MBA Innovation, Digitalization & Entrepreneurship

Toxic management - how to discover, prevent and cure negative impacts to productivity of individuals, teams and organizations

A Master's Thesis submitted for the degree of
"Master of Business Administration"

supervised by
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Vienna, 04.03.2024

Affidavit

I, **JOSIP SABAN**, hereby declare

1. that I am the sole author of the present Master's Thesis, "TOXIC MANAGEMENT - HOW TO DISCOVER, PREVENT AND CURE NEGATIVE IMPACTS TO PRODUCTIVITY OF INDIVIDUALS, TEAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS", 75 pages, bound, and that I have not used any source or tool other than those referenced or any other illicit aid or tool, and
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Abstract

Toxic managerial practices are present in various organizational landscapes, spanning both established corporations and startup ecosystems. This thesis is aimed at gaining new perspectives, cultivating awareness regarding subject impacts and equipping them with actionable insights for confronting such environments and individuals. The author provides a comprehensive definition of toxic management, including its manifestations and repercussions within the contemporary academic and professional literature, proposing a correlative relationship between toxic managerial practices and a myriad of adverse organizational outcomes. This thesis further defines one possible methodological framework tailored for empirically validating existence of managerial toxicity, thereby augmenting the empirical foundations underlying referenced state of the art. Central to the research objectives is the aspiration to create an organization characterized by psychological well-being and interpersonal harmony. Recognizing the lack of resources available to individuals navigating toxic workspaces, this work provides guidance, facilitating the identification of underlying dynamics and orchestrating informed interventions. The empirical analyses are enriched by referenced literature, particularly concerning the detection of toxic environments and the mitigation of associated psychological ramifications, including self-doubt and undue self-attribution of blame. Empathy emerges as a key construct, with empirical evidence based on individual experiences and exposures to toxic management paradigms. Multiple sources indicate a common ground, encompassing novices and seasoned professionals alike, pertaining to many faces of toxic management. Upon encountering patterns of toxic dynamics, initial responses frequently manifest as skepticism, indicative of entrenched biases and cognitive dissonance. Furthermore, empirical findings corroborate the ramifications of toxic managerial practices on organizational vitality, encompassing diminished productivity, stifled innovation, and compromised long-term viability across entities of varying magnitudes. Concluding, this research aspires to serve as an enlightening compass for emerging professionals, bringing to light the imperatives of proactive vigilance and the adoption of resilient organizational frameworks, thereby safeguarding against the encroachments of toxic management on organizational efficacy and vitality.

Acknowledgements

The process of earning an MBA degree, while simultaneously working a full-time job, is a challenging and time-consuming journey, and it is not a task that can be achieved alone. The successful completion of the MBA program and this master's thesis was made possible through the invaluable support and contributions of my academic mentor, professors, colleagues, and all those who are dear to me. Although it required long working hours, the effort was worth it, as the aim was not solely to obtain academic title, but to enrich our experiences gained throughout the MBA program and create a secure environment where we can confront our weaknesses and enhance our abilities as leaders and lifelong learners. The people around me played an instrumental role in making this possible, and I sincerely hope that our paths will continue to cross in personal and professional circles in the future.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all those individuals who have had to endure toxic environments in their workplaces or personal lives. I have attempted to demonstrate that there is another way. As in medicine, it is better to prevent than to cure, and dealing with the issue of toxic managers can significantly reduce the emotional distress that many individuals experience in the workplace, decrease the resulting waste of energy, and enhance productivity and well-being. This thesis is aimed at all managers out there, encouraging them to learn about better ways of conducting themselves and to strive to change their ways.

It is my sincere hope that this work will inspire thought and reflection.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to the thesis

In today's professional world, managers abound, occupying positions in teams, departments, divisions, and boards. At every level and in all types of organizations, one can find individuals who have landed in managerial roles unsuited to their skills, causing issues for themselves and their subordinates, either due to incompetence or naivete. Some managers are excessively benevolent, while others are downright unpleasant. There are those who are incapable of remembering the names of their employees, and some who shirk their own duties. Regrettably, some are so inept that their companies would have been better off had they never been appointed, as they do not add any value and cause more harm than good. In the past, the responsibilities of managers were straightforward: to provide leadership and delegate tasks. If a manager was successful in doing so, they were considered to be doing their job adequately. Today, professional requirements for managers have changed, especially with the engineering management movement, and those who think in directive terms find their career options quite limited.

The primary goal of this thesis is to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of toxic management styles, thereby fostering greater empathy and appreciation among readers for individuals grappling with these deleterious circumstances. The focused nature of this work aims to equip readers with insights that enable the cultivation of a healthy work environment. Furthermore, this work seeks to provide valuable guidance and resources for individuals currently navigating toxic work environments, empowering them to recognize the dynamics at play and offering avenues for support and intervention. Finally, this study endeavours to serve as a cautionary guide for prospective professionals in pursuit of their educational aspirations, enlightening them about the potential hazards of toxic management and motivating the adoption of proactive measures to avert adverse consequences on organizational profitability, productivity, and morale.

Empathy, an integral aspect of interpersonal dynamics within organizations, appears to vary considerably among individuals based on their exposure to toxic management. The breath of exposure to such managerial practices often leads individuals to possess limited empathic tendencies toward those who have endured these detrimental experiences. Regardless of their professional background, encompassing

both students and seasoned business personnel, some may remain unfamiliar with the intricacies of toxic management styles. When confronted with narratives of toxicity, initial reactions tend to reflect a scepticism rooted in individual biases and misperceptions. Such reactions may encompass attributions of personal inadequacy or discontentment on the part of those sharing their encounters with toxic managers, culminating in recommendations for career changes as a supposed resolution. However, personal encounters with the realities of toxic management can dispel such misconceptions and offer insights into the gravity of its impact.

1.2 Research problem

This master thesis endeavours to investigate two key facets of managerial toxicity. Firstly, it aims to provide ways of identifying toxic managers, and secondly, it seeks to explore appropriate strategies for individuals already under the purview of such managerial figures. A critical aspect of this study involves comprehending our distinctive personal attributes while recognizing the hierarchical dynamics within a work environment, where one individual exercises authority over others. Managers bear a heightened burden of accountability, as they are entrusted with addressing problematic issues and devising effective resolutions. Although managers may face pressures from various sources, such as uncomfortable interactions with their own superiors, they remain duty-bound to oversee and support their subordinates. Utilizing personal stress as an excuse or claiming a lack of time is unacceptable. As managers, they must be responsive to the needs of their employees and proactively strive to cater to those needs. The exploration of these managerial dynamics is indispensable in fostering a work culture characterized by empathy, empowerment, and constructive leadership, ultimately leading to enhanced organizational performance and employee satisfaction.

Workplace bullying and toxicity manifest themselves in various forms, encompassing verbal affronts, menacing threats, coercive tactics, and even physical confrontations. Additionally, toxic work environments are often symbolized by absence of organizational support, communication breakdowns, inequitable treatment, and an overarching aura of hostility. The repercussions of workplace bullying and toxicity are manifold and far-reaching. Affected individuals often grapple with diminished job satisfaction, escalated rates of absenteeism, elevated turnover metrics, and a discernible decline in overall productivity. Moreover, the insidious nature of such

toxicities can precipitate a myriad of physical and psychological ailments, including but not limited to anxiety disorders, depressive manifestations, and an assortment of stress-induced maladies. Therefore, the imperative to address workplace bullying and toxicity transcends mere organizational compliance; it is a prerequisite for engineering an environment that prioritizes the holistic well-being of its constituents. Through concerted efforts and unwavering commitment, organizations can aspire to cultivate a work environment that is not only safe and healthy but also conducive to the attainment of overarching organizational objectives and sustained success. This is also made visible in works of (Nielsen et al. 2019), where he deliberates on a correlation between workplace bullying and diminished organizational productivity, coupled with a palpable erosion of employee commitment to the organizational ethos. Furthermore, this study accentuated the role of organizational support mechanisms as instrumental deterrents to the propagation of bullying behaviours, concurrently fostering an environment conducive to employee well-being and holistic development.

1.3 Research aims, objectives, and questions

In pursuit of our overarching goals, this study will concentrate on two fundamental objectives. Firstly, we aim to delineate and explore a series of indicators essential for the identification of toxic managers. Secondly, we will delve into potential strategies to mitigate the detrimental effects that such individuals might have on their companies and the broader work environment. These objectives will be achieved through the formulation of two well-defined hypotheses that will be put to the test through data collection and analysis, utilizing questionnaires, using same structured questions in order to preserve a coherent analysis environment.

The structured questions in this study will be designed to elicit Yes/No or numerical answers, facilitating clear data collection and analysis. However, to allow for a more open-ended approach, participants will have the option to provide free-text input if they wish to expand on their responses or provide additional insights. This flexible approach to data collection aims to accommodate participants' preferences and ensure a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research subject.

The success criteria for this study are contingent on the validation of the following two hypotheses:

Based on the responses obtained, majority results would confirm that key indicators, such as diminished work morale, elevated employee turnover, diminished

professional respect towards other line employees and managers, and limited individual influence on major decision-making processes, can be attributed to the impact of toxic management practices and the prevailing work environment.

Based on the gathered responses, the majority of the results would validate the notion that implementing positive measures, such as providing contemporary leadership style training for individuals in supervisory roles, could lead to a boost in employee morale and a reduction in employee turnover.

The successful validation of these hypotheses will constitute significant progress in understanding and addressing toxic managerial behaviours, leading to valuable insights and practical measures for promoting positive work environments and organizational success. This study will be enriched by the inclusion of a comprehensive list of practical recommendations aimed at empowering both individuals and companies to enhance productivity and mitigate toxic behaviours within their respective environments. These recommendations will be founded on the insights gained from the analysis of indicators and intervention strategies. By offering tangible and actionable guidance, this study seeks to support positive changes within organizations and foster healthier work cultures.

1.4 The structural outline

Introductory chapter of this master thesis establishes the context for the research, introduces the research objectives and questions, and provides a rationale for the significance of the study. Chapter two delves into existing literature and knowledge pertaining to toxic management, identifying relevant sources and referencing them accordingly. Chapter three presents the theoretical framework underpinning the study, justifying the chosen methodological approach, and discussing the broader research design, including its limitations. Chapter four presents the research findings, categorizing and summarizing the data generated during the investigation.

Chapter five involves the analysis and discussion of the collected information from various perspectives and aspects, including an exploration of the research impacts and other pertinent considerations. Chapter six concludes the research by addressing the research questions and providing answers aligned with the research aim.

Chapter 2: State of the art

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the outcomes derived from literature review focusing on the phenomenon of managerial toxicity and workplace bullying. The research encompassed a diverse array of readings, spanning academic works, professional literature, and online articles, collectively offering insights into the subject matter. To ensure coherence and comprehensive coverage, the findings have been categorized thematically, delineating various aspects and perspectives by the respective authors. The organization of the chapter is guided by the relevance and thematic cohesion of the gathered knowledge rather than adhering to a chronological sequence. Toxic management is not confined to a specific level of management; it can be found in small businesses as well as at the highest levels of authority. This style of management leads to high employee turnover and diminished workplace morale due to the gradual erosion of individuals' confidence and self-esteem. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue, it is crucial to explore the various characteristics of the toxic management style. Often, individuals struggle to articulate what they are going through, as it can be a culmination of events over time that eventually take a toll on their well-being.

Before we start with the main literature review, we should define in more detail the concept of toxic management and list its constituent elements. While many individuals engaged in the study of management possess a foundational understanding of what constitutes 'effective' or 'beneficial' leadership, deeper exploration of its adverse manifestations is often overlooked. The term 'toxic' is frequently mentioned with descriptors such as abusive, destructive, narcissistic, and controlling leadership. As discussed in works (Shaw et al. 2015), toxic management is defined as ""the systematic and repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor, or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organization by undermining and/or sabotaging the organization's goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates." Similarly, (Einarsen et al. 2007:208) categorizes toxic management in terms of leadership behaviors, intrinsic human traits, and their ramifications. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that a universally accepted definition of toxic leadership remains unclear, thereby warranting further scholarly inquiry to establish a foundational understanding of this phenomenon. The prevailing definition positions toxic leadership as "intentional or unintentional series of acts that

undermine and discourage those followers who genuinely seek to carry out the mission and vision of the organization, who then become stied in the process of achievement by self-serving leaders who put missional or personal gain above the needs of followers, creating a demoralized state that deteriorates organizations from the inside out". This conceptualization of toxic leadership is important as it distinguishes it from the broader constructs of destructive and abusive leadership. Specifically, while destructive leadership predominantly concerns itself with overarching organizational outcomes, often sidelining the individuals tasked with executing the organizational mandate, abusive leadership underscores negative impacts of toxic interactions within interpersonal relationships. Another definition is given in Workplace bullying institute website (Namie 2023), where toxic management style is "repeated, health-harming mistreatment of one or more persons (the targets) by one or more perpetrators", further explaining that it is "driven by the perpetrator's need to control the targeted individual(s) and initiated by bullies who choose targets, timing, place and methods". A toxic management environment can be attributed to extreme manifestations of both autocratic and laissez-faire management styles.

In the following sub-chapters, the literature will be categorically divided into three classifications encapsulating the concept of toxic management.

2.2 The cost of toxic people and cultures

The term "toxic personality" encompasses individuals exhibiting patterns of counterproductive behaviors that undermine not only individuals but also teams and organizations over prolonged periods. These individuals, often described using various terms such as control freaks, narcissists, manipulators, or bullies, possess the capacity to infiltrate professional and personal spaces, thereby demoralizing and demotivating individuals and teams, ultimately eroding one's sense of competence and productivity.

In severe cases, individuals may experience heightened emotional responses to the toxicity, extending beyond the workplace and impacting familial, social, and emotional spheres. The enduring effects of toxicity may persist even after the departure of the toxic individual, contributing to a lingering negative atmosphere within the organizational ecosystem.

