued that illegitimate tasks can lead employees to a state of low job engagement which then acts as a motivator to remain silent. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H4: Job engagement will mediate the effect of illegitimate tasks on employee silence

The moderating role of Agreeableness

People of high agreeableness are those who are altruistic and extremely willing to help others (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Agreeableness has also been categorized by characteristics of compliance and cooperation (Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001). In fact, research has indicated agreeableness may be the single best predictor of job performance in roles involving strong interpersonal dimensions and high need for team-based performance (Barrick et al., 2001; Mount, Barrick, & Steward, 1998). The concept of agreeableness is often associated with words such as patient, tolerant, agreeable, lenient, quarrelsome, stubborn, or choleric (Ashton & Lee, 2007). A theoretical interpretation offered by Ashton and Lee (2007) is that people high in agreeableness benefit from gains from cooperation and team dynamics but are at risk from being exploited or coerced by others in the workplace. A theoretical argument could be made that those employees high in agreeableness would be less likely to speak up about the perception of illegitimate tasks (e.g. engage in silence behavior). Similarly, employees who are low in agreeableness tend to be more ill-tempered and quarrelsome and could be more likely to perceive illegitimate tasks as a stress-as-offence-to-self and thus become upset or insulted by the notion of performing work tasks that are perceived to be unreasonable or unnecessary. The SOS model would theorize that individuals high

in agreeableness would be better equipped to handle the adverse effects of illegitimate tasks, acting as a buffer on the stressor-strain relationship. This buffer works because those high in agreeableness would tend to become less insulted by unnecessary or unreasonable tasks that challenged their self-concept. Previous research also supports that agreeableness is an effective buffer in moderating the effect of work stressors on adverse outcomes. As an example, Bowling and Eschleman (2010) found agreeableness to moderate the effect of work stressor on counterproductive work behavior (CWB) such that the effect of agreeableness acted as a buffer against the adverse effects of work stressor on CWB. Given the theoretical arguments offered by the SOS model and the existing empirical evidence the following hypotheses are made:

H5: Agreeableness will moderate the effect of illegitimate tasks on job engagement, such that that the negative correlation between illegitimate and job engagement will be lower for those high in agreeableness.

H6: Agreeableness will moderate the effect of illegitimate tasks on silence behavior, through work engagement. Such that agreeableness will buffer the effect of illegitimate tasks on silence behavior through work engagement.

The moderating role of Conscientiousness

Conscientious individuals are characterized by organization, high detail-orientation, perseverance, and hardworking (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Conscientiousness is characterized by words such as organized, detailed, diligent, and careful (Ashton & Lee, 2007). Those high in conscientiousness tend to enjoy engaging in task-related endeavors and are very organized about their work (Ashton & Lee, 2007). We have previously established that perceptions of illegitimate tasks create strain and challenge one's role identity. Drawing from the SOS model, it can be argued that those higher in conscientiousness are more likely to take offense to the assignment of tasks that are perceived to be unnecessary or unreasonable because of their predisposition to passionately engage in work tasks in an organized and detailed fashion. People of high conscientiousness are more prone to take offense to menial or administrative tasks that could be perceived as illegitimate. For example, if a supervisor assigns a task to organize emails by topics, and the employee feels the task is unnecessary, a person high in conscientiousness may be more likely to suggest a process improvement or comment on the illegitimacy of the task. Similarly, those lower on conscientiousness may fail to see a more efficient process necessary or simply not care to organize the task in a more optimum manner.

Conscientiousness has shown to be an effective trait moderator when combating negative effects of stressors (Bowling & Eschleman, 2010) and abusive supervision (Nandkeolyar et al., 2013). Conscientiousness has also been shown to positively relate to work engagement (Inceoglu & Warr, 2011). These results suggest that individuals high in conscientiousness are more likely to be engaged in their job and less likely to be affected by stressors. Relevant to the relationship of illegitimate tasks and silence behavior, a review by Morrison (2014) found conscientiousness to be a key motivator of voice behavior. The review argued that individuals with strong characteristics of prosocial behavior and a desire to excel were more likely to voice their suggestions and concerns and thus abstain from remaining silent. Given the theoretical arguments and existing empirical evidence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H7: Conscientiousness will moderate the effect of illegitimate tasks on job engagement, such that the negative correlation between illegitimate tasks and job engagement will be lower for those high in conscientiousness.

