TRICKLE DOWN EFFECT OF THE TOXIC LEADERSHIP PANDEMIC ON EMPLOYEE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE WORK BEHAVIOR: IN RETROSPECT TO SDGs, LAWS, REGULATIONS, AND ILO PROVISIONS

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ABSTRACT

The global prevalence of toxic leadership has transcended to pandemic levels, instigating a spectrum of dysfunctional organizational fiascos, including counterproductive work behavior, all in violation of laws, regulations, ILO provisions, and SDGs. The toxic leadership pandemic has violated at least six SDGs, affecting over 10% of employees worldwide. The prevalent toxic pandemic transcends suffering from an increase in health expenditure as a consequence of bullying and harassment while translating into higher employee burnout and turnover rates. With a focus on the trickle-down effect, this study highlights the extent of the pandemic, with the constructive aim to examine how toxic leadership can have an exponential impact on employees' behavior at the workplace. The current study found that the literature supports the notion that perceived organizational support mediates the link between toxic leadership and employees' counterproductive work behavior. This pragmatic study proposes a conceptual model that will be useful for leaders, legislators, regulators, and policymakers in diverse organizations/sectors as they develop strategies to counter toxic leadership and encourage positive workplace behavior. This study opens new avenues for the body of knowledge on toxic leadership and how it affects behavior at work in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Toxic Leaders; Leadership; Toxic Leadership Pandemic; Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB); Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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INTRODUCTION

As toxic leadership has been shown to have detrimental consequences on employee well-being (Ahmed et al., 2020), creativity, and organizational performance in recent years (Ahmed et al., 2023; Schyns & Schilling, 2013), scholars have grown more interested in the subject in recent years. Toxic leaders can harm their employees through bullying, micromanagement, and power abuse, according to Bhandarker & Rai (2019). Employees may engage in counterproductive work behavior as a result of these actions, which have the potential to produce an unsatisfactory work environment, devoid of creativity. Bhandarker and Rai (2019) elaborate further that this encompasses behaviors including sabotage, theft, and absenteeism.

Background

According to the "trickle-down" theory of toxic leadership, a toxic work environment can develop when a leader's behavior spreads to their staff (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). The association between toxic leadership and counterproductive work behavior (CWB) is mediated by perceived organizational support (POS), a major variable. According to (& Eisenberger, 2002), POS relates to how employees view the level of support their company offers for their contributions and well-being, including creativity. Inadequate levels of perceived organizational support (POS) may lead to retaliatory acts or coping methods, such as counterproductive work behavior (CWB), as employees may believe their company is not supporting them, and their creativity is wasted.

It is important to investigate the link between counterproductive work behavior (CWB), toxic leadership, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), which may act as a moderator. Mahembe and Engelbrecht (2014) defined OCB as behaviors that go above and beyond an employee's outlined job responsibilities and enhance the effectiveness and success of the organization as a whole, while losing the synergies of creativity. Aquino et al. (2018) claim that toxic leaders might foster a hostile workplace where workers' contributions are not appreciated, discouraging OCB.

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the relationship between toxic leadership and counterproductive work behavior at Pakistan's higher education institutions (HEIs), which violates Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), International Labor Organization (ILO) provisions, and national and international laws and regulations. This study will especially look at perceived organizational support (POS) and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Pakistan offers a special environment for studying (Qureshi et al., 2023) the brewing toxic pandemic because of its deeply ingrained patriarchal and hierarchical culture, as well as the

challenges that higher education institutions must overcome, in the backdrop of SDGs, ILO provisions, laws and regulations.

Toxic Leadership and Its Violations: Detailed Analysis of SDGs, Laws, Regulations, and ILO Provisions

Toxic leadership significantly impacts employee well-being and productivity (Ahmed et al., 2020), including creativity, violating various frameworks designed to promote sustainable development, labor rights, and fair treatment at work. This analysis focuses on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), laws, regulations, and International Labour Organization (ILO) provisions violated by toxic leadership in the context of employee work behavior, covering international, U.S., European, and Pakistani laws.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Violated by Toxic Leadership

SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing

SDG 3 aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages. Toxic leadership, often characterized by abusive supervision, harassment, and unreasonable demands, contributes to a hostile work environment that can lead to severe physical and mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and cardiovascular diseases (Kelloway & Barling, 2010).

Mental and Physical Health

Toxic leadership negatively impacts employees' mental and physical health, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and burnout. The hostile work environment created by toxic leaders can exacerbate mental health issues, undermining SDG 3, which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all.

