

## The dark side of leadership: A conceptual assessment of toxic leadership

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### Abstract

Toxic leadership scares its employees in order to gain acceptance and gain personal gains; constantly humiliating the members of the organization with their narcissistic tendencies and authoritarian attitudes; It is a dysfunctional type of leadership that discourages them and causes their physical and mental destruction. The accuracy and prevention of this leadership style, which is very common in organizations, is important for the employee and the organization. In order to effectively deal with toxic leaders and understand their behavior, it is often important to analyze leader behavior in context. This study focuses on empowering stakeholders and organizational structures to identify, address and transform the dynamics of toxic leadership, and some effective coping strategies have been proposed. The study also examined the effects of toxicity on the individual and the organization. Thus, an effort was made to promote a positive social environment by increasing employee awareness.

**Keywords:** Toxic Leadership, Unethical Behavior, Systemic Disruption

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### 1. Introduction

Leadership is considered as a critical factor in achieving organizational goals, ensuring coordination among employees, integrating employees and organizational goals, and increasing organizational performance. It is claimed that disorder and inefficiency will emerge in leaderless organizations and even leaderless organizations cannot be considered. This importance of leadership in terms of organizations and employees has been the subject of many researches, and it has been tried to determine what kind of results many different leadership styles cause in terms of followers and organizations in the literature (DeCelles & Pfarrer, 2004; Krasikova et al., 2013; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). When these studies are examined, it is seen that the majority of them focus on leadership styles that positively affect positive organizational outputs and offer implications for the development of these leadership styles (Fascia, 2018). Transformational leadership, authentic leadership, ethical leadership, charismatic leadership, democratic leadership or servant leadership are just some of them. Since all relevant leadership styles positively affect organizational outputs such as desired job satisfaction, job performance, creativity and productivity in organizations (Braun et al., 2013; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Conger, Kanungo & Menon, 2000; Foels et al., 2000), there is still continues to be the subject of many studies. In this sense, it seems natural to consider the subject from this perspective, which can be considered as positive leadership, and to create a growing literature accordingly. However, this has led to the neglect of the dark side of leadership (Fascia, 2018) and the limited number of studies examining the subject in the literature (Contreras & Espinosa, 2019). Recently, the ideas that leadership can seriously affect employees and organizations have started to develop, and in line with these developments, some researchers have begun to think that focusing on the negative effects of leadership is more important in understanding leadership, rather than being influenced only by the positive leadership perspective (Aasland et al., 2010; Burton). & Hoobler, 2006; McCleskey, 2013; Tepper, 2000). Baumeister et al. (2001) emphasized that individuals are more sensitive to the negative aspects of the external context than the positive aspects, and accordingly, negative contexts are more effective on individual attitudes and behaviors. This system of thought has started to cause a great increase in studies focusing on the negative aspects of leadership, especially since the second half of the 90s. Today, it is possible to argue that studies focusing on the negative aspect of leadership continue increasingly.

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Although the related field is expressed as negative leadership, negative aspect of leadership, negative leadership and dark side of leadership, it is seen that the concept of dark leadership is widely used in general. When dark leadership is mentioned, different leadership styles are referred to in different studies (Allio, 2007; Erickson et al., 2007; Padilla Hogan & Kaiser, 2007; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Landa & Tyson, 2017; Tepper, 2000). This situation creates a complexity in terms of what dark leadership is and exactly which leadership styles it includes and which ones it does not. It can be argued that the lack of a complete theoretical integration regarding the dark leadership has been effective in the emergence of the aforementioned situation. In this context, a problem arises regarding a clear understanding of the relevant field.

