



The Managerial Traits Responsible for the Disappearance of Employees in the Organisation !!!

Sonali Banerjee and Sweta Bannerjee

EasyChair preprints are intended for rapid dissemination of research results and are integrated with the rest of EasyChair.

May 17, 2023

The Managerial traits responsible for the disappearance of employees in the organisation !!!

By Sonali Banerjee & Dr Sweta Bannerjee

Abstract

It is a saying in the corporate circle that Employees do not leave the organisations, they leave their Managers. This is a question which is very important to answer especially as organisations are dealing with Great Resignations. The attrition rate is at its peak and increasing. Unless something is done about it differently the situation may not change. It may need a deeper look at the causes. What are the factors which trigger the employees to think about leaving the organization? This question actually makes us realise how very important is leadership in the organization. Sadly toxic lethal Managers are a reality and are present in the organization making the environment lethal. These lethal Managers with their bad behaviour and selfish interest make the work environment toxic making it difficult for employees to stay in the organisation for a longer period of time. These lethal managers make the environment stressful creating unnecessary work pressure, and unhealthy competition between colleagues thus making the workplace psychologically unsafe for the subordinates thus depleting the organization of its value creation.

Key words: toxic lethal leadership, destructive leadership, egocentric leadership, dysfunctional leadership

Introduction

Toxic Lethal behaviors in managers are a common phenomenon happening in the organisation for a long time. Every person working in a corporate setting may have experienced toxic lethal behaviours in their professional life at least once. These Toxic lethal behaviors are not only detrimental to the growth of organisation but also leaves a negative impact in the minds of employees. p [Goldman, 2009a; Lipman–Blumen, 2005a], toxic management [Lubit, 2004; Niehus, 2011], toxic organizations, and toxic workplaces [Frost, 2003; Kusy and Holloway, 2009.

There is lot of literature on Toxic behaviours and Management, however in this short study we tried to find the behaviours of the managers which had an impact on the employees resulting in the exit of the employees.

Literature Review

Toxicity is very damaging and has adverse effects on employees. It is even more harming if the leadership display toxic behavior and this encourages others to medel their behavior resulting in destructive and toxic culture in the organisation. (Burton, J. P. (2009). The great leader project. *Organization Management Journal*, 6(2), 69-75.)

The toxic lethal behaviours are so detrimental that it brings about negative outcomes for the organisation. Data suggests that half of the members in leadership roles are not able to meet the organisational results due to the toxic behaviors. Most employees have reportedly said that the unpleasant part of their roles are their Managers. Many refer to their Managers as tyrants, narcissists, abusive, bully, Hitler, psycho, uncaring. These say all about the engagement of employees. Time and again it has been proven that productivity and engagement of employees are at its lowest when managers display toxic behaviors. (Ready, D. A. (2004). The characteristics of great leader-builder companies. *Business Strategy Review*, 15(3), 36-40)

Some researchers refer to Toxic and lethal leadership as a process. They highlight patterns such as narcissism or self-importance and other patterns that are associated with isolation and unfaithfulness (e.g., Hogan & Hogan, 2001; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006) or behaviors like control, bullying, oppression, and one-way communication (e.g., Howell & Avolio, 1992). From this viewpoint, Toxic and lethal leadership is something Managers do, independent of the consequences from these Patterns. Some researchers weigh down the adverse consequences faced by organizations and their representatives, including external stakeholders, (House & Howell, 1992; O'Connor et al., 1995; Sankowsky, 1995) or personally by the Manager (e.g., the literature on career derailment; McCall & Lombardo, 1983). Either way, Toxic and lethal leadership results in adverse outcomes. Chua, S. M. Y., & Murray, D. W. (2015). How toxic leaders are perceived: Gender and information-processing. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*.

Toxic managers' damaging actions and traits can make people, Teams, organizations, and societies badly and perpetually broken (Kellerman, 2004) Kellerman, B. (2004). *Bad leadership: What it is, how it happens, why it matters*. Harvard Business Press.. Toxic Lethal Managers are those that demonstrate their ugly side in a way that would have a detrimental effect not only on individuals but on the whole company and its ecosystem (Reed 2004). The toxicity of these Managers hampers the growth of employees and the organisation and also the organisation culture through the deteriorating organisation environment and climate. It is important to know as an organisation the toxic behaviors and the managers who are displaying these behaviors. The toxic environment is so lethal that it slowly grips the whole organization resulting in a downward fall of the business, and their reputation and thereby destroying the value created. (Orren, K., Skowronek, S., & Karen, O. (2004). *The search for American political development*. Cambridge University Press.)