Workplace Safety

SDG 3 also emphasizes workplace safety. Toxic leadership can lead to environments where psychological safety is compromised, thereby violating the principles of this goal (Iqbal et al., 2021).

SDG 4: Quality Education

Impact on Academic Quality

Toxic leadership in HEIs impairs the quality of education by fostering an environment of fear and non-cooperation. It undermines the potential for innovative teaching and research, thereby impeding the achievement of SDG 4, which focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education.

Equitable Learning Environment

SDG 4 promotes equitable learning opportunities. Toxic leadership, which often includes favoritism and discrimination, contradicts these principles, leading to disparities in educational outcomes.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Toxic leadership can manifest in gender-based discrimination, harassment, and inequality, violating this goal by perpetuating gender biases and reducing the empowerment of women in the workplace (Einarsen et al., 2011).

Gender Discrimination

Toxic leadership often reinforces gender biases, creating barriers for women in HEIs. Such leadership practices violate SDG 5, which seeks to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Gender-based discrimination, harassment, and unequal opportunities are exacerbated under toxic leadership, hindering progress toward this goal (Ali & Knox, 2020).

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

SDG 8 promotes sustained, inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work, preferably driven by technology. Toxic leadership undermines this goal by creating toxic work environments that result in high employee turnover, decreased productivity, loss of creativity, and poor job satisfaction.

Workplace Decency

Toxic leadership creates a work environment that is hostile and unproductive, directly opposing SDG 8's goal of promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

Employee Engagement and Productivity

The demotivation and disengagement caused by toxic leadership lead to decreased productivity, stifling the economic potential of HEIs (Javed et al., 2019).

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

Toxic leadership often involves favoritism, discrimination, and exclusion, contributing to inequalities within organizations. SDG 10 focuses on reducing inequalities within and among countries, a goal fundamentally at odds with toxic leadership practices (Einarsen et al., 2011).

Workplace Inequalities

Toxic leadership exacerbates inequalities within HEIs by promoting discriminatory practices and favoritism. This directly violates SDG 10, which aims to reduce inequality within and among countries.

Social Cohesion

By creating a divided and unequal work environment, toxic leadership disrupts social cohesion, further widening the gap between different employee groups.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

Institutional Integrity: Toxic leadership undermines institutional integrity and governance, contradicting the objectives of SDG 16, which seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable institutions.

Workplace Justice: The unjust practices associated with toxic leadership, such as retaliation and unethical behavior, hinder the development of strong, transparent, and accountable HEIs (Rasool et al., 2021).

International Laws Violated by Toxic Leadership

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948

Article 23 of the UDHR states that everyone has the right to just and favorable work conditions. Toxic leadership practices violate this right by creating an unhealthy and unsafe working environment (United Nations, 1948). Further, Articles 1 and 23 of the UDHR emphasize dignity, equality, and the right to work in favorable conditions. Toxic leadership contradicts these principles by creating hostile and discriminatory work environments.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966

The ICCPR protects individuals from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Toxic leadership, especially when it involves psychological abuse or harassment, violates this covenant by subjecting employees to demeaning and harmful treatment (United Nations, 1966).

United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

Toxic leadership in HEIs violates these principles, which emphasize the need for businesses, including educational institutions, to respect human rights and ensure safe and dignified work environments.

U.S. Laws Violated by Toxic Leadership

Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA), 1970

OSHA mandates that employers provide a workplace free from recognized hazards that could cause death or serious harm. Toxic leadership, by fostering a psychologically unsafe

environment, can be considered a violation of OSHA's standards regarding workplace safety (American Psychological Association, 2017).

Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII)

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of (1964) prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Toxic leadership can lead to discriminatory practices that violate this law, particularly when such leadership is expressed through harassment or unequal treatment (Gordon, 2017).

This law prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin; toxic leadership often involves discriminatory practices that would violate this law if applied within the US context.

European Laws Violated by Toxic Leadership

Equality Act 2010 (United Kingdom)

This act makes it illegal to discriminate against anyone based on protected characteristics such as age, gender, or race. Toxic leadership often involves discrimination and harassment, violating this law by fostering a hostile work environment (Lewis & Gunn, 2007).

European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights, 2000

Article 31 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000) guarantees fair and just working conditions for employees without any discrimination. Toxic leadership, which undermines workers' dignity and safety, breaches these essential fundamental rights (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018), by fostering an oppressive work environment.

EU Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions (2019)

This directive emphasizes the need for clarity and fairness in employment relationships. Toxic leadership often involves manipulation and unfair practices that contravene these principles.

