

## **AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON TOXIC LEADERSHIP AND ITS IMPACT ON ORGANISATION; A LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE**

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### **Abstract**

Toxic leadership (Marcia Whicker 1996) which was linked with a number of dysfunctional leadership styles can produce negativity in an organisation and induces toxic culture with employees having only two options: conform to the rules or leave the organisation. The word “toxic” comes from the Greek “toxikon” which means “arrow poison”. In a literal sense, the term in its original form thus means to kill (poison) in a targeted way (arrow). Toxic organisations and leaders therefore are those who deliberately destroy the fabric of the institution. Any employee staying in the toxic style will mostly be in the losing end of their career and usually gets disappointed believing that the situation will change, or moonlight (trying for better opportunity while working in one organisation) secretly for a better career. Others, start accepting the toxic leadership as normal and faces unusual stresses. The organisation will die a slow death as it radiates depressed workforce. It usually looks like a termite-infested house, the organization crumbles from within mostly without the knowledge of the very fellow workers inside the organisation.

**Key Words; Toxic Leader, Traits, Toxic Boss, Cold Fish, Glory Seeker, Traits, Bad Leadership, Moonlighting, Stress**

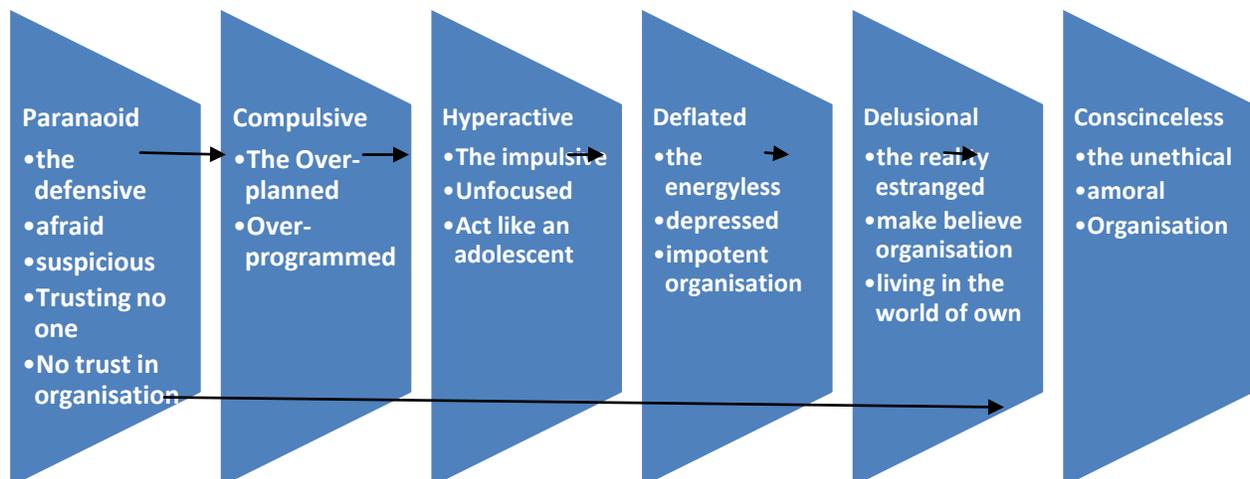
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## Introduction

A **toxic leader** who is responsible over a group of people or an organization, and abuses the **leader–follower** relationship by leaving the group or organization in a worse-off condition. It was coined by Marcia Whicker in 1996 and is linked to dysfunctional leadership styles. Other names for toxic leaders are **the toxic boss, boss from hell** or **toxic manager**. The style exercise a tyrannical or very authoritative or dictator style of management, resulting in a culture of fear and negativism. This exploratory study is to identify how toxic leader's traits, charecteristics, behaviour and attitude towards his fellow workers from the related liteature and case examples to identify and suggest methods to manage and train them. There are ample evidence across industries like corporations, banks, and governments where toxicity is heavy due to toxic leaders, hence making this research a very useful one. Typical toxic leaders pattersns of looking at and relating to the world, the research says, following patterns emerge in toxic leaders:

- Paranoid: the defensive, afraid, suspicious, trusting no-one or nobody organisation.
- Compulsive: the over-planned and over-programmed organisation.
- Hyperactive: the impulsive, unfocused organisation, acting like an adolescent.
- Deflated: the energyless, depressed and impotent organisation.
- Delusional: the reality estranged, make-believe organisation, living in a world of its own.
- Conscienceless: the unethical, amoral organisation.