As researched by Frost (2003), negative emotions in the employment world are a disturbing situation where undesirable feelings are more deepened and include mental duplication, separation, and exhaustion phases. In the mental duplication phase, the individuals are unable to understand an adverse experience that affects them and employees are unable to comprehend the damaging outcomes of the repetitive adverse experiences. When this phase is over these employees experiencing these adverse environments separate themselves from their colleagues, environment, workplace. In the exhaustion phase, the employees are overwhelmed with so many negative emotions that they are depleted of any real

energy for anything else. In many other types of research, it appears that this lethal Manager's venom is so lethal that it spreads like wildfire to other parts of the organization Lubit, R. H. (2003). *Coping with toxic managers, subordinates... and other difficult people: Using emotional intelligence to survive and prosper*. FT Press.

Managers with these Toxic Lethal behaviors to increase their control do aggressive propaganda of their vision and the way to achieve it, this unconsciously blinds the employees and to cope with uncertainty without thinking much trying to adhere to the illogical norms as set by the toxic leaders, thus this environment which is not conducive thrives. (Mergen, A., & Ozbilgin, M. F. (2021). Understanding the followers of toxic leaders: Toxic illusion and personal uncertainty. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 23(1), 45-63.)

Research Intension

To study and find the behaviors of the managers which create toxic environment in the organization which had a negative impact on the employees resulting in the exit of the employees.

Research Methodology

Our current study is based on analysing exit interview data of 158 ex employees as provided by companies in IT, Finance and Services sector (under anonymity) where the attrition rate was reported higher.

Research Findings

In the study of these organisations which had reported a record high attrition rate as compared to their previous years, one thing that came out very starkly was their Managers. Supervisors or first-line managers are very critical to the organisations. They are the ones who bind the staff to the organisations. So if the Managers are caring and respect the staff members they can bring the trust factor and the emotional connect of the staff with the organisation. And if the Supervisors or the Front-Line managers spread negativity by selfishly thinking about them, creating an environment of mistrust, which creates toxicity and building a psychologically unsafe environment. (Tastan, S. B. (2017). Toxic workplace environment: In search for the toxic behaviours in organizations with a research in healthcare sector. *Postmodern Openings*, 8(1), 83-109.)

In the course of this study few behaviors of the Managers came into focus which were common in all these companies which had nothing in similar right from the domain, to the size, turn over etc and more over no connection with each other. So these factors reiterates the facts that Managers are important and they have a pivotal role in building the culture of the organisation. Some behaviors of Managers which are absolutely not conducive to the wellbeing of the employees are as under:-

1)Unmannerly Management

In the study by, Tepper (2000) defined Unmannerly Management as, “team member’s opinions to the extent to which Managers involve in the continuous demonstration of unpleasant verbal and nonverbal behaviors, not including physical contact” (p. 178), and unmannerly management includes subjecting the subordinates or team members behaviors which could be termed obnoxious acts like (e.g., “telling the report or the work is stupid, brainless work,” “saying insulting words in from of other colleagues which are very demeaning,” “putting the burden of failure to the subordinates, freeing themselves”. (Tepper, B. J., Simon, L., & Park, H. M. (2017). Abusive supervision. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 4(1), 123-152.

This unmannerly Management has been one of the major causes of people leaving their bosses. Demeaning the subordinates makes the employees lower their self-esteem, making them feel small. It creates alienation from their managers and triggers them to search for another role either within or outside of the current organisation.

Also as per research since these unmannerly behaviors are done clandestinely, other members are unaware of the behaviors towards their colleagues, this could be easily ignored by others as mere misunderstanding and which could be more damaging. (Martinko, M. J., Harvey, P., Brees, J. R., & Mackey, J. (2013). A review of abusive supervision research. *Journal of organizational behavior*, 34(S1), S120-S137.)

The way and the extend to which the Managers engaged in unmannerly behavior effects the way these employees would think themselves to be victims of the organizational injustice, which would, in turn, affect their choices to resign, their perception of job satisfaction, life satisfaction, organizational commitment, and there are more chances of conflict between work and family life, Causing psychological anguish.(Tepper, B. J. (2000). Consequences of abusive supervision. *Academy of management journal*, 43(2), 178-190.)

2)Self absorption- abusing power for self interest

Self Absorption trait of leaders is compared to having a chocolate cake (Campbell, 2005; Campbell, Hoffman, Campbell, & Marchisio, 2011). The initial taste of a chocolate cake is extremely awesome, creamy, rich, and melts in the mouth. After a few bites, the same texture, taste, and sweetness makes one nauseated.

