

## Impact Of Toxic Leadership On Organizational Commitment: Validation In The Education Industry

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore nature and process of toxic leadership behaviour in the Indian context. The impact of toxic leadership on organizational commitment is also assessed. When focusing on toxic leadership, many researchers emphasize the symptoms of toxicity (traits) and not the disease (outcomes). There has been limited focus on harmful leadership behaviour and negative effects of such behaviours on people and organizations. However, educational institutions have started recognizing the hostility towards peers and subordinates which makes it important to understand how these behaviours affect workplace outcomes like organizational commitment

**Keywords:** Toxic leadership, Organizational commitment, educational sector, Government colleges

### INTRODUCTION:

For decades, academic researchers focused on how leaders improve their organizations and increase the effectiveness of their followers. Very little research has addressed harmful leadership behaviours and the potential negative effects of such behaviours on the organization and employees. Comparatively more research has investigated constructive, effective or successful leadership. Many theories of positive leadership appeared to assume that ineffective leadership simply reflects the absence of leadership. However it is only recently that researchers have begun to directly explore negative leadership styles. Research on destructive aspects of leadership clearly document that this phenomenon includes a variety of different behaviours that is not limited to the mere absence of effective leadership behaviour. Leaders may actively behave in a destructive manner towards subordinates. The negative behaviours of leaders may include ridiculing their employees in public, forcing employees to endure physical hardships, and promoting divisiveness between work groups or individuals. These behaviours of leaders inflict serious physical and/or psychological harm on their followers.

#### 1.1 Toxic Leadership

**Lipman-Blumen (2005)** defined toxic leaders as “individuals who, by virtue of their dysfunctional personal characteristics, inflict serious and enduring harm on the individuals, groups and organisations, communities and even the nations that they lead.” It is inferred that toxic leaders exhibit an underlying neglect for the well-being of their subordinates, and may even be harmful or abusive (**Flynn, 1999; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Wilson-Starks, 2003**). Many such leaders berate, belittle, and bully their subordinates, hold subordinates responsible for things beyond their control or tasks beyond their job descriptions, and cause their subordinates to work harder and sacrifice more than is reasonable (**Wilson-Starks, 2003**).

Toxic leaders exhibit negative behaviors that tend to decay their followers’ morale, motivation, self-esteem and impose unrealistic workload on the followers. Toxic leaders are abusive; indulge in workplace bullying, harassment, fraud and deception. They tend to be obsessed with power and abuse power to teach followers never to question their decisions or actions. Toxic leaders mislead followers by deliberate lying and distorting or suppressing facts to fulfill personal agenda. They compete with anyone whom they feel has the potential to challenge their position including potential successors and tend to use divide-and-conquer strategies to set people against each other. In order to save their skin, toxic leaders identify scapegoats and put blame on the designated scapegoats for any actions which could go against them (**Lipman-Blumen, 2005**).

#### 1.2 Organisational Commitment

Organizational commitment is defined as a process in which employees internalize the values of the organization, keep on staying at the organization to get the results of their investments on the organization and they think that staying at the organization is a moral and ethical responsibility (**Allen & Meyer, 1990**).

Organizational commitment has been examined in three dimensions:

- 1.) Affective commitment means that the individuals identify themselves with the organization, are happy to be a member of it and are strongly committed to it. Workers having such a commitment to their organizations keep working there because they “want to”, not because they “have to”. (**Nasiri, 2015**).
- 2.) Continuance commitment is related to employee’s staying in the organization considering the price he/she will have to pay such as wage, pension rights and profit sharing if he/she leaves the organization. The fact that the worker keeps working at the present organization

as there are no alternative job opportunities and s/he will experience difficulties in transferring his/her basic skills to another organization constitutes continuance commitment (**Balay, 2000**).

- 3.) Normative commitment is associated with the obligation that employees feel about staying in the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Workers with high normative commitment consider working at the organization to be their duty, and continuing working at the organization to be a proper behavior and an obligation because of their personal values and the ideologies causing this obligation.

Affective commitment is found in the relationship between individual values and organizational values that makes individuals emotionally attached to organizations and gives them a sense of satisfaction in being members of an organization (**Wiener, 1982**). Continuance commitment develops as a result of employees' investments in their organizations. In this situation, the employee thinks that he or she has invested time and efforts and thus is obliged to stay with the organization. Normative commitment is an individual's feeling of moral obligation to stay with an organization (**Meyer and Allen, 1997**).