H8: Conscientiousness will moderate the effect of illegitimate tasks on silence behavior through engagement. Such that conscientiousness will act as a buffer on the effect of illegitimate tasks on silence behavior through work engagement.

Overall, Figure 1 (Appendix A) presents a conceptual model of the variables and the relationships included in the current study.

Chapter 5

Method

Data Collection

Participants of the current study were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (Mturk). Amazon's Mturk platform has become a popular data collection strategy for many social scientists and existing research has demonstrated that data collected from Mturk is equally valid compared to traditional cross-sectional survey designs (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). In fact, research has suggested that samples from Mturk are more demographically diverse and realistic compensation does not affect data quality (Buhrmester et al., 2011). The present study utilized a compensation strategy of \$1.20 per participant. Existing research suggests that compensation is only tied to response speed and not traditional data quality issues, such as reliability of scales (Buhrmester et al., 2011).

Using Amazon Mechanical Turk, a total of 230 respondents were collected from the platform. Respondents were asked three attention check questions throughout the survey (see Appendix B). An example question included, "there are 70 seconds in one minute." Strict criteria were used during the attention check process. Respondents who did not select the highest agreement of accuracy for all three attention check questions were removed. Upon attention check screening, 33 respondents were chosen to be excluded from analysis. Additionally, there were 5

respondents with complete missing data, thus those responses were excluded as well. Thus, the total respondents eligible for hypothesis testing was 192. A preliminary outlier screening was conducted. The aggregated data of both the predictor and outcome were standardized to allow for quick screening of the distribution. No scores above ± 3.00 were identified.

Participants

Detailed demographic information is reported in Appendix C. The final sample included 192 participants working at least 30 hours a week, with 22.5% reported working in the Software Information Technology Services. Of the total survey respondents, 69.8% identified as male and 30.2% identified as female. Concerning the age of respondents, 48.5% identified as being between 25 – 34 while 27.7% identified as ages 35 – 44. Furthermore, 8.5% identified as ages 18 – 24 while 10.6% identified as ages 45 – 54. Less than 4% of respondents indicated being older than 55. When respondents were asked about their ethnicity, 56% identified as White Caucasian, 5.2% identified as Black or African American, 2.1% identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, 35.1% identified as Asian, and 1.6% identified as other.

Measures

All measures, including demographics, can be found in the appendices (see Appendix B). Data was collected using self-report measures that had been validated in previous studies.

Illegitimate tasks. The Berne Illegitimate Task Scale (Semmer et al., 2010;BITS) was used to measure illegitimate tasks. The scale contains 7 items on a frequency scale from 1 (never) to 5 (frequently). Example items include, “Do you have work tasks to take care of which you keep wondering if... “they have to be done at all?” or “they make sense at all?”. Four items measure the unreasonable facet of illegitimate tasks, while the remaining three items measure the unnecessary facet. A reliability analysis was conducted to measure the internal consistency of the measure. The analysis determined the reliability of the measure to be good with a Cronbach’s alpha of .8. At the sub-facet levels, Cronbach’s Alpha was .82 and .87 for the unreasonable facet and unnecessary facet, respectively.

Employee silence. Employee silence was measured using the instrument designed by Brinsfield (2013). The measure contains 29 items that were asked using a frequency scale from 1 (never) to 5 (frequently). A stem is used to prompt respondents to respond to various reasons as to why they have remained silent. An

example item includes, “to get even with another person” and to, “to protect myself from harm.” Reliability analysis was conducted to determine the internal consistency of the measure. Reliability was determined to be good with a Cronbach’s alpha of .96.

