Toxic Leadership and its Relationship with Work Pressure among Ministry of Youth and Sports Employees

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Abstract

This research aims to explore toxic leadership and its relationship with work pressure among employees of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The researchers adopted the descriptive-correlational research methodology due to its suitability for studying the correlational relationships between variables and describing and analyzing the studied phenomenon. The research population consisted of 3000 employees of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. A random stratified sample of 500 employees was selected for the academic year 2022-2023. After reviewing the relevant literature and previous studies on toxic leadership, a scale for toxic leadership and work pressure was developed and validated for reliability (both face and content validity), difficulty factor, discriminative power, incorrect alternatives' effectiveness, and stability. Statistical methods such as one-sample t-test, Pearson correlation coefficient, Spearman-Brown formula, and Cronbach's alpha were utilized.The current research yielded several significant findings:Objective 1: To identify toxic leadership among employees of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.To achieve this objective, the researcher applied a toxic leadership scale comprising 15 items to a sample of 500 employees. Subsequently, the researcher calculated the mean and standard deviation for each dimension of toxic leadership separately. To determine the significance of the differences between the arithmetic means and the hypothetical mean for each dimension, the researcher used the one-sample t-test. The results indicated the presence of toxic leadership practices among the ministry's employees.Objective 2: To identify work pressure among employees of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.To verify this objective, the researcher administered a work pressure scale consisting of 44 items to a sample of 500 employees. The researcher calculated the mean and standard deviation for each work pressure aspect separately. To assess the significance of the differences between the arithmetic means and the hypothetical mean for each work pressure aspect, the researcher utilized statistical analysis. The results indicated the presence of work pressure among the ministry's employees.

Introduction

Background

There has been a growing interest in studying toxic leadership due to its association with a range of negative effects in the workplace, including reduced employee motivation and productivity (Cortina et al., 2001; Pelletier, 2010). The concern surrounding the topic of "work pressure" can be attributed to the adverse effects these pressures have on individuals' behavior and attitudes towards their jobs. These pressures and stressors can impact individuals in their daily lives, both personally and professionally, a phenomenon referred to in psychology as "occupational stress." When individuals experience work pressure, and if this feeling intensifies in their workplace, the outcomes can be highly

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detrimental to productivity, work hours, and can lead to physical and psychological health deterioration (March 2015, p.2; Mellen, 2022)

The Ministry of Youth and Sports, like any other governmental organization, operates based on organizational characteristics such as the organizational structure, hierarchy of authority, and established work rules and regulations. It relies on these characteristics to guide employees towards working collectively to achieve its goals, which include preparing and empowering youth, protecting and nurturing them, as well as developing their talents and directing their energies towards contributing to the building of Iraq and expressing good citizenship while respecting the law (Al-Abbasi, 2018, 98). Modern administrative leadership styles, however, focus on human development as a fundamental conviction, emphasizing that humans possess intellectual capabilities and potentials far beyond what is commonly utilized or harnessed in various workplace settings. Therefore, the researchers have decided to delve into this subject. (Pammu & Hasyim, 2023)

Significance of the Research

1 Scientific Significance

The scientific significance of this research lies in the absence of prior local studies that have examined the relationship between toxic leadership and work pressure. By achieving the study's objectives, it will contribute new insights to the field of toxic leadership and work pressure.

2. Practical Significance

The practical significance of this study lies in its potential to draw the attention of decision-makers to the importance of focusing on the selection of individuals in leadership positions and working on developing their leadership skills. This can help reduce negative behaviors associated with toxic leadership and mitigate the adverse effects of work pressure experienced by employees. Furthermore, this study may serve as a precursor to future studies related to these variables.

3. Research Objectives

The primary objectives of the current research are as follows:

Objective 1: To identify toxic leadership among employees of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.
Objective 2: To identify work pressure among employees of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

4. Research Boundaries

Objective Boundaries:
Subject Matter Boundaries: Toxic Leadership, Work Pressure.
Geographic Boundaries: This study is limited to employees of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.
Time Boundaries: The study will be conducted in the year 2022-2023.