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 2.1 Studies on Toxic Leadership

It has been observed that dysfunctional leadership was assumed to be simply the absence of effective leadership. According to **Reed (2004)** toxic leadership, like leadership in general, is more easily described than defined, but terms like self-aggrandizing, petty, abusive, indifferent to unit climate, and interpersonally malicious seem to capture the concept. The author suggests in order to detect leaders who might have destructive leadership style, the most important step is to recognize the symptoms. Superiors are in positions to unmask toxic behaviour because they have the authority to counter it. Yet, they might be the last to observe the behaviour unless they are attuned. Subordinates are generally not in a position to address the problem because toxic leaders are characteristically unconcerned about subordinates. Still, toxic leaders need not be tolerated as they are poison to the unit.

**Padilla et al. (2007)** suggested three elements of 'toxic triangle', that are toxic leaders, susceptible followers and conducive environments, which are responsible for negative organizational outcomes. According to the 'toxic triangle', the characteristics of toxic leadership include negative charisma, personalized power, narcissism, negative life themes, and ideology of hate. Susceptible followers are either conformers or colluders. Conformers accept the authority of toxic leaders, adhere to the instructions given by the leader and due to their unsatisfied needs they are vulnerable to the leader's influence. Colluders support the toxic leaders and contribute to toxic vision of the leader. The third element of the toxic triangle is the conducive environment which supports the toxic leaders to succeed in their personal

agenda. This environment is created in weak organizations which have unstable systems, unethical culture and no systems to have checks and balances on usurping power and control.

### 2.2 Studies on Organisational Commitment

**Azeem (2010)** investigated the relationships of demographic factors (age and job tenure) and job satisfaction with organisational commitment among employees in the Sultanate of Oman. A moderate significant positive relationship among job satisfaction facets, demographic factors, and organisational commitment was found. The results of the study also indicated that age and job tenure were the significant predictors of organisational commitment. These results are consistent with previous studies that older workers have more commitment to their organizations than the younger ones and the longer the employees stay with an organization the more time they have to understand the organization and their relationship with it.

**Battistelli et al (2016)** examined the contributions of perceived organisational support (POS) and organisational commitment (i.e. affective, continuance and normative) to self-competence among nurses. In high-POS environments, workers benefit from socio-emotional resources to improve their skills, while positive forms of commitment (e.g. affective commitment) create a fertile context for developing one's competencies. A cross-sectional study was conducted among the nursing staff of two Italian urban hospitals. A structured questionnaire was administered individually to the nurses. The results showed that POS was positively related to self-competence through affective commitment. In contrast, continuance and normative commitment did not mediate this relationship. The study shows that supporting employees through caring about their well-being as well as fostering positive forms of organisational commitment increases nurses' self-competence.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Need & Rationale for the Study

The majority of studies on leadership have focused on the positive aspects of leadership more so than the destructive ones. Although an understanding of effective leadership is vital for developing managers and supervisors, it is equally important to identify the behaviours of leaders who knowingly or unintentionally inflict enduring harm on their constituents and the impact of such behaviours on employee's organisational attitudes. Hence it became imperative to study these behaviours and understand its impact on the employees. In Indian context no major research has been done on toxic leadership and its impact on organisational commitment.

### 3.2 Scope of the Study

The study is limited to:

- Union Territory of Chandigarh.
- Indian Education Sector

### 3.3 Research Objectives of the Study

1. To study the various dimensions of Toxic Leadership and Organisational Commitment in the select government colleges.

2. To examine the relationship and impact of Toxic Leadership on Organisational Commitment among the teachers in select government colleges.

3.5 Research Design

This will be a cross-sectional study with self-reported data.

3.6 Variables of Study

The proposed research design will have the following variables:

- **Independent Variable:**

Toxic Leadership- the study proposes 5 dimensions under toxic leadership: Self-Promotion, Abusive supervision, Unpredictability, Narcissism, and Authoritarianism.

- **Dependent Variables:**

Organisational Commitment – the study proposes 3 dimensions under organisational commitment: affective, normative, and continuance.