Job engagement. Job engagement was measured using 18 items from Rich, LePine, and Crawford’s measure (2010). The measure uses a 5-point Likert scale and response options range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Example items include, “I work with intensity on my job” and “I am proud about my job.” Reliability analysis determined the internal consistency of the measure to be good, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .97.

Conscientiousness. Conscientiousness was measured using Ashton and Lee’s (2009) HEXACO-60. The measure is the short measure of the HEXACO model and the agreeableness factor consists of ten items. The measure utilized a 5-point Likert scale and ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Example items include, “I often push myself very hard when trying to achieve a goal” and “I plan ahead and organize things, to avoid scrambling at the last minute.” Reliability was reported as good with a Cronbach’s alpha of .83.

Agreeableness. Agreeableness was measured using Ashton and Lee’s (2009) HEXACO-60 measure. The agreeableness factor consists of ten items and utilizes a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly

agree). Example items include, “I rarely hold a grudge, even against people who have badly wronged me” and “I tend to be lenient in judging other people.”

Cronbach’s alpha was .69 for the ten items.

Chapter 6

Results

Correlations and descriptive statistics can be found in table 1 below. All variables were calculated as composite scores averaged across the items of each construct. Cronbach Alpha statistics are presented in parentheses. To determine if illegitimate tasks would positively predict silence behavior, a simple linear regression was conducted. Illegitimate task was a significant predictor of silence behavior ($b = .53, p < .001$). Overall, the model was significant with $R^2 = .38, F(1,190) = 115.57, p < .001$. Thus, illegitimate task predicted 38% of the variance in silence behavior. Taken together, hypothesis 1 was supported.

To determine if illegitimate task would negatively predict job engagement, a simple linear regression was conducted. Illegitimate task was a significant predictor of job engagement ($b = -.52, p < .001$). The model was significant with $R^2 = .16, F(1,190) = 35.60, p < .001$. This model suggests that 16% of the variance in job engagement was predicted by illegitimate tasks. Thus, this result supported hypothesis 2.

Table 1*Descriptive statistics of core analysis*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1. Conscientiousness	4.97	1.02				
2. Agreeableness	3.23	0.61	.37**			
3. Job Engagement	5.60	1.14	.42**	.39**		
4. Employee Silence	2.22	0.79	-.36**	-.27**	-.21**	
5. Illegitimate Tasks	2.87	0.89	-.41**	-.35**	-.28**	.57**

Note. *M* and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$.

To test hypothesis 3, a simple linear regression was conducted with job engagement as the predictor variable and silence behavior as the dependent variable. Job engagement was a significant predictor of silence behavior ($b = -.14$, $p < .01$). Overall, the model was significant with $R^2 = .05$, $F(1,190) = 9.39$, $p < .01$. This model suggests 5% of the variance in silence behavior was predicted by job engagement. Taken together, this analysis supports hypothesis 3.

To test hypothesis 4, a mediation analysis following guidelines from Hayes (2013) was conducted. Bootstrapped bias-corrected 95% confidence interval for the

indirect effect were run at 5000 iterations and the bootstrapped indirect effect was -.01 with a 95% CI [-.06, .04]. Because the 95% CI did include zero, the indirect effect was not significant, thus failing to support hypothesis 4. Furthermore, hypothesis 5 utilized a moderation analysis to determine if agreeableness would moderate the effect of illegitimate tasks on job engagement. There was not a significant interaction effect between illegitimate task and agreeableness on job engagement ($b = .05, p = n.s.$), thus failing to support hypothesis 5. Additionally, hypothesis 6 stated agreeableness would moderate the indirect effect of illegitimate task on employee silence through work engagement. The indirect effect was non-significant when agreeableness was high (indirect effect = -.01, 95% CI [-.04, .01]) and non-significant when agreeableness was low (indirect effect = -.01, 95% CI [-.06, .03]). Thus, hypothesis 6 was not supported.