What exactly is meant by dark leadership? What leadership styles or behaviors are described as dark leadership? Are there any differences and similarities between the leadership styles presented as dark leadership, and if so, what are these issues? What are the antecedents and consequences of dark leadership? The above-mentioned questions essentially constitute the rationale for the existence of this study. Another problem related to the field is the limited number of studies on the dark side of leadership, especially in the local literature (Başar, 2020a; Başar, 2020b; Başar, 2020c; Başar, et al., 2016; Özsoy & Ardiç, 2020). However, in these limited studies, it is emphasized that rather than determining what dark leadership is, it is mostly focused on the antecedents and consequences of dark leadership (Başar, et al., 2016). In order to fill the gap in the local literature on toxic leadership and to contribute to a clearer understanding of the related concept, this study aimed to scan the relevant literature through the questions mentioned above. For this purpose, the conceptualization of dark leadership, its antecedents and results are given in the context of the relevant literature, and the issues that are considered to be findings are mentioned in the discussion and conclusion part. The study is methodologically conceptual and descriptive. In this context, a general portrait of the related concept has been tried to be drawn by examining the studies in the domestic and foreign literature. It is expected that a current and regular study on toxic leadership, which is directly related to many variables that can be considered critical for the success and continuity of organizations, will contribute to future research and practitioners.

## 2. Toxic Leadership as a Concept

Until today, theories have been produced by investigating the characteristics and distinctive aspects of successful leaders in many studies. For example, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, charismatic leadership. However, some leaders make the life and work of employees unbearable. Most people have to work with such leaders in their business life. Over time, these negative aspects of leadership have attracted the attention of fields such as Business Management and Psychology, and research has begun in this field. (Baser, 2016). These negative behaviors and attitudes; ruthless (Ashfort, 1994), colonial (Tepper, 2000), bad leadership (Kellermen, 2008), destructive leadership (Padilla, Hogan & Kaiser 2007), self-admiring leadership and toxic leadership (Whicker, 1996; Lipman-Bluman, 2005; Goldman, 2009).

Toxic; According to the Dictionary of the Turkish Language Association (2015), it is conceptually defined as a poisonous substance that is harmful to health (Türk Dil, 2015). It is frequently used in the toxic medical literature and is expressed as toxicus in Latin. Toxic means poisonous in general terms. Poison is the name given to substances that cause chemical, biochemical or radioactive damage to cells and tissues. The word toxic is like toxic air that enters the lungs through the respiratory tract. For this reason, the poison is not only taken by touch, but also in the place where the poison is, causing poisoning (Kırbaç, 2013).

Whicker was the first to use the term toxic leader. In many of his studies, he conducted studies on toxic leadership (Whicker, 1996). Toxic Leadership: It is defined as a dysfunctional and destructive leadership approach that can cause serious harm to communities, organizations and individuals. According to Frost; "Toxic emotion is like a harmful substance that consumes energy from the entire organization and its individuals, and acts in a way that causes a decrease in organizational efficiency and the abandonment of important personnel for the organization" (Frost, 2003). Lubit talks about the characteristics of toxic leaders as narcissistic, controlling, paranoid, opportunistic, anti-social, aggressive, rude, overbearing,

unstable, murderous, chauvinistic, tough, authoritarian, rigid, abusive, dictatorial, persistent, uncontrollable and passive-aggressive. as “leaders with characteristics such as personality disorder” (Lubit, 2004).

According to Lipman-Blumen, this concept; It is expressed as a dysfunctional and destructive leadership approach that seriously harms communities, organizations and individuals (Lipman-Bluman, 2005). Toxic leadership is a form of leadership that leads people into darkness. It refers to the misuse of power and authority. The damage may be intentional or it may be the result of carelessness. However, this does not change the level of damage. It is possible for certain patterns to emerge in toxic leadership (Kellermen, 2008). Toxic leaders have smug personalities (Lipman-Bluman, 2005). The characteristic of many managers and general managers is that they are narcissistic. Narcissism is the state of being smug, worshiping and falling in love with oneself. Narcissism is associated with charisma and the use of personal power, and includes self-aggrandizement, arrogance, constantly believing that one is right, and chasing pleasures (Padilla, Hogan & Kaiser, 2007). For example, while Schmidt defines toxic leadership in his study; listed narcissistic characteristics such as "personal inadequacy, selfishness, thinking only of himself, putting forward his own interests" (Schmidt, 2008). Walton states that toxic leadership is attractive and the reason for this is that these people have characteristics that show strong personality such as being narcissistic, ambitious and willing (Walton, 2007). It is reported in the studies that the organization has to make excessive health expenses due to the negative effects of toxic leadership on the mental and physiological health of the followers. In some studies, toxic leadership; It is stated that it causes low motivation and thus an increase in the rate of work interruption and quitting (Macklem, 2005). One of these studies was conducted by the United States (US) military to try to define toxic leadership. In this context, the secretary of the military, White, asked members of the American War College to express their opinions on how to determine the attitudes of destructive leaders and how the military could be more effective (Williams, 2004).