Pakistani Laws Violated by Toxic Leadership

Pakistan Employment of Children Act, (1991)

While primarily focused on child labor, the principles of safe and dignified work conditions extend to all employees, and toxic leadership violates these principles by creating hostile work environments.

The Protection Against Harassment at the Workplace Act, 2010

This essential Pakistani law enacted in 2010 by the parliamentary consensus and legislation – *"The Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act",* aims to protect women

from any type or form of harassment at work, whether physical or mental. Toxic leadership often includes behaviors that can be construed as harassment, making it a stark violation of this fundamental legislative act (Shaikh, 2015).

Toxic leadership in HEIs can involve harassment, particularly against women, violating this act. The act aims to create a safe working environment free from harassment for all employees, which is undermined by toxic leadership.

The Factories Act, 1934

Although outdated, the pre-partition Factories Act of 1934, upheld by Pakistan after its independence, mandates that employers ensure the health and safety of workers. Toxic leadership, which endangers the mental and physical health of employees, contravenes this provision fundamentally (Ahmad & Ahmad, 2014).

International Labour Organization (ILO) Provisions Violated by Toxic Leadership

ILO Convention No. 155 - Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981

This convention requires the promotion of safe and healthy working conditions. Toxic leadership, which creates a hostile and stressful work environment, violates the principles of this convention (International Labour Organization, 1981).

ILO Convention No. 111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958

This convention prohibits discrimination in employment and occupation. Toxic leadership that involves discriminatory practices or favoritism violates this convention (International Labour Organization, 1958), violates this convention by creating unequal opportunities within HEIs.

ILO Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998)

This declaration emphasizes the right to fair treatment at work. Toxic leadership, through its discriminatory and abusive practices, directly contravenes these principles.

ILO Convention No. 190 - Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019

This convention addresses violence and harassment in the workplace. Toxic leadership that involves psychological violence and harassment directly contravenes the provisions of this convention (International Labour Organization, 2019), to eliminate such behaviors in workplaces globally.

Summary: Toxic Leadership & Its Violations of SDGs, Laws, Regulations, & ILO Provisions

Toxic leadership not only negatively impacts employee behavior, creativity, and well-being but also violates various international goals, laws, regulations, and ILO provisions. The breaches

of the SDGs, particularly in relation to health, decent work, and equality, underline the incompatibility of toxic leadership with the broader aims of sustainable development. Similarly, national, and international laws and conventions underscore the illegality and unethical nature of toxic practices in leadership. Addressing toxic leadership is essential to ensuring compliance with these frameworks and promoting a healthy, fair, and productive work environment, preferably fuelled by technology.

Salient Policy Tactical Benefits

Addressing toxic leadership within Pakistani HEIs is crucial for aligning with international standards, promoting mental health, ensuring gender equality, and fostering decent work environments. By enforcing relevant laws and regulations and adhering to ILO provisions, HEIs can enhance institutional integrity, contribute to the achievement of multiple SDGs, and create a more equitable and productive educational environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Toxic Leadership: An overview of the magnitude of its prevalence

Toxic leadership is a significant concern in organizations, which can result in adverse outcomes for both individuals and the organization (Hussain et al., 2022), and a clear violation of legislated law which infringes at least six SDGs. Previous studies have investigated the negative effects of toxic leadership on various aspects of employee well-being (Ahmed et al., 2020), such as job satisfaction, organizational loyalty, and intention to leave the organization. (Bhandarker & Rai, 2019).

According to Bhandarker & Rai (2019), the toxic leadership trickle-down effect suggests that the negative conduct of toxic leaders can permeate their subordinates, leading to a toxic atmosphere within the company. The effect that has been discussed in the literature could potentially have a significant impact on higher education institutions (HEIs). A study by Renn et al. (2011) found that academic institutions frequently have hierarchical structures and deal with challenges such as political unpredictability, a lack of resources, and academic dishonesty.

Global Statistics on Toxic Leadership & Its Influence on Employee Work Behavior

Toxic leadership is a pervasive issue affecting organizations worldwide. Characterized by behaviors such as abusive supervision, manipulation, and coercion, toxic leadership significantly impairs employee well-being (Ahmed et al., 2020), job satisfaction, creativity, and overall organizational performance (Ahmed et al., 2023; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). This

section provides a detailed overview of global statistics on toxic leadership and its tangible detrimental effects on employee work behavior, supported by credible references.

