Illegitimate tasks and occupational outcomes: the impact of vertical collectivism

Server Sevil Akyurek
Former Student, Business Administration Department, Yasar University, Izmir, Turkey, and
Ozge Can
Business Administration Department, Yasar University, Izmir, Turkey

Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to understand essential work and occupational consequences of employees' illegitimate task (ILT) experiences (unreasonable and unnecessary task demands) under the influence of vertical collectivist (VC) values.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected via a survey from 503 teachers in the Turkish public education sector. The hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling.

Findings – Findings of this study reveal that unnecessary tasks decrease employees' professional identification and perceived occupational prestige, whereas unreasonable tasks weaken their workplace well-being. Results also show that employees with higher VC orientation feel these adverse effects to a lesser extent.

Research limitations/implications – This study demonstrates that individual-level cultural values play a significant role in understanding task-related dynamics and consequences at the workplace. It brings new theoretical insights to job design and work stress literature regarding what similar factors can mitigate task pressures on employees.

Practical implications – A key practical insight from the findings is that human resources management experts should create a positive task environment where ILT demands are not welcome by analyzing jobs and skill requirements in detail, communicating task decisions regularly with employees and providing them with the necessary work support.

Social implications – Understanding the impact of ILT can greatly help to assess the quality of the education system and the value of teaching occupation in society.

Originality/value – ILT have been mainly discussed without considering the effect of different cultural orientations. This is the first study empirically showing the diverse effects of two ILT dimensions on essential occupational outcomes in connection to individual-level cultural influences.

Keywords Illegitimate tasks, Professional identification, Occupational prestige, Workplace well-being, Vertical collectivist values, Job design

Paper type Research paper

In occupational role perceptions, the tasks that are demanded beyond reasonable job expectations may create high levels of stress on employees. Such expectations and their consequences on the employee can be successfully identified and explored by using the notion of illegitimate tasks (ILT). As a relatively new concept, ILT can be defined as tasks that are not included within a profession's role boundaries yet are demanded from the employees (Semmer *et al.*, 2007, 2015) and become a stress factor.

There has been growing research on ILT investigating different issues such as its intrinsic, behavioral and health-based outcomes. The impact of ILT on employee health (e.g. Pereira *et al.*, 2014), work-related attitudes (e.g. Ma and Peng, 2019), intrinsic psychological states (e.g. Semmer

Both authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

et al., 2015; Omansky *et al.*, 2016) and personal and family lives (e.g. Ahmed *et al.*, 2018) have been well discussed and identified.

Despite available research, the possible impact of ILT on workplace well-being, professional identification and occupational prestige have hardly been theorized or empirically investigated. As professional norms are concrete rules drawing the boundaries of the profession, individuals behave according to them. It may be difficult to break out of this established framework for an employee because the profession is a meaningful part of his/her global identity (Meyer *et al.*, 2006). Unexpected tasks (as being out of norms and accepted values) might distort employees' identification with their profession.

In the same vein, the illegitimacy of tasks may damage employees' perception of occupational prestige (POP). Since self-development and uncertainty reduction are among basic needs for any individual (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008; Hogg, 2000), evaluation of others within the same profession or comparing their profession with others might have an impact on the degree employees perceive their occupation as high-status, admired and respected. Thus, experiencing task illegitimacy may weaken POP by creating ambiguous and complex work processes. Put together, investigating these relationships can answer the essential question of how task perceptions, particularly those around the logic of legitimacy, may affect professions and professional work-life.

As social expectations and cultural differences intensely influence task processes in the workplace, tasks and task perceptions should also be examined through cultural lenses (Erez, 2010; Grant, 2007). As perceptions about work, occupations and tasks are shaped by the socio-cultural environment, the meaning and outcomes of tasks that are out of norms might also vary across diverse cultural contexts (House *et al.*, 2004; Ahmed *et al.*, 2018). Yet so far, the notion of ILT has been exclusively studied in Western countries (e.g. the USA, Switzerland, Denmark and Germany), which are typically described by high individualist and low power distance values. So, it is particularly important to identify how these tasks are experienced in contexts characterized by high collectivist and power distance values. Our key prediction is collectivist values and hierarchical social relationships can mitigate the negative influences of ILT that have been widely covered in the literature.

Altogether, the purpose of this research is to investigate how ILT, as a unique task stressor, shapes employees' work and occupational outcomes, and scrutinize the effect of cultural values on employee responses to task illegitimacy. On this axis, our research questions can be identified as follows: *What are the effects of illegitimate task perceptions on the employee outcomes of workplace well-being (WWB), professional identification (PI), and occupational prestige perception (POP)? How do individual vertical collectivist values shape these relationships?*

In order to answer these questions, we conducted survey research based on the responses of 503 teachers in the Turkish education system. We expect to make three key contributions. First, according to our best knowledge, this is the first study investigating WWB instead of overall psychological or physiological well-being in relation to ILT. Focusing on WWB can help us understand the particular work-related feelings and experiences of the employee and how they are influenced when a given task cannot be regarded as reasonable and meaningful.

Second, even though the early theorization of ILT was built on how it destructs role perceptions and work identity of the employees, no research has empirically examined the impact of ILT on how employees perceive and evaluate their roles and occupations and to what extent they identify with these roles. Filling this gap, this study intends to show how employees' perception of the assigned tasks as unfair, unacceptable or illogical can impact the extent they identify with their profession and their perception of it as desirable and respectful.