According to Reed (2004), toxic leadership is defined as a disease and three elements are emphasized. The first of these is the lack of concern about the welfare level of the employees; the second has individual or interpersonal relations that negatively affect the culture of the organization; The third is expressed as the leader's putting his own interests first. Although toxic leaders are talented and effective, they create a negative organizational climate due to their harmful effects during their duties (p, 67-71).

While some organizations may promote or simply tolerate toxic leaders for economic or political reasons, the long-term impact on the organization's mission and reputation is often underestimated. As a result, as Glass (2002) suggests, we all need to learn effective strategies and attitudes to deal with difficult personalities in the workplace.

Given the negative impact of disruptive leadership, more information is needed on what triggers disruptive leadership. According to Mehta and Maheswari (2014), what causes people to become toxic leaders is that they think they have to control everything. Ego satisfaction from overcontrolling reaches a certain level. So they continue in this situation. Another reason is that toxic leaders may have unresolved psychological issues (fear of the unknown, fear of failure, distrust of people). The drive to gain power and authority can become an addiction for some leaders. It is also possible for this insatiable desire to become so strong that a leader can use his energy to maintain or enhance his status and authority.

Toxic leaders cannot exist alone. They need an environment in which they can thrive and followers who don't challenge them. Yapp (2016) states that if there is a toxic leader in our organization, there are also the following elements:

**Conductive environment:** To be successful, toxic leaders need an environment in which they can thrive. There are four key elements that will contribute to this favorable environment: instability, perceived threat, questionable values and standards, lack of governance. Toxic leaders will try to create themselves by taking advantage of such environments.

**Indecision:** When there is indecision, people recognize that decisive action must be taken to restore order and stability. They are willing to sacrifice slower democratic decision making in favor of quick, unilateral decisions. E.g; When the Roman Republic was threatened, senate leaders (Consuls) elected military leaders (Dictators) to protect the Empire. Quick decision-making will often lead to decisive action.

**Perceived threat:** The external influence or actor creates a feeling of “under attack”. People get scared when they feel threatened. This leads to a willingness to accept toxic leadership. Fear is the strongest human emotion. Toxic leaders try to create an environment where there is a perceived threat. When managing change, people often talk about creating a 'flaming platform' so that they can change their behavior. This is often effective and may be necessary; this contributes to an environment in which toxic leaders thrive. Questionable values and standards. Toxic leaders ignore values and standards.

**Lack of governance:** Toxic leaders thrive in an environment that is not properly managed.

**Conformers:** These people are passive in the face of toxic leadership. They often lack confidence; They need an authority figure to provide security and certainty. They are focused on self-preservation and are unlikely to contend with toxic leaders who seek the path of least resistance.

**Collusive:** These followers are more proactive than conformers and will conform and accept toxic leadership. They are often assertive and quickly progress towards becoming toxic leaders by imitating the behavior of toxic leaders.

Yapp (2016) states that toxic leaders exhibit autocratic, narcissistic, manipulative, intimidating, overcompetitive and discriminatory behaviors in organizations; Kim (2016) stated that “the unwillingness to listen to feedback, excessive self-promotion and self-interest, lies and inconsistency, lack of moral philosophy, lack of support and counseling, inadequacy in rewarding, bullying and harassment, which cause distress in the workplace and negatively affect the mental health of employees.

According to Singh, Sengupta and Dev (2018), authoritarianism is a popular terminology in the lexicon of toxic leaders. These leaders use their subordinates at every opportunity, pretending they don't exist. These leaders, who love micromanagement, penetrate the ineffective group by exhibiting unethical behavior.