Global Prevalence of Toxic Leadership

High Incidence of Abusive Supervision

Abusive supervision, a key component of toxic leadership, is alarmingly prevalent worldwide. Studies estimate that between 10% and 16% of employees globally experience abusive supervision at some point in their careers (Tepper, 2007). In the United States alone, it is reported that nearly 13% of employees experience abusive behavior from their supervisors (Harvey et al., 2007). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, research shows that approximately 1 in 4 employees have experienced bullying or abusive behavior from their bosses (Einarsen et al., 2011).

Global Survey on Workplace Bullying

Toxic leadership often manifests through workplace bullying, a problem affecting a significant percentage of the global workforce. According to a 2020 study by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), about 15% of workers in the UK reported being bullied at work within the last three years, with a substantial portion attributing this behavior to toxic leadership (CIPD, 2020). Similarly, in Australia, around 10% of workers reported experiencing bullying, with leadership identified as a major contributing factor (Safe Work Australia, 2018).

Employee Turnover and Burnout

Toxic leadership is strongly linked to high employee turnover and burnout rates. Research indicates that employees who experience toxic leadership are 75% more likely to leave their jobs within the first two years (Gallup, 2017). Moreover, burnout rates are significantly higher in workplaces led by toxic leaders, with studies showing that 77% of employees who report burnout also cite poor leadership as a primary cause (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009).

Tangible Detrimental Effects of Toxic Leadership

Impact on Employee Mental Health

Toxic leadership has severe implications for employee mental health. Employees subjected to abusive supervision and toxic leadership are more likely to experience stress, anxiety, and depression. A meta-analysis by Zhang and Liao (2015) found that toxic leadership is a significant predictor of psychological distress, leading to symptoms such as sleep disturbances, fatigue, and reduced self-esteem. Long-term exposure to such environments can lead to chronic mental health issues, including clinical depression (Harms et al., 2017).

Decreased Job Satisfaction and Productivity

Job satisfaction and productivity are critically impacted by toxic leadership. Employees working under toxic leaders report lower job satisfaction and are often disengaged from their work, resulting in a loss of creativity. Research by Tepper et al. (2007) shows that toxic leadership leads to a 33% reduction in employee productivity. Additionally, job satisfaction levels drop by 40% among employees who experience toxic leadership, contributing to lower morale and a negative organizational culture (Tepper, 2007).

Increased Absenteeism and Health-Related Costs

The stress and burnout caused by toxic leadership often result in increased absenteeism and health-related costs for organizations. A study by the American Psychological Association (APA) found that toxic work environments contribute to 550 million lost workdays annually in the U.S., costing employers nearly $500 billion in absenteeism, healthcare expenses, and lost productivity (APA, 2017). Employees who work under toxic leaders are more likely to take sick leave, and in extreme cases, may develop chronic health conditions requiring long-term medical care (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012).

Organizational Costs Due to Turnover and Legal Issues

Toxic leadership can lead to substantial financial losses for organizations due to high employee turnover and legal disputes. It is estimated that replacing an employee can cost up to 150% of their annual salary, which can be a significant burden on organizations with high turnover rates caused by toxic leadership (Gallup, 2017). Additionally, toxic leadership may result in legal challenges, such as lawsuits related to harassment or wrongful termination, further exacerbating organizational costs (Lewis & Gunn, 2007).

Overall Tangible Detrimental Effects of Toxic Leadership

Toxic leadership is a global issue that has far-reaching consequences for employees and organizations alike. The statistics underscore the prevalence of this destructive leadership style and highlight the severe, tangible effects it has on employee mental health, job satisfaction, productivity, creativity, and organizational costs. Addressing toxic leadership is crucial to fostering healthier, more productive workplaces and reducing the substantial human and financial costs associated with this pervasive problem.

Intangible Detrimental Effects of Toxic Leadership

The indirect and intangible detrimental effects of toxic leadership are numerous, with far-reaching consequences, even impacting foreign remittances and bank deposits, while allegedly

ignoring and turning a blind eye to green motivation and environment management. Toxic leadership seems to be an ingredient in questionable corporate governance, which would be despised in both Islamic and conventional corporate governance and instrumental in instigating the financial collapse while compromising the competitive advantage gained from technology. Further, toxic leadership diminishes the influence and motivation of front-desk staff's service quality at higher education institutes on students' affective commitment, trust, and word-of-mouth.

Mediating role of Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

Perceived organizational support (POS) has been found to play a significant mediating impact between toxic leadership and counterproductive work behavior (CWB) among employees. The word "POS" relates to how employees view the level of assistance provided by their business toward their well-being and overall job performance, according to Eisenberger et al (1986). According to previous studies, it has been found that employees who perceive insufficient levels of organizational support may be more likely to engage in counterproductive work behavior (CWB), such as absenteeism or theft (Akhtar et al., 2018; Ugwu et al., 2023).