**Figure; 1; The Interrelating Behaviour Patterns of Toxic Leaders in Organisation; Graphic Source Created; Author Dr.C.Karthikeyan**

**Objectives; (i) To explore who are Toxic Leaders and their Traits**

**(ii) To examine the qualities and types of Toxic Leaders and their nature.**

**(iii) To evaluate the impact of Toxic Leaders in an Organisation.**

**(iv) To examine the nature of Toxic Leader Personality and their roles in creating toxic organisations**

**(v) To suggest Remedial measures to identify and avoid Toxicity in Organisations**

**Methodology;** Qualitative Meta Analysis with Secondary Data and Case Reports

**Data;** Secondary and other Literature Sources with opinion from behavioural scientists

**Nature of Study;** Conceptual and on Grounded Theories of Leadership

**Scope;** To explore leadership personality in depth and their impacts in an organization

### **Background of the Study**

Kellerman (2004) states that good leadership spreads stability and motivation. Bad leadership creates feelings of rejection, confusion, and can destroy a team. Clinton (1988) listed four stages of development in leadership: (a) the challenges of potential leadership, (b) the skills and gifts to enhance the leader's effectiveness, (c) relating to people in ways that motivate, and (d) principles of leadership. Schmidt (2008) labeled toxic leadership as "narcissistic, self-promoters who engage in an unpredictable pattern of abusive and authoritarian supervision" (p. 57). Human resource researchers are still finding out why the toxic leaders are hired or how to deal with them. This exploratory study would try to add knowledge for identifying the toxic leader and resolving the conflict.

### **Problem Statement ;**

Toxic leaders destroy morale, productivity, and organizational effectiveness and why there is still lack of understanding in handling toxic leaders, and the dysfunctional situations that arise during the toxic leader's reign.

**Purpose of the Study ;**

The purpose of this research is regarding identifying and managing a toxic leader and to discover methods to addressing the toxic leadership problems.

**Conceptual Framework ;** The toxic leader destroys peace, creates conflict, and precludes chaos by antagonizing the subordinate through their toxic behavior. This knowledge may lead to understanding the consequences that occur within organizations from this negative leadership style.

**Review of related Literature;**

**Barbara Kellerman (2004)** suggests that toxicity in leadership (or simply, "bad leadership") may be analysed into seven different types: Incompetent, Rigid, Intemperate, Callous, Corrupt, Insular and Evil.

**Terry Price** identified workplace bullying can result in physical as well as emotional and psychological disorders, including a diagnosis such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

**Steven Sample**, former president of the University of Southern California, describes "thinking gray" as an attribute of a **contrarian leader**. It refers to avoiding, delaying or deferring a decision until it has to be made, which really is a decision in itself. In some highly charged political situations the leader may walk a thin line between pragmatic indecision and toxic ambivalence. While this may preserve college presidencies or other newly installed senior leaders, it can also be a quick route to toxic ambivalence.

**Robert Greenleaf** found in the analysis, for those who refuse to part with the term servant leaders (and especially if you think you are one), have someone check with followers anonymously. The only true test for a so-called servant leader is a confidential reality check with the followers.

**Schmidt (2008) stated that** toxic leadership as "narcissistic, self-promoters who engage in an unpredictable pattern of abusive and authoritarian supervision" (p. 57). There have been

occasions when toxic leaders were hired because of their industry knowledge with the intent to repair an ineffective team or inoperative noncompliant culture.

**Gouldner (1960)** when employers do not fulfill their promises and obligations, the employee reciprocates by altering his or her contributions to the organization (e.g. by reducing their efforts and performance)” (Bal, Chiaburu & Jansen, 2010). A toxic leader’s short-term success in terminating unproductive or difficult followers is one motivation for senior teams to knowingly hire them.

**Schyns and Hansbroughn (2010)** observed that senior management would hire a toxic leader because past positions of employment demonstrate short-term success. Once the toxic leader has reached a high performance level, the actual symptoms of a destructive culture begin to appear.

**Boddy, (2014); Meyer & Casile, (2010)** Human resource personnel are able to identify toxic leaders from multiple perspectives and may even express apprehension when senior management considers hiring one.

**Schmidt’s (2008)** definition of toxic leaders to new knowledge provided by human resource managers defines toxic leadership through the view of various authors, the similarity of behavior became evident.

**Hogan (2007), Pellitier (2010), Reed (2009), and Schmidt (2008)** completed the research on toxic leadership terms referenced in this dissertation and demonstrated that this subject affects all organizations.

**Schmidt (2008)**, the perspective of human resource personnel may lead to a broader definition of the toxic leader’s behavior. Exploring this variation led to a new and deeper definition of the toxic leader. It was clear through multiple literature articles that toxic leadership is a negative experience for the follower, which is harmful to any organization (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2013; Pellitier, 2010; Tepper, 2010; Yagil & Luria, 2010).

**Lipman-Blumen (2004, 2005)** wrote several books on the subject of toxic leadership from the perspective of the follower or subordinate. A subordinate is a descriptive term for anyone who officially reports to a superior. The definition of follower or followership used by Lipman-

**Blumen (2004, 2005)** was supported by Kellerman (2008), Pellitier (2010), and Tepper (2011), who also used the term of follower rather than subordinate.