## 2.1. The Historical Process of Toxic Leadership

In the past, most of the studies on leadership have focused on investigating the positive aspects of leadership, successful leadership characteristics and their distinctive qualities. Thus, different leadership concepts have been developed. These concepts are listed as the positive aspects and characteristics of leadership such as Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Charismatic Leadership, and Democratic Leadership (Yukl, G, 2013/2018). Negative leader behaviors, which are expressed as the dark side of leadership, have attracted the attention of researchers and business administrations, so studies on this subject have begun to increase (Lipman-Bluman, 2005). It is stated that the first studies to explain the negative side of leadership were made by Conger. According to Conger, it is stated that some features that distinguish the leader from the manager can negatively affect the organization and employees and cause negative results. It is assumed that three skill areas of leaders cause problems. These are: the leader's strategic vision, communication style and impression management ability. In addition, leaders cause negative results in the organization when they cannot realize the developments in the environment by integrating the principles established for the institution with their personalities, when they make their followers believe in their own vision with their communication skills, and when they are unable to notice the mistakes in their practices. Conger refers to this situation as the dark side of leadership (Conger, 1990).

Ashforth studied the leaders who tried to suppress and intimidate their power and called these leaders “petty tyrants”. The term petty tyranny is defined in six behavioral dimensions. These behaviors are; self-esteem, humiliating employees, not thinking about employees, trying to impose their own thoughts on employees, preventing the use of decision-making authority and punishing them without showing a

reason. Here, the point of view of the leader, which is emphasized in the adjective small, is expressed in a narrow framework (Ashfort, 1994). Inspired by Ashforth's work, Tepper developed the concept of "exploitative management". He defines the concept of abusive leader as "consistency in verbal and non-verbal hostile behaviors, excluding physical contact". He defines abusive leadership behaviors as behaviors that criticize, humiliate, scold, be rude, and force employees to work they don't want in front of other employees. He also emphasizes that employers working with this type of leader have a tendency to leave the organization more, and that they experience intense stress in their lives and thus are unhappy (Tepper, 2000).

Kellerman states that the positive aspects of leadership are emphasized in the studies, but the causes of negative behaviors are not included, and expresses the understanding of leadership that shows abusive and destructive behaviors to employees as "bad leadership" (Kellerman, 2008). According to Whicker, toxic leaders are described as incompatible, dissatisfied and harmful, hiding their own failures, selfish, trying to achieve success by deceiving those around them and crushing their opponents (Whicker, 1996). Based on these ideas of Lipman-Blumen Whicker, he defines toxic leadership when leaders engage in behaviors that cause continuous, negative and toxic effects on employees and organizations. Thus, he proposed the concept of toxic leadership (Lipman-Bluman, 2005).

## **2.2. Dimensions of Toxic Leadership**

Benefiting from the "Development and Validation of The Toxic Leadership Scale" study conducted by Schmidt in 2008, it was stated that there are four dimensions of toxic leadership according to the "Toxic Leadership Scale" developed by Çelebi, Güner and Yıldız in 2015. These are self-interest, ignorance, negative mood and selfishness (Çelebi, Güner & Yıldız, 2015).

### **2.2.1. Self-interest**

Exploitative dimension; behaving disrespectfully, humiliating and humiliating employees, trying to manage people with fear, creating fear of dismissal, trying to destroy trust in the institution and organizational commitment, forcing employees to do their own will by ignoring their expectations with emotional pressure on employees, showing their opinions more important than the opinions of employees. Working, not allowing employees to express themselves, etc. Toxic behaviors such as self-interest are behaviors that occur in the dimension of self-interest (Goldman, 2009).

### **2.2.2. Invaluation**

Dimension of ignorance; Negative behaviors such as those who do not value their employees, tell their employees that they are inadequate in their jobs, do not listen to the employees, think pessimistic about people, are inflexible towards employees, give orders in their communication style, and belittle people are behaviors that occur in the dimension of ignorance (Çelebi et al., 2015). ). Managers may aim to retain their authority with such behaviors. For example, the manager may change the rules in a way that does not respect the employees or by introducing new rules, which may cause negative situations in the face of the demand to comply with them (Bitirim, S & Eğinli, A, T, 2008). As a result of the toxic leader's negative effects on the institution with such toxic behaviors, the rate of organizational commitment decreases and work efficiency decreases further. In other words, the tasks and behaviors expected to be performed in an environment with a negative organizational culture show themselves outside of the norm (Goldman, 2009).