Influence of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

It has been proposed that the relationship between toxic leadership and counterproductive work behavior can be influenced by organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). According to Organ's (1994) definition, OCB refers to voluntary actions that exceed an employee's assigned job responsibilities and contribute to the overall success and performance of the organization (Ahmed et al., 2023; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). According to (Zaabi et al., 2018), an unappreciative work climate generated by toxic leaders may result in a decline in OCB.

Research focus

The core purpose of this research is to highlight the prevalent magnitude of toxic leadership and instigates counterproductive work behavior among employees at Pakistani higher education institutions, to uphold the spirit of enacted laws, in compliance with ILO provisions and SDGs, by proposing a framework based on proposition supported by literature. Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and perceived organizational support will be the primary focus of the study.

In retrospect of the global and local magnitude of toxic leadership, a pragmatic constructive approach has been initiated to address and mitigate the issue, gravitating closer to ILO provisions and SDGs. Thus, the strategy employed has been to construct an initial framework,

which can be deployed to analyze the prevalent toxic leadership pandemic in higher education institutions of Pakistan, as these constitute the fundamental national grooming arena; as a pragmatic tactical step forward, eradication of the toxic leadership pandemic in these pivotal institutes will contribute to the eventual remedy, although somewhat distant, yet gravitating closer to the ILO provisions and SDGs. Thus, the central goal of this study is to close a knowledge gap by examining the specific circumstances of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Pakistan and suggesting an initial constructive framework. Certain work settings' hierarchical and patriarchal structures, together with the obstacles they face, may mitigate the consequences of toxic leadership on employees associated with HEIs.

Propositions

Toxic Leadership and Employee Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB)

Toxic leadership has a negative impact on the well-being and productivity of employees, as well as creativity. Toxic leadership is characterized by abuse, intimidation, and manipulation, which can create a stressful and uncomfortable work environment; all of these are in clear violation of local and global laws, regulations, ILO provisions, and SDGs. As per the findings of the previous studies, there exists a direct correlation between toxic leadership and counterproductive work behavior (CWB) exhibited by employees. Toxic leaders have been found to be associated with a decline in respect and trust due to their unethical and immoral conduct. (Mawritz, Dust, et al., 2014; Mawritz et al., 2023; Mawritz, Folger, et al., 2014). Furthermore, individuals who operate in settings with detrimental leadership may experience discontent and a lack of drive, resulting in unfavorable actions such as non-attendance, theft, and intentional harm to company assets (Ahmed et al., 2018; Brohi, et al., 2018). The prevalence of hierarchical and patriarchal cultures in Pakistani higher education institutions may reinforce toxic leadership behaviors. Based on research, there appears to be a positive correlation between toxic leadership and counterproductive work behavior among employees. Based on the findings, it is recommended:

Proposition 1: Toxic leadership will have a positive relationship with employee counterproductive work behavior (CWB) in HEIs in Pakistan.

Toxic Leadership and Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

According to Kiazad et al. (2014), there is a correlation between toxic leadership and decreased levels of perceived organizational support. As a consequence of toxic leadership, subordinates may perceive a hostile work environment. Based on previous research conducted by (Eder & Eisenberger, 2007; Eisenberger et al., 1986), the findings suggest that a decrease in employee

POS may lead to decreased job satisfaction, increased turnover intentions, and decreased job performance (Ahmed et al., 2023; Schyns & Schilling, 2013); clearly, all serious concerns for the proponents of SDG compliance. When employees are subjected to toxic leadership, they may perceive that their well-being is not a priority for the organization, resulting in a decrease in their loyalty, commitment, and creativity. Therefore, it is proposed:

Proposition 2: Toxic leadership will have a negative relationship with perceived organizational support (POS) in HEIs in Pakistan.

Toxic Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

Toxic leadership and organizational citizenship behavior are found to have a strong inverse relationship. This shows that workers who experience toxic leadership have a lower propensity to engage in OCB, with tendencies to breach labor laws, ILO provisions, and SDGs. There is evidence that toxic leadership can have detrimental consequences on work outcomes by adversely influencing employee well-being (Ahmed et al., 2020), job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Mehmood et al., 2018); a manifest violation of labor laws, ILO provisions, and SDGs. According to (Mawritz et al., 2023), a toxic leadership style is linked to lower levels of OCB among workers in Pakistani organizations, potentially breaching national laws. According to the findings, toxic leadership behavior has a negative impact on employees' attitudes and behaviors, making it imperative to address it in order to encourage constructive workplace behavior, in compliance with the SDGs, ILO provisions, and local and global laws. As a result, it is assumed:

Proposition 3: Toxic leadership will have a negative relationship with organizational citizenship Behavior (OCB) in HEIs in Pakistan.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and Employee Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB).