**Hogan (2007)** revealed through the Hogan Development Survey (Hogan/HDS/asp) the pattern of derailing when senior management hires a leader who later becomes toxic. Hogan specifies the leader or manager who is feeling significant pressure and stress may act in toxic manners and derail their career.

**Harms et al. (2011)** provided several points of interest, including the lack of empirical studies on “narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism as the most widely studied subclinical traits” (p. 496). The dark side of personality is another way of describing toxic behaviors in individuals. Understanding those traits may help to identify leaders who tend to practice the behaviors of the authoritarian, the narcissist, and illustrate abusive traits.

**Goldman (2008b)** defended the use of the term toxic leaders versus abusive or other terms for toxic behavior as applied to organizational development and organizational behavior. As reported by Goldman (2008): The toxic leader is an insidious and pernicious spreading of negative emotional contagion—a toxic process accelerated by highly destructive and dysfunctional leadership behavior

**Crocker (2005)** stated that behaviors of incivility resemble behaviors of the toxic leader since they display narcissism, abusiveness, and authoritarian action. Furthermore, he developed hypotheses to define employee perceptions of “interactional injustice, managerial incivility and turnover intentions, withdrawal behaviors, performance behaviors, and negative effects on the organization” (p. 42).

**Crocker (2005)** further acknowledged that behaviors within cultures are seen as acceptable or unacceptable in accordance with their accepted norm, thus individual employee perception may not be enough to convince senior management there is an issue.

**Narcissism and Toxicity Tepper, Moss, and Duffy (2011)** examined the perception of deep-level differences between subordinates and leaders. The narcissistic leader displays an attitude of superiority, impatience, and dwells on their image of leadership and ability. The attitude and behavior that accompanies the narcissism may become toxic as a leader is consumed with their accomplishments or successes.

**Tepper et al. (2011)** applied a test to measure and determine the validity of their thesis that unfavorable outcomes arise when a leader perceives an extremely dissimilar trait or personality and moral code from a follower. If the leader displays additional toxic behavior because of getting ahead, he or she would be aligned with the definition of the toxic leader defined in this dissertation by displaying narcissism, which is one of the five behaviors of a toxic leader. This further supports an alignment with actions of incivility and the toxic leaders.

**Reiter-Palmon (2008)** determined that “harming organizational members or striving for short-term gains over long-term organizational goals leads to focusing on sustained destructive acts with profound implications rather than minor slip-ups” (p. 24).

**Tepper, Moss, and Duffy (2011)** described “annual losses of an estimated \$23.8 billion in increased health care costs, workplace withdrawal, and lost productivity” (p. 279) due to the consequences of followers’ perceptions of toxic leadership. Many theorists have noted hiring a toxic leader negatively affects followers (Ashforth, 1994; Kellerman, 2005, 2008; Lipman-Blumen, 2004, 2005; Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007; Tepper, 2003, 2007).

**Schyns and Hansbroughn (2010)** stated that the cognitive “process employed by the leader play a large role in how he or she gathers information, interprets it, and makes decisions toward a course of action” (p. 23).

**Lipman-Blumen (2005)** addressed these phenomena by noting, “Organizations qua organizations can yield their own toxins. They do so through detrimental policies and practices—including setting unreasonable performance goals, promoting excessive internal competition, and creating a culture of blame” (p. 17).

**Bal, Chiaburu, and Jansen (2010)** discussed authoritarianism management and the effects this behavior has on rebellion by the follower. **Bond, Tuckey, and Dollard (2010)** discussed workplace bullying and the personal stress related to this action.

**Baker (2007)** believed that followers no longer hold a passive role, and leaders are people with a role to fill rather than inherent personality “specifically graced” (p. 55) upon them.

**Cangemi and Pfohl (2009)** described seven conditions of actual events occurring under the reign of a sociopathic leader, the chameleon-type personality, verbally aggressive, and got-to-beright attitude.

**Bond et al. (2010)** discussed how bullies react to the competition and the internal stress factors, and how they generate a work environment that creates such behavior. Bond et al. provided insight referencing narcissism, bullying, abusive, and authoritative behaviors of which all assist with the understanding of toxic behavior.

**According to Bond et al. (2010):** The symptoms are: work-related harassment, job demands, meaningless tasks, professional humiliation, belittlement, intimidation, and isolation. These work symptoms are reflected in employee posttraumatic stress by a) intrusions, flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive thoughts, b) avoidance of people, places, objects, and thoughts associated with the traumatic event; and c) physiological and psychological hyper-arousal. (p. 39)

**Goldman (2008)** noted senior management will often not act on toxicity due to fear of litigation, wrongful termination claims, or other allegations until it is too late and followers have left a company, a worker’s compensation case is filed, or a lawsuit ensues.