Third, since research considering the role of culture with respect to ILT is very rare (see Ahmed *et al.*, 2018 as the only exception), our research presents a big and important step toward understanding the cultural mechanisms underlying task relations, especially when these tasks put enormous pressure on the acceptable norms and principles. To our best

knowledge, this is the first study investigating ILT by measuring the effect of culture directly at the individual level instead of taking national culture as a proxy.

This paper is organized as follows: The next section summarizes the existing theory and research of ILT. Then, the research model and hypotheses of the current study are explained. After core components of data collection and measurement are described, the results from data analysis were presented. Finally, the implications of the study findings were discussed.

Theoretical background
Key attributes of illegitimate tasks
The "illegitimate tasks" concept fundamentally emerges from the thought of "evaluating the individual self as positive" (Alicke andSedikides, 2009) and is driven by stress as offense-to-self theory (Semmer *et al.*, 2007, 2015). This theory explains that threat to self is at the core of stress and ILT is a stress factor that damages self by decreasing well-being. In research, ILT has been identified as tasks that are not acceptable within the existing work boundaries and occupational norms (Semmer *et al.*, 2007). As such, it has been considered as a stressor closely related to the employee's health and behaviors (Semmer *et al.*, 2010, 2015).

Within the classification of controllable and uncontrollable task-related stressors (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), ILT is a typical hindrance factor as it represents an offense to self by threatening the person's identity through tasks that are out of accepted and agreed-upon norms. What distinguishes ILT from classic task stress factors is that the employee does not see these tasks as appropriate and valid, and in a sense, questions their essence. Yet, perhaps the most important feature of ILT is that these tasks provide critical social messages in terms of expectations from the employee (Semmer *et al.*, 2015) and degrade the self-concept of an individual at work.

ILT consists of two dimensions; unnecessary and unreasonable tasks (Semmer *et al.*, 2007), which comprise distinctive characteristics. In a work environment, the existence of different technical and relational factors can shape the degree of effort by the employee to perform the given task. In this regard, *unnecessary tasks* (ILUN) define tasks that can be completed with little or no effort if they are organized in an effective way, indicating organizational inefficiencies or problems in work relationships (Semmer *et al.*, 2010). *Unreasonable tasks* (ILUR) are those that are not compatible with the professional norms and status. Such tasks should not be demanded from the employee since they are outside of a profession's acceptable boundaries (Semmer *et al.*, 2010, 2015). Since each profession has its own sets of norms and rules, employees expect task practices to stay within the lines of these norms and rules. Overall, while ILUN refers to general work violations, ILUR reflects the situation and violation of specific occupational roles.

Theories behind illegitimate tasks
There are three pivotal theoretical perspectives behind the ILT concept: Stress as offense-to-self (SOS) theory (Semmer *et al.*, 2007), justice theory and role theory (Semmer *et al.*, 2010). SOS theory suggests that stress emerges as a threat to crucial goals (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) and includes three key factors. It claims that self-esteem is the core resource of a person, lack of fairness may create a threat to self-esteem and the absence of reciprocity during task performance may also disturb self-image (Semmer *et al.*, 2010). The unique character of ILT as a social stressor makes it a threat to social self-esteem (Semmer *et al.*, 2007).

ILT can also be understood as a part of the general understanding of organizational justice regarding the violation of norms identifying what can be reasonably expected from an employee. When task assignments are considered, ILT can be associated with the distributive dimension of organizational justice. To the extent that job allocation processes are unfair and

involve disrespectful behaviors, ILT is also related to procedural and relational injustice (Semmer *et al.*, 2015).

Role theory is related to the characteristics of roles and behavior patterns that are pivotal in social life. It explains that people have expectations and social status based on roles (Biddle, 1986). Besides, professional roles are an essential part of social identity (Haslam and Ellemers, 2005). Occupational roles are embedded in the identity of the employee because they create a sense of purpose and meaning (Thoits, 1991). In the light of role theory, ILT can be regarded both as a relational incompatibility on task requirements and as a person-role conflict referring to task requirements that are out of occupational norms.

Current illegitimate tasks research

ILT research mainly can be analyzed in three main categories: (1) physical health; (2) psychological state and affect; and (3) work-related attitudes and behaviors. Within the first category, researchers have found various negative effects of ILT on physical health such as decreased sleep quality and higher cortisol levels (e.g. Pereira *et al.*, 2014). In the second group, depression, decreased self-esteem, negative emotions, higher levels of anxiety and emotional exhaustion can be counted among adverse psychological outcomes of ILT (e.g. Fila and Eatough, 2018; Pindek *et al.*, 2019). As for the third category, it was shown that ILT causes unproductive work behaviors (Schulte-Braucks *et al.*, 2019; Zhou *et al.*, 2018), decreases organizational justice perception and damages conscientious and harmonious behaviors (Semmer *et al.*, 2010).

A number of mediation and moderation mechanisms have also been identified. So far, appreciation, effort-reward imbalance, negative emotions, role conflict, interactional justice and task identity (Semmer *et al.*, 2010; Omansky *et al.*, 2016; Minei *et al.*, 2018; Faupel *et al.*, 2016; Ma and Peng, 2019) were found to be mediating between ILT and different individual and organizational outputs. Control coverage, gender and age (Omansky *et al.*, 2016), sensitivity to justice, appreciation (Schulte-Braucks *et al.*, 2019), relational transparency, supervisor's support (Fila and Eatough, 2018), explanation and approval, hostile attribution bias (Minei *et al.*, 2018), time pressure and flexible role orientation (Ma and Peng, 2019) are among personal, relational and work-related moderators for ILT.