Hypothesis 7 stated conscientiousness would moderate the effect of illegitimate tasks on job engagement, such that the negative correlation between illegitimate tasks and job engagement will be lower for those high in conscientiousness. To test hypothesis 7, moderation analysis was conducted to test the interaction effect. There was not a significant interaction effect between conscientiousness and illegitimate tasks on employee silence ($b = -.10, p = .06$) at the 95% CI [-.21, .00]. Hypothesis 8 stated conscientiousness would moderate the effect of illegitimate tasks on silence behavior through engagement. Such that

conscientiousness will act as a buffer on the effect of illegitimate tasks on silence behavior through work engagement. To test hypothesis 8 a moderated mediation analysis was conducted to test the significance of the indirect effect of job engagement at values of the moderator of conscientiousness. The indirect effect was non-significant when conscientiousness was high (indirect effect = $-.02$ 95% CI $[-.07, .02]$) and non-significant when conscientiousness was low (indirect effect = $-.01$, 95% CI $[-.04, .01]$). Thus, hypothesis 8 was not supported.

Supplementary Analysis

I conducted additional correlational analyses to examine the relationships of two dimensions of illegitimate tasks (unnecessary tasks and unreasonable tasks) with six dimensions of employee silence. As shown in Table 2, both dimensions of illegitimate tasks were positively related to all dimensions of employee silence, consistent with the finding for Hypothesis 1.

Table 2*Descriptive statistics of supplementary analysis*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. UncTasks	2.73	1.04							
2. UnrTasks	2.98	0.94	.65*						
3. DefSil	2.24	1.01	.43*	.45*					
4. DifSil	2.08	0.94	.44*	.44*	.71*				
5. InefSil	2.31	1.08	.53*	.49*	.72*	.67*			
6. DisSil	2.21	0.97	.37*	.40*	.58*	.55*	.63*		
7. RelSil	2.68	1.12	.20*	.29*	.56*	.48*	.36*	.44*	
8. DevSil	1.76	0.92	.44*	.37*	.53*	.60*	.55*	.46*	.19*

Note. * indicates $p < .01$. UncTasks = Unnecessary Tasks, UnrTasks = Unreasonable Tasks, DefSil = Defensive Silence, DifSil = Diffident Silence, IneSil = Ineffectual Silence, DisSil = Disengaged Silence, RelSil = Relational Silence, DevSil = Deviant Silence

Chapter 7

Discussion

The current study examined the relationship between illegitimate tasks and employee silence behavior with job engagement as a mediator, and conscientiousness and agreeableness as moderators. The findings showed that illegitimate tasks had a negative direct effect on job engagement and a positive direct effect on employee silence behavior. However, the findings indicated job engagement did not mediate the effect of illegitimate tasks on employee silence and neither personality trait was significant moderators.

The positive relationship between illegitimate tasks and employee silence demonstrates that experiences of illegitimate tasks can predict employee's subsequent behavior to remain silent and may help explain why individuals choose to engage in the conscious process of withholding information and communication from the organization. This finding also contributes to the literature examining stressors as predictors of employee silence (Morrison, 2014). Additionally, this study contributes to the quickly growing literature on the negative influence of illegitimate tasks (Semmer et al., 2015). For example, previous research found a direct effect of illegitimate tasks on CWB, an active harmful behavior (Semmer et

al., 2010), and our finding suggests that employee can potentially engage in passive forms of behaviors (e.g., silence) as their responses to illegitimate tasks.

The negative relationship between illegitimate tasks and job engagement demonstrates that tasks perceived as unreasonable or unnecessary are directly related to low job engagement. Individuals who are highly engaged with their job are said to engage in high energy and effortful concentration of cognitive, behavioral, and affective resources (Kahn, 1990). Using the SOS framework as an explanatory mechanism, illegitimate tasks seem to distract from this type of job engagement in that individuals begin to feel insulted or resentful towards their job, from the prevalence of illegitimate tasks. This study outcome is aligned with previous research that has suggested task characteristics to be related to job engagement (Kahn, 1990). As well as being aligned with existing empirical evidence which has found a negative relationship between illegitimate tasks and job engagement (Schmitt et al., 2015).