### **2.2.3. Negative mental state**

In the dimension of negative mental state; Toxic behaviors such as angry, distressed, demoralized, reflecting negative mood in tone of voice, unbalanced behavior, waiting for employees to act according to the mood of the leader are seen as behaviors that occur in the dimension of negative mental state (Çelebi et al., 2015). Kellerman's behaviors in the dimension of negative mental state; malicious, destructive, narrow-minded, rude and harsh behaviors, lack of emotion, excessive and incompetent in

relations with employees (Kellermen, 2008). Toxic leaders; They are leaders who have a wide perspective on exhibiting toxic behaviors, and thus they manipulate the employees by enchanting them, then they undermine the employees by exhibiting contradictory behaviors. Such toxic behaviors are exhibited against both the organization and the employees and indirectly cause negative consequences (Neuman & Baron, 2005). Leaders who exhibit a negative mental state prefer to blame their employees, not themselves, in case of any negativity in the institution (Demirel, 2015).

#### **2.2.4. Selfishness**

In the dimension of selfishness; Negative behaviors such as those who think that they are perfect, believe that the future of the institution will only achieve success if they exist, believe that they deserve their position and more, and think that they are more talented than other employees are expressed as behaviors seen in the dimension of selfishness (Çelebi et al., 2015). Toxic leaders exhibit behaviors that use the expression "I" constantly, directing successful situations to themselves and unsuccessful situations to employees. They prefer to satisfy their ego by giving unconstructive and negative messages. Managers who exhibit such behaviors prefer to use behaviors that express fear towards their employees (Demirel, 2015). According to another view, a toxic leader is a disagreeable, anxious and malicious leader. In addition, these leaders are self-centered, have weak personality traits and distrustful traits who want to raise their position through the efforts of others (Whicker, 1996). Managers who think about themselves and exhibit selfish behaviors will not be able to fulfill their personal and corporate responsibilities by not fulfilling their duties and responsibilities, and contributing to the work efficiency and motivation of the employees in the organization (Demirel, 2015).

### **2.3. Toxic Leader Traits and Behaviors**

Behaviors of toxic leaders; ignoring the rights of employees, suppressing positive criticism, weakening the perception of justice, a totalitarian approach, being away from raising other leaders, causing the formation of groups that are against each other, increasing conflicts between groups, identifying people who will impose negativities, encouraging incompetence, nepotism and corruption. (Bahadir, 2018). It is stated that these toxic behaviors depend to a certain extent on the personalities of the leaders and form the basis for the emergence of toxic behaviors. These personal characteristics are stated as greed, ego, arrogance and indifference (Lipman-Bluman, 2005).

According to Lipman-Blumen (2005), toxic leaders are the ones that negatively affect the employees as well as the immediate environment of the employee, isolate the employee, scare them, demotivate them, expect them to be constantly obedient, etc. exhibit behaviors that cause destructive effects. It is stated that these toxic behaviors in the organizational environment emerge as attacks on the personality and abilities of the followers (p, 10-19). In addition, Lipman-Blumen (2005) explained the negative behaviors of toxic leaders in detail as follows: taking away the rights of employees, preventing criticism, trying to deceive employees with unrealistic discourses, activating an unfair management approach, applying an oppressive management style, trying to prevent them from being a leader candidate in the future, deliberately bringing groups and individuals within the institution into conflict with each other for the interests of their own authority, blaming an event on people who are not related to the event, creating the idea that he is an indispensable leader and thus the system will collapse if he leaves the organization, giving importance to incompetence is stated as tying his followers to himself by using the blackmail method (p, 10-19).

Williams (2004), on the other hand, describes the personality traits of the toxic leader as incompetent, inadequate, constantly complaining, unwilling to take responsibility, weak moral values, constantly ambitious, selfish, arrogant, stingy and dishonest, lying, malicious, abusive (p. , 67-71). Reed (2004), on the other hand, states that a leader who speaks loudly, is determined and demanding will not be toxic, while a leader with naive and sincere attitudes can be toxic (p, 65-70).