We must underscore the disproportionate impact of negative interactions in the workplace, that exert a more potent influence on individuals' moods compared to positive interactions. Illustrative examples, such as the repercussions of uncivil demands by organizational leaders, highlight the profound ramifications of toxic behaviors on organizational dynamics and stakeholders. Such instances underscore the significance of addressing toxic behaviors comprehensively, considering their potential long-term repercussions on organizational well-being, both in terms of financial ramifications and the toll on human well-being - resulting from the deleterious effects of toxic behavior.

Upon grasping how these toxic individuals derive power from organizational systems, reader will be equipped to effectuate substantial change in their organizations, teams, or communities. It is noteworthy that we emphasize "your organization, team, or community" deliberately, as while leaders undoubtedly play a pivotal role, their interventions will be less efficacious without broader comprehension of the systemic dynamics underlying toxic situations.

Merely addressing the toxic individual is insufficient, as others may have adapted their behaviors in response to the toxic triggers. The onus for effectively dealing with toxic individuals shifts to the system as a whole. Addressing the systemic root causes is the most effective way to mitigate the problem and safeguard the organization from further harm. Toxicity permeates systems, exerting long-lasting effects on organizational climate even after the individual's departure. To combat this, we need both reactive measures to mitigate ongoing toxicity and proactive approaches to cultivate environments inhospitable to toxic individuals, addressing systemic components of toxicity. Identifying and addressing the system surrounding the toxic personality is essential for meaningful change to ensue, ultimately rendering one-on-one interventions more effective.

2.2.1 The Concealed Dimensions of Toxicity

While conventional wisdom often focuses on the visible aspect of toxicity - the individual perpetrating toxic behaviors - it is paramount to recognize the broader impact of this toxic phenomenon on the organization, encompassing both its human and financial ramifications. These consequences, lurking beneath the surface like the submerged portion of an iceberg, have long eluded the direct observation of many leaders and non-leaders alike.

One question is usually encountered: "Do leaders not perceive the detrimental impact of this individual on the team?" The reality is nuanced; while some leaders are cognizant of the situation, others may not be. Moreover, even when leaders are aware, they may be hesitant to intervene for various reasons. However, achieving favorable outcomes in terms of productivity is merely one facet amidst a multitude of adverse effects that can precipitate the organization's downfall.

2.2.2 The Concealed Dimensions of Bullying

One particular manifestation of workplace hostility is bullying, which involves subjecting individuals to a submissive, powerless position to facilitate influence and control, ultimately serving personal or organizational interests. When individuals engage in bullying behaviors, the organization witnesses elevated turnover rates, diminished job satisfaction, decreased organizational commitment, and heightened psychological distress among employees compared to situations involving non-bullies. In fact, incidents of bullying have surged in recent decades. This increase can be partially attributed to the trend of organizations adopting flatter and leaner structures, resulting in fewer management mechanisms to address and mitigate bullying.

2.2.2 Understanding the Mechanisms of Toxic Hiring

Leaders have raised the question: "Can personality assessments serve as a preventive measure by screening out toxic individuals from entering organizations?" This is a hard question to answer, and, while affirmative to a certain extent, comes with qualifications. Indeed, empirical evidence suggests that personality assessments can predict an individual's performance reasonably well, including traits such as conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability. However, these assessments primarily target overt counterproductive behaviors like aggression, theft, and absenteeism.

One might wonder, "Why not simply terminate toxic individuals?" While termination may be warranted in many cases, its implementation is hindered by several factors. Firstly, leaders may lack a structured performance management process, as required by most organizations. Secondly, inadequate HR support or organizational ambiguity

surrounding toxic behavior exacerbates the challenge. Moreover, the process of termination is often protracted, draining, and emotionally taxing for all involved parties. Furthermore, terminating an individual who otherwise meets or exceeds job performance standards poses a dilemma. Our findings underscore the necessity of clearly defined organizational values, integrated into performance management systems, to facilitate decisive action against toxic behavior.

The phenomenon known as the "bad apple syndrome" underscores the insidious influence of toxic behavior within teams. Research indicates that even a single emotionally unstable team member can significantly impair group performance, akin to an entire team comprising emotionally unstable members. Negative relationships within teams exert a more profound impact on job satisfaction and organizational commitment than neutral or positive ones.

The far-reaching repercussions of toxic individuals underscore the imperative of addressing this issue promptly. The impact of toxic individuals permeates the organizational fabric, leading to talent attrition and diminished performance. While toxic individuals may exhibit both overt and covert behaviors, their systemic effects remain largely concealed beneath the surface, akin to the submerged portion of an iceberg.

2.3 Recognizing the Toxic Personality

Toxic people usually present a charismatic facade, effectively concealing manipulative and self-serving tendencies that undermine trust and cohesion. Such narratives underscore the complexity of discerning toxic behavior and its detrimental impact on workplace dynamics.

Understanding the intricacies of toxic behavior is foundational to effecting enduring change within organizational systems. While existing literature often employs typologies to categorize various manifestations of toxicity, reliance on diagnostic labels may prove limiting. Professional psychologists utilize diagnostic frameworks to delineate consistent behavioral patterns; however, a nuanced understanding of toxic behavior transcends mere classification.

Importantly, recognizing toxicity necessitates an awareness of differing perspectives, as individuals may experience toxicity differently based on their vantage points within power structures. Moreover, toxic individuals often adeptly mask their behavior,

strategically altering their demeanor to suit specific contexts and objectives. Leaders must remain vigilant, acknowledging that complaints may not always align with their impressions of individual performance. The recognition of toxic behavior holds significant implications for proactive change strategies within organizational settings.

2.3.1 Three Categories of Toxic Behaviors Leading to Destruction

Profession recognizes three primary categories: shaming, passive hostility, and team sabotage.

Shaming usually shows behaviors such as humiliation, sarcasm, potshots, and mistake pointing as emblematic of shaming behavior. This illuminates the prevalence of abusive conduct within organizational settings. While some instances manifest as overt intimidation, the more insidious verbal humiliations and put-downs are often harder to discern but equally damaging. Such behaviors perpetuate an atmosphere of disrespect and negativity, eroding morale and productivity. The subtlety of shaming behavior complicates the establishment of legal and ethical frameworks to address verbal hostility, often rationalized as constructive feedback. Consequently, leaders frequently overlook these behaviors until their pervasive and destructive nature becomes undeniable, leaving work units poisoned and colleagues demoralize.

Second behavior is passive hostility: passive aggression, distrust of others' opinions, territorial behavior, verbal attacks in response to negative feedback, and a lack of awareness regarding their own toxicity. Identifying these behaviors may not be immediately evident, particularly to those unaccustomed to such dynamics.

Passive-aggressive behaviors are often recognized for their indirect and veiled expressions of anger. Despite being aware of their actions, individuals engaging in passive-aggression choose indirect means to express their dissatisfaction. This behavior, characterized by hostility concealed behind a façade of compliance, is pervasive and enduring. Passive hostility also manifests as a pervasive distrust of others' opinions, hindering collaborative efforts and impeding progress. This behavior subtly undermines teamwork and erodes trust within the organizational framework.

Territoriality, when driven by a need for control and power, transcends natural inclinations towards ownership. Excessive territoriality, often manifesting as micromanagement, stifles creativity, undermines autonomy, and engenders fear among team members.

Toxic individuals often exhibit resistance to negative feedback, denying accountability and deflecting responsibility for their actions. This obstinate refusal to acknowledge constructive criticism impedes personal growth and obstructs efforts to address counterproductive behaviors.

Finally, passive-hostile individuals often exhibit a lack of awareness regarding their own toxic behavior. This obliviousness complicates efforts to address and rectify their actions, as they fail to recognize the impact of their behavior on others.

Passive hostility encompasses a range of behaviors that undermine organizational cohesion and individual well-being. Recognizing these behaviors is essential for implementing effective strategies to address toxicity within the workplace.

Last, but not least, is team sabotaging toxicity - toxic individuals exhibit adeptness in undermining team dynamics, often engaging in behaviors such as surveillance of the team, meddling in teamwork, and abusing their authority to punish others. Toxic individuals frequently engage in surveillance activities, gathering information to leverage against team members. This behavior creates an atmosphere of distrust and intrusion, undermining team cohesion and fostering an environment of suspicion. Toxic individuals often disrupt the team's workflow through meddling and sabotage, hindering progress and productivity. This interference may go unnoticed until its detrimental effects become evident, leading to project failure and team disarray.

When toxic individuals hold positions of authority, they may abuse their power to punish dissenters or coerce allegiance. Bullying tactics and credit appropriation are common strategies employed to maintain dominance and suppress opposition within the team.

In summary, toxic behaviors within teams manifest through surveillance, meddling, and authority abuse, leading to diminished trust, productivity, and team cohesion. Recognizing and addressing these behaviors is crucial for fostering a healthy and productive work environment.

2.3.2 How These Behaviors Contribute to Sustaining Toxicity

An intricate interplay of various behaviors effectively shields toxic individuals from accountability, perpetuating a cycle of toxicity within organizational systems. These individuals employ a range of tactics to evade detection and thwart efforts to address their misconduct. The behaviors outlined across the three types of toxicity - shaming,

passive hostility, and team sabotage - contribute synergistically to foster a pervasive sense of powerlessness within the organizational framework. Consequently, the system becomes acclimated not only to the toxic behaviors but also to a blatant disregard for company objectives and values.

Contrary to the prevailing belief that most individuals would not tolerate toxic behavior, it is usually different: people endure such behavior for extended periods, often at significant personal and organizational costs. This phenomenon can be attributed to several factors within the organizational context that collectively maintain the status quo, a phenomenon known as homeostasis. Similar to familial and group dynamics, organizational systems often resist change, preferring stability over disruption. Despite recognizing the need for change, leaders frequently encounter inertia when attempting to initiate organizational transformations.

Legal thresholds for addressing harassment and abuse in the workplace provide some recourse; however, many aggressive behaviors, both passive and direct, may not meet these criteria yet yield significant consequences.

Three conditions typically facilitate the perpetuation of toxic behavior:

- Relationships with leaders - toxic individuals may enjoy protection based on special relationships with influential figures within the organization.
- Recognition of expertise - perceived as indispensable sources of knowledge, toxic individuals manipulate, intimidate, and bully others to maintain their authority.
- Perceived productivity - despite causing distress and turmoil, toxic individuals may be perceived as highly productive, shielding them from accountability.

Each of these conditions grants toxic individuals a power base that reinforces their behavior, leaving leaders and peers feeling immobilized and unable to challenge the prevailing acceptance of toxicity. It is imperative to dispel the notion that toxic individuals are indispensable to organizational success. While some may possess valuable skills, their overall impact often proves counterproductive, leading to diminished team cohesion and productivity.

In conclusion, toxic behaviors are sustained through a complex web of interrelated factors within the organizational ecosystem, perpetuating a cycle of acceptance and accommodation. Recognizing and addressing these dynamics are essential steps toward fostering a healthier and more productive work environment. Toxicity manifests in various forms within the workplace, transcending demographic

categories such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. It is imperative to recognize that it is the observable behavior itself that holds significance - behaviors that consistently exhibit difficulty, disruption, and persistence. Equipping oneself with the vocabulary to articulate experiences with toxic individuals is crucial for early recognition and mitigation of these behaviors, thereby preventing the spread of toxicity throughout the team and organizational structure.

2.4 How Organizational Culture Contributes to Toxicity

There are multiple ways in which an organization inadvertently fosters toxicity - structural adaptations to accommodate the toxic individual, tolerance of toxicity as long as the individual remains productive, shifts in team climate when the toxic individual is present, lack of awareness among organizational leaders regarding the toxic behaviour, acceptance of less productive team meetings, and may others.

While organizational leaders may not intentionally cultivate an environment conducive to the influence of toxic individuals, their ignorance of these dynamics often serves the interests of the toxic individual rather than the organization's overall well-being.

2.4.1 How Organizational Culture Contributes to Toxicity

Consider your own organization or community. Does the structure adjust based on the demands of the toxic individual? To answer this question, we must understand what we mean by structural change. Restructuring efforts, whether prompted by strategic concerns or the need to manage a toxic individual, have a dubious track record of success. Studies reveal that mergers and acquisitions, a common impetus for restructuring, rarely achieve their intended objectives. Similarly, restructuring to accommodate a toxic individual often leads to failure.

2.4.2 The Organization Tolerates Toxicity, Conditional on Individual Productivity

Let's address the misconception that toxic individuals persist within organizations solely because of their productivity. While some toxic individuals indeed demonstrate

productivity, others do not. When toxic individuals exhibit productivity, organizations frequently adopt a hands-off approach.

This tolerance represents a classic case of enabling behaviour. Those surrounding the toxic individual must recognize that enabling is detrimental not only to themselves but also to the organization. Enabling behaviours manifest in various forms, such as overlooking the individual's outbursts to maintain peace or feigning agreement to avoid confrontation.

Once leaders acknowledge the presence of enabling behaviours, they can uncover the concealed costs associated with allowing supposedly "productive" individuals to persist in their roles. We use "productive" in quotes because while some toxic individuals may appear productive superficially, their achievements are offset by numerous hidden costs, including staff turnover, reluctance to collaborate, and the propagation of passive-aggressive behaviours detrimental to both team dynamics and organizational health.

2.4.3 Less Productive Team Meetings Are Tolerated

Toxic individuals often foster mediocrity within their teams, regardless of their personal productivity. Interestingly, the lowest member's scores in conscientiousness and agreeableness are better predictors of group performance than cognitive ability alone. Furthermore, a team comprising both emotionally stable and unstable members perform as poorly as a group composed entirely of emotionally unstable individuals. This phenomenon illustrates how one toxic individual can negatively influence team dynamics, resulting in demotivation and reduced productivity.

Understanding how organizations contribute to and enable toxic behaviour is crucial for addressing systemic issues effectively. This entails recognizing the interplay between power differentials and systemic factors.

Power differentials play a significant role in how leaders perceive and address toxic behaviour within their teams. Leaders overseeing toxic individuals may be less aware of systemic issues compared to those who do not directly manage such individuals. Leaders often resort to managing the toxic person's performance directly, relying less on organizational values to address toxic behaviour. However, a more effective approach involves aligning individual interventions with broader organizational values.