Vertical collectivism as a value orientation

Culture can be defined as "shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives that are transmitted across generations" (House *et al.*, 2004, p. 15). Along with other elements of work-life, cultural values have significant effects on how jobs are designed. Likewise, culture plays a moderating role between various job characteristics and work outcomes (Erez, 2010).

Although well-known frameworks conceptualize and measure cultural values at the societal level (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; Schwartz, 1992; House *et al.*, 2004), analyzing the influence of culture by using a country as a proxy brings serious problems and risks as several studies have shown that there have been significant differences in how individual experience culture in a society (e.g. Triandis, 1995; Fischer and Schwartz, 2011). Cultural values do not necessarily or entirely correspond with a particular society or country, and studies ignoring this fact disregard the complex and nuanced effects of culture in attitudes and behaviors in organizations (Richter *et al.*, 2016).

In contrast, conceptualizing and measuring culture at the individual level brings significant advantages. First, it allows us to identify the relative strength of any cultural value in a given group. Second, instead of assuming the prominence of these values through false aggregations, their existence is empirically demonstrated (Mazneski *et al.*, 2002). As

such, one can directly observe and test how a person's level of collectivism or individualism makes an impact on essential outcomes. Hence, when studying specific individual behaviors and attitudes, individual-level assessment of culture should be preferred to national-level analysis. Indeed, there have been numerous studies measuring culture at the individual level by using valid scales (e.g. Soh and Leong, 2002; Li and Aksoy, 2007; Wasti and Can, 2008).

In a similar vein, while collectivism and individualism values may imply societal characteristics, individuals can also be distinguished based on their collectivistic and individualistic orientations, regardless of the societal culture they live in (Mazneski *et al.*, 2002). As a cultural value, collectivism entails norms and attitudes that highlight the group over the individual, where persons view themselves on the basis of strong and cohesive relationships with the group and collective goals are prioritized (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). Accordingly, at the individual level, collectivism denotes a personal tendency where a person lets group interests, demands and goals come before personal ones (Triandis, 1995; Triandis and Gelfand, 1998). This tendency is also marked as an "interdependent self-construal" as opposed to an "independent self-construal" (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

Perhaps the most well-known and advanced measure to capture personal collectivist and individualist dispositions is the INDCOL scale (Singelis *et al.*, 1995), which assesses these two value constructs based on vertical (stressing hierarchy) and horizontal (stressing equality) dimensions. Built on Triandis and Gelfand (1998)'s conceptualization, it provides a value orientation typology based on four categories; *horizontal individualism, vertical individualism, horizontal collectivism* and *vertical collectivism* (VC). In this typology, VC reflects obedience to authority, enhancing the status of the in-group and sacrificing personal objectives for the sake of the in-group (Triandis and Gelfand, 1998; Wasti, 2003). In VC, acceptance of inequalities and loyalty to the superiors are visible where attachment to the in-group is established through strict hierarchical norms that should be followed (Chen *et al.*, 2002; Wasti, 2003; Wasti and Can, 2008). An individual with high VC orientation will submit to the demands of the in-group authorities even though these demands are personally unpleasant or undesirable (Triandis and Gelfand, 1998).

There has been an ongoing discussion in the literature regarding how tasks should be examined not only objectively but also through their relational and cultural elements (Erez, 2010; Grant, 2007; Ahmed *et al.*, 2018). Collectivist values in general and VC orientation, in particular, have been found to be largely effective on several job attitudes and behaviors such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, job performance, job security and entrepreneurial orientations (e.g. Wasti, 2003; Probst and Lawler, 2006; Arshad and Farooq, 2018). The intensity of VC values might also play a key role in how job design conflicts and challenges influence employee outcomes, an argument that should also be tested in understanding ILT experiences at the workplace.

Current study
As it is depicted above, there has been considerable research on ILT associated with different intrinsic, behavioral and health-based outcomes. However, no study has examined the occupation-specific outcomes of ILT for employees. Specifically, exploring the connection between ILT and PI and POP can answer the essential question of how task perceptions, particularly those around the logic and legitimacy of tasks, do affect professions, professional work-life and the assessment of them. Moreover, as employees' cognitive and emotional welfare heavily depends on tasks and work relations the workplace dimension of well-being should be critically discussed and examined beyond general or personal aspects.

Perhaps as important as the above theoretical shortcomings, in ILT research, there has been noticeable dependence on studies from Western countries, most of which can be regarded as contexts reflecting high individualism and low power distance values. Yet, there

is no clear idea about how the available theoretical arguments should be interpreted and how the relationships around ILT are manifested in different socio-cultural contexts.

As such, our study seeks to answer the following questions: How does ILT effect WWB, PI and POP of employees? How are these relationships shaped by vertical collectivist values? Below, we explain our research hypotheses based on these two key questions.

ILT and workplace well-being. The broad definition of employee well-being consists of three dimensions: subjective well-being (SWB), psychological well-being (PWB), and WWB (Zheng *et al.,* 2015). In this framework, job satisfaction and work-related affect comprise the sub-dimensions of WWB. Beyond psychological or physiological well-being, the investigation of WWB may reveal a new understanding of employees' general attitude toward their work and work environment as it entails both satisfaction from the job and positive emotions experienced through work.

It can be argued that the WWB of the employee will be negatively affected by ILT as such tasks cause stress by interrupting the work processes. As ILUN refers to tasks that would not be needed to be performed if they were well organized, they may negatively affect WWB in the form of meaningless workload. ILUR represents roles that go beyond expectations in the professional sense and may lead to intense role-based conflicts.

Hence, we propose that:

H1a. ILUR will negatively affect employees' WWB.

H1b. ILUN will negatively affect employees' WWB.