**Goldman (2008b)** noted, “Although there are individuals who may be labeled as dysfunctional, this only constitutes a subset of larger, systemic issues” (p. 245). Goldman noted that after organizational leaders accept the existence of an issue of concern, the leaders would treat the solution as a patient-doctor relationship by hiring an outside person to identify the cause of the illness or toxin and recommend a repair to reverse the effects.

**Mossholder, Richardson, and Settoon (2011)** completed research on creating value in organizations by having human resource personnel create systems

### **Objective 1; (i) To explore who are Toxic Leaders and their Traits**

**Understanding toxic leadership;** It is a leadership approach that harms people—and, eventually, the company as well through the poisoning of enthusiasm, creativity, autonomy, and innovative expression. Toxic leaders disseminate their poison through over-control. They define leadership as being in control. **Symptoms of toxic leadership;** In a toxic leadership environment, people are rewarded for agreeing with the boss and punished for thinking differently. In a toxic leadership environment, “yes” people are rewarded and are promoted to leadership roles, while people who more fully engage their mental resources, critical thinking, and questioning skills are shut out from decisionmaking and positions of influence. Toxic leadership often causes a high turnover rate, a decline in productivity, less innovation, and interdepartmental conflict.

### **Objective (ii); To examine the qualities and types of Toxic Leaders and their nature.**

- **The Cold Fish:** the ends justifies the means. So any decision and action is justifiable in terms of the results desired.
- **The Snake:** the world serves me in the endeavour to satisfy my personal needs like greed, status and power.
- **Glory Seeker:** personal glory and public visibility at any cost, regardless of whether I have made any real and meaningful contribution.
- **Puppet Master:** absolute, centralised control over everything and anyone, under all circumstances.

- **Monarch:** ruling the organisation as if it is my kingdom. All of its assets are available for my personal use.

The more prolific these toxic leaders are in an organisation, the more toxic the organisation. The table below profiles these toxic leaders.

The Big Five Toxic leaders ;

<b>The Cold Fish</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Ends Justifies Means</li> <li>•Any Decision and Action is justified in terms of results</li> </ul>
<b>The Snake</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Satisfy personal needs</li> <li>•Greed, Status, Power</li> </ul>
<b>Glory Seeker</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Personal Glory, Public Visibility at any cost.Glory needed regardless of cost</li> </ul>
<b>Puppet Master</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Absolute, Centralised Control Over Everything and Anyone</li> </ul>
<b>Monarch</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Ruling the Organisation as if it is my Kingdom</li> <li>•All ASSETS are for my personal use</li> </ul>

**Figure; 2; 5 Kinds of Toxic Leaders Characters; Source; Author ;Dr.C.Karthikeyan**  
**Barbara Kellerman (2004)** suggests that toxicity in leadership (or simply, "bad leadership") may be analysed into seven different types:**Incompetent, Rigid, Intemperate, Callour, Corrupt, Insular and Evil.**

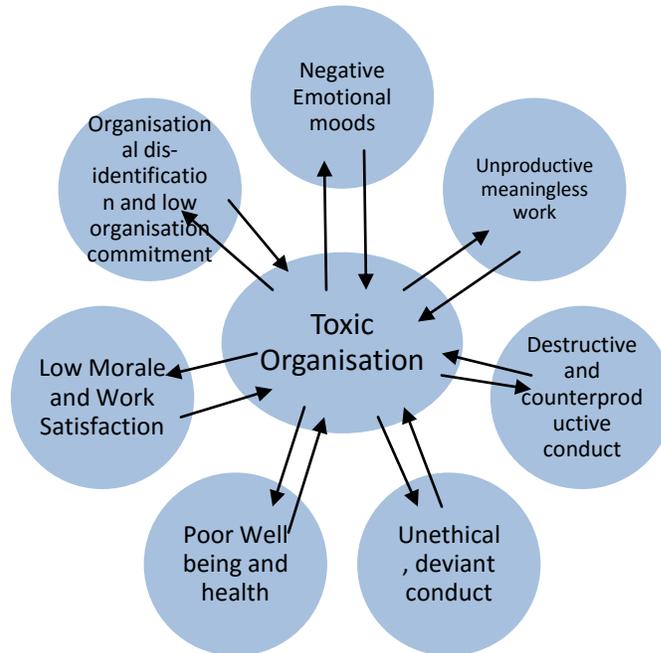


Figur; 3 ; 7 Types of Bad Leadership; Concept Source; Barbara Kellerman Graphic Source; Dr.C.Karthikeyan

**Incompetent** – the leader and at least some followers lack the will or skill (or both) to sustain effective action. With regard to at least one important leadership challenge, they do not create positive change. **Rigid** – the leader and at least some followers are stiff and unyielding. Although they may be competent, they are unable or unwilling to adapt to new ideas, new information, or changing times. **Intemperate** – the leader lacks self-control and is aided and abetted by followers who are unwilling or unable to effectively intervene. **Callous** – the leader and at least some followers are uncaring or unkind. Ignored and discounted are the needs, wants, and wishes of most members of the group or organization, especially subordinates. **Corrupt** – the leader and at least some followers lie, cheat, or steal. To a degree that exceeds the norm, they put self-interest ahead of the public interest. **Insular** – the leader and at least some followers minimize or disregard the health and welfare of those outside the group or organization for which they are directly responsible. **Evil** – the leader and at least some followers commit atrocities. They use pain as an instrument of power. The harm can be physical, psychological or both.