2.4.4 Developing Values Relevant to Your Organization

Organization level changes emphasize a proactive approach to large-system strategies, with a central focus on developing organizational values that prioritize human respect, dignity, and acceptable behaviours. Organizations with well-defined, behaviourally specific values experienced fewer issues with toxicity. It is imperative for organizations to integrate these values into various aspects of their operations, including policies, performance management processes, 360-degree feedback systems, and leader development initiatives.

Before integrating values into existing systems, organizations must first establish these values. For values development we need a comprehensive process involving input from a diverse range of key stakeholders who have a vested interest in the organization's success, spanning across all functional areas. While some may question the need for stakeholder involvement, proposing to create values solely at the executive level and disseminate them downwards, such top-down approaches are no longer sufficient and may even be counterproductive.

Involving key stakeholders in the values development process yields increased commitment, a stronger sense of ownership, and better outcomes. Values development represents a significant change process, and engaging stakeholders ensures that all perspectives are considered and consensus is reached on the values essential for organizational success. Furthermore, stakeholders collaboratively determine the methods for integrating these values into existing systems, such as performance management processes, 360-degree feedback systems, and leadership development initiatives.

Meaningful involvement of stakeholders in the values creation process is paramount to success. Failure to include key stakeholders often leads to unsuccessful outcomes.

To summarize, organizational culture plays a pivotal role in understanding and addressing toxic personalities. Leaders who grasp the organization's cultural dynamics are better equipped to tackle toxic behaviour effectively. By leveraging a systemic approach and aligning interventions with organizational values, leaders can address toxic behaviour more comprehensively.

2.5 Thematic literature review

2.5.1 Toxic leadership styles

According to Workplace bullying institute (Namie 2023), a toxic management style is "repeated, health-harming mistreatment of one or more persons (the targets) by one or more perpetrators", further explaining that it is "driven by the perpetrator's need to control the targeted individual(s) and initiated by bullies who choose targets, timing, place and methods". A toxic management environment can be attributed to extreme manifestations of both autocratic and laissez-faire management styles.

As defined in Systems approach to small group interaction (Tubbs 2011: 233), "the authoritarian, or autocratic, leader has a high need to maintain control of the group himself or herself. Some might even say that the autocratic leader has an obsession for control." He continues by stating that when the autocratic leadership style reaches the extreme "the leader almost invariably maintains strict control...he or she appears to love placing group members in a 'straitjacket' of restrictions."

On the other side of the spectrum, we find a laissez-faire style that is "the most passive and therefore the least effective of the leader's behaviors; leaders using this style are rarely viewed as effective." (Robbins et al. 2017: 189), continuing to explain that "the laissez-faire style…not only is there no concern for control, but there is no direction, concern for task accomplishment, or concern for interpersonal relationships. The laissez-faire style is not really a style of leadership at all; it is non-leadership." (Robbins et al. 2017: 190)

Should you look for more practical approach, Beating the Workplace Bully (Curry et al. 20), an audio book, gives the reader insights that bullying is no longer confined to the realm of childhood playgrounds; it has infiltrated our workplaces, manifesting itself in various forms from casual exchanges in break rooms to insidious power plays in boardrooms. Discussing perspectives of supervisors or managers, whether you find yourself subjected to manipulation, intimidation, verbal abuse, or calculated humiliation, this work offers a strategic blueprint for resistance. This comprehensive guide is replete with exercises, self-assessments, and real-world anecdotes, designed to empower you to identify the factors that have rendered you a target and equip you with the tools to mount a robust defense.

In the Harvard Business Review article The No Asshole Rule (Sutton 2010) author creates a manual for effectively navigating and surviving the presence of difficult

personalities, encompassing bullies, creeps, jerks, tyrants, tormentors, despots, backstabbers, egomaniacs, and other disruptive individuals who often pose formidable challenges within the workplace environment. The exclamation, "What an asshole!" is a sentiment that countless individuals have uttered in the context of their professional lives. This book resonates with the experiences of many, shedding light on the strategies for effectively addressing such disruptive influences and elucidating why their presence can be profoundly detrimental to organizational well-being, providing practical strategies for identifying and eradicating negative influences from the workplace and illuminating case studies drawn from prominent organizations that exemplify the consequences of tolerating disruptive behavior.

When the departure of one individual is celebrated as an annual occasion, as expressed by the statement, "The day this person left our company is considered an annual holiday.", then you can be sure that this environment is ready for research of toxic management. This quotation, extracted from the research on toxic personalities conducted by (Mitchell Kusy et. al 2009), resonates with the exasperation and bewilderment associated with interacting with or overseeing an exceptionally challenging individual. A solitary toxic individual possesses the potential to incapacitate not only individuals but also entire teams and organizations. Their work, "Toxic Workplace!", addresses the foundational intricacies facilitating the ability of a toxic individual to start a trajectory of devastation within an organization. Interviewing over 400 leaders, many of whom are affiliated with Fortune 500 entities, this book discusses strategies for managing toxic behaviors and formulates norms needed to stop the proliferation or resurgence of toxic environments.

2.5.2 Human traits and behavior indicators of toxic managers

The toxic managers' human behaviours transcend hierarchical boundaries and can be observed in leadership positions across the globe. Numerous prominent world leaders have displayed toxic traits, which have resulted in dire consequences for their nations. One such example is the former dictator of North Korea, Kim Jong Il, whose extravagant lifestyle stood in stark contrast to the plight of his country's residents who faced severe struggles for survival. As stated in the article (McClure 2003)," he uses fear and punishment to control the population and potential opposition, and somehow he's preventing his population from standing against him", continuing to state later that "Hennessy, the maker of Paradis cognac, which sells for a reported $630 a bottle,

confirmed in 1994 that Kim was then the biggest buyer of the cognac, spending $650,000 to $800,000 annually on the liquor since 1992. The average North Korean makes about $1,000 a year."

Continuing with research of toxic management indicators we continue with article (Higgs 2009) The good, the bad and the ugly - leadership and narcissism, where is stated that a "number of central (albeit overlapping) themes which occur within the different typologies, including abuse of power, inflicting damage on others, over-exercise of control to satisfy personal needs and rule breaking to serve own purposes". Similar topic was addressed in the article Toxic corporate culture (Rooij et al. 2018), where authors researched multiple corporate environments, concluding that "detoxing corporate culture requires more than changing leadership or incentive structures. In particular, it requires addressing the structures, values, and practices that enable violations and obstruct compliance within an organization" and later adding that this requires "moving away from a singular focus on liability management (i.e., assigning blame and punishment) to an approach that prioritizes promoting transparency, honesty, and a responsibility to initiate and sustain actual cultural change."

Full of fresh anecdotes, updated references, and contemporary humour, Crazy Bosses (Bing, 2007) offers exploration into the enigma of eccentric bosses. Enthusiasts of television's "The Office" and cult classic film "Office Space" will find resonance in this timeless guide, which examines the ubiquitous workplace phenomenon of eccentric and irrational bosses. Now reimagined for the modern era, the author discerns various archetypes of erratic bosses, including the excessively cerebral leader, the bully, the paranoid supervisor, the narcissist, the bureaucrat gone awry, and the relentless disaster chaser. This comprehensive guide not only aids readers in navigating these trying encounters but also imparts practical strategies on how to effectively cope with such bosses. Crucially, it provides insights into avoiding the transformation into a "crazy boss" oneself.

Offering a pragmatic guide to enhancing communication and permanently dismantling the cycle of emotional blackmail is Emotional Blackmail (Forward, 2019), where author assists you in recognizing and rectifying an intensely harmful and bewildering pattern of interaction with your loved ones. If you ever heard phrases like "If you really loved me...", "After all I've done for you...", "How can you be so selfish..."...then you are met with an instance of emotional blackmail, a potent form of manipulation wherein individuals close to us employ threats of punishment to coerce us into aligning

with their desires. Emotional blackmailers are acutely aware of the value we place on our relationships with them. They possess intimate knowledge of our vulnerabilities and deepest secrets. They may be our mothers, partners, bosses, co-workers, friends, or lovers. Irrespective of their genuine care for us, they leverage this personal knowledge to secure the compliance they seek. Author comprehends the triggers that activate our emotional responses, delving into the anatomy of relationships tainted by manipulation. Moreover, the author arms readers with a repertoire of tools to counteract and resist these forms of manipulation.

If you found yourself in a challenging environment, abundant with inept managers or lethargic colleagues, then you should read the book Surrounded by bad bosses and lazy employees (Thomas Erikson 2021), where the author describes various professional complexities and strategies to achieve positive outcomes. In order to resolve these situations, it is often necessary to manage upwards, skipping hierarchical lines, something that can be particularly daunting when faced with challenging superiors. Building upon the straightforward four-color system, the author discusses how comprehending both your boss's behavioural tendencies and your own can foster a more harmonious and productive workplace. The author outlines the characteristics of an exemplary leader and provides strategies for adapting your behaviour to emulate such qualities. Recognizing the duality inherent in workplace dynamics, the author also scrutinizes employees themselves, shedding light on the reasons behind underachievement and offering actionable advice for instigating positive change.

2.5.3 Ramifications of toxic management

Toxic management often triggers emotions of unfair treatment, as stated in Toxic emotions at work (Frost 2003: 15): "when people believe they've been treated unfairly (especially by their supervisors), they can turn on their organizations, attempting to 'even the score' in any number of ways – at great cost to the organization." On the following pages he continues to explain possible consequences of such actions which can include "acts of revenge, sabotage, theft, vandalism, withdrawal behaviours (withholding effort), spreading gossip, or generally acting cynical or mistrustful can all represent direct and indirect costs to the organization.

Similar results were found in How toxic workplace environment affects the employee engagement (Rasool et al. 2021), where authors state that…"the direct relationship

between a toxic workplace environment and employee engagement confirms that if employees are working in a toxic environment, they will spread negative feelings among other co-workers.", continuing to explain that "feelings that come with a toxic workplace environment…can be detrimental and lead to unnecessary stress, burnout, depression, and anxiety among the workers". They defined a toxic workplace as a relationship between workers and the workplace (not manager), but identified the manager as a person responsible for creating either a collaborative or toxic environment, making a key distinction between job and organizational engagement by stating that…"job engagement leads to employee commitment, which directly deals with dedication and work performance, which routes to organizational development. Organizational engagement is interlinked with employee commitment and employee loyalty".

When looking for a definition of toxic leader, the Toxic human resource management article (Fedorova 2016) defines this person as "a leader, who generates crisis situations inside a company. Identifying the toxic manager at a company can be obtained by comparing his or her individual characteristics with professional features of an effective leader." She presents a simple framework to identify such individuals, by comparing their intelligence and will attributes to leadership attributes, personnel morale and implications to the wider environment, and assigning them to various categories of toxic managers and their impact to companies and employees.

In Rising above a toxic workplace (Chapman et al. 2014) authors provide empathetic counsel to individuals ensnared within degrading work environments. Their compassionate guidance is harmonized with pragmatic recommendations and a rallying cry for fortitude. They show, using relevant stories, how one can take steps to overcome challenges, even when faced with intimidation. This work does not merely offer solace to those seeking respite from such adversities, but also extends its wisdom to supervisors aspiring to cultivate workplaces characterized by principles of integrity, empathy, and mutual trust.

One of the key works in this area is a book Toxic Workplace! (Kusy et al. 2009) as one of the first to address the systemic factors that facilitate the emergence and perpetuation of toxic individuals within organizations. These individuals can instigate a trail of disruption, affecting the thoughts, energies, and overall well-being of their colleagues. Grounded in a research endeavour encompassing over 400 leaders, including prominent figures from the Fortune 500, this book not only delineates strategies for managing existing toxic behaviours but also elucidates the formulation

of norms designed to prevent the resurgence of toxic environments. It ultimately advocates for the creation of organizational communities characterized by respectful and healthy engagement.

Numerous managers exhibit behaviours that can be categorized as detrimental, causing substantial harm not only to their subordinates but also to their organizations and, ultimately, to themselves. Whether these behaviours manifest as narcissism, ethical lapses, rigidity, aggressiveness, or stem from underlying issues such as depression, anxiety, or burnout, the repercussions of working with such individuals can be nightmarish. In Coping with Toxic Managers (Lubit, 2003) author, a notable psychiatrist and organizational consultant, offers a comprehensive guide on how to cultivate emotional intelligence and shield oneself, as well as one's organization, from the influence of toxic managers. While it is true that many organizational consultants draw upon psychological insights in their professional capacities and psychologists consult with organizations, Dr. Lubit's distinctive expertise, encompassing psychiatry, organizational behaviour, and organizational consulting, equips him with a uniquely well-rounded perspective. This vantage point allows him to offer insights that are not only invaluable but also deeply nuanced and tailored to the specific challenges posed by toxic managers in the workplace.

In a professional landscape where encounters with challenging colleagues and frustrating bosses are all too common, the author of Surrounded By Idiots (Erikson, 2021) offers invaluable guidance on how to navigate such situations effectively and accomplish your objectives with finesse. The scarcity of effective leadership is a common issue, and nearly everyone must learn to manage upwards to some degree. However, the quality of bosses can vary significantly, with some proving to be more challenging than others. If you find yourself driven to the brink by a micro-manager, drowning under the weight of unrealistic expectations, or grappling with the burden of delegated responsibilities without corresponding authority, this work stands ready to provide assistance.

In "The relationship between perceived toxic leadership styles, leader effectiveness and organizational cynicism" author (James M. Dobbs 2014) discusses effects of organizational cynicism to employee burnout, emotional exhaustion, turnover, and detrimental impacts on organizational citizenship behaviour, commitment, and overall organizational effectiveness. This study seeks to address gaps in the existing research by investigating the relationship between perceived toxic leadership behaviours, leader effectiveness, and organizational cynicism. The study's results

indicate a discernible relationship between toxic leadership styles and organizational cynicism. Notably, strong evidence suggests that cadets at the Academy who perceive higher levels of toxicity in their commanding officer, particularly in dimensions such as abusive supervision, authoritarian leadership, narcissism, self-promotion, and unpredictability, tend to harbour greater cynicism towards their organization. Among these toxic leadership dimensions, self-promotion emerges as the most significant predictor of organizational cynicism.