Both the mediation and moderation effects were not significant. There are several potential reasons for these results. First, it is possible the relationship between illegitimate tasks and employee silence through job engagement is more of a feedback loop than traditional mediation. That is, the prevalence of employee silence, facilitated by a high perception of illegitimate tasks, may in turn predict job engagement. Given the cross-sectional design of this study methodology, the ability

to determine directionality of the correlation coefficients is lacking. Additionally, this is just one methodological reason as to why the mediation effect was not found, there could be additional reasons as well. For example, future research should consider self-regulatory mechanisms as mediators as the stressor-strain relationship may be better explained by factors such as ego-depletion or core self-evaluation, as opposed to job engagement.

Both conscientiousness and agreeableness were not found to not moderate the relationship of illegitimate tasks and employee silence, through job engagement. It is possible the personality traits of individual's, in this case conscientiousness and agreeableness, are not the primary factors that describe when and, under what circumstances the deleterious effects of illegitimate tasks occur. For example, future research should examine more macro level variables such as leadership-member exchange and organizational design strategy. It is possible individual's perception of illegitimate tasks is more affected by the relationship and communication exchange with leaders. Additionally, perceived illegitimate tasks may be a symptom of poor organization design and task structure. Further research is needed to expand past individual differences as the primary factor of moderating conditions. Finally, it is possible the design methodology may be under powered to find the desired parameter estimates.

However, there are several implications concerning the nonsignificant moderators. First, illegitimate tasks may be more destructive than initially thought. That is, illegitimate tasks may negatively affect employees regardless of personality. It is also possible the relationship between personality and illegitimate tasks is more complex. By using polynomial regressions, it may be possible to understand the relationship between illegitimate tasks and personality with more complex function fitting. In summary, illegitimate tasks present a negative phenomenon that may not be captured accurately by traditional methods and focus on individual differences.

On a theoretical level, this study provides additional support for the SOS framework, demonstrating illegitimate tasks relate to negative behaviors at work, in this case employee silence. The findings are in line with the existing SOS framework (Semmer et al., 2007) as well as the current understanding of theoretical antecedents to employee silence (Morrison, 2014). Furthermore, this study expands on the depth of damage the negative effects of illegitimate tasks can occur by suggesting organizations may continually lack critical information because employees choose to engage in silence behavior.

The current study is also the first to examine employee silence as an outcome of illegitimate tasks. This is important for several reasons. First, it provides further expansion of the known outcomes of illegitimate tasks and further

validates the current understanding we have of stressor-strain relationships. Second, this study helps broaden our understanding of the reasons employees may choose to remain silent. Current literature has mostly focused on attitudinal antecedents and devious behavior motivations as reasoning for employee silence (Morrison, 2014). This study demonstrates that task assignments that are perceived as illegitimate negatively predict job engagement and positively predict employee silence. This suggest organizational design factors, in this case task structure, could potentially be a pain point for employees that effect employee silence, an area of current employee silence literature not considered.

Practical Implications

On a practical level, this study has several implications. First, this work adds to the growing body evidence demonstrating negative effects of illegitimate tasks on employee behavior. Moreover, this negative reaction can predict job engagement and employee silence. Thus, organizations and managers should attempt to reduce illegitimate tasks through appropriate intervention strategies. For example, organization design implementations should consider the process of task assignment and the type of work each job role performs. Additionally, organizations should ask their employees if any work tasks they engage in are perceived as unnecessary or unreasonable. As a result, managers and executive leadership may discover poor organization design implementations can lead to a

high perception of illegitimate tasks. Focus on early assessment of the prevalence of illegitimate tasks should also be paired with encouragement to foster open communication between supervisors and employees. This will allow supervisors greater opportunity to detect which tasks could be perceived as illegitimate by their subordinates.