ILT and professional identification. By definition, PI is the degree an employee senses unity with their occupation and with the specific features attributed to that profession (Vough, 2012). It indicates to what extent an employee feels belongingness to his/her profession (Mael and Ashforth, 1992). For many people, occupational roles are a central component of their overall identity (Ashforth *et al.,* 2008), giving them a sense of purposefulness and expressiveness (Thoits, 1991). As a result of the close connection between role and identity; tasks, actions and situations shape the foundation of a person's professional identity (Walsh and Gordon, 2008). In this way, professional identity promotes pride and self-esteem.

ILT has the potency to threaten the professional identity of the employees through conflict and uncertainty because professions have a set of expectations based on work-related roles and behaviors. It is not easy for employees to move away from their roles defined in the framework of their profession and expertise which complements the self (Meyer *et al.,* 2006). PI is critical as employees define themselves related to their occupational group in line with typical roles and mastery (Ashforth *et al.,* 2008). Their sense of belonging is threatened with unacceptable role assignments by violating the norms and values embedded in the frame of a profession through questionable job demands. Accordingly, their connection to the profession is likely to decrease as a result of the norm-violation impact of ILT and its distortion of professional identity. Hence, we suggest that:

H2a. ILUR will negatively affect an employee's PI.

H2b. ILUN will negatively affect an employee's PI.

ILT and perceived occupational prestige. Considering a profession as a social group, POP can be defined as the group members' beliefs about outsider's perceptions of that group based on referral groups' points of view, and it is used by an interpretation of the societal value of group belongingness (Smidts *et al.,* 2001). Societal hierarchical location is determined for a given occupation through POP. By means of comparing occupations in terms of social aspects and status, it may change from one profession to another. As an indicator of societal perceptions and evaluations of work, POP might vary based on the extent of how much the occupation has been established.

In consideration of conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), ILT might be considered as a resource loss, creating a lack of self-enhancement in the occupational status and preventing clarity by increasing ambiguity and conflict during the work processes. Thus, it might be suggested that undesirable work experiences in terms of ILT may negatively affect POP. Since ILUR creates disrespectful and conflicting task situations, it may be more degrading for the occupation and have a larger impact on POP than ILUN does. Thus, we propose that:

H3a. ILUR will negatively affect an employee's POP.

H3b. ILUN will negatively affect an employee's POP.

Moderating effect of vertical collectivist orientation. The content, structure and processes of tasks and roles are the direct representation of the work environment (Ohly and Fritz, 2010); therefore, the meanings and effects of them may change based on cultural values. Similarly, discussing cultural dimensions is also pivotal for the perception of ILT. Because of different cultural values, the meanings attributed by the employees to the work experiences, and the perceptions formed along with work processes also change.

We predict that employees with high VC orientation will be affected by ILT in a different way than those with low VC orientation. Because of strong normative attachment to the in-group in VC (Singelis *et al.*, 1995; Triandis and Gelfand, 1998), more attention to and compliance with the task demands from respected in-group members (e.g. supervisor and coworkers) might be observed. As such, it is possible to expect that employees with high VC orientation might manage task conflicts and identity-related issues more easily through their strong and close relations with their supervisors and co-workers than those having low VC orientation. When VC orientation is high, perceptions at the relational level may become less conflictual or confrontational, due to the acceptance of the privileged position of the supervisor and accentuated role obligations (Soh and Leong, 2002; Probst and Lawler, 2006; Wasti and Can, 2008). Serving and sacrificing for the group benefit and feeling comfort and ease in accepting the supervisor's demands will decrease the negative impact of both unnecessary and unreasonable tasks on WWB, PI and POP. Hence, we propose that (Figure 1):

H4a. VC orientation will moderate the relationships between ILUR and WWB, PI and POP such that the relationships will be weaker for employees with higher VC orientation.

H4b. VC orientation will moderate the relationships between ILUN and WWB, PI and POP such that the relationships will be weaker for employees with higher VC orientation.

Methods
Data collection
This study was conducted by collecting survey data from teachers who work in public schools in six different cities in Turkey. After contacting and receiving the informed consent
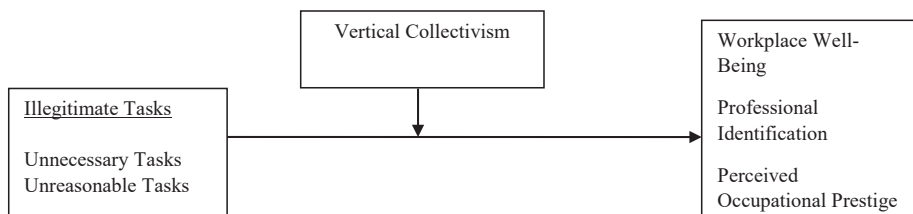

Figure 1.
Research model

of the participants, an online questionnaire was sent to their email addresses. Out of 1,260 teachers, 521 answered (41.3% response rate). Due to incomplete answers and outliers, 17 observations were discarded from the data, leaving a final sample of 503 teachers.

Turkish formal education system is composed of three distinct stages. There is a primary school stage that lasts four years after one year of preschool education in kindergarten. Then, secondary school and high school education are given separately for additional four years. According to Ministry of National Education statistics (Kasap, 2020), as of November 2020, more than 17 million students were included in the national education system, the majority receiving education in public schools (91.2%) as opposed to private schools (8.8%). The majority of teachers (84.9%) are employed in public schools (5.9% in preschool, 32.8% in primary schools, 39.4% in secondary school and 40.4% in high schools).