5. Definition of Terms

Toxic Leadership: (Toxic Leadership)

We will now review some of the most prominent definitions of toxic leadership provided by researchers, sorted by the year of publication:

Morris (2019) defined toxic leadership as a form of leadership that harasses, diminishes, and intimidates employees, resulting in unnecessary pressures that lead to decreased performance and undesirable behaviors (2019, p.13).

Milosevic, Maric, and Loncar (2020) defined toxic leadership as leadership that focuses on maintaining control through toxic attempts to influence, unintentionally causing significant harm due to reckless behavior and inefficiency (2020, p.2).

6. Work Pressure

Regarding work pressure, despite its frequent use, there is currently no universally agreed-upon definition for work pressure (Hart & Cooper, 2002). We provide the following definitions:

Luthans defined work pressure as "an adaptive response to an external situation that results in physiological, psychological, and behavioral deviations among organizational participants" (2002, p.396).

Edwards defined work pressure as "a negative emotional state resulting from the comparison of the perceived state of the employee and the desired state, provided that this discrepancy is considered important by the employee" (1992, p.245).

3. Ministry of Youth and Sports: It is one of the ministries of the Iraqi government responsible for youth and sports affairs.

Literature Review

In this chapter, the researchers address two main axes: the theoretical evolution of toxic leadership and previous studies.

Axis 1: Theoretical Evolution of Toxic Leadership

The Toxicity Metaphor

The first documented academic use of the term "toxicity" in organizational literature can be attributed to Peter Frost (1993). Frost employed this term to describe dysfunctional organizational behavior observed in some organizations (Goldman, 2008, p.226; Carlock, 2013, p.14). Frost studied the emotional pain's effects on the human immune system and indicated that "negative emotions" such as anger, sadness, frustration, or despair can be "toxic" to the human body and impact the immune system (1993, p.3). Frost hypothesized that a toxic work environment is one in which members of the organization experience emotional pain that robs them of their self-confidence, hope, and self-respect, making them disengaged from their work (Carlock, 2013, p.14).

Following this pioneering work, numerous scholars and researchers based their work on the toxicity metaphor, with notable contributions like Marcia Whicker's (1996) book "Toxic Leaders: When Organizations Go Bad."

The term "the dark side of leadership" first appeared when it was used by Conger (1990) and Hogan, Rashkin, & Fazzini (1990) to describe the risks of charisma in leadership. Some researchers (Smith & Hasselfeld, 2013) suggest that this term may have been inspired by a scene from George Lucas's famous "Star Wars" film, which dominated the U.S. box office in the summer of 1977. In that scene, the film's protagonist, Luke Skywalker, receives advice from his mentor, urging him to avoid "the dark side," where evil traits and actions reside (Smith & Hasselfeld, 2013, p.3).

The works of Conger (1990) and Hogan, Rashkin, & Fazzini (1990) trace their roots back to the efforts of Jon Bentz (1967, 1985a, 1985b, 1990). Bentz is credited with conducting the initial research on the dark side personality dimensions among managers, in a study spanning 30 years that focused on failed executive managers at Sears. Bentz observed that intelligent and skilled managers failed due to

"dominant personality disturbances." The manifestations of this failure included difficulties in building teams, delegating to subordinates, coping with complexity, maintaining relationships, and other issues related to failing to learn from experience, excessive interaction, and emotionally-driven decision-making (Gaddis, 2015, p.5).

Conger's Perspective (1990): Conger (1990) postulated that leaders have the ability to achieve both positive (bright) and negative (dark) outcomes. When behaviors that are congruent with positive effects are out of place or exaggerated, leaders can unintentionally fall into the trap of managerial incompetence, resulting in negative outcomes (Arbogast, 2018, p.9). Leet (2011) suggests that the term "dysfunctional" is an acceptable description of leadership, usually associated with incompetence in skills and ineffective behaviors. On the other hand, the term "toxic" is more emotional and controversial, reserved for deliberate leadership behaviors. Therefore, there are occasions where some leadership actions may deviate from organizational norms but are carried out by competent leaders. It is essential to distinguish between intentional toxic behaviors and behaviors that are deviant due to incompetence (pp.108-109).