Study Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, this study utilized a cross-sectional design with data collected at one point in time. Thus, causation cannot be established, and potentially common method bias might occur. Second, though the sample resulted in a diverse set of demographics, the data was collected using the Mechanical Turk online platform. Thus, it may be difficult to generalize these results because of the selection bias that is inherently apart of using Mechanical Turk as a data collection platform. Company size may also have affected the results. For example, individual at startups may perceive illegitimate tasks differently than employees at well-established enterprises. This perceptual difference may occur because smaller less mature companies may have ambiguous roles and require you to perform work outside of your normal duties. Additionally, the sample size could have been larger for the moderated mediation analyses to help increase the power and confidence of the effect sizes. Finally, this study is

limited in the availability of measures of illegitimate tasks. Research is encouraged to expand the methodologies to collect information of both perceived and actual illegitimate tasks.

Directions for Future Research

This study added to the body of literature by expanding the known outcomes of illegitimate tasks. However, further research is needed to better understand how illegitimate tasks affect employees. Specifically, more research is needed to understand the potential difference between acute and chronic illegitimate tasks. For example, is an employee who experiences illegitimate tasks twice a week affected less than an employee who experiences them daily? Research that attempts to understand the long-term fatigue that is caused by chronic vs. acute illegitimate tasks would be especially interesting. Additionally, research on the perceived life cycle of illegitimate tasks as it relates to onboarding is also important. For example, does the perception of illegitimate tasks change as employees learn more about the strategic goals of the organization and gain better understand of the job role itself? Research that seeks to understand how the perception of illegitimate tasks change during the onboarding process of employees is needed.

Research is also needed to understand if a potential reciprocal relationship between illegitimate tasks and job engagement exist. It is possible a feedback loop

exists where illegitimate tasks and job engagement create a negative cycle of disengagement. Longitudinal research should be utilized to examine the potential feedback loops that exist with illegitimate tasks and job engagement. Furthermore, other outcomes should be examined. Specifically, research on voice and extra-role behavior as potential outcomes of illegitimate tasks is needed. This study has demonstrated illegitimate tasks predict employee silence. However, it is important to understand how illegitimate tasks affect extra-role behavior in order to study which individuals are likely to speak up about unnecessary or unreasonable tasks.

Furthermore, research should investigate the relationship of illegitimate tasks with the different types of employee silence, at the sub-facet level. Theoretical arguments could be made that certain motivations to remain silent, such as a disengaged inclination to remain silent could be better explained by illegitimate tasks than other types of silence. Further research is needed into this matter to determine the theoretical soundness of this notion.

Finally, more measurement research is needed to develop additional ways to capture the perception of illegitimate tasks. In particular, qualitative research would be useful. Interview and focus group questions that capture the essence of illegitimate tasks would help capture in greater detail how illegitimate tasks are being perceived. Research using modern methods, such as natural language

processing, is also needed to further streamline qualitative measures that assess illegitimate tasks.

Conclusion

This work extends previous findings by demonstrating the effect of illegitimate tasks have on employees and is the first study that examines employee silence as an outcome. In summary, the findings demonstrate a between-person relationship between illegitimate tasks and employee silence. This study adds to the body of knowledge on illegitimate tasks and underscores the importance of further research in this area of stress research.

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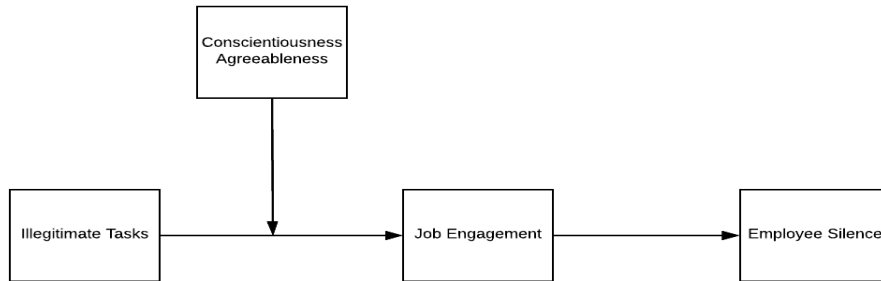
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Appendix A

Proposed theoretical model



Appendix B

Survey Measures

Demographic Questions

What's your age?