Although the teaching profession has strong and established norms, the extent to which tasks are carried out through these norms is an important question. Several shortcomings and challenges characterize the Turkish national education system including questionable quality of teacher training programs, lack of planning and decreased effectiveness of teaching (Karaca, 2008; Ustuner, 2004). Several educational, legal, economic, political and organizational problems put pressure on Turkish teachers and teaching occupation. One structural issue is the inadequate number of teacher appointments, as there is an increasing gap between the number of graduates and the number of teachers appointed to the profession (Uygun, 2012). Additionally, Turkish teachers face the problem of losing their rights and job security as contract-based temporary employment categories are being enacted. A simple comparison of salaries for permanent versus contract status shows that Turkish teachers are exposed to an economic demeaning. Overall, they experience several financial difficulties in their livelihood.

Another important issue in the Turkish education system is how the government's educational policies and conservative-Islamist ideological impositions distort the meaning and role of the teaching profession. Through politically induced staffing decisions, teachers are put under strong pressure in their schools and districts. Those who are identified by school management as "opponents" can face various sanctions such as disciplinary punishments, assignment to distant regions and even dismissal from the profession (Akyurek, 2020). Despite these problems and rights violations, only 36.9% of all teachers are unionized in Turkey (Aybek, 2018). Moreover, the largest unions are rather silent on the ongoing conflicts.

Participants
The characteristics of study participants are presented in Table 1. According to the table, more than half of the participants have 20 years or more of teaching experience and nearly half of them are between 40 and 49 years old (44%). As for gender distribution, the number of female participants is higher than males (65%). Most of the teachers in the sample have an undergraduate degree (85%) in different subject fields. While elementary school teachers constitute the largest group in the sample (26.4%), the other groups include physical education (9.9%), literature (9.5%), foreign languages (8.3%) and science and mathematics (8.2%). As of weekly lecture hours, 70% of the teachers have a workload between 21 and 30 h. The types of schools responding to teachers work include high schools (40%), primary schools (31%) and middle schools (25%).

Measures
Independent variables. Bern Illegitimate Tasks Scale (BITS) (Jacobshagen, 2006) was used to measure ILT, in which each dimension (ILUN and ILUR) is captured by four items. Translation from English to Turkish and back-translation from Turkish to English was

Attribute	Category	(%)
Gender	Female	65
	Male	35
Age	40–49 years old	44
	30–39 years old	26
	50–59 years old	22
	60 and above	3
Marital status	Married	80
	Single	20
Total tenure at profession	31–45 education years	8.5
	26–30	15
	21–25	27
	16–20	15
	11–15	21
	6–10	8.5
	0–5	5
Education level	Associate	2.5
	Undergraduate	85
	Master	11.5
	PhD	1
School type	Preschool	4
	Primary school	31
	Middle school	25
	High school	40
Weekly class hour	21–30 h	70
	11–20 h	19
	31 and above	2
	1–10 h	5
	0–1 h	4

Table 1.
Profile of respondents

achieved by three different experts who are fluent in both languages. Based on the BIT Scale used to measure ILT in almost all quantitative studies to date, the average Cronbach's alpha value for ILUN is $\alpha = 0.80$ and for ILUR $\alpha = 0.89$. (e.g. Semmer *et al.*, 2010; Zhou *et al.*, 2018).

Dependent variables. WWB was measured by using Zheng *et al.* (2015)'s *WWB Scale* (6 items) which was established in China with a goal to properly measure well-being in contexts characterized by high power distance and high collectivism. The Internal consistency for the scale was measured as $\alpha = 0.87$ (Zheng *et al.*, 2015). The scale consists of both job satisfaction and work-related affect items.

PI was measured by six items from Mael and Ashforth's (1992) organizational identification scale, where wordings of items were changed to measure cognitive and emotional attachment to occupation. The scale was initially translated to Turkish by Tak and Çiftçioğlu (2009) and internal consistency for the Turkish version was $\alpha = 0.83$.

POP was assessed by the scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992) which includes six items. Initially "organizational prestige" terms in the scale items have been transformed into "professional prestige" terms. In previous studies, the reliability of the scales was measured as $\alpha = 0.77$. In Turkish literature, Tak and Çiftçioğlu (2009) translated into Turkish and measured the Cronbach's alpha as $\alpha = 0.84$.

Moderating variable. VC was measured by the *INDCOL Scale*, which is a 32-item scale developed by Singelis and colleagues in 1995 to measure cultural values at the individual level in four dimensions. The scale was adapted to Turkish and validated by Wasti and Erdil (2007). Nine items measuring the VC dimension were included in this study.

Each of the above variables was assessed on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Control variables. Participants were asked to state their demographic data in the first part of the questionnaire form. These demographic questions include gender and total tenure at the period of the profession.

Analysis strategy

To make sure of the accuracy of the study results, the checks for normal distribution, outlier analysis and multicollinearity tests were completed. For outlier analysis, *Mahalanobis distance* measure was applied. For multicollinearity, variance inflation factors were calculated. After these checks, descriptive analysis was conducted to indicate the general characteristics of the data.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to assess the measurement model. To this end, three different factor models were compared. The aim of this comparison is to ensure that the proposed model represents valid and plausible relationships. In order to understand convergent and divergent validities, item factor loadings and cross-loadings were examined.

In the hypotheses testing phase, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used as the analysis method. In SEM analysis, *"maximum likelihood"* and *"bootstrapping method with two-tailed"* strategies were used.

Findings

Validity of measures

The diagnostics indicate no problem with the data. After outliers were discarded, further analyses were conducted by 503 observations. Validity and reliability of the measures were achieved by means of the following: (1) convergent and divergent validity of the scales, (2) individual item reliabilities and (3) internal consistency of the scales.