As evident, toxic management styles can exert profound repercussions on both internal and external aspects of the organization. If the organization's primary objective is to achieve success in goal attainment, it becomes imperative for leadership to remain cognizant of the potential impact of diverse management styles on their subordinates. It is reasonable to infer that a management style heavily reliant on hostility and fear, even if unintentional, as the primary methods of employee motivation, can only undermine the organization's goal achievement. Similarly, a complete lack of effective leadership is likely to yield comparable outcomes. In such cases, the majority of reported harm to employees stems from the aforementioned hostile approach, rather than a laissez-faire supervisory approach.

The pursuit of a comprehensive understanding of toxicity within individuals and organizations through a thorough literature review has yielded a plethora of references. However, the literature landscape exhibits a conspicuous gap, with relatively scant attention dedicated to the microcosmic individual level. Specifically, there exists a dearth of emphasis on the methodology for collecting employee data that can efficiently gauge the impact of toxic individuals on the lives of those affected. This critical gap, which encapsulates the intricate interplay between individual experiences and organizational dynamics, constitutes the focal point of investigation for this master thesis. Aiming to bridge this evident void, the primary objective of this research endeavour is to explicate and address the aforementioned gap in the extant literature.

The upcoming chapter will dive deeper in research methodology, divulging the intricate rationale underlying the selection of specific principles that underpin the methodological framework.

2.5 Conclusion

As evident, toxic management styles can exert profound repercussions on both internal and external aspects of the organization. If the organization's primary objective is to achieve success in goal attainment, it becomes imperative for leadership to remain cognizant of the potential impact of diverse management styles on their subordinates. It is reasonable to infer that a management style heavily reliant on hostility and fear, even if unintentional, as the primary methods of employee motivation, can only undermine the organization's goal achievement. Similarly, a complete lack of effective leadership is likely to yield comparable outcomes. In such cases, the majority of reported harm to employees stems from the aforementioned hostile approach, rather than a laissez-faire supervisory approach.

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Chapter 3: Description of the methodical approach

3.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this chapter is to establish an alignment between the research design, methods, and strategy with research objectives. This alignment is essential to ensure that the study can provide comprehensive responses to the research questions posed. Key aspects addressed in this chapter include the differentiation of research philosophy, research type, methodological approaches, temporal framework, sampling strategy, techniques for data collection, and procedures for data analysis. Each of these elements is connected to specific research aims, thereby ensuring that the selected methodologies are well-suited to address the research inquiries at hand.

Furthermore, this chapter dives into an exploration of the research limitations, offering a comprehensive assessment of the potential constraints that might exert influence on the study's outcomes. Importantly, these limitations are critically examined to elucidate why they do not render the research irrelevant or invalid.

3.2 Research design

The research philosophy adopted for this study can be described as interpretivism, primarily due to the potential influence of subjective expert and author opinions. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the survey results do not include researchers' opinions, indicating that the study emphasizes objective data analysis. Given the inherently subjective nature of topics related to toxic management, survey responses are treated as such. However, the diversity of interviewees, spanning different age groups and backgrounds, contributes to result dispersion. The results are not solely interpreted at face value but are the product of extensive literature reviews, both from academic and professional sources. The authors' own experiences are minimized to the greatest extent possible.

Given that the goal of this thesis extends beyond the mere validation or refutation of defined hypotheses and aims to provide a broader insight into the subject of toxic management that can serve as a foundation for further research, the research type can be characterized as inductive. Since the research topic revolves around psychology, workplace dynamics, and human behavior, qualitative methods are

imperative. This is especially important given that the main data collection methods involve surveys. To gather valid data in such a deeply personal and nuanced topic, flexibility is essential, as there are often no clear-cut answers. Constructing a quantitative metric for toxic management would pose significant challenges, as it would necessitate the inclusion of cultural, experiential, and personality differences that can vary significantly across age groups, geographical locations, and nationalities.

The collection process unfolds in several iterations as survey subjects become available for participation for surveys or interviews. Since time is not a critical variable within the limited timeframe available for this study, a cross-sectional time horizon is employed. Time in toxic management, unless studied across significantly longer time periods than those available for this thesis, does not constitute a critical variable for the research objectives.

Given that survey data is being collected from individuals representing diverse age groups, countries, and nationalities, and considering that the collected data comprises a plethora of personal opinions influenced by various cultural backgrounds, a non-probability sampling strategy is deemed appropriate. The data collection encompassed participants from five countries: Austria, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia. The sample encompassed individuals ranging from junior employees to seasoned senior managers. Furthermore, recognizing the sensitivity of the subject matter, and acknowledging the legitimate concerns of individuals who fear potential repercussions for openly discussing toxic managers, efforts were made to diversify the industry representation within the sample to ensure its relevance.

The data collection phase spanned one month and involved the administration of structured surveys that allowed respondents flexibility to express their personal thoughts through comments. All survey participants remained anonymous, with only basic personal facts, age and profession, disclosed in this master's thesis. Although the survey questions were standardized, individuals from various age and industry groups provided invaluable comments from their unique perspectives on how they perceive toxic management and the perceived impacts on themselves and their environments. The data is categorized by age, industry, and country of origin, as this is deemed an adequate level of granularity for subsequent data analysis.

It is acknowledged that this research, encompassing results obtained from a limited number of survey participants, may not unveil all crucial behavioral patterns, and this is acknowledged as a key limitation of the study. Nonetheless, it is believed that the

findings will adequately highlight recurring patterns across different age groups and industries. To mitigate the risk of overlooking significant patterns, the survey participants were afforded the privacy to express their opinions in a personal environment, completing the survey online and not as part of study groups. Additionally, an effort was made to include a diverse array of industries to mitigate professional biases. With these precautionary measures in place, it is hoped that the results will prove to be of substantial value to readers, particularly senior managers in companies of varying sizes.

3.3 Conclusion

In summary, this master's thesis adopts an inductive interpretive research philosophy, employing qualitative methods, and does not impose temporal constraints. To construct the survey and minimize biases, the author drew from a multitude of academic and professional sources, including scientific articles and books. The surveys were conducted in a manner that prevented the influence of group dynamics.

Chapter 4: Presentation of result data

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we present an overview of the survey questions and provide general information concerning the data collected. Despite the highly personal nature of the topic of toxic management, our endeavor has been to minimize subjective factors and produce objective results that can serve as a foundational platform for future research. Subsequent to the collection of survey responses, the data was structured and analyzed in accordance with its relevance to the hypotheses, which are outlined below for reference:

- Based on the responses obtained, majority results will confirm that key indicators, such as diminished work morale, elevated employee turnover, diminished professional respect towards other line employees and managers, and limited individual influence on major decision-making processes, can be attributed to the impact of toxic management practices and the prevailing work environment.

- Based on the gathered responses, the majority of the results will validate the notion that implementing positive measures, such as providing contemporary leadership style training for individuals in supervisory roles, would lead to a boost in employee morale and a reduction in employee turnover.

4.2 Survey questions

Question	Answer type	Optional answer
Introduction question - what industry do you work in	Free text entry	No
Introduction question - what is your age group	Free text entry	No
1. Assess your individual workplace morale on a scale ranging from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies the lowest level and 10 represents the highest level.	Numeric 1-10	Free text entry
2. How do you perceive that the ongoing turnover of employees is directly linked to low workplace morale?	Numeric 1-10	Free text entry

3. How strong is your belief that the perpetually elevated workload demands have a direct correlation with diminished workplace morale?	Numeric 1-10	Free text entry
4. Do you hold the belief that unprofessional treatment of your present or past colleagues has been a contributing factor to the unusually high turnover?	Yes/No	Free text entry
5. Do you think that providing supervisor training in contemporary leadership styles would result in elevated employee morale and retention?	Yes/No	Free text entry
6. Do you think that you are treated with respect and professionalism by your supervisors, which includes being entrusted to make significant decisions?	Yes/No	Free text entry
7. Do you think that an increase in mutual respect between supervisors and employees could potentially lead to a reduction in turnover?	Yes/No	Free text entry
8. Do you harbor concerns that committing a technical error in your job might result in termination?	Yes/No	Free text entry
9. Is it evident to you that your employer regards you as their most valuable asset?	Yes/No	Free text entry
10. Do you believe that you receive the level of respect and support necessary to enable you to realize your full potential?	Yes/No	Free text entry
11. Any additional thoughts or comments (grouped)	Free text entry	No

Table 1: Survey questions for Toxic Management research (own representation)

4.2 Key findings

Assessing the presence of a toxic environment poses a challenge in terms of establishing tangible, quantifiable metrics. A single individual's assertion of a problem differs significantly from a chorus of voices echoing similar concerns, especially when detailing the personal and professional impacts. Additionally, the element of confidentiality and apprehension regarding potential repercussions should be taken into account, especially in the event of any workplace assessments being carried out.

The survey, which solely requested information regarding age group and profession without delving into personal details, garnered an impressive response rate, approaching nearly one hundred percent. Of the 57 individuals approached to

participate, a remarkable 51 responded, providing both quantitative and qualitative feedback. The majority of respondents were employed in environments characterized by policy-driven operations, and centralized structures, predominantly within corporate settings characterized by extensive standardization of work processes.

As expanded in a subsequent section of this chapter, interviews consistently revealed that toxic management styles tended to lean towards either authoritarian or autocratic approaches. It is worth noting, however, that an extreme laissez-faire style of management can also yield detrimental effects on both the organization and its staff. Among the surveyed individuals, both of these management styles were prevalent, with many reporting a noticeable deterioration in morale. The hostile conduct exhibited by these managers has become widely recognized within the organization and the broader professional sphere, yet it appears to be ignored by C-level management within their respective companies. Over time, this unchecked mistreatment of employees by toxic managers has engendered a perceived culture of hostility. This toxic environment has subsequently contributed to a high rate of employee turnover, even in departments not directly under the purview of these managers. Furthermore, it has given rise to challenges in recruitment, stemming from the proliferation of rumors and internal social networks.

This type of employee turnover initiates a self-perpetuating cycle that, if left unaddressed, can lead to significant financial and motivational repercussions of a broader scope. Hence, it is imperative to take prompt and effective action to remove such toxic individuals from the work environment before they can inflict greater harm. One notable consequence of a toxic management style is the establishment of a detrimental cycle in which the worksite seldom operates with a full complement of employees capable of managing the workload. Due to established policies and basic practicality, new hires are unable to fully handle their own workload until they have undergone several months of onboarding, resulting in a delayed transition period for their predecessors and existing colleagues. In light of the elevated turnover rates, coupled with sluggish hiring procedures, prolonged training periods, hiring freezes, and widely recognized cultural issues, the remaining employees find themselves tasked with managing a workload that should ideally be distributed among a larger staff.

The data collection plan for this project entailed administering a questionnaire comprising multiple questions, including both structured and free-form entries. These questions were crafted to examine and analyze the previously stated hypotheses.

They were formulated with clarity and conciseness to minimize any potential for ambiguity.

The sample population encompassed individuals from diverse professions, as will be expounded upon in the results analysis chapter. As mentioned earlier, to enhance participation, it was crucial to assure respondents that their assessment answers would remain confidential and untraceable to any specific individual. This was achieved by solely collecting non-identifiable information (age group and industry) and emphasizing to each participant that the assessment process was entirely anonymous.

4.3 Conclusion

The survey results underscore that while training and external supervision may yield short-term improvements, there is a pressing need to foster a more open and inclusive culture. This should include the implementation of specialized supervision for such managers, ensuring that everyone is confident the situation is being effectively addressed. The findings reveal a clear correlation between high turnover rates and the perception of unprofessional treatment of line staff by those in managerial positions. It was hypothesized that providing contemporary leadership training could potentially have a positive impact and help reverse the trend of high turnover.

In the subsequent chapter, author will present a detailed analysis of the survey results, establishing connections between the questions and hypotheses, and delving into both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of each inquiry.

Chapter 5: Analysis and discussion of results

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents detailed survey results and connects those results with defined research topics. Survey with previously defined questions was filled online, without any need for personal identification, from a group of people from various industries. No person identification, except industry and age group was required, in order to increase survey attendance and promote quality answers. Data was collected using a free version of Mentimeter, and displayed graphs are taken from its result system. For easier analysis they are also presented in tabular format. Most answers are in English, though some might be in other languages (German, Croatian, Slovak, Czech), since some participants felt more comfortable using their native languages.

5.2 Dispelling Myths and Embracing Truths: Overcoming Toxicity in the Workplace

It is of vital importance to integrate values of respectful engagement into the daily operations of an organization. At the core lies the implementation of strategies aimed at fostering a culture of respect at every organizational level and nurturing a healthy and productive work environment.

Earlier, we outlined the misconceptions prevalent among leaders when dealing with toxic personalities. Now we need to debunk these myths and reframe them based on our research and practical experiences. While some of these myths may serve as reminders or existing knowledge, others may challenge conventional wisdom. Even after the successful implementation of systemic interventions, individuals who have endured toxic environments may still require support in transitioning towards a healthier workplace culture. Now, we turn our focus to leaders and teams prepared to embark on a journey of renewal and reaffirm their commitment to cultivating a positive work environment.

Renewal, in this context, entails harnessing the human potential within the workplace to inspire, instill hope, and imbue individuals' lives with meaning. It underscores an organization's dedication to fostering a culture characterized by respect, vitality, and dignity. The TOCS model of systemic interventions serves as a cornerstone for

leaders and teams seeking to facilitate renewal and invest in cultivating a values-driven culture.

By scrutinizing the systemic factors contributing to toxicity, identifying tangible behaviors for transformation, establishing clear expectations, and providing relevant and inclusive feedback, leaders can demonstrate the transformative power of respect to individuals and teams alike.