What's your gender?

What's your ethnicity?

What is your annual income?

What is your current marital status?

How many children do you have?

What is your employment status?

How many hours do you work every week?

How long have you worked before you started this job?

What is your education level?

How long have you worked in your current employer?

How long have you worked on your current job?

Attention Check Questions

Uses the following scale:

Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree

1. There are 70 seconds in a minute.
2. Please select Strongly Agree.
3. Please select Disagree

Berne Illegitimate Task Scale

A. Do you have work tasks to take care of, which you keep wondering if...

1. they have to be done at all?
2. they make sense at all?
3. they would not exist (or could be done with less effort), if it were organized differently?
4. they would not exist (or could be done with less effort), if some other people made less mistakes?

B. Do you have work tasks to take care of, which you believe...

1. should be done by someone else?
2. are going too far, which should not be expected from you?
3. are unfair that you have to deal with them?

Response options: (1) never (2) rarely (3) once in a while (4) rather often (5) frequently

Job Engagement Scale

1. I work with intensity on my job.
2. I exert my full effort to my job.
3. I devote a lot of energy to my job.
4. I try my hardest to perform well on my job.
5. I strive as hard as I can to complete my job.
6. I exert a lot of energy on my job.
7. I am enthusiastic about my job.
8. I feel energetic about my job.
9. I am interested in my job.
10. I am proud of my job.
11. I feel positive about my job.
12. I am excited about my job.
13. At work, my mind is focused on my job.
14. At work, I pay a lot of attention to my job.
15. At work, I concentrate on my job.
16. At work, I focus a great deal of attention on my job.

17. At work, I am absorbed in my job.
18. At work, I devote a lot of attention to my job.

Conscientiousness

1. I plan ahead and organize things, to avoid scrambling at the last minute.
2. When working, I sometimes have difficulties due to being disorganized.
3. I often push myself very hard when trying to achieve a goal.
4. I do only the minimum amount of work needed to get by.
5. When working on something, I don't pay much attention to small details.
6. I always try to be accurate in my work, even at the expense of time.
7. People often call me a perfectionist.
8. I make decisions based on the feeling of the moment rather than on careful thought.
9. I make a lot of mistakes because I don't think before I act.
10. I prefer to do whatever comes to mind, rather than stick to a plan.

Agreeableness

1. I rarely hold a grudge, even against people who have badly wronged me.
2. My attitude toward people who have treated me badly is "forgive and forget".
3. People sometimes tell me that I am too critical of others.
4. I tend to be lenient in judging other people.
5. Even when people make a lot of mistakes, I rarely say anything negative.
6. People sometimes tell me that I'm too stubborn.
7. I am usually quite flexible in my opinions when people disagree with me.
8. When people tell me that I'm wrong, my first reaction is to argue with them.
9. People think of me as someone who has a quick temper.
10. Most people tend to get angry more quickly than I do.

Employee Silence

How frequent have you remained silent or withheld valuable information at the company? This is to better understand communication processes within the organization. Questions asked on a frequency scale.

1. To get even with another person
2. To purposefully harm another individual
3. To retaliate against the organization

4. To purposefully harm the organization
5. To make management look bad
6. I did not want to harm my relationship with another individual
7. I did not want to create tension with co-worker
8. To avoid conflict with another individual
9. To protect my relationship with another individual
10. To avoid hurting someone's feelings
11. I felt it was dangerous to speak up
12. To protect myself from harm
13. I felt it was risky to speak up
14. I believed that speaking up may negatively impact my career
15. I was afraid of adverse consequences
16. Due to fear of retaliation
17. I did not feel confident enough to speak up
18. To avoid embarrassing myself
19. I was unsure what to say
20. I felt insecure
21. I did not want to appear incompetent
22. I did not believe my concerns would be addressed
23. Management did not appear interested in hearing about these types of issues
24. No one was interested in taking appropriate action
25. I did not feel I would be taken seriously
26. I did not think it would do any good speaking up
27. The issue did not personally affect me
28. I did not care what happened
29. I did not want to get involved