In order to obtain the best representation of the theoretical model, three different measurement models were compared in CFA. Model 1 denotes a single factor where all items are linked to it, whereas Model 2 represents a measurement where subdimensions were omitted. Model 3 includes all theorized measures in the study as separate factors. We followed the recommendations of Hair *et al.* (2014) for large samples ($N > 250$) with more than 30 observed variables ($m > 30$) to assess the fitness of alternative models.

CFA results support the validity of the study measures. According to Table 2, Model 3 constitutes the best factor solution as its fit indices are both within the recommended parameters and are better than those of the other two models (CFI = 0.943, GFI = 0.876, TLI = 0.937, RMSEA = 0.046, SRMR = 0.044). Model 3 also represents a superior fit over other factor solutions as indicated by the significant improvement in $\Delta\chi^2$ ($p \leq 0.01$).

We also checked the convergent and divergent validity by examining factor loadings and using the average variance constructed (AVE). Item factor loadings of latent variables were checked. Two VC items, one WWB item, three POP items and one PI item were excluded from the study as their loading was lower than 0.5. There was no cross-loading among latent

Model	X^2	df	X^2/df	Δx^2	Δdf	GFI	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
Model 1	10490.296**	777	13.501	–	–	0.395	0.256	0.215	0.1702	0.158
Model 2	1771.368**	675	2.624	8718.928**	102	0.837	0.913	0.905	0.0506	0.057
Model 3	1382.084**	668	2.069	389.284**	7	0.876	0.943	0.937	0.0441	0.046

Table 2.
CFA for alternative factorial models

variables. The construct reliabilities were also acceptable. Composite reliability (CR) and internal consistency values were above 0.7 for all variables. All AVE values were also acceptable. Although the AVE values for VC and PI were a little lower, they were still very close to 0.5, which represents an adequate level of reliability. Overall, the better fit of Model 3, high factor loadings and large construct internal consistencies signify strong validity and reliability of the study measures (Table 3).

Descriptive statistics

Table 4 shows that the independent variable ILUN has significant negative correlations with dependent variables of POP ($\beta = -0.250$, $p < 0.01$) and WWB ($\beta = -0.160$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, ILUR is negatively correlated with WWB ($\beta = -0.179$, $p < 0.01$) and POP ($\beta = -0.171$, $p < 0.01$). Moreover, VC has positive correlations with all outcome variables; with POP ($\beta = 0.164$, $p < 0.01$), with WWB ($\beta = 0.200$, $p < 0.01$) and with PI ($\beta = 0.229$, $p < 0.01$).

SEM results

Analysis results were given in Table 5. Six different direct relationships were found significant. First, ILUR has a significant negative impact on WWB ($\beta = -0.145$, $p < 0.05$). However, no significant effect was found for ILUN. These results indicate that H1a cannot be accepted, while H1b was supported. Second, while ILUR has an unexpected positive relationship with PI ($\beta = 0.240$, $p < 0.01$), ILUN also has a negative impact on PI ($\beta = -0.158$, $p < 0.05$) as predicted. These findings indicate that H2b was supported yet H2a was not. Finally, the results show that ILUN significantly decreases POP ($\beta = -0.258$, $p < 0.01$), whereas no relationship was found between ILUR and this outcome (POP). Thus, while H3b was supported, H3a was not.

As of VC's moderating effect, results indicate that it has no significant influence on the relationship between ILUN and the three employee outcomes. Therefore, H4b was not supported. On the other hand, VC has a significant moderating effect for ILUR regarding both WWB and POP. That is, it significantly reduces the adverse impact of ILUR on these outcomes ($\beta = 0.118$ and $p < 0.01$ and $\beta = 0.149$, $p < 0.05$). Yet, it has no impact on the relationship between ILUR and PI. These findings reveal that H4a was partially supported. Overall, these SEM results point out that the theoretical predictions of our study were partially supported for both the direct and interaction effects being proposed. As seen in Table 5, VC has significant direct effects on WWB ($\beta = 0.191$, $p < 0.01$) and POP ($\beta = 0.148$ and $p < 0.01$).

As of control variables, *gender* was found to be negatively correlated with ILUN ($\beta = -0.161$, $p < 0.01$), PI ($\beta = -0.108$, $p < 0.05$) and WWB ($\beta = -0.271$, $p < 0.01$). *Tenure*, the second control variable, had no statistically significant correlation with any study variables as can be seen in Table 4.

	CR	AVE	Cronbach's alpha
ILUN	0.871	0.634	0.881
ILUR	0.910	0.717	0.910
VC	0.867	0.487	0.849
WWB	0.926	0.717	0.928
PI	0.816	0.484	0.797
POP	0.936	0.831	0.935

Table 3.
Reliability of study measures

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 ILUN	3.1809	0.8781	(0.88)						
2 ILUR	2.6750	1.0211	0.675**	(0.91)					
3 VC	4.0940	0.6617	-0.160	0.001	(0.85)				
4 POP	2.7959	1.0814	-0.250**	-0.171**	0.164**	(0.94)			
5 PI	3.6863	0.7559	0.014	0.141**	0.229**	0.148*	(0.80)		
6 WWB	4.1105	0.7405	-0.160**	-0.179**	0.200**	0.367**	0.310**	(0.93)	
7 Gender	1.644	0.4793	-0.161**	-0.097	-0.045	-0.019	-0.108*	-0.271**	
8 Tenure	4.420	1.6809	0.042	0.077	0.021	0.062	-0.021	0.057	0.79**