Similarly the followers perceive the self absorbed leaders initially as chocolate cake (e.g., Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006) Smooth, creamy and tasty. Some models (Campbell, Brunell, & Finkel, 2006; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001) describe Self-absorbed individuals with positive, bloated egos, and who employ ways to enhance their self-views. Thus, self-absorbed leaders would be expected to aspire for the positions of leadership, because such positions will help to promote their selves (Campbell & Campbell, 2009). Thus from the perspective of subordinates or followers , the self absorbed leaders possess certain qualities which initially looks very attractive like extroversion.They are very social, smooth and effective talkers and are publicly skilled. (Oltmanns, Friedman, Fiedler, & Turkheimer, 2004) and emerge very genial (Paulhus, 1998).They are very good at managing their image. Outside of being extroverts, they

also seem to be very charismatic (Khoo & Burch, 2008), they perform well in Civic chores and problematic situations (Roberts, Callow, Hardy, Woodman, & Thomas, 2010; Roberts, Woodman, Hardy, Davis, & Wallace, 2013; Wallace & Baumeister, 2002; Woodman, Roberts). Exhibit lot of promise and control (Bradlee & Emmons, 1992; Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994) Thus able to win the confidence of members easily

However, with expanding social connects and exposure, others view self-absorbed leaders less positively as they are more egotistic, bad listeners, talk highly of themselves, and has over confidence in their capabilities (Paulhus, 1998). These kind of Managers donot allow other members to be in the limelight by not letting them share their ideas, in some instances proposed their Team members ideas as their own. The employees suspect them and are guarded against being backstabbed by their managers, so they donot share the information with others. Such organisations where managers and team are not gelling and sharing may let the company go down spirally faster.

Stein, M.J. (2013). When Does Narcissistic Leadership Become Problematic? Dick Fuld at Lehman Brothers. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 22, 282 - 293.

3)Erratic Behavior

In the world of uncertainty and unpredictability in business, employees get turned off by the erratic behavior of their supervisors. The erratic behavior as per employees interviewed were that their supervisors had different rules for different personnel which was not fair. Today behaving in a certain manner and reacting in a particular and the very day they respond in a totally different way, leaving the employees confused, dizzy and stressed. (Direction, S. How to mitigate the impact of visceral behaviors: A fine line between passionate or immature, stubborn, weak and unpredictable leaders.)

In this business world when there is so much chaos, the employees expect a bit more stable environment to flourish. Employees get confused, worked up and unable to make sense of things when there is no transparency from their Managers. They feel let down, being treated unfairly and develop contempt for their leaders and which spirals to the organisation and this becomes one of the reasons for their feeling left out, not being able to add value to themselves. They conclude that there is no opportunity for growth in the organization with these erratic lunatic leaders. They feel no longer engaged with their work, their roles and the organization. Once that disengagement sets in they start to look for other opportunities and ultimately quit. (Baker, R., & Newport, S. (2003). Dysfunctional managerial behavior in the workplace: implications for employees, supervisors, and organizations. *Problems and perspectives in management*, (1), 108-113.) Some behaviors of the managers on top of being erratic also demanding type which is again not attractive behavior for subordinates and they try to disassociate themselves from such managers.(Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1976; Donaldson, 1996; Manz & Sims, 1987; Walton, 1985; Weick, 1976, 1979), have indeed concluded that demanding leadership may be a stumbling block rather than a doorway to the success story of the organisation. McKelvey (in

press) covers this disagreement ahead by proposing that even charismatic leadership is demanding and obstructs the abundance of employees' collective capital, thus, completely diminishing the ability of the organization to innovate resulting in its subsequent decline in all aspects of growth and sustainability.

Marion, R., & Uhl-Bien, M. (2001). Leadership in complex organizations. *The leadership quarterly*, 12(4), 389-418.

4) Micromanaging

Another behavior which came out of the study which is detrimental to the retention of employees is the Manager's trait of Micromanaging.

Most managers aren't aware that they're micromanaging. Many of the managers are pleased to hear that they "run a tight ship" or that "the buck stops here." They may feel they're giving their employees guidance and help. But actually, they do not believe in their employees that they can do it, they feel that they are not capable or mature. They want them to avoid any wrongdoings and therefore are at their back to check. Actually, this micromanagement makes the employees woeful and actually leads to less productivity. They feel suffocated when they are not able to take a very simple decision and have to go for approval. The feeling makes them think that they are being boxed with no freedom and feel trapped making them totally dis engaged .it leads to poor long-term performance and eventually the loss of the organization.

(Staninger, S. W. (2012). Identifying the presence of ineffective leadership in libraries. *Library Leadership & Management*, 26(1).

These kind of Managers are so much control freaks , that they are not happy to give the empowerment to others, They want to call all the shots. They always want to be in control and keep checking if the team members are doing it or wasting the time.