**Objective; (iii) To evaluate the impact of Toxic Leaders in an Organisation.**

**The Typical Toxic organisations;** The typical manifestations of a toxic organisation resulting from toxic leadership are:



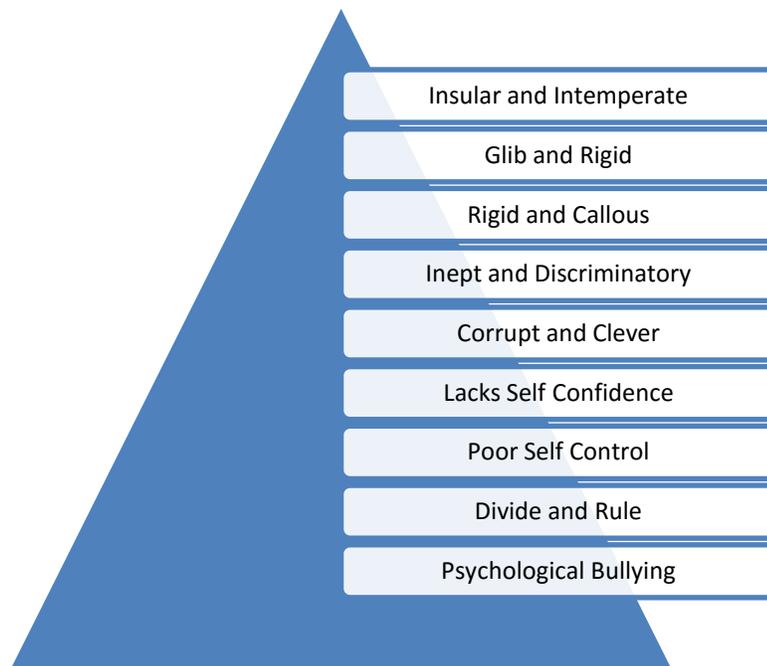
**Figure; 4; Toxicity in Organisation 7 TOXIC factors ; Source Author; Dr.C.Karthikeyan**

- Negative emotional moods and mood swings: anger, despair, despondency, frustration, pessimism and aggression.
- Unproductive and meaningless work.
- Destructive and counterproductive conduct.
- Employee physical and emotional disengagement and withdrawal such as absenteeism, lack of contribution, and turnover.
- Unethical, deviant conduct: theft, fraud and sabotage.
- Poor well-being and health.
- Low (team) morale and work satisfaction.
- Organisational dis-identification and low organisational commitment.
- General life dissatisfaction.

**Basic traits;**

The basic traits of a toxic leader are generally considered to be either/or **insular, intemperate, glib, operationally rigid, callous, inept, discriminatory, corrupt**<sup>1</sup> or aggressive by scholars

such as **Barbara Kellerman**. They boast that they are supposedly **clever**, always criticize other staff members and avoid or dislike to be asked awkward questions about their leadership style. These may occur as either: Oppositional behaviour. Plays corporate power **politics**., An overcompetitive attitude to other employees. Perfectionistic attitudes., Abuse of the disciplinary system (such as to remove a workplace rival)., A condescending/glib attitude. They are **shallow** and **lack self-confidence**. Toxic leaders are not confident with themselves and become aggressive to cope. **Poor self-control** and/or restraint., Physical and/or **psychological bullying**. **Procedural inflexibility**. Discriminatory attitudes (sexism, etc.)., **Causes workplace division instead of harmony**. Use "**divide and rule**" tactics on their employees. Irritable



**Figure ;5; Escalating Toxicity by Toxic Leader Characters; Concept; Barbara Kellerman; Graphic Concept Source ; Dr.C.Karthikeyan**

Leaders are authoritarian, autocratic, and control freaks use both micromanagement, over management and management by fear to keep a grip of their authority in the organizational group. A toxic leader is hypocritical and hypercritical of others, seeking the illusion of corporate and moral virtue to hide their own workplace vices. Hypocrisy involves the deception of others and is thus a form of lying. They are sometimes maladjusted, and afraid of change They can also be both frightening and psychologically stressful to work with. The Russian Army defines toxic leaders as commanders who put their own needs first, micro-manage subordinates, behave in a mean-spirited manner or display poor decision-making. A study for the Center for

Army Leadership found that toxic leaders in the army work to promote themselves at the expense of their subordinates, and usually do so without considering long-term ramifications to their subordinates, their unit, and the Army profession.