Note(s): $N = 503$. M = means, SD = standard deviations. Internal consistency values are on the diagonal. *$p \leq 0.05$ (two-tailed). **$p \leq 0.01$ (two-tailed)

Table 4.
Descriptive statistics

	Coefficient (β)	SE	95% CI	t-value	p-value
ILUN → POP	−0.258**	0.043	−0.352: −0.171	−5.940	0.001
ILUN → PI	−0.158*	0.059	−0.282: −0.026	−2.682	0.013
ILUN → WWB	−0.079	0.058	−0.199: 0.034	−1.378	0.188
ILUR → POP	−0.023	0.059	0.146: 0.109	−0.391	0.721
ILUR → PI	0.240**	0.059	−0.116: 0.372	4.069	0.001
ILUR → WWB	−0.145*	0.056	−0.266: −0.018	−2.582	0.018
VC → WWB	0.191**	0.047	0.096: 0.286	4.322	0.001
VC → POP	0.148**	0.047	0.051: 0.239	3.332	0.001
VC → PI	0.234	0.052	0.136: 0.343	5.266	0.001
ILUR × VC → POP	0.149*	0.059	0.016: 0.278	2.341	0.014
ILUR × VC → PI	−0.020	0.064	−0.170: 0.142	−0.317	0.776
ILUR × VC → WWB	0.118**	0.064	0.003: 0.235	−1.847	0.005
ILUN × VC → POP	0.038	0.039	0.038: 0.114	0.990	0.323
ILUN × VC → PI	0.113	0.038	0.038: 0.188	2.953	0.003
ILUN × VC → WWB	0.103	0.039	0.027: 0.179	2.663	0.008

Note(s): N = 503. Model fit: CMIN/df = 4.742, GFI = 0.998, CFI = 1.000, TLI = 1.019, SRMR = 0.026
RMSEA = 0.000. *$p \leq 0.05$ (two-tailed). **$p \leq 0.01$ (two-tailed)

Table 5.
SEM results

Discussion

This is the first study examining the influence of ILT and its two distinct dimensions on the work and occupational outcomes of WWB, PI and POP by focusing on the moderating impact of VC values. According to the results, the two ILT dimensions affect work and occupational outcomes differently. While ILUN demands deteriorate occupational identification and prestige, ILUR demands decrease employee WWB without any adverse occupational consequences. Moreover, as was expected, we found that vertical collectivist orientation alleviates the negative effect of ILT on WWB and perceived POP, but only for ILUR.

Regarding the direct effects of ILT, the severity of ILUR appears to make a larger and immediate impact on the perception of work and the level of satisfaction related to work as it can make employees suffer more regarding their responsibilities and resource allocations in the workplace (Pindek *et al.*, 2019). As for the negative impact of ILUN on the two occupational outcomes, it can be argued that such tasks possibly move teachers away from the core professional framework such as teaching, mentoring and being a role model (Faupel *et al.*, 2016). Instead, they are forced to deal with secondary and needless tasks that are not directly related to their teaching role. Hence, they disrupt their original roles, create identity-related confusion and lead to a weakened PI (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, teachers may perceive their occupation as less impressive and respected. On the other hand, unlike ILUN, findings show that ILUR has an unexpected positive relationship with PI. This might be linked to the fact that ILUR might be pushing the employee too far, causing deprivation of professional norms and values (Haslam and Ellemers, 2005; Ashforth *et al.*, 2008). As a reaction to this strong threat, teachers might be focusing on their professional group membership and sticking to available professional resources and relationships more than ever as a defensive mechanism against those irrational demands (Walsh and Gordon, 2008).

In terms of how cultural values might moderate the impact of ILT at the employee level, study findings reveal that VC values at the individual level have a mitigating effect when ILUR is experienced. A possible interpretation might be that the feeling of connection to the group and responsibility, respect and admiration for the superiors are activated only when there is a strong threat to professional identity (e.g. Hogg, 2000; Ma and Peng, 2019). That is, high VC values decrease the damage of ILUR on employees' WWB as role positions and expectations are built on strong groups connections and values as well as positive social

relationships with the supervisor who assigns tasks to the employee (Wasti, 2003). In a similar vein, the available attachments of teachers with high VC to their peers and supervisors and the respect and pride they feel as a member of that group might limit the level of reduction in POP triggered by ILT (Wasti and Can, 2008). The negative social messages are soothed through values such as acceptance of inequalities and deference to authority figures as well as the pride and respect received from group membership regardless of the occurrence of ILT (e.g. Arshad and Farooq, 2018; Probst and Lawler, 2006).

Theoretical implications
Although there has been considerable research on the link between ILT and different employee outcomes (e.g. Thun *et al.*, 2018; Pindek *et al.*, 2019), there has been no study investigating employee outcomes of PI and POP and measuring the moderating impact of cultural values at the individual level. The results indicate that VC orientation has a soothing effect on the stress created by ILUR experiences for both WWB and POP. This is consistent with existing theories that emphasize ILT's main character as being out of professional norms and having adverse social meanings (Semmer *et al.*, 2010). Accordingly, it is not easy for employees to step out of the roles defined in the boundaries of their profession that comply with self-view (Meyer *et al.*, 2006). Even though there have been theoretical discussions on ILT-work identity link, this is the first study in which these mechanisms were empirically shown in connection with cultural values.