They spend their time in telling how to do it and not why to be done. They are totally transactional. This is one of the factors which is a irritant for employees . The employees under such leader who is micromanager loose confidence in themselves as their every movement is being watched over by their manager. Their whole time goes in managing their managers expectations and approvals. Their growth is stunted and their capabilities are not being utilized which leave them in thinking that their career is moving nowhere triggering them to leave the organisation. (Amabile, T. M., Schatzel, E. A., Moneta, G. B., & Kramer, S. J. (2004). Leader behaviors and the work environment for creativity: Perceived leader support. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15(1), 5-32.)

5) Unjust Treatment

Employees get dismayed by the unjust treatment of their leaders.

Managers, and other leaders, are often subject to simple, but grave, biases and judgemental errors when making important organizational decisions. Sometimes these errors and biases produce decisions that result in adverse outcomes. Humans by instinct are inclined towards just behavior however this ideology is shaken when employees see or are subjected to unfair treatment in the organisation it could be conscious or unconscious.

(Eberlin, R., & Tatum, B. C. (2005). Organizational justice and decision making: When good intentions are not enough. *Management Decision*.)

When employees observe blatant violations of norms, their rights and their voice not being heard they are totally distraught. Some follow their leaders steps and follow them and some try to raise their voice, when their voices are being ignored and no concrete steps are being taken they decide to quit.

Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, P., & Suárez-Acosta, M. A. (2014). Employees' reactions to peers' unfair treatment by supervisors: The role of ethical leadership. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 122(4), 537-549.

All these behaviors of the Managers are detrimental to the organization as well as to individuals. It creates an environment of distrust, making members feel insignificant, unimportant, and psychologically unsafe.

Conclusion

Any organisation where employees are not able to trust the managers, feel that they are stuck with no growth, their voices are not being heard, they feel insignificant , it creates an environment which is psychologically unsafe and so they ultimately quit the organisation.

The organisations can do a lot better if the values of the organisation are being followed by their leaders and they walk the talk to demonstrate and any violations by any of the members are dealt with seriously. The managers are held accountable for any kind of violations.

The managers are being trained and are being made aware of their unconscious biases and be mindful of their actions and decisions. Employees' voices are being heard and actions taken on the same which makes the place psychologically safe.

Managers play a key role in the retention of the employees they can make the workplace for the employee a great place to grow, thrive, innovate, create value for themselves, the organization, and the world, or make it an unsafe place where they feel insignificant, unsafe, violated and the worst place to be in.

References

Kilic, M., & Günsel, A. (2019). The dark side of the leadership: The effects of toxic leaders on employees. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(2), 51-56.

Padilla, A., Hogan, R., & Kaiser, R. B. (2007). The toxic triangle: Destructive leaders, susceptible followers, and conducive environments. *The leadership quarterly*, 18(3), 176-194.

Tavanti, M. (2011). Managing toxic leaders: Dysfunctional patterns in organizational leadership and how to deal with them. *Human Resource Management*, 2011, 127-136.

Chua, S. M. Y., & Murray, D. W. (2015). How toxic leaders are perceived: Gender and information-processing. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*.

Burke, R. J. (2017). Toxic leaders: Exploring the dark side. *Effective Executive*, 20(1), 10.

Kusy, M., & Holloway, E. (2009). *Toxic workplace!: Managing toxic personalities and their systems of power*. John Wiley & Sons.

Goldman, A. (2008). Company on the couch: Unveiling toxic behavior in dysfunctional organizations. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 17(3), 226-238.

Tastan, S. B. (2017). Toxic workplace environment: In search for the toxic behaviours in organizations with a research in healthcare sector. *Postmodern Openings*, 8(1), 83-109.

Eberlin, R., & Tatum, B. C. (2005). Organizational justice and decision making: When good intentions are not enough. *Management Decision*.

(Direction, S. How to mitigate the impact of visceral behaviors: A fine line between passionate or immature, stubborn, weak and unpredictable leaders.)

Amabile, T. M., Schatzel, E. A., Moneta, G. B., & Kramer, S. J. (2004). Leader behaviors and the work environment for creativity: Perceived leader support. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15(1), 5-32.

(Staninger, S. W. (2012). Identifying the presence of ineffective leadership in libraries. *Library Leadership & Management*, 26(1

Marion, R., & Uhl-Bien, M. (2001). Leadership in complex organizations. *The leadership quarterly*, 12(4), 389-418.

Stein, M.J. (2013). When Does Narcissistic Leadership Become Problematic? Dick Fuld at Lehman Brothers. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 22, 282 - 293.

Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, P., & Suárez-Acosta, M. A. (2014). Employees' reactions to peers' unfair treatment by supervisors: The role of ethical leadership. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 122(4), 537-549.