5.2.1 Myth 1: The Success of Toxic Individuals Shouldn't Be Challenged

There is a prevailing notion suggesting that the success of certain toxic individuals should remain untouched. There was a perception that interfering with their achievements, particularly if they were high performers, would be counterproductive. However, there are costs incurred by organizations due to toxic behavior, even among those who excel in their roles. Despite their apparent productivity, the financial and emotional toll they exact can significantly impede an organization's reputation and profitability.

Perceptions regarding the productivity of toxic personalities vary depending on their hierarchical position within the organization. Leaders tended to view toxic individuals reporting directly to them as successful more frequently than those who were their peers or superiors. This divergence in perception stems from the tendency of toxic individuals to exhibit appropriate behavior in the presence of their superiors while concealing the destructive consequences of their actions from those above them. Their success was often attributed to their contributions in areas such as marketing, sales, and specialized knowledge and skills. Consequently, many organizations tolerate counterproductive behaviors to perpetuate due to the perceived benefits brought forth by high-achieving toxic personalities. The reluctance to disrupt the status quo, fueled by the positive organizational outcomes associated with toxic individuals, is a sentiment commonly encountered by leaders.

However, this sentiment often persists until the detrimental effects of toxicity begin to manifest in business results. We need to question whether mere high performance justifies the havoc wreaked by toxic individuals on their colleagues, customers, and the organization's bottom line.

5.2.2 Myth 2: Toxic Individuals Have Full Awareness of Their Actions

Contrary to common belief, many toxic individuals lack awareness of the detrimental impact their behavior has on both the organization and their colleagues. Confronting them about their misconduct often elicits two typical responses. Firstly, they may respond with indignation, claiming that their actions are justified by their unwavering commitment to the organization, while insinuating that others lack the same level of dedication. Alternatively, they may exhibit a sense of self-righteousness, convinced that they alone possess the true interests of the organization at heart.

Despite their outward display of confidence and conviction, toxic individuals often exhibit a lack of introspection regarding their own actions. They tend to attribute wrongdoing to others rather than acknowledging their own faults, reflecting a narcissistic worldview. Criticism is met with incredulity, as toxic individuals struggle to accept responsibility for their behavior. Consequently, attempts to explain the impact of their actions to them often prove futile, perpetuating the cycle of misbehavior and reinforcing the next myth.

5.2.3 Myth 3: Providing Feedback Will Lead to Change

The belief that offering feedback to toxic individuals will prompt them to change is a common misconception. However, the effectiveness of feedback in modifying behavior is not absolute and varies depending on the individual and the context. Many leaders rely solely on feedback strategies without witnessing any tangible change in behavior, highlighting the limitations of this approach.

When feedback fails to yield the desired results, leaders may consider two options. Firstly, they should ensure that their feedback is specific and behaviorally focused, presenting concrete evidence rather than vague assertions. For instance, instead of stating, "Your attitude in team meetings is poor," provide specific examples such as interrupting others, attacking dissenting opinions, or being distracted by electronic devices. Clear, direct feedback grounded in observable behaviors is more likely to be effective and respectful.

However, if the toxic individual persists in rejecting feedback and defending their actions, leaders may opt for a more intensive approach. This could involve conducting a comprehensive performance appraisal, soliciting input from relevant stakeholders, or engaging an internal or external coach to work with the individual.

While individual feedback can be a starting point, leaders should be cautious not to invest excessive time in a futile endeavor. Instead, they should establish a realistic timeline for behavioral change and transition to systemic strategies if no improvement is observed. Understanding the systemic components at play is crucial for effectively addressing toxic behavior, underscoring the importance of adopting a holistic approach to organizational intervention.

5.2.4 Myth 4: Tolerance of Toxic Behaviors Over Time

Contrary to the belief that most individuals will not tolerate toxic behaviors, many people endure such behaviors for extended periods. This endurance can be attributed to various factors, including the perceived high performance of the toxic individual, their influential connections, or the fear of reprisal for confronting them.

This myth is dispelled when victims grasp the concept of the iceberg metaphor, which illustrates the hidden consequences of inaction. Above the waterline lies the visible tip of the iceberg, symbolizing the apparent benefits of avoiding confrontation. However, beneath the surface lies a substantial portion of the iceberg, representing the extensive ramifications of the individual's destructive behavior on the organization, team, or individuals. By meticulously weighing the perceived benefits against the actual damages, individuals can make informed decisions and take appropriate action.

5.2.5 Myth 5: Reliance on HR and Consultants as the Sole Solution

The prevailing notion that human resources (HR) professionals and external consultants can single-handedly resolve issues related to toxic behavior is not always accurate. While these professionals possess valuable expertise, their effectiveness hinges on recognizing the point at which feedback becomes ineffective and adopting a systemic approach to intervention.

It is essential to acknowledge that HR professionals can significantly contribute to addressing toxic behavior. However, they may become ensnared in the toxic system if they focus excessively on providing feedback without addressing systemic issues. Success in addressing toxic behavior also relies on the establishment of clear organizational values, which HR professionals can help promote within the organization.

5.2.6 Myth 6: Dismissal as the Ultimate Solution

The common belief that terminating the employment of a toxic individual will resolve the issue often oversimplifies the complexities of toxic work environments. While firing the toxic individual may seem like a definitive solution, it fails to address the broader toxic culture that the individual has fostered.

The aftermath of dismissal may not lead to an immediate restoration of a healthy work environment. This is because the enabling behaviors of those surrounding the toxic individual may persist even after their departure, perpetuating the toxic environment. While termination is not necessarily inappropriate, it may not achieve the intended goals of instantly transforming the work environment into a healthy one.

In a toxic work environment, firing the toxic individual does not fully address the underlying issues, and the repercussions of their toxicity may linger. The devastation caused by toxic behavior extends beyond the workplace, impacting the personal lives of colleagues.

In essence, while dismissal may remove the immediate source of toxicity, it does not necessarily eliminate the broader effects or address the systemic components contributing to the toxic environment. Thus, organizations must consider comprehensive strategies to address toxic behavior beyond mere termination.

5.2.7 Myth 7: Toxic Behavior Is Isolated

Contrary to popular belief, toxic behavior rarely exists in isolation. Instead, it often permeates an entire system, ensnaring others in its destructive path. Moreover, there may be individuals within the organization who enable and protect the toxic individual, further perpetuating the toxicity.

While many assume that toxic behavior is driven by narcissism and ego-centered control, the reality is more nuanced. Toxic personalities often rely on protectors who shield them from consequences and facilitate their harmful actions. These protectors may not even realize that they are enabling toxic behavior; instead, they prioritize the outcomes associated with the toxic individual, such as organizational profitability or client satisfaction.

In their role as protectors, individuals may seek to shield others from the toxic person's behavior, maintain the toxic person's position within the organization, or derive personal benefits from their association with the toxic individual. This dynamic illustrates how toxic behavior is often enabled and perpetuated by a network of individuals within the organization, rather than being the sole responsibility of one individual.

5.2.8 Myth 8: Prioritize Likability Over Expertise in Hiring

Contrary to common belief, prioritizing expertise over likability during the hiring process is not always the most effective approach. While expertise is undoubtedly important, it should not overshadow the significance of likability. Therefore, when crafting selection criteria for hiring, it is essential to involve both staff and managers in the process to ensure that the criteria are comprehensive and reflective of the organization's needs.

Additionally, when evaluating candidates, it is crucial to consider the likability factor alongside their expertise. If multiple candidates possess similar levels of expertise, but one candidate demonstrates slightly more likability, it may be beneficial to prioritize likability over a slight difference in expertise. This does not mean compromising on competence; rather, it acknowledges the importance of interpersonal skills and positive relationships in the workplace.

Conducting behaviorally focused interviews based on actual work situations can help assess candidates more accurately. By focusing on concrete examples rather than hypothetical scenarios, it becomes more challenging for candidates to bluff or fabricate their qualifications. Moreover, involving key stakeholders, including both management and staff, in the interview process ensures a more comprehensive evaluation of candidates. This may involve group interviews, individual interviews conducted by staff members, or separate interviews with leaders, with the goal of gathering diverse perspectives on each candidate's suitability for the role.

5.2.9 Myth 9: Bosses Are Aware of Systemic Effects

Contrary to common belief, bosses are often the least likely to recognize the systemic effects of a toxic individual within the organization. This lack of awareness can stem from various factors, including reluctance among subordinates to provide feedback or

the boss's tendency to prioritize the toxic individual's apparent productivity or agreeableness over the need for change. Consequently, bosses may remain oblivious to the destructive impact that the toxic individual's behavior has on the entire system.

To address this issue, it is essential for bosses to create an environment where feedback, both positive and negative, is welcomed and encouraged. By signaling openness to receiving feedback, bosses can create opportunities for subordinates to express concerns about toxic behavior without fear of reprisal.

Additionally, when confronted with negative feedback, bosses should refrain from dismissing or belittling the messenger, instead demonstrating a willingness to address the issues raised in a constructive manner. This proactive approach fosters a culture of transparency and accountability, ultimately mitigating the harmful effects of toxic behavior within the organization.

These myths offer practical insights for navigating toxicity within organizational contexts. We trust that they will prompt readers to gain new perspectives on their workplace dynamics and interactions, fostering a deeper understanding of both toxic and non-toxic individuals within their professional spheres.

5.3 Interpretation of results and solution suggestions

5.3.1 Pre-questions 1&2

Pre-question one for population information - What industry do you work in?

Figure 1: Survey result to pre-question 1 (own representation from Mentimeter chart)

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The majority of survey participants are employed in technology-related sectors such as information technology, software engineering, and telecommunications, constituting approximately 70% of the sample. The remaining 30% is distributed relatively evenly among industries including banking, electronics, hospitality, and pharmaceuticals. Notably, a significant proportion of these enterprises are affiliated with medium to large-scale institutions, with a predominant emphasis on corporate entities.

Pre-question two for population information - What is your age group?
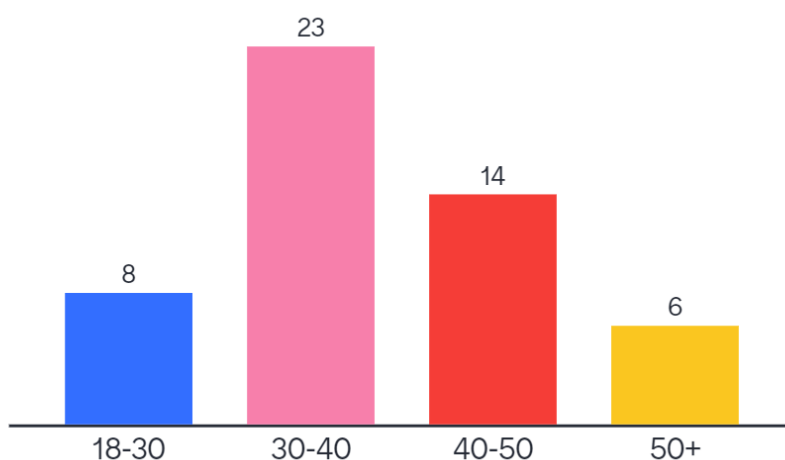
Figure 2: Survey result to pre-question 2 (own representation from Mentimeter chart)

As anticipated, the cohort of junior employees (aged 18-30) comprises the smallest subset in the sample. This aligns with existing literature and empirical evidence, affirming their relative resilience to managerial toxicity, primarily attributable to their lower hierarchical standing and limited occupancy of positions with elevated significance. A parallel trend is observed among older employees, aged over 50, who, by and large, demonstrate enhanced professional and financial stability, along with the development of effective strategies for coping with workplace bullies. Consequently, it is unsurprising that the demographic exhibiting the most pronounced interest in this subject consists of individuals in their professional prime, aged 30-50, occupying pivotal roles and thereby emerging as the demographic most susceptible to encountering toxic superiors.

5.3.2 Questions 1-11

Question 1 - Assess your individual workplace morale on a scale ranging from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies the lowest level and 10 represents the highest level
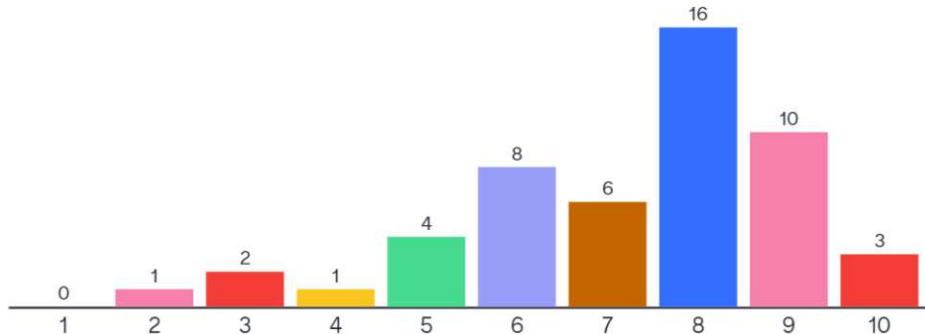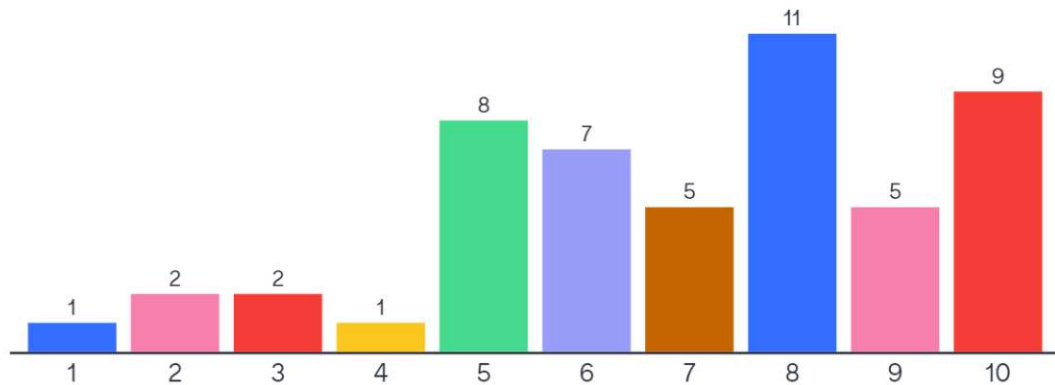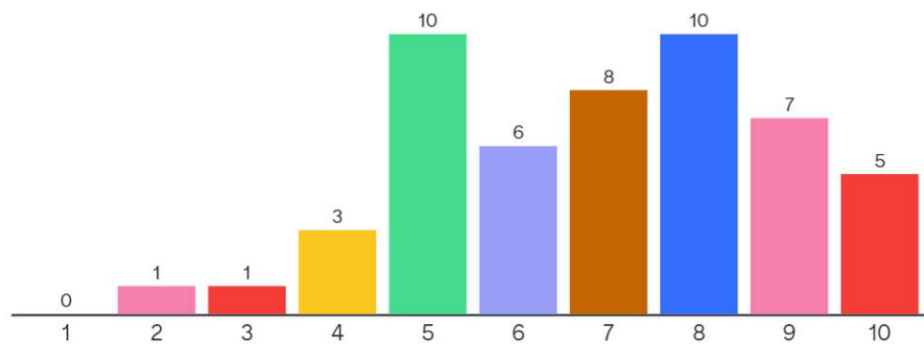