Our study also makes the difference between the two dimensions of ILT clearer with respect to three different employee outcomes that have not been examined before. While ILUR has a negative impact on WWB, ILUN does not. This finding mirrors previous research indicating that ILUR has more severe effects on employee emotions, well-being and presence at work and emotions (Pindek *et al.*, 2019; Thun *et al.*, 2018). In contrast, ILUN appears to be associated with occupational outcomes more strongly than with WWB. As well as we know, this is a new finding which has not been theoretically proposed or evidenced in previous literature, and thus, it is worth further investigation.

Our study also contributes to ILT research regarding how ILUN and ILUR might have diverse effects under the influence of different cultural values. ILUR can be perceived as a larger resource loss (both as instrumental and symbolic values) than ILUN due to being more contradictory, leading to higher negative self-efficacy perceptions. Therefore, high collectivist and power distance values might be needed and activated more compared to ILUN situations that do not typically go beyond the inefficient organization of tasks.

Research on ILT have largely been conducted in Western countries characterized by high individualist and egalitarian values as opposed to collectivist values and hierarchical norms (Ahmed *et al.*, 2018 is the only exception). This is the first study theoretically discussing and empirically demonstrating the importance of employees' VC disposition, which reduces the destructive effect of ILT on significant work and occupation outcomes. In this way, our study contributes to the understanding of how employees' self-view, sense of belongingness, group goals and cooperative and compliant attitudes may change their perception and experience of norm-breaking task demands (Haslam and Ellemers, 2005; Vough, 2012). On a broader level, it also enhances work stress literature by clarifying how employees with different cultural values respond differently to complex, non-standard job designs (Semmer *et al.*, 2015; Fila and Eatough, 2018).

Practical implications
Our study also provides insights that can encourage policy and HRM interventions to prevent the occurrence of ILT for teachers and other occupational fields. In order to reduce undesirable consequences on employees such as severe role confusion, psychological and

emotional distress and occupational detachments, task structures should be designed with more care and the framework conditions should be improved (Faupel *et al.*, 2016). For instance, school administrators can define teachers' job descriptions in more detail and better analyze questionable task structures that may take teachers out of professional focus, thereby ensuring less exposure to task-based conflicts and stress during work processes (Wilkesmann and Schmid, 2014). It is also important to increase communication between teachers and school managers through diverse channels and regular meetings. Together, they can discuss, negotiate and decide the content of teaching programs and activities to avoid illegitimacy. Besides information sharing, providing social support to teachers is also necessary to help them adapt more easily to new, unfamiliar or complex task assignments (Kaur and Randhawa, 2020). Interventions to make managers be aware of these support responsibilities might be needed (Faupel *et al.*, 2016). However, it should be taken into account that general practices, regulations and laws in the education system have a larger impact in shaping illegitimate tasks, and thus, the capabilities of school administrators to minimize these tasks are limited.

Additionally, teachers should develop ways of dealing with ILT by sharing their experiences among each other, organizing as a collective and making joint demands from authorities for necessary task improvements and revisions.

As it is evident in the literature, certain human resources management (HRM) policies and practices can play a critical role regarding how job design and work conditions affect employee's job satisfaction, well-being and job performance in multiple ways (e.g. Brannick and Levine, 2002; Siengthai and Pila-Ngarm, 2016). As such, HRM experts in a given field should create a more positive task environment by performing job analysis in order to prevent excessive workloads and unreasonable task demands in work processes. In this sense, work and task processes affected by non-standard, out-of-norm demands such as ILT can be regarded as a new and promising topic for HRM research, where critical interventions should be designed and executed.

Limitations and future research suggestions
As one of the shortcomings of this research is only teachers working in public schools were included in the sample, whereas teachers working in private schools could not. Other studies may collect and compare data from teachers working in both private and public schools. Nevertheless, since our data include responses of teachers working in different types of schools, fields of expertise and cities, our sample can be regarded as suitable for understanding the impact of ILT in the education sector in a generalizable manner. On the other hand, as each profession has its own attributes, it will be useful to investigate the same relationships by collecting data from other occupations as well such as physicians, engineers and IT specialists.

The fact that the available research data come from a single country can be explained as a limitation of this study. Cross-cultural studies that compare samples from different countries in terms of subject and hypothesized relationships should definitely be achieved. The findings may also be vulnerable to common method bias since analyses were conducted based on one-time self-reported data. Procedural controls were implemented and the error-corrected percentile method was used in SEM procedures for decreasing this bias. Still, the cross-sectional nature of the study may limit the accuracy of research findings. Thus, future research can use longitudinal designs and collect data from employee-supervisor peers.

Even though widely established and valid scales are used for assessing the variables, alternative measures can also be used in future research. For instance, despite acceptable reliability and validity values of the professional identification scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992), it has an internal consistency lower than the other measures in the study.

Hence, alternative conceptualizations and measurements can be introduced by other researchers. Finally, even though a significant moderating effect of VC orientation was found in the Turkish context, new attempts are needed to measure VC and other key cultural dispositions at different national contexts and make cross-cultural comparisons so that a broader picture of job design-culture interaction can be gained.

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About the authors

Dr Server Sevil Akyurek from Ph.D. program at Business Administration Department in Yasar University, Izmir. She has articles and proceedings published in Management Organization and Organizational Behavior fields. She is particularly interested in organizational change and development and cultural influences on organizations. Server Sevil Akyurek is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: s.sevilakyurek@hotmail.com

Dr Ozge Can completed her PhD in Management Studies at Sabanci University, Istanbul. She has been working as a full-time faculty in Yasar University, Izmir, since 2013. She also had researcher position at the University of Antwerp, Belgium (2014–2015). She is particularly interested in organizational identities and categorizations, institutional entrepreneurship, sociocultural influences in and around organizations.