Petty Tyranny: These studies opened up academic discussions regarding the negative effects of leaders on their followers and organizations. Ashforth (1997/1994) introduced the concept of "Petty Tyranny," defined as the "oppressive use of power over others" (Ashforth, 1997, p.126). Petty tyranny includes behaviors such as arbitrariness, self-aggrandizement, belittling others, neglect, coercive conflict resolution, initiative suppression, and non-emergency punishment (Ashforth, 1994, p.755).

Abusive Supervision:** Tepper (2000) addressed several shortcomings in the construct of Petty Tyranny and came closer to the concept of toxic leadership when he introduced the term "Abusive Supervision," defined as "the sustained display of hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000, p.178).

The Great Awakening: Reed noted that "there is no single behavior that can be used to determine if a leader is toxic" (p.67). According to Reed, there are three symptoms of toxic leadership syndrome:

1. A clear lack of concern for the well-being of subordinates.
2. A personal or personality-driven negativity affecting the organizational climate.
3. Subordinates' belief that the leader's primary motivation is self-interest (Reed, 2004, p.67).

Denise Williams (2005): Although Kellerman (2004) did not use the term "toxic leadership," her influence was evident in several subsequent studies on the subject, including Denise Williams' (2005) research paper on toxic leadership in the U.S. Army. Williams' work helped introduce the idea of a spectrum or a connected series of toxicity. Williams stated that at one end of the spectrum, functionally dysfunctional leaders may simply be unskilled, unproductive, and entirely unaware of their lack of leadership talent. On the other end, toxic leaders find their success and glory in destroying others, whether psychologically or even physically, thriving on the harm they can inflict on others (2005, p.1).

Lipman-Blumen's Perspective: Lipman-Blumen used the term "toxic leaders" as a global label for leaders who engage in various destructive behaviors and exhibit some deviant personal characteristics. For these behaviors and personal traits to be considered toxic, they must reasonably cause significant and lasting harm to their followers and organizations (2005, p.18).

Previous Studies

Hadadian & Zarei (2016)

This study titled "The Relationship between Toxic Leadership and Job Stress among Knowledge Workers" is a correlational study aimed at determining the potential relationship between toxic leadership and job

stress. Data collection tools, including two standardized questionnaires, were used. The toxic leadership questionnaire (Schmidt and Hanges 2009; Haeri et al., 2022) was employed to measure toxic leadership in organizations, and the NIOSH General Job Stress Questionnaire (Hurrell and McLaney 1988) was used to measure job stress. SPSS software was used for data analysis. The results showed a significant direct relationship between toxic leadership and job stress among employees.

2 Study by Yeşiltaş (2020) titled "The Role of Toxic Leadership and Work Pressure on Organizational Commitment"

The aim of this study is to examine the influence of toxic leadership and work pressure on the organizational commitment of employees. In this context, data were collected from a total of 337 employees in private banks through questionnaires. Confirmatory factor analysis, correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression analyses were employed in the study. The results indicate a positive correlation between toxic leadership dimensions and the dimension of continuous commitment. The four dimensions of toxic leadership (self-promotion, abusive supervision, unpredictability, and narcissism) showed a negative correlation with the normative dimension of organizational commitment. It was also found that job stress has a negative correlation with continuous commitment and a positive correlation with normative commitment. The dimension of self-promotion in toxic leadership influences negative continuous commitment, while toxic leadership dimensions (unpredictability and narcissism) affect positive normative commitment. Moreover, the dimension of self-promotion in toxic leadership has a negative influence on normative commitment. Importantly, job stress was found to positively affect normative commitment. (Spangler, 2023)

3 Study by Uysal (2019) titled "The Mediating Role of Toxic Leadership in the Impact of Work Stress on Job Satisfaction"

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of work stress on job satisfaction and determine whether employees' perceptions of toxic leadership have any influence on the significant relationship between these variables. If there are any effects, it aims to identify whether toxic leadership serves as a partial or full mediating force and provides suggestions to enhance organizational well-being for employees. Data for this study were obtained from 124 employees. The analysis conducted revealed a significant relationship between work stress and job satisfaction. Through a multiple regression analysis for the mediating effect, it was determined that the perception of toxic leadership acts as a partial mediating variable in the impact of work stress on job satisfaction.