Figure 3: Survey result to question 1 (own representation from Mentimeter chart)

Free text comments, after removing duplicate answers:

- It is fine, usual work

- It could be better, but I know worse environments, for now it is OK, passively looking

- I need to pay my bills, company doesn't provide career growth, but I need salary

- Staying at the same place from university, I am not sure that somewhere else would be better

- When a bad manager comes, I just wait out till he leaves, and then I have peace again, they all leave sooner or later

- It is OK, if I get a toxic manager, I change the team and write complaint to HR, usually it is handled internally

The findings indicate, particularly from the subjective viewpoint of individuals, that a substantial majority expresses satisfaction or high satisfaction regarding their work morale and social conditions. This outcome is indicative of an overall positive sentiment, signifying that a significant portion of the respondents does not encounter notable challenges. However, it is noteworthy that a subset of individuals resorts to avoidance as a strategy for corporate survival, implying the presence of unresolved issues. Additionally, a notable proportion of respondents assigns values to the intermediate range, typically suggestive of an underlying managerial issue that may

be overlooked by the organization and its broader context, yet is not presently robust enough to warrant direct intervention.

Question 2 - How do you perceive that the ongoing turnover of employees is directly linked to low workplace morale?

Figure 4: Survey result to question 2 (own representation from Mentimeter chart)

Free text comments, after removing duplicate answers:

- People come, people go
- Morale is always low, we work for money and job stability, not for pleasure
- No one knows why my manager is employed at his position
- Colleagues leave when they find environments with less stress and more security
- Most of my team left, my manager stays, I stay and wait for my exit package
- Old saying "fish smells from head" applies well to most managers I know

As depicted in the graph, it is evident that the overwhelming majority of respondents perceive a substantial to highly pronounced association between turnover and low morale. This underscores the contention that the organizational climate, intricately linked to managerial competence and the absence of toxic managerial practices, exerts a strong influence on both employee retention and innovation. This influence stems from the establishment of a secure working environment as a consequential outcome.

Question 3 - How strong is your belief that the perpetually elevated workload demands have a direct correlation with diminished workplace morale?

Figure 5: Survey result to question 3 (own representation from Mentimeter chart)

Free text comments, after removing duplicate answers:

- There is always so much you can do and still keep enough energy to live after work
- Employee job is to learn and grow, not work on same things every day
- The more they increase my workload, the less I produce
- Since new manager came, sickness in the team significantly increased

The outcomes illustrated in this graph distinctly illustrate a duality of perspectives, a phenomenon well-acknowledged in the referenced literature. It is discerned that a heightened workload, particularly in the short to medium term, does not inherently erode workplace morale when the influence of workplace toxicity is minimal, and employees perceive a sense of safety. However, this dynamic undergoes a transformation over time when a sustained high workload coincides with escalating managerial toxicity and pressures. The extent of its impact on both teams and individuals varies contingent upon factors such as team cohesion and industry context. Nevertheless, it is clear that the convergence of high workload environments with toxic managerial practices significantly undermines both performance and personal development.

Question 4 - Do you hold the belief that unprofessional treatment of your present or past colleagues has been a contributing factor to the unusually high turnover?
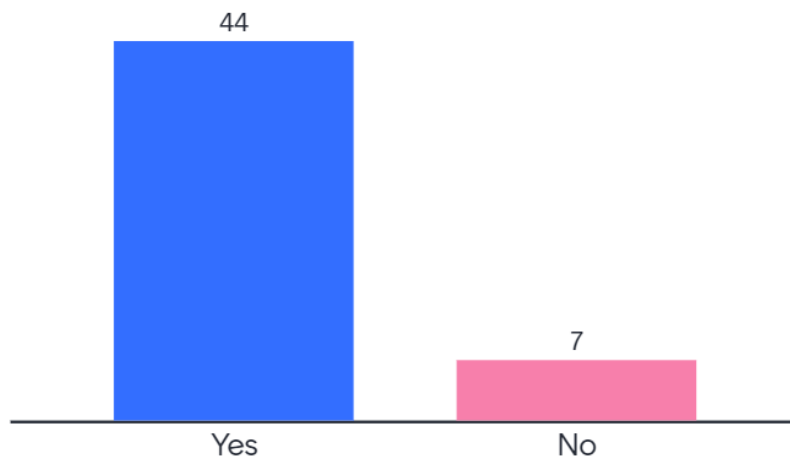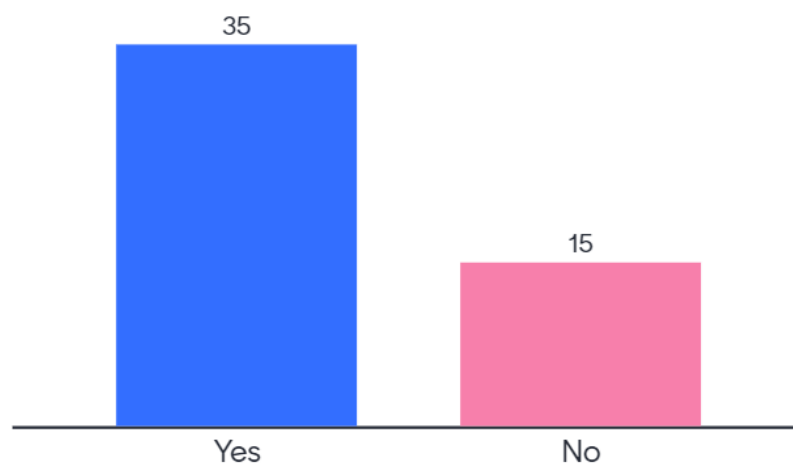
Figure 6: Survey result to question 4 (own representation from Mentimeter chart)

No free text comments.

It is evident that individuals consistently seek two fundamental objectives, albeit expressed through varied manifestations: security and predictability in personal advancement. When external influences, particularly those stemming from toxic managerial dynamics, undermine these inherent goals, a notable disruption in social equilibrium ensues. Consequently, this leads to a decline in both organizational and personal efficacy.

Question 5 - Do you think that providing supervisor training in contemporary leadership styles would result in elevated employee morale and retention?

Figure 7: Survey result to question 5 (own representation from Mentimeter chart)

42

No free text comments.

In the course of reviewing before-mentioned literature for the development of this thesis, the outcomes of the specific question under consideration reveal a discernible and anticipated distribution concerning the perceived value of managerial education. This arises due to the substantial investment of time and financial resources by companies in the training of mid-level managers. Paradoxically, despite this substantial investment, the discernible impact on both company productivity and employee job satisfaction appears limited. Many managers with a more outcome-oriented approach attend these training sessions out of obligation rather than with the intention of assimilating new insights, particularly if such insights do not offer immediate advantages to their short-term objectives. Conversely, it is noteworthy to highlight a positive sentiment prevalent among a significant majority of surveyed individuals regarding managerial education, expressing optimism about its potential to yield favorable outcomes within their organizational environment.

Question 6 - Do you think that you are treated with respect and professionalism by your supervisors, which includes being entrusted to make significant decisions?
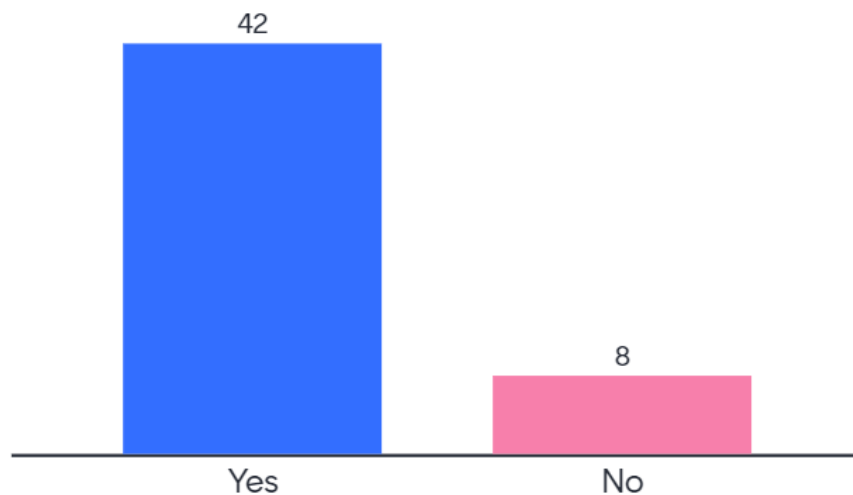
Figure 8: Survey result to question 6 (own representation from Mentimeter chart)

Free text comments, after removing duplicate answers:

- Since I try to avoid my supervisor, as well he tries to avoid me, we are both fine

- He does what he needs by HR rules, otherwise he cares only about his career
- My manager is a great person, although limited by company rules, I am happy to have him
- Although quite inept at management skills, at least my manager is not hostile
- I changed three managers in company I work for, they treated me with respect and did not bother me as long as I delivered minimum required work packages
- She is amazing, gives us just enough work that we can work slowly and relaxed

Given that a substantial portion of respondents comes from expansive corporate contexts, the responses above underscore the significance of congruence in managerial culture for the cultivation of safe work environments. The establishment of stable and secure working environments is deemed more important than the pursuit of short-term objectives that may compromise the enduring stability of the team. The apparent understanding of this inherent principle by the majority of corporate managers is promising, as it manifests in the provision of the necessary autonomy and respect required for effective decision-making. This approach, at times allowing for the possibility of failure, contributes to the cultivation of a culture that values both organizational resilience in the face of setbacks and the generation of novel value for customers.

Question 7 - Do you think that an increase in mutual respect between supervisors and employees could potentially lead to a reduction in turnover?
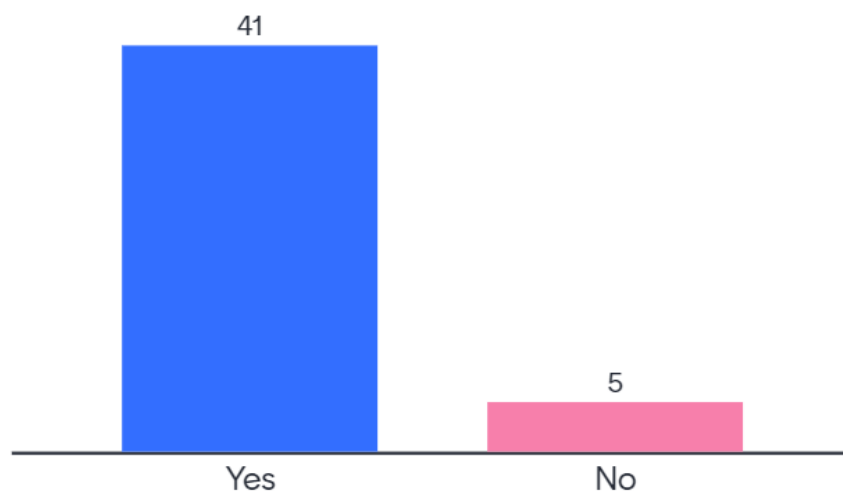
Figure 9: Survey result to question 7 (own representation from Mentimeter chart)

No free text comments.

It is evident that substantial progress can only be attained when there exists a professional and respectful rapport between employees and their managers. Any alternative approach, while potentially yielding immediate results, tends to create managerial toxicity and cause reductions in productivity and innovation.

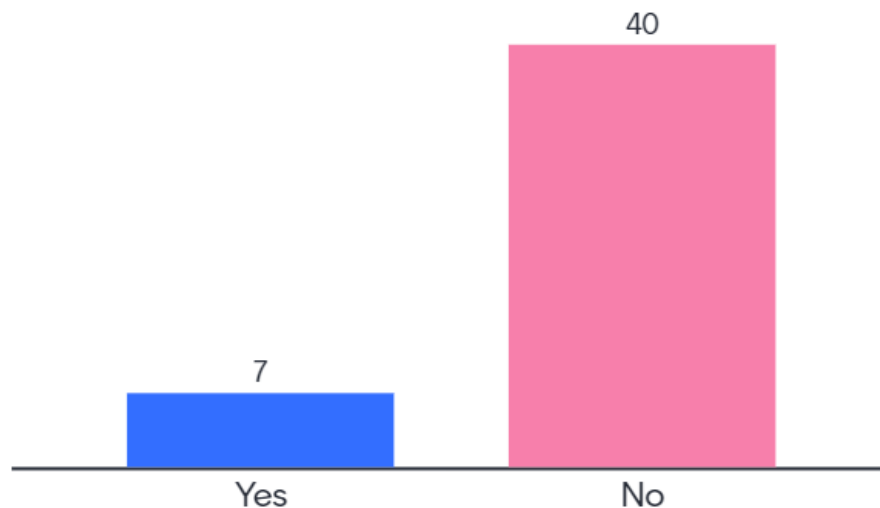*Question 8 - Do you harbor concerns that committing a technical error in your job might result in termination?*

Figure 10: Survey result to question 8 (own representation from Mentimeter chart)

No free text comments.