Appendix C

Demographic Information

Age of Survey Respondents

Age Ranges	N	%	
	18 - 24	20	8.5
	25 - 34	114	48.5
	35 - 44	65	27.7
Age Ranges	45 - 54	25	10.6
	55 - 64	8	3.4
	65 - 74	3	1.3
	Total	235	100
Missing	System	6	
Total		241	

Gender of Survey Respondents

Gender	N	%	
	Male	159	67.7
Valid	Female	76	32.3
	Total	235	100
Missing	System	6	
Total		241	

Number of Children of Survey Respondents

How many children do you have?	N	%	
	None	109	46.6
Valid	2-Jan	104	44.4
	4-Mar	21	9
	Total	234	100
Missing	System	7	
Total		241	

Ethnicity of Survey Respondents

Ethnicity	N	%	
Valid	White	124	53
	Black or African American	12	5.1
	Indian or Alaska Native	10	4.3
	Asian	84	35.9
	Other	4	1.7
	Total	234	100
	Missing System	7	
Total	241		

Marital Status of Survey Respondents

Marital Status	N	%	
Valid	Married	116	49.6
	Divorced	20	8.5
	Separated	9	3.8
	Never married	89	38
	Total	234	100
Missing System	7		
Total	241		

Annual Income of Survey Respondents

Annual Income	N	%
Less than \$10,000	16	6.8
\$10,000 - \$19,999	26	11.1
\$20,000 - \$29,999	31	13.2
\$30,000 - \$39,999	28	11.9
\$40,000 - \$49,999	30	12.8
\$50,000 - \$59,999	37	15.7
Valid \$60,000 - \$69,999	16	6.8
\$70,000 - \$79,999	22	9.4
\$80,000 - \$89,999	10	4.3
\$90,000 - \$99,999	7	3
\$100,000 - \$149,999	11	4.7
More than \$150,000	1	0.4
Total	235	100
Missing System	6	
Total	241	

Previous Work Tenure

How long have you worked before you started this job?		N	%
Valid	Less than 1 year	11	4.7
	1 - 3 years	46	19.6
	3 - 5 years	45	19.1
	5 - 10 years	49	20.9
	10 years or greater	84	35.7
	Total	235	100
Missing	System	6	
Total		241	

Education Level of Survey Respondents

What is your education level?		N	%
Valid	High school graduate	15	6.4
	Some college	22	9.4
	2 year degree	25	10.6
	4 year degree	125	53.2
	Professional degree	44	18.7
	Doctorate	4	1.7
	Total	235	100.0
Missing	System	6	
Total		241	

Tenure of Current Employer

How long have you worked in your current employer?		N	%
Valid	Less than 1 year	17	7.3
	1 - 3 years	75	32.1
	3 - 5 years	68	29.1
	5 - 10 years	41	17.5
	Greater than 10 years	33	14.1
	Total	234	100.0
Missing	System	7	
Total		241	

Tenure in Current Job Role

How long have you worked on your current job?		N	%
Valid	Less than 1 year	17	7.3
	1 - 3 years	90	38.6
	3 - 5 years	68	29.2
	5 - 10 years	40	17.2
	Greater than 10 years	18	7.7
	Total	233	100
Missing	System	8	
Total		241	

Work Industry of Survey Respondents

Please select an employment industry.		N	%
Valid	Banking & Financial Services	23	9.8
	Software, IT Services	58	24.8
	Customer Service	18	7.7
	Education	22	9.4
	Government	14	6.0
	Healthcare	18	7.7
	Manufacturing	24	10.3
	Retail	18	7.7
	Food & Beverage	8	3.4
	Other	31	13.2
	Total	234	100.0
Missing	System	7	
Total		241	