3.7 Sources of Data

Self-administered questionnaires will be used to ask questions from the respondents to explore and collect the information about their opinion, attitudes, behavior and demographics.

3.8. Sampling Method

The study will use random sampling.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Various statistical analyses like descriptive analysis, correlation and linear regression analysis were performed to arrive at the results. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 20) was used to analyse the data.

Overall profile of the respondents was examined. Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations and reliabilities (Cronbach’s alphas) for all the variables used in the study were used to describe the demographic profile.

**Table 1. Demographic Profile**

<b>Gender</b>	Females	100	66.67%
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<b>Age</b>	Males	50
	Between 21 and 30 years	81
	Between 31-40 years	61
<b>Years of service</b>	Age 41 or above	8
	Less than 1 year of service	20
	1 to 3 years of service	26
	4 to 5 years of service	45
	More than 5 years of service	59

**Cronbach Alpha** for the dimensions and overall were also calculated for the variables are displayed in the table below:

**Table 2- Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients** N=150

Self-Promotion	.830
Abusive supervision	.730
Unpredictability	.691
Narcissism	.789
Authoritarianism	.880
Affective commitment	.655
Continuance commitment	.743
Normative commitment	.734
Overall	.728

Since, according to Nunnally (1978), an alpha coefficient of 0.7 or higher is necessary for an exploratory research or survey to be considered reliable, this questionnaire can be therefore be regarded as reliable.

**H01: No significant difference exists in organization commitment between male and female employees.**

Independent samples t-test was performed for examining the difference among male and female employees for commitment displayed towards the organization.

**Table 3 - Independent samples test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
T_OC	Equal variances assumed	.929	.337	1.030	148	.305	1.91814	1.86292
	Equal variances not assumed			1.004	91.966	.318	1.91814	1.91071

It can be concluded that no significant difference exists between both genders for organization commitment towards the institution. Null hypothesis is accepted at  $t(148) = .337, p > 0.05$ .

Simple regressions was used to test the hypothesised relationship between the predictor (TL) and the criterion (OC). The analysis indicated that there was TL score and OC Score were significantly correlated,  $R = .734$ ,  $R\text{-square} = .538$  and adjusted  $R\text{-square} = .518$ ,  $F(5, 144) = 26.57, P < 0.05$

**H02: There is no significant impact of toxic leadership on Organisational Commitment among the teachers under study.**

**Table -4 Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.734 <sup>a</sup>	.538	.518	4.77471	1.410

- a. Predictors: (Constant), SELF-PROM, ABUSE, UNPERDICTA, NARCISS, AUHORITY
- b. Dependent Variable: OC\_SCORE

**Table – 5 ANOVA Model**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	3029.640	5	605.928	26.578	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	2598.951	144	22.798		
Total	5628.592	149			

**Table – 6 Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	26.890	4.668		5.760	.000
SELF-PROM	.721	.161	.462	4.483	.754
ABUSE	-.786	.225	-.305	-3.487	.001
UNPERDICTA	.355	.106	.280	3.362	.001
NARCISS	-.161	.045	.318	3.539	.382
AUHORITY	-.051	.059	-.063	-.878	.001

- a. Dependent Variable: OC\_SCORE

The regression model would look like:

$$T\_ORG\ COMMIT = 26.89 - .786\ ABUSE + .355\ UNPERDICTA - .051\ AUHORITY$$

It can be concluded from the above table that three dimensions of toxic leadership i.e. Abusive supervision, Unpredictability and Authoritarianism have a significant impact on Organizational commitment of teachers while as Self-Promotion and Narcissism dimensions had no influence for employees of this sector.

## CONCLUSION

No organization and its employees are perfect, and businesses face situations when even the best managers behave badly. These might increase stress levels temporarily but unless they are not sustained, they do not result in toxic work environment. Harassing the employees or showing other such behaviours can worsen the toxicity in the workplace. Organizations and HR must take preventive measures in order to avoid escalation of these issues in a hostile work environment. The results indicated that continuance commitment level of teachers have the least value while as normative commitment is having the most value. Thus it can be concluded that teacher's commitment levels for the college was not dependent on the economic interest mostly. Also, the high levels of affective and normative commitment means that teachers could identify with the college they work for and feel obligated to devote themselves for the work they were associated with.

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