It is encouraging to note that a significant proportion of respondents provided a negative response to this query, indicating the emergence of a robust innovation culture across companies of varying sizes and sectors. Ability to make mistakes is compulsory to refine existing solutions and create new ones. Consequently, for those who responded differently, it serves as a compelling indicator of underlying challenges within their organizational context.

Question 9 - Is it evident to you that your employer regards you as their most valuable asset?
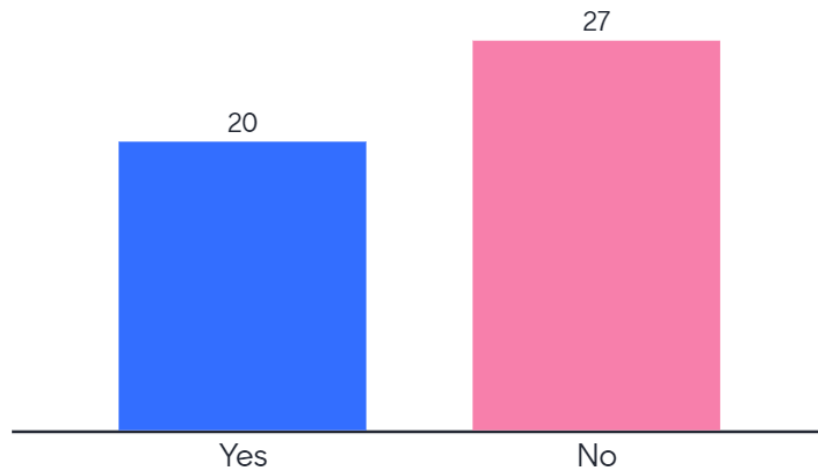
Figure 11: Survey result to question 9 (own representation from Mentimeter chart)

No free text comments.

Dual nature of this response unmistakably delineates the prevailing corporate cultures from which these individuals originate. While certain employees are accorded dignity and respect, others are perceived and treated merely as "resources" to be maximally "utilized." While such an approach may yield immediate advantages, its long-term implications are profoundly detrimental. This strategy not only fosters elevated turnover rates and stifles innovation but also promotes toxic work environments, underscoring pervasive managerial deficiencies.

Question 10 - Do you believe that you receive the level of respect and support necessary to enable you to realize your full potential?
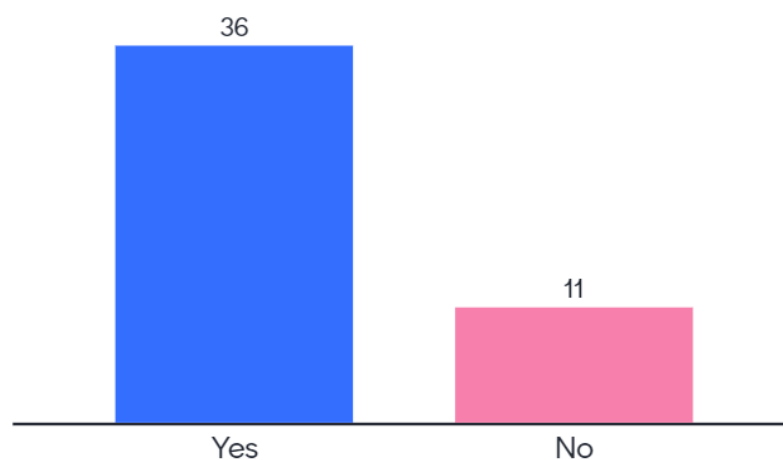
Figure 12: Survey result to question 10 (own representation from Mentimeter chart)

No free text comments.

While bearing resemblance to the preceding question, this one specifically probes the extent to which structured mechanisms are in place to foster employee development. Certain career progression frameworks may exist merely as corporate formalities, whereas others genuinely facilitate professional growth. This extends beyond mere training initiatives, encompassing coaching sessions and assignments to growth-centric or innovative projects. Encouragingly, a majority of respondents express confidence in their ongoing professional development.

Question 11 - Any additional thoughts or comments (grouped)

Situations often vary based on the department and are heavily influenced by individual managers. However, the overarching company culture tends to be the defining factor (5 answers).

It is commendable that attention is being directed towards this subject (19 responses).

The persistent presence of ineffective managers is indicative of organizational maturity, particularly in how such challenges are addressed (20 responses).
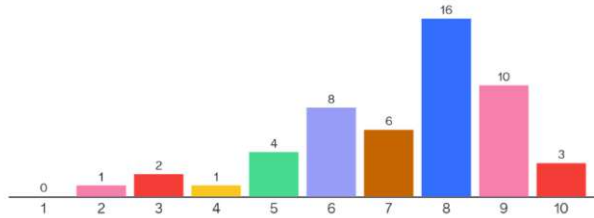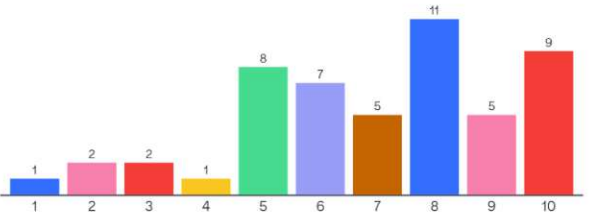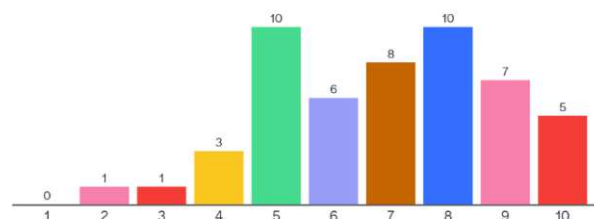
There is merit in not only critiquing but also acknowledging positive behaviors, as exemplary instances can instigate transformative shifts (12 responses)

The detrimental impact of a single ineffective manager can overshadow the cumulative efforts of numerous employees (10 responses).

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter provides a consolidated summary of the outcomes derived from ten survey questions, excluding the introductory queries and the concluding question. The findings are systematically presented in tabular format for enhanced clarity and comparative analysis:

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Number	Question text	Type	Answer distribution
1	Assess your individual workplace morale on a scale ranging from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies the lowest level and 10 represents the highest level.	Numeric 1-10	
2	How do you perceive that the ongoing turnover of employees is directly linked to low workplace morale?	Numeric 1-10	
3	How strong is your belief that the perpetually elevated workload demands have a direct correlation with diminished workplace morale?	Numeric 1-10	
4	Do you hold the belief that unprofessional treatment of your present or past colleagues has been a contributing factor to the unusually high turnover?	Yes/No	Yes - 44 No - 7

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5	Do you think that providing supervisor training in contemporary leadership styles would result in elevated employee morale and retention?	Yes/No	Yes - 35 No - 15
6	Do you think that you are treated with respect and professionalism by your supervisors, which includes being entrusted to make significant decisions?	Yes/No	Yes - 42 No - 8
7	Do you think that an increase in mutual respect between supervisors and employees could potentially lead to a reduction in turnover?	Yes/No	Yes - 41 No - 5
8	Do you harbor concerns that committing a technical error in your job might result in termination?	Yes/No	Yes - 7 No - 40
9	Is it evident to you that your employer regards you as their most valuable asset?	Yes/No	Yes - 20 No - 27
10	Do you believe that you receive the level of respect and support necessary to enable you to realize your full potential?	Yes/No	Yes - 36 No - 11

Table 2: Result analysis summary for Toxic Management research (own representation)

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This final chapter will demonstrate primary research findings related to the defined research objectives and inquiries, showing their significance and contributions to the academic domain. Additionally, it will critically assess the constraints inherent to the thesis and propose alternatives for future research endeavors. Serving as an overview, this chapter will present insights derived from the results analysis section, clarifying the overarching contributions of the thesis to the broader scholarly discourse.

6.2 Organizational strategies on dealing with toxic individuals

We must acknowledge that not all leaders possess the authority or resources to effect change across the entire organizational system. Instead, leaders must assess the areas where they have the opportunity, and potentially the power, to enact change. In the absence of systemic support, toxic behavior often went unaddressed or was merely shifted to another department within the organization.

Interventions that combine organizational, team, and one-on-one approaches have the greatest likelihood of success. If interventions cannot be implemented at all three levels (organizational, team and individual) simultaneously, priority should be given to addressing organizational factors first, followed by team-level interventions before individual-level actions. The individual within the organization possessing sufficient organizational authority to enforce clear consequences should be tasked with implementing one-on-one strategies with the toxic individual.

While addressing toxic behavior may initially seem daunting, the ramifications of neglecting the issue or resorting to termination without due consideration can be detrimental to the organization. The process of termination can be protracted and challenging in the absence of clear performance appraisal documentation or robust organizational policies governing acceptable behavior. Furthermore, these policies and behaviors must align with clearly delineated organizational values. Such values not only aid in managing toxicity and mitigating risks associated with hiring the wrong individuals but also contribute to fostering an organizational culture that prioritizes human dignity - a fundamental aspect beneficial for any organization's success.

6.3 Team strategies on dealing with toxic individuals

We must not underestimate the profound impact of one individual's toxic behaviors on team dynamics. Some individuals assimilate toxic behaviors and direct them towards their peers, while in others, they withdraw from team interactions to shield themselves. This leads to team climate deterioration, transforming cohesive units pursuing common objectives to fragmented groups focused on self-preservation.

A climate permeated by negativity, demotivation, and disengagement hampers productivity and innovation, critical components for success in today's competitive markets. Actions aimed at preventing toxic climates and facilitating recovery, if prevention proves unattainable, are pivotal for cultivating a healthy team environment. Regrettably, historical attempts at implementing such actions often lacked a systemic perspective, thereby undermining their efficacy.

However, this does not imply that leaders should forego team strategies until broader organizational issues are addressed. Rather, it underscores the importance of organizational support in enhancing the success rate of team interventions. All organizational strategies are deemed proactive as they establish a foundational framework for subsequent interventions. Conversely, team interventions may encompass both proactive and reactive measures.

Proactive measures include initiatives such as team value cultivation, irrespective of the presence of organizational values, while reactive approaches comprise methods such as 360-degree feedback, exit interviews, team system assessments, and strategies for managing toxic dynamics within the team. It is noteworthy that these strategies tend to yield optimal results within organizational contexts that prioritize values conducive to respectful engagement. However, given that working teams constitute the backbone of organizational productivity, it is impractical to postpone intervention until broader organizational values are addressed, given the potential loss of valuable time and resources, both human and financial.

Team leaders possess the capacity to effectively address toxicity within their teams and enhance team cohesion. While mentioned methods represent a comprehensive framework, they are by no means exhaustive, and leaders may find that existing management practices can be adapted to identify and mitigate toxic dynamics within

their teams. It is crucial for leaders to remain vigilant for signs of toxicity, comprehend underlying team-level issues, and respond proactively in the team's best interests.

Leaders may encounter challenges and make occasional missteps in their efforts to foster a culture of respect within their teams. However, by aligning their actions with the goal of cultivating a respectful and cohesive team, such missteps are outweighed by the overarching objective of creating a conducive team environment primed for future success. Respectful engagement serves as a pivotal tool in mitigating toxicity and reducing the likelihood of toxic individuals infiltrating the organization in the future.

6.4 Individual strategies on dealing with toxic individuals

At times, leaders are compelled to promptly address the behavior of individuals exhibiting toxicity. We can only hope that engaging in performance management discussions with such individuals will significantly mitigate their toxic tendencies. Additionally, we believe that by managing the repercussions of these behaviors, positive outcomes will ensue, a practice we term "talking with consequences." While this approach occasionally proves effective, its success is not guaranteed. Equally important is recognizing when to shift focus from individual intervention to implementing systemic measures.

It would be wrong to assert that direct intervention with toxic individuals is destined to fail, it is important to find a proper level of intervention at three levels: organizational, team, and individual. In this chapter I will briefly discuss the complexities of individual interventions, addressing strategies, optimization techniques, and overcoming obstacles. Successful individual interventions are contingent upon organizational and team efforts. It is crucial to note that organization-wide strategies are proactive, while team strategies incorporate both proactive and reactive elements. Conversely, individual interventions are predominantly reactive, responding to the behavior of toxic individuals in an effort to effect change.

The likelihood of successfully addressing toxic behavior directly increases with the implementation of proactive organizational and team interventions. While not mandatory, organizational and team interventions enhance the efficacy of individual interventions, maximizing potential benefits. Usual methods used to implement these strategies, among others, are targeted feedback, performance appraisals, coaching, and termination. Employing any one or a combination of these approaches is likely to

diminish the spread of toxicity beyond immediate circumstances and prevent its recurrence.

6.4.1 Targeted feedback

In an organizational setting characterized by a zero-tolerance policy towards toxic behaviors, coupled with strong leadership commitment to upholding organizational values, the implementation of thoughtful and targeted feedback within the framework of performance management can prove effective. This ideal scenario maximizes the efficacy of performance feedback when dealing with toxic individuals. However, even in the absence of such strict policies and values, individual interventions through targeted feedback can still yield positive outcomes, albeit to a lesser extent compared to environments with established zero-tolerance measures.

Understanding certain aspects of human behavior is crucial when employing targeted feedback strategies. Some individuals exhibit deeply ingrained counterproductive behavioral patterns that may resist change, even with psychotherapeutic interventions. Consequently, a subset of such individuals may choose to leave their employment rather than engage in any process aimed at individual change. Nonetheless, a structured and systematic feedback approach tailored to address specific behaviors within particular contexts can be beneficial in modifying their coping mechanisms at work, although it may not alter their underlying personality traits.

Despite the frequent opportunities managers have to provide feedback to toxic individuals, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this approach. Research findings from our study indicate that feedback, while somewhat effective in curbing toxic behaviors, is perceived differently by male and female managers. Female managers, in particular, find giving feedback to direct reports less effective than their male counterparts. This discrepancy highlights the gendered dynamics influencing feedback efficacy and underscores the challenges leaders face in addressing toxic behavior.