Research Methodology

The researchers adopted the descriptive correlational methodology as it is the most suitable approach for studying the correlational relationships between variables and describing and analyzing the studied phenomenon. The study of the phenomenon relies on what exists in reality and is concerned with providing an accurate description.

Research Procedures

To achieve the current research objectives, it was necessary to define the study population, select a representative sample, prepare appropriate measurement tools, ensure their validity, reliability, and discriminative capability, and then apply them to the chosen research sample. Statistical methods were employed for data analysis and processing (Sabri and Radhi, R.I. 2021).

The following is a description of the research procedures

First: Research Population

The current research population consists of employees of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, totaling 300 employees.

Research Sample

To achieve the current research objectives, a stratified random sample was selected from the total research population, consisting of 500 employees.

Research Instruments

As the current research aims to identify toxic leadership and its relationship with work stress among employees of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the researchers adopted two instruments: one measures toxic leadership, and the other measures work-related stress.

First: Toxic Leadership Scale

The researchers followed the following procedures for each instrument:

Statistical Analysis of the Toxic Leadership Scale Items:

Regardless of the logical judgment and expert opinions, field testing of the scale and analyzing the items is essential, using statistical methods (Alem, 2000, p. 367). Therefore, the researchers conducted statistical analysis as follows (Al-Kubaisi, 2001, p. 56).

1. Sample for Statistical Analysis of Items:

The scale, consisting of 15 items, was administered to a sample of 500 employees. This sample is appropriate for the analysis of the toxic leadership scale. According to Henrysoon, a suitable sample size for item analysis should not be less than 400 or 500 individuals, carefully selected from the original population (Henrysoon, 1963, p. 132). Using 27% of individuals in this sample to determine the two extreme groups in the total score achieves an adequate size in each group and good variation between them (Ghiselli et al., 1981, p. 434).

2. Calculation of Psychometric Properties of Items:

The psychometric properties to be verified in scale items include item discrimination and reliability coefficients (Ghiselli et al., 1981, p. 421). Therefore, the researchers calculated discriminant validity and internal consistency as follows:

A. Discrimination Power of Items:
B. Relationship of Item Scores with the Total Score of the Relevant Domain:
5. Psychometric Properties of the Scale:
A. Validity of the Scale:

a. Face Validity

[Provide details on the assessment of face validity.]

b. Construct Validity

[Describe how construct validity was assessed and any specific methods or analyses used.]

B. Scale Reliability

First: Test-Retest Method (Sabri, 2009, p. 302):

[Explain the procedures and results of the test-retest reliability analysis.]

Description of the Final Scale

The final toxic leadership scale in the current research consists of five domains: self-promotion, abusive supervision, inability to predict, narcissism, and autocratic leadership (Al-Jabri & Dawood, 2015, p. 66).

Second: Work Stress Scale

The researchers followed the same procedures to develop the work stress scale.

The researchers utilized the following statistical methods:

First: The researchers used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to perform the following:

Presentation and Interpretation of Results

This chapter entails presenting the results obtained based on the research objectives and subsequently drawing conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions. The results can be presented as follows:

Objective 1: To Identify Toxic Leadership Among the Employees of the Ministry of Youth and Sports

To achieve this objective, the researcher administered a toxic leadership scale consisting of 15 items to a research sample comprising 500 male and female employees. Subsequently, the researcher calculated the means and standard deviations for each dimension of toxic leadership separately. To determine the significance of the differences between the means and the hypothetical mean for each dimension, the researcher employed a one-sample t-test. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and t-Test Values for the Toxic Leadership Scale

Dimensions of Toxic Leadership	Sample	The arithmetic mean	The standard deviation	The hypothetical mean	The t-value Calculated	Tabular	Significance (0,05)
Self-Promotion	500	9,482	2,808	9	3,838	1,96	Significant
Abusive Supervision	500	9,174	2,853	9	1,364	1,96	NOT Significant
Inability to Predict	500	9,662	2,776	9	5,332	1,96	Significant
Narcissism	500	8,842	3,491	9	1,012	1,96	NOT Significant
Authoritarian Leadership	500	9,028	2,848	9	0,220	1,96	NOT Significant

Results

1. For the dimension of self-promotion, the sample's mean was 9.482, with a standard deviation of 2.808. The hypothetical mean was 9, and the calculated t-value was 3.838, which was greater than the tabular value of 1.96 at a significance level of 0.05 with 499 degrees of freedom. This indicates that this dimension was highly significant from the perspective of the research sample.