**Objective (iv) To examine the nature of Toxic Leader Personality and their roles in creating toxic organisations**

**Tools that increase toxicity;**

**Workload:** The *setting up to fail* procedure is in particular a well established workplace bullying tactic that a toxic leader can use against his rivals and subordinates.

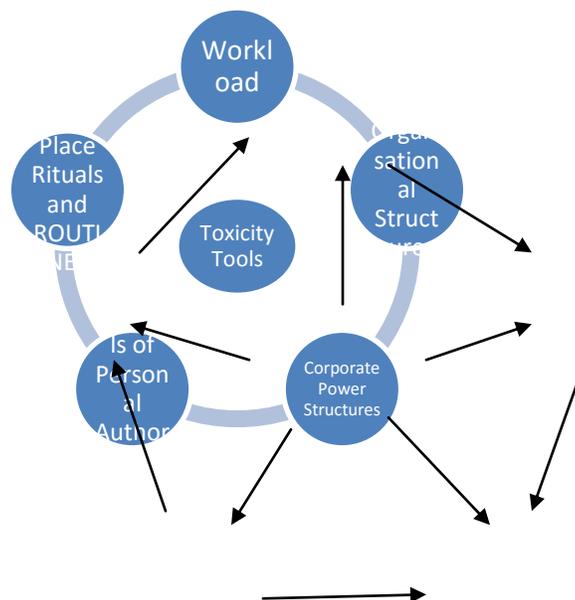
**Corporate control systems:** They could use the processes in place to monitor what is going on. Disciplinary systems could be abused to aid their power culture.

**Organizational structures:** They could abuse the hierarchies, personal relationships and the way that work flows through the business.

**Corporate power structures:** The toxic leader controls who, if any one makes the decisions and how widely spread power is.

**Symbols of personal authority :** These may include the right to parking spaces and executive washrooms or access to supplies and uniforms. Narcissistic symbols and self-images (i.e. workplace full of self-portraits).

**Workplace rituals and routines:** Management meetings, board reports, disciplinary hearing, performance assays and so on may become more habitual than necessary.



**Figure; 6; Complementary Cycle of Toxicity Tools (Factors Complementing each other);  
Graphic Source; Dr.C.Karthikeyan; Concept Source; Russian Army Literature**

Professor Jean Lipman-Blumen found that dominating characteristics among corporate and political leaders is visible because the people are psychologically weak to counter "toxic leadership". The "dysfunctional personal characteristics" and "destructive behaviours" "inflict reasonably serious and enduring harm" and influence badly on a personal and/or corporate basis. He suggests there is something of a deeply psychological nature going on. She argues the need to feel safe, specialness and in a social community all help explain this psychological phenomenon.

**Factors that develop a toxic leader?;** poor role models, operating under a faulty definition of leadership, having distorted definition of strength, trying to control everything, not realizing that over-controlling produces toxic effects, have unresolved psychological issues (such as fear of the unknown, fear of failure, mistrust of people, feelings of inadequacy, lack of confidence, or extreme overconfidence) that they avoid by exercising toxic leadership. The net result is the toxic leaders's distorted view of human nature drives them to treat people as robots, and are likely to see their work as "only a job," thus actually controls less of the person, and thus has less control. **Their impact on the company;** systemic damage throughout the organization creating serious trouble just under the surface. Makes the company face unusual stresses—a depressed economy, for instance—more demands will be put on the workforce. Like a termite-infested house, the organization crumbles from within. **Can toxic leaders change?;** change is possible, toxic leader to be given an ultimatum—change, or else!—he or she might realize the need for a change. Advice to commit to the process of change. Creative coaching is needed to guide and support the leader through the transformation process. Specific plan custom-designed for that leader's situation, anecdotal evidence as well as research which suggests that one out of every five leaders is toxic. **Competency of Toxic leader;** Leadership toxicity and incompetence are not directly related even incompetent leadership can be toxic. In a long term toxic leaders are incompetent because they fail to be a well-rounded leader. Leadership qualities like personal attributes, technical and professional competencies, values and attitudes, regardless of their level of technical and professional competence, are incompetent. since competent leadership is getting things done with people.

### **The fatal attraction ; towards Toxic Leaders ;**

There are several key reasons for our attraction to toxic leaders: **First**, we are driven by our more *pragmatic* needs. We often stick with toxic leaders because working for them pays the mortgage and the kids' dental bills, provides political, occupational, and other types of important access, and lets us share in additional attractive benefits that they provide. Incidentally, these pragmatic needs are the ones we most easily recognize. **A second set of needs**, this time *existential* needs, sprouts from our poignant awareness of our own mortality. From the depths of our unconscious, it relentlessly drives us to find relief in the form of toxic leaders, who dangle assurances of safety, meaning and immortality before us. **A third set of needs** stems from the *uncertain, disorderly world* in which we all live creates "situational fears" give rise to an increased need for certainty and orderliness. Leaders who promise us an orderly, predictable and controlled world can look very attractive when everything around us seems about to fall apart.