To enhance the effectiveness of targeted feedback, it must be administered rigorously and comprehensively. Managers should remain receptive to feedback themselves and promptly address any interpersonal conflicts. However, if targeted feedback fails to yield desired results within a reasonable timeframe, it should be discontinued.

Furthermore, targeted feedback should not solely focus on addressing poor performance but should also incorporate recognition of individuals' strengths. Positive feedback can serve as a precursor to addressing negative behaviors, particularly in cases where passive-aggressive tendencies hinder receptivity to criticism. Commencing the feedback process with acknowledgment of strengths can foster a more constructive environment for subsequent discussions on areas requiring improvement.

6.4.2 Performance appraisal

Performance appraisal can prove efficacious when it aligns with organizational values that promote specific behavioral objectives conducive to respectful engagement. The integration of organizational values serves as the cornerstone for optimal performance appraisal outcomes when dealing with toxic individuals. A performance appraisal system that incorporates values emphasizing respectful and transparent communication furnishes leaders with a robust framework for incorporating behavioral feedback.

It is important to recognize that self-evaluations may not always provide comprehensive insights, particularly in the case of toxic individuals who may be unaware of the impact they exert on others and tend to attribute their difficulties to external factors. This aspect complicates the process of facilitating behavioral change. However, the efficacy of 360-degree feedback processes hinges upon the integrity of the system. Furthermore, leaders may find it beneficial to review past performance appraisals of the individual in question to discern recurring patterns and the duration of toxic behavior. Emerging evidence suggests that 360-degree feedback should primarily serve developmental purposes. Only when an organization possesses confidence in the system's reliability and its capacity to furnish an accurate portrayal of job-related behaviors should it contemplate its utilization for evaluative purposes.

6.4.3 Coaching

The International Coach Federation defines coaching as a collaborative process wherein coaches engage clients in thought-provoking and creative dialogues aimed at maximizing their personal and professional potential. This partnership, characterized by ongoing support, aims to help clients achieve fulfilling results in various aspects of their lives. Professional coaches work with individuals to enhance their performance and overall quality of life. The origins of organizational coaching

can be traced back to the 1950s when it was utilized alongside psychological consultations to enhance executive performance. Over the past two decades, there has been a notable surge in the popularity of coaching as a professional discipline. Both for-profit and non-profit entities frequently engage coaches to aid in improving employee performance. Organizational coaching serves as an avenue for retaining institutional knowledge by fostering the development of existing employees' skills and leadership capabilities. It emphasizes leveraging individuals' inherent strengths while also addressing areas for improvement through targeted actions. Furthermore, organizational coaching aims to unlock individuals' full potential within the framework of organizational objectives, facilitating change in organizational structures, cultures, and climates while enhancing individual productivity.

6.4.4 Termination

Termination is the most prevalent individual strategy for addressing toxic behavior, usually followed by expressions a unanimous sentiment: "Just get rid of them." However, executing termination in a fair and equitable manner is not only challenging but also entails a protracted and laborious process, especially in the absence of organizational support systems. Hence, I have deferred discussion on termination, as it typically represents the final recourse after failed attempts at implementing alternative strategies. Notably, immediate termination may be warranted in cases where the toxic individual's behavior poses severe threats. Ensuring the fairness of the termination process necessitates adopting a systemic approach to toxicity.

6.4.5 Closing thoughts

Addressing toxicity within organizations stands out as one of the most challenging tasks for companies. However, I believe we can firmly assert that toxic behaviors and the resulting detrimental relationships can indeed be transformed through a systemic approach. Leaders can transcend the tendency to solely blame the toxic individual and instead seize the opportunity to instill dynamic organizational values that foster respectful interactions among members. Effective leadership embodies principles of integrity, authenticity, and social responsibility - integrity pertains to a leader's unwavering commitment to upholding the organization's core values consistently, authenticity involves leaders embodying these values in their actions, thereby serving as role models for others within the organization and social responsibility entails demonstrating respect towards all individuals within the organization and engaging with external stakeholders in a conscientious manner.

When leaders embrace these three dimensions fully, they acquire the capacity to address toxicity in the most comprehensive and systemic manner possible.

6.5 Key findings in relation to research aims

This thesis tries to show the contemporary landscape of toxic management practices and assess their ramifications on employee retention and productivity within the industry. To achieve this, a comprehensive questionnaire was administered to a substantial number of participants. The two primary hypotheses, succinctly reiterated below, were formulated:

- Based on the collected responses, the preponderance of findings will affirm that indicators are attributable to the negative effects of toxic managerial practices and the prevalent organizational environment

- Based on collected responses, the majority of outcomes will corroborate the proposition that the implementation of affirmative interventions would generate heightened employee morale and mitigate turnover rates.

Upon conducting a thorough review of the existing literature and considering the responses obtained, it is evident that both hypotheses align with the current state of knowledge in the field.

The first hypothesis, which pertains to the prevalence of toxic management within organizations, finds support in both the literature and survey responses. The literature, along with survey answers, underscores the persistent and contemporary nature of managerial toxicity, indicating that many organizations have yet to effectively address this pressing issue. Notably, key survey responses, particularly those to questions four, seven, nine, and ten, consistently align with the hypothesized existence of toxic management. The evidence suggests that lack of supportive management practices and opportunities for personal growth, coupled with other toxic behaviors, not only diminishes motivation but also stifles innovation. In the medium and long term, these factors significantly impact a company's competitive productivity rating.

Turning to the second hypothesis, which explores positive actions to mitigate the effects of managerial toxicity (focused on questions five, six, and eight), the overall response is affirmative. However, it is noteworthy, as indicated by the response to question five, that a considerable number of employees do not believe that

management training would effectively address the situation. This sentiment resonates with insights from various authors in the literature, who contend that companies sometimes overlook or undervalue the need for comprehensive manager development initiatives. There is a risk of treating managers as more valuable than regular employees, and such oversight may lead to high turnover among the best-performing staff.

The survey results unequivocally highlight that, regardless of industry or age group, there exists ample research potential, particularly in knowledge-intensive industries, to dig deeper into the discovery and management of toxic managers. Left unchecked, these toxic managerial behaviors can contribute to the contamination of work ecosystems, emphasizing the urgent need for further exploration and intervention in this area.

6.6 Research contributions to the field of study

The research defined within this master's thesis tries to define the concept of toxic management while offering a pragmatic framework for measuring the presence of toxicity within organizational contexts. Despite the voluminous scholarly literature surrounding this subject, the thesis aspires to distill actionable insights through the formulation of a targeted questionnaire tailored to discern managerial toxicity.

The exploration of toxic management within this study is based on four dimensions: firstly, the conceptual formulation of a general theory defining the underpinnings of managerial toxicity; secondly, the taxonomy of toxic behaviors within diverse contextual settings; thirdly, the identification of discernible patterns indicative of toxic individuals and environments; and lastly, the articulation of best-practice strategies designed to ameliorate the adverse repercussions of identified toxic behaviors.

Central to the thesis's contributions is its emphasis on discerning patterns of toxicity, a pursuit pursued through bifurcated approaches: firstly, the delineation of a versatile set of survey questions—capable of facile adaptation across varied contexts; and secondly, the proposition of actionable recommendations tailored for instances wherein toxic behaviors are discerned. A salient contribution of this research lies in its synthesis of scholarly literature, which furnishes readers with a comprehensive understanding of the subject, complemented by a practical toolkit encompassing survey instruments and actionable strategies, thereby empowering stakeholders to

proactively address and mitigate the deleterious ramifications of toxic managerial dynamics.

6.7 Research limitations

Undertaking research on a topic as subjective and contingent upon numerous variables - both objective and subjective - as toxic management poses inherent challenges and associated limitations. These limitations require comprehensive scrutiny and subsequent exploration within the academy.

A primary constraint is on the prevailing state of art, which predominantly focuses on discovering toxic management dynamics within large corporations or business ecosystems, neglecting detailed examinations within smaller teams or startup ecosystems. Conversely, the existing literature predominantly directs its attention towards micro-level interventions, defining strategies to address the negative influence of specific individuals endowed with excessive authority, rather than creating macro-level solutions that envision a transformative evolution of the managerial discipline.

Furthermore, the interpretative nature of survey responses introduces an inherent subjectivity, contingent upon the respondent's prevailing psychological disposition, accumulated experiences, and cultural background. Such variability diminishes the generalizability of findings. While conscientious efforts were exerted to mitigate these constraints - particularly by targeting demographically and professionally aligned survey participants - the inherent limitations persist. Enhanced robustness and validity might be achieved through broader respondent diversity or a more nuanced sampling strategy tailored to specific business contexts.

In summary, while this research endeavors to shed light on the intricacies of toxic management, it is imperative to acknowledge and address the associated limitations to foster more comprehensive and nuanced scholarly discourse in the future.

6.8 Recommendations for future research

The recommendations and future research paths are defined by limitations identified within the scope of this master's thesis. One major research avenue pertains to the absence of a universally accepted definition of toxic management. Nevertheless,

existing literature uniformly acknowledges its ramifications on both micro-level and broader organizational ecosystems.

Given the observed constraints regarding the transferability of findings across different cultural and business environments, there exists an imperative to undertake investigative endeavors within varied geographical locales and divergent industry contexts. Such endeavors would not only include a more encompassing conceptualization of toxic management but also yield contextually relevant strategies to mitigate its adverse effects.

Subsequent research initiatives could pivot towards the formulation of preemptive measures designed to identify and mitigate the ascension of ill-suited individuals to managerial roles. This is particularly sensitive given the prevalent reliance on historical performance metrics, as opposed to a more holistic assessment encompassing formal educational qualifications, managerial acumen, and intrinsic behavioral attributes.

Furthermore, there exists a compelling need to undertake comprehensive analyses and benchmarking exercises targeting existing organizations. Such endeavors would facilitate the cultivation of enterprises characterized by leadership practices devoid of toxic anomalies. This necessitates the development of a holistic framework underpinned by a combination of managerial, sociological, and psychological research paradigms, while concurrently accounting for the cultural nuances intrinsic to the targeted business environments.

6.9 Closing summary

This master's thesis started as an exploration of the current landscape surrounding toxic management, looking at its repercussions within today's corporate environment. Scholarly and professional discourse has extensively examined this phenomenon, diving into its multiple dimensions, from its identification to the profound adversities it imposes upon individuals, organizational cultures, and broader ecosystems, with a significant impact observed within knowledge-intensive service sectors. The study has defined key questions essential for discovering the presence of toxic managerial dynamics and settings, subsequently formulating a survey designed to question the outlined hypotheses.

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While this research offers an introduction into this domain, the findings show multiple avenues warranting deeper investigation in subsequent studies. Consequently, it shows invaluable insights that could lead to future scholarly activities. It is imperative to acknowledge the profound cultural difference inherent to toxic management, which constitute a primary constraint and sampling limitation of this study. This complexity confirms the absence of a one-size-fits-all solution to addressing managerial toxicity; rather, interventions must be tailored to align with local customs and industry specifics.

It is evident that the challenges within any workplace stem primarily from economic factors, beyond the control of any individual or organization. Despite efforts to combat these issues, the pervasive nature of the business environment often perpetuates dysfunctional leadership, creating a cycle difficult to break. However, there are avenues to mitigate the impact of these challenges. Firstly, individuals can work towards alleviating immediate discomfort. Secondly, efforts can be made to exert some degree of control over the situation. Lastly, there is potential to achieve mastery over the circumstances at hand.

While abandoning ship may seem appealing, it frequently results in long-term loss of career advancement rather than liberation. Transitioning between roles often leads to encountering similar issues elsewhere. Thus, seeking refuge in new environments is not always a viable solution. Despite the abundance of strategies to confront irrational management, their long-term efficacy remains uncertain.

Nevertheless, sanity possesses its own power, albeit limited. Rational thought and decisive action are formidable tools, yet their effectiveness has boundaries. Hence, individuals are encouraged to embrace a certain level of eccentricity to navigate the complexities of their careers successfully. Personal growth, particularly within the realm of management, often coincides with the development of one's idiosyncrasies.

Addressing toxic organizational culture presents a formidable challenge in mitigating corporate crime and misconduct. While discussions surrounding toxic culture abound, delving into its intricate processes to effect change poses a far greater challenge. Toxic cultures do not solely emerge from explicit endorsement of unlawful behavior. Rather, they thrive in environments where norms tacitly condone rule-breaking, impede compliance efforts, and undermine the authority of legal norms.

The genesis of toxic cultures within these environments stem from a convergence of core processes, including organizational strain, unrealistic performance targets,

suppression of dissent, and the normalization of deviant behavior. While high-ranking executives undoubtedly play a significant role in perpetuating these processes, the development of toxic cultures often unfolds organically, influenced by various actors within the organization.

Understanding the endemic nature of corporate wrongdoing necessitates a shift in focus from individual blame to the broader organizational culture. While holding leaders accountable is essential, it alone is insufficient in effecting meaningful change. Detoxifying corporate culture requires a comprehensive overhaul addressing structural deficiencies, ingrained values, and operational practices.

Initiating cultural detoxification mandates a meticulous assessment of toxicity across organizational dimensions, followed by strategic interventions targeting both structural reforms and attitudinal shifts among executives and employees. Creating a culture of accountability necessitates fostering an environment conducive to open dialogue, where all stakeholders can candidly discuss past transgressions and their ramifications.

Ultimately, this study aims to guide practitioners tasked with detoxifying corporate cultures. While acknowledging the complexity of cultural change, it underscores the importance of patience and sincerity in effecting lasting transformation, cautioning against quick-fix solutions that may exacerbate existing organizational dissonance. Successful cultural overhaul hinges on a steadfast commitment to transparency and gradual, sustained change efforts.

In conclusion, while challenges persist in the professional sphere, personal growth through embracing one's unique traits can serve as a means of empowerment. However, this journey may entail facing internal and external resistance, necessitating readiness to confront obstacles head-on. Addressing the issue of toxic managerial practices and associated organizational climates not only increases project efficacy but also fosters the creation of healthier, more sustainable professional and personal ecosystems.

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