2. For the dimension of abusive supervision, the sample's mean was 9.174, with a standard deviation of 2.853. The hypothetical mean was 9, and the calculated t-value was 1.364, which was less than the

tabular value of 1.96 at a significance level of 0.05 with 499 degrees of freedom. This suggests that this dimension was moderately significant from the perspective of the research sample.

3. For the dimension of inability to predict, the sample's mean was 9.662, with a standard deviation of 2.776. The hypothetical mean was 9, and the calculated t-value was 5.332, which was greater than the tabular value of 1.96 at a significance level of 0.05 with 499 degrees of freedom. This indicates that this dimension was highly significant from the perspective of the research sample.

4. For the dimension of narcissism, the sample's mean was 8.842, with a standard deviation of 3.491. The hypothetical mean was 9, and the calculated t-value was 1.012, which was less than the tabular value of 1.96 at a significance level of 0.05 with 499 degrees of freedom. This suggests that this dimension was moderately significant from the perspective of the research sample.

5. For the dimension of authoritarian leadership, the sample's mean was 9.028, with a standard deviation of 2.848. The hypothetical mean was 9, and the calculated t-value was 0.220, which was less than the tabular value of 1.96 at a significance level of 0.05 with 499 degrees of freedom. This suggests that this dimension was moderately significant from the perspective of the research sample.

the second objective and the corresponding table:

Objective Two: To identify the work pressures among the employees of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

To achieve this objective, the researcher applied a work pressure scale consisting of (44) items to the research sample, which consisted of (500) male and female employees. The researcher calculated the mean and standard deviation for each work pressure dimension separately. To determine the significance of the difference between the mean and the hypothetical mean for each work pressure dimension, the researcher used a one-sample t-test, as shown in Table (2).

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-Value for the Work Pressure Scale

"Work pressures"	sample	The arithmetic mean	The standard deviation	The hypothetical mean	The t-value calculated	tabular	Significance (0,05)
physiology	500	12,894	3,371	12	5,930	1,96	Significant
workgroup	500	15,688	4,527	15	3,398	1,96	Significant
individualism	500	67,176	13,102	63	7,127	1,96	Significant
organizational	500	43,532	11,851	42	2,891	1,96	Significant

1. Regarding physical pressures, the sample's mean was 12.894 with a standard deviation of 3.371. The hypothetical mean was 12. The calculated t-value was 5.930, which is greater than the tabulated value of 1.96 at a significance level of 0.05 with 499 degrees of freedom. This indicates that the research sample experiences physical work pressures to a great extent.

2. Concerning workgroup pressures, the sample's mean was 15.688 with a standard deviation of 4.527. The hypothetical mean was 15. The calculated t-value was 3.398, which is greater than the tabulated value of 1.96 at a significance level of 0.05 with 499 degrees of freedom. This implies that the research sample experiences workgroup pressures to a great extent.

3. For individual pressures, the sample's mean was 67.176 with a standard deviation of 13.102. The hypothetical mean was 63. The calculated t-value was 7.127, which is greater than the tabulated value of 1.96 at a significance level of 0.05 with 499 degrees of freedom. This suggests that the research sample experiences individual work pressures to a great extent.

4 Regarding organizational pressures, the sample's mean was 43.532 with a standard deviation of 11,851. The hypothetical mean was 42. The calculated t-value was 2.891, which is greater than the tabulated value of 1.96 at a significance level of 0.05 with 499 degrees of freedom. This indicates that the research sample experiences organizational pressures to a great extent.

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