**Fourth, psychosocial needs arise** from the interaction between the individual (replete with psychological needs, existential anxiety and situational fears) and his or her demanding environment. when we fail to meet our culture's achievement norms, we have two major choices. We can join a subcultural group whose norms are less exacting or even antithetical to those of the mainstream culture, like gangs or cults. Or we can crown as leaders others who *do* exceed the norms. When we join up with these outstanding individuals, stronger and smarter than we are, we can feel vicariously accomplished, powerful and protected. **Fifth, we humans** have always lived in an *unfinished and unfinishable world*, a world in which the explanations our parents took for truth we recognize as partially incorrect or totally mistaken. Thus, in each era, certain knowledge is overwritten by newer, more accurate knowledge, casting doubt upon related assumptions.

### **Objective (v) To suggest Remedial measures to identify and avoid toxicity in Organisations**

Fortunately, there are various ways of dealing with toxic leaders, ranging from the cautious to the courageous. There are both *personal options* that individuals can select and *policy options* that organizations can adopt to break the hold of toxic leaders.

**Personal options;** Personal options all require keeping your cool as you navigate the choppy seas one invariably encounters in any effort to confront or capsize a toxic leader.

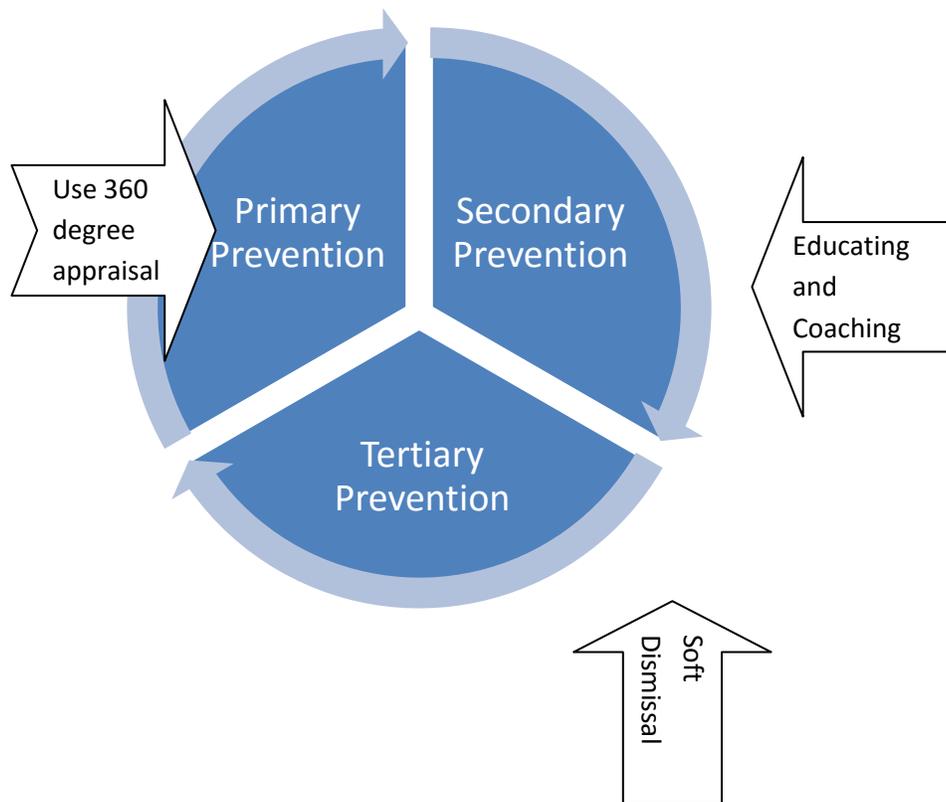
- **Do your homework.** That can mean several things. For one, *investigate* the toxic leader's *history*. For another, *consult with trusted colleagues* who interact with the same leader. Seek the advice of the *opinion leaders* and those individuals everyone recognizes as *wise organizational owls*. You will probably discover that you are not the only one who sees the leader's toxic warts.
- **Create a coalition.** If you are suffering, most likely others are experiencing similar problems. *Strategize* about how the group will confront the leader and try to *structure* the *confrontation as constructively* as possible. If possible, *frame* your *concerns* in terms of *organizational impact*, that is, how the leader's decisions and actions have negatively affected the organization and the people in it.
- **Avoid solo confrontations.** Confrontations without witnesses open the possibility for the leader to twist the encounter into a "you said/she said" scenario. Bringing a small, but well-regarded, group to a confrontation with the leader will impress upon him that you are not alone, that influential others share your concerns, and that this meeting is completely on the record. *Offer to work together* with the leader to improve the situation, but insist upon *benchmarks and timelines* for improvements.
- Alerting the *media* or appropriate *regulatory bodies* may be the only remaining way to stop the damage if the board refuses to act in the face of demonstrable unethical or criminal practices. This step is fraught with danger and difficulty. Due diligence is necessary to ensure that the media and/or regulatory sources you choose to enlist have a record of unshakeable integrity. And be certain that the documentation you provide is accurate and supportable by supplementary data from other sources.
- Leaving is also an honourable strategy, particularly when you are convinced either that you and your collaborators cannot prevail or that the toxic impact is limited solely to you. Some followers depart when the physical or psychological impact grows too great to bear. When leaving is the only way to preserve your integrity and/or your mental or physical health or that of your family, it's probably time to go. Social, financial and/or political costs may also figure into the calculus. Remember, martyrdom is not a necessary part of honour.