At the same time, according to Reed (2004), it is stated that toxic leadership destroys harmony within the group. It is claimed that toxic leaders cause the motivation and self-esteem of the employees to

disappear. Toxic behaviors must affect all employees in the organization. Toxic leadership also causes an increase in employee turnover, a decrease in productivity, the emergence of conflicts between departments and a decrease in employees' organizational commitment (Wilson-Starks, 2003). Gangel describes toxic leaders as deceptive, autocratic, egoistic, selfish, cruel, reckless and thoughtless (Gangel, 2007).

Wilson and Starks, on the other hand, explain the characteristics of toxic leaders as leaders who have deficiencies in creativity and communication. However, he states that toxic leaders have three basic characteristics (Wilson-Starks, 2003). The first feature among them emphasizes that leaders try to destroy people's creativity by using tight control mechanisms, and they prefer employees who implement the orders and vision of the leader. The second feature is communication problems. Here again, they isolate people from each other by using tight control mechanisms. By keeping the information and communication network under their control, it causes insecurity and thus negatively affects the organizational climate. As a third feature, employee relations decrease as distrust dominates the organization. Employees turn into employees who do not communicate with each other, instead of increasing the efficiency of the organization by establishing good relations with each other (Wilson-Starks, 2003).

Some research highlights that toxic leadership behaviors can range from incompetence to unethical behavior. Toxic leaders; are divided into categories as those who are not sufficient, act callously, do not care about moral values and exhibit evil attitudes. Toxic leaders may show behaviors that make a living on the backs of their employees in order to achieve their own goals, but constantly criticize their ideas, create a negative climate by making negative evaluations about the abilities of the employees, reduce them to a lower class or cause them to leave the job. In addition, some leaders knowingly deprive some employees of their social rights. They mislead employees by voluntarily lying about their employees' fears or needs and distorting events (Kellermen, 2008).

#### **2.4. Toxic Organization Qualities**

Organization; In order to be expressed as toxic, it is necessary to spread negative information about the institution and its employees and to focus on discourses that harm the institution (Bitirim & Eğinli, 2008). Whether an institution is toxic or not can be understood from the low job satisfaction and high levels of stress in that institution. Toxic organizations can be defined as (Gangel, 2007):

- Incapable of producing jobs more efficiently,
- Not supporting their employees professionally or emotionally,
- Inadequate in identifying the causes of problems in the institution,
- Insufficient to produce permanent solutions to existing problems,
- Being under constant internal and external threats.

The following can be listed as signs of a toxic institution (Macklem, 2005):

- Being away from virtuous attitudes and behaviors,
- Not allowing the expression of new ideas, efforts to ensure the continuation of the management of the institution with fear,
- The fact that managers work under intense stress leads to a decrease in their success. This situation causes leaders to lose,
- Managers try to adapt the employee to the image of the organization when a new employee starts the organization,
- Job changes are frequent among employees in managerial positions,
- There is no expectation about the future due to the repetition of the same negative situations in the organization.

## 2.5. Classification of Organizational Toxicity Sources

Researchers have expressed their opinions on this issue. Frost explains 7 toxic causes of toxic leadership in organizations for employees as follows (Frost, 2003):

- Intention
- Incompetence
- Infidelity
- Insensitivity
- Intrusion
- Organizational Forces
- Inevitability

## 2.6. Spread of Toxicity

It is stated that toxicity has recently become one of the most serious problems of institutions. For this reason, although institutions try to take various measures to prevent the formation of toxic cultures, they cannot prevent the spread of toxicity within the institution. It is reported that toxicity has an opportunity to spread under certain conditions. If Toxicity; If it is not controlled, ignored and denied, it will not prevent the spread of toxicity to the institution by negatively affecting the motivation and productivity in the organization (Goldman, 2009).

## 2.7. Why go after a toxic leader?

The reasons why employees follow toxic leaders are listed as follows (Bass et al., 1996):

- Believing in impossibility