According to Organ (1988), the term "organizational citizenship behavior" pertains to voluntary actions that are not officially recognized or rewarded but contribute to the effectiveness of an organization. Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) encompasses actions such as assisting colleagues, volunteering for additional tasks, and demonstrating dedication to the company. A potential outcome of individuals displaying organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is a reduction in counterproductive work behavior (CWB). This may be due to the fact that OCB can foster feelings of loyalty and attachment towards one's workplace. Based on the research conducted by (Henderson et al., 2020), it is expected that there will be a negative correlation between OCB and employee CWB. Individuals with OCB

tend to be motivated by a sense of duty and accountability towards their organization, resulting in an increased moral obligation to maintain the organization's principles and ethics. It is possible that employees who perceive a sense of responsibility or moral obligation may exhibit reduced engagement in Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB). Moreover, individuals who participate in Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) may experience higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational satisfaction, which reduces the likelihood of engaging in unfavorable conduct. Consequently, our research suggests the following:

Proposition 4: Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) will have a negative relationship with employee counterproductive work behavior (CWB) in HEIs in Pakistan.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Employee Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB)

A few studies (Bal, 2020; Wang et al. 2020) have found that there is a negative correlation between perceived organizational support (POS) and counterproductive work behavior (CWB). This means that employees who feel that their organization provides them with higher levels of support are less likely to exhibit CWB; clearly a notion that should be nurtured and strengthened. According to recent studies, including the research conducted by (Bal, 2020), there is evidence to suggest that there is a negative correlation between POS and CWB in organizations based in Pakistan. In a study conducted by Wang et al. (2020), it was discovered that POS can serve as a notable predictor of CWB and may potentially decrease its prevalence among employees in HEIs located in Pakistan. These findings emphasize the significance of organizational backing in mitigating counterproductive work behavior and fostering favorable workplace conduct.

Proposition 5: perceived organizational support (POS) will have a negative relationship with employee counterproductive work behavior (CWB) in HEIs in Pakistan.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) as a Mediator

The concept of perceived organizational support refers to employees' beliefs regarding the extent to which their employer values their contributions and prioritizes their well-being. According to the findings of Wickramasinghe & Wickramasinghe (2011), perceived organizational support may function as a buffer against the negative outcomes associated with toxic leadership. Individuals who perceive a substantial amount of support from their organization are more likely to feel a sense of value and admiration, resulting in an increase in their overall happiness and motivation. On the other hand, it has been observed that leaders who exhibit toxic behavior tend to cultivate a work environment that is perceived as unhelpful

by their team members, resulting in a decline in employee perceived organizational support (POS). According to (Kim & Jo, 2022), there is a negative correlation between employee counterproductive work behavior and employee perceived organizational support. Based on our deduced observations, we have developed the following proposition:

Proposition 6: Perceived organizational support (POS) will mediate the relationship between toxic leadership and employee counterproductive work behavior (CWB) in HEIs in Pakistan.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) as a Moderator

According to Schyns & Schilling (2013), there is evidence to suggest that organizational citizenship behavior could potentially mitigate the adverse impact of toxic leadership on employees' counterproductive work behavior; a valuable insight for a complex puzzle to stem the prevalent toxic leadership pandemic. Individuals who display Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) may possess greater resilience towards the adverse impacts of toxic leadership due to their heightened levels of dedication and allegiance towards the company. Additionally, individuals who participate in OCB may exhibit higher levels of motivation to assist their colleagues and make valuable contributions to the overall success of the company, resulting in a greater sense of fulfillment and significance in their job. The sense of meaning and purpose could potentially decrease the probability of participating in harmful actions; this could be an ingredient of the solution to curb the prevalent toxic leadership pandemic. Thus, it is proposed that:

Proposition 7: Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) will moderate the relationship between toxic leadership and employee counterproductive work behavior (CWB) such that the relationship will be weaker when OCB is high.

METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Framework

The primary objective of this research was to examine the possible relationships between toxic leadership, perceived organizational support, organizational citizenship behavior, and employee counterproductive work behavior, in the Pakistani context of HEIs. Employee counterproductive work behavior (CWB) is correlated with toxic leadership and perceived organizational support, and organizational citizenship behavior is inversely related to employee CWB, according to the study's assumptions. The relationship between toxic leadership and employee CWB may be moderated by employee OCB, according to the study's conditional

proposition. The final proposition proposes that the relationship between toxic leadership and employee CWB is mediated by perceived organizational support.
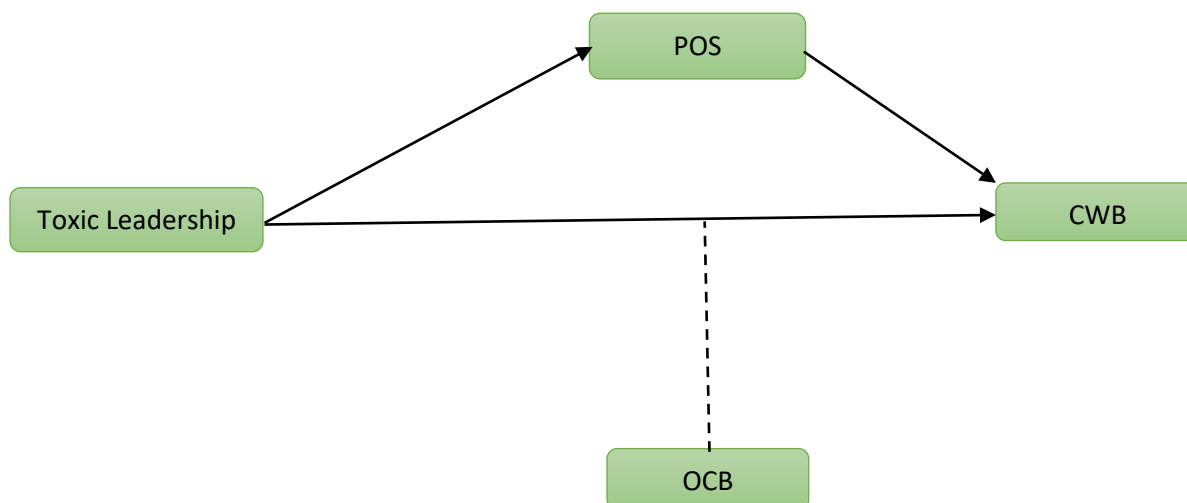

Figure 1: *Conceptual Research Framework*

DISCUSSION

Toxic Leadership in Pakistani Higher Education Institutes (HEIs)

Context of Toxic Leadership

In the context of Pakistani Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), toxic leadership is characterized by destructive behaviors such as authoritarianism, lack of empathy, and manipulation, which can create hostile work environments. The prevalence of toxic leadership in Pakistani HEIs has been linked to organizational inefficiency, reduced job satisfaction, and a marked increase in counterproductive work behavior (CWB). Toxic leadership undermines academic integrity and fosters a culture of fear and disengagement, leading to significant challenges in achieving institutional goals (Ahmad & Kaleem, 2020).

Toxic Leadership and Employee Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB)

CWB in Pakistani HEIs

Counterproductive work behavior (CWB) encompasses actions that harm the organization, including absenteeism, reduced productivity, and workplace incivility. In Pakistani HEIs, toxic leadership is a primary driver of CWB, as employees under such leadership are more likely to disengage, resist directives, and even sabotage institutional efforts. Research shows that employees exposed to toxic leadership in HEIs report higher levels of stress, burnout, and

withdrawal behaviors, leading to a deterioration of both academic and administrative functions (Malik et al., 2020).

Influence of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

OCB in the Context of Toxic Leadership

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) refers to voluntary behaviors that contribute to the organizational environment. In Pakistani HEIs, OCB is critical for fostering collaboration and innovation. However, the presence of toxic leadership significantly diminishes OCB, as employees become less motivated to go beyond their formal job roles. While some employees may initially engage in OCB as a coping mechanism, prolonged exposure to toxic leadership typically results in a decline in such positive behaviors, exacerbating organizational dysfunction (Iqbal et al., 2021).

Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

POS as a Buffer Against Toxic Leadership

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) refers to the extent to which employees believe their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. In Pakistani HEIs, POS can serve as a critical mediator between toxic leadership and CWB. High POS can mitigate the negative impacts of toxic leadership by providing employees with a sense of security and support. Conversely, low POS amplifies the detrimental effects of toxic leadership, leading to increased CWB and reduced OCB. Strengthening POS through transparent communication, fair practices, and supportive leadership is vital for minimizing the harmful effects of toxic leadership in HEIs (Javed et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

Theoretical Contribution

The theories have far-reaching implications for leadership, especially given the globally prevalent notion of a toxic leadership pandemic permeating the work arena. By understanding the effects of toxic leadership, perceived organizational support, and organizational citizenship behavior on employees' counterproductive work behavior, researchers can recommend strategies for cultivating constructive leadership approaches and enhancing employee welfare, creativity, and productivity. Understanding the moderating role of OCB allows researchers to identify employees who are most resilient to the negative effects of toxic leadership and support their positive behavior in order to foster a thriving organizational climate, thus moving closer to harnessing the benefits of ILO provisions, SDGs, laws, and regulations.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This research provides a comprehensive overview of the various legal, regulatory, and international standards violated by toxic leadership in Pakistani HEIs, along with their implications for achieving key SDGs.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)

Addressing toxic leadership in HEIs is crucial for improving mental health and reducing stress among employees, aligning with SDG 3.

SDG 4 (Quality Education)

Mitigating toxic leadership enhances the quality of education by fostering a positive academic environment, thereby supporting SDG 4.

SDG 5 (Gender Equality)

Toxic leadership often disproportionately affects women in HEIs. Implementing gender-sensitive leadership policies support SDG 5 by promoting equal opportunities.

SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)

Promoting fair and supportive leadership practices contributes to decent work environments and organizational growth, aligning with SDG 8.

SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities)

Reducing the negative impacts of toxic leadership helps in addressing power imbalances and fostering inclusive environments, supporting SDG 10.

SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)

Strengthening institutional governance and accountability in HEIs supports SDG 16, which focuses on building peaceful, just, and inclusive institutions.

Laws and Regulations

International Laws

Pakistani HEIs should align with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to ensure that leadership practices do not infringe on the rights and dignity of employees. These principles promote ethical leadership and provide a framework for addressing toxic behaviors.

US Laws

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits employment discrimination, offers a model for protecting employees in HEIs from the discriminatory and harmful effects of toxic leadership.

European Laws

The EU's Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions emphasizes fairness and transparency, which can help HEIs in Pakistan implement policies that reduce the occurrence of toxic leadership.

Pakistan Laws

Harassment of Women in the Workplace Act (2010) EC) guidelines to include specific provisions against toxic leadership, alongside existing laws like the Protection Against Harassment of Women in the Workplace Act (2010), can help mitigate the impact of toxic leadership in HEIs.

International Labour Organization (ILO) Provisions

ILO Convention 190

The ILO's Convention on Violence and Harassment (C190) provides a comprehensive framework for addressing workplace violence, including the psychological harm caused by toxic leadership. Pakistani HEIs should adopt the principles of C190 to ensure a safe and supportive working environment.

Salient Policy Tactical Benefits

Enhanced Organizational Health

Implementing policies to counter toxic leadership promotes mental health, reduces CWB, and enhances organizational citizenship behavior, leading to a healthier and more productive workplace.

Alignment with Global Standards

Adopting international frameworks such as the ILO provisions and UN principles ensures that Pakistani HEIs meet global standards, enhancing their reputation and reducing legal risks.

Achievement of SDGs

Addressing toxic leadership directly contributes to achieving multiple SDGs, fostering a sustainable and inclusive educational environment.

Improved Legal and Regulatory Compliance

Strengthening laws and regulations to address toxic leadership ensures compliance with national and international legal standards, protecting both employees and institutions.

These recommendations emphasize the need for Pakistani HEIs to adopt comprehensive strategies that not only address the immediate impacts of toxic leadership but also align with broader sustainable development goals, legal requirements, and international labor standards.

Future Studies

Future research may collect data from staff members working in HEI associated organizations, as well as seek to extend the suggested framework to different organizations/sectors using a cross-sectional survey methodology. Structural equation modeling may be employed to investigate propositions and the relationships between related phenomena, such as empowerment, job enrichment, and servant leadership variables may be used. The results can significantly advance the body of knowledge on employee well-being (Ahmed et al., 2020) and leadership by illuminating the effects of toxic leadership, perceived organizational support, and organizational citizenship behavior on employee CWB. The findings can also provide important insights for Pakistani scholars and practitioners on the importance of encouraging positive leadership behaviors and creating a supportive work environment.

Furthermore, once the framework evolves and matures, it could be used to enhance and refine the impact of sustainable green management (Ahmed et al., 2020), renewable energy, and diminishing agricultural pollution (such as Ahmed et al., 2022), as the pandemic of toxic leadership permeates a broad spectrum of industries.

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