### **Organizational policy options**

- **Periodic 360 degree reviews of individual leaders.** Confidential reviews of leaders by those with whom they interact frequently and intimately would go far toward giving those leaders a clear perspective on their strengths and limitations.
- **Respectable departure options.** Many leaders become overly comfortable with their power and perks. So, it is probably worthwhile to construct a set of *respectable departure options* to ease the leader's leave-taking before toxicity takes serious hold. One such option might be a *transition year* after officially stepping down.
- **Open and democratic leadership selection processes.** Transparency in the processes designed to identify and select leaders will help ensure the appointment or election of leaders with non-toxic backgrounds. Lacking open procedures, due diligence may be seriously hampered. This doesn't mean all aspects of the selection committee's work must be conducted in public.
- **Constituencies educated to deal with their anxieties.** Educating constituencies to confront their anxieties and fears is no small task, but an essential one, nonetheless. This necessitates a long-term strategy that sequential leaders must insist upon maintaining. Education helps us understand and cope with the fears and anxieties that make us vulnerable to the illusions of toxic leaders. It also tends to liberate us from narrow and stereotypical thinking.
- **Regular accountability forums.** When leaders are required to hold regular town-hall meetings or accountability forums, there is increased likelihood that they will think more deeply about the decisions and actions that they have taken or are considering. When leaders expect to be asked regularly to explain the thinking behind their initiatives, they inevitably must become far more reflective and self-conscious as they engage in their leadership activities

**Conclusion; How to prevent toxic behaviors in the workplace;** Baird Brightman, a behavioral scientist at Harvard University, suggests a three-pronged approach to preventing the development of a toxic workplace:

1. Primary prevention
2. Secondary prevention
3. Tertiary prevention



**Figure; Graphical concept of Preventing Toxic Behaviour (Baird Brightman developed at Harvard University) ; Graphic Designed and Developed; Prof Dr.C.Karthikeyan**

Stopping the growth of toxicity of the workplace is to prevent it from occurring in the first place (**primary prevention**). Brightman suggests leaders to use 360-degree observer ratings to detect toxic behaviors. It caters to identifying factors associated to toxic behaviors than having reference checks or conducting one to one interview.

**The secondary prevention** can be done by educating and coaching the employees at appropriate levels, and also can identify toxic personality types. Extensive screening and coaching, may not remove person's toxic behavioral tendencies.

**Tertiary prevention** can be done by soft dismissal or dismissal process can be as smooth as possible. Leaders ultimately bear the responsibility of establishing an environment free from toxic behaviors. Let the employees change to a positive environment, if the leadership of the

organization is the root cause, employees must be bold enough to address the issue and seek recourse. Toxicity costs a lot and its indirect costs are difficult to identify. It destroys individuals, groups and organizations, even countries.

Effective and practicable staffing and selection policies can help provide structural defences against the paradox of toxic leadership, but followers cannot avoid their personal responsibility for serious reflection and change.

### **How to Cleanse a Toxic Workplace**

**Identify the warning signs;** Though little difficult to identify but some of the direct observable warning signs will be in the form of offending others down, passive aggressive leadership, destructive gossip, devious politics, negativity, aggressiveness, narcissism, lack of credibility, passivity, disorganization, and the resistance to change. These behaviors—individually or combined—can create a toxic workplace environment. Positive and Motivating Leadership or supervisors need to take toxicity in the workplace seriously and need to avert in a very professional way.

**Assess the Impact on the employees;** Observe closely on the emotional exhaustion, low self-esteem, and low job satisfaction. increased intention to quit, decreased organizational commitment, and increased psychological distress, replace it with positive performance evaluations, encouraging work culture, smile and charm while dealing subordinates can solve the problem of toxicity to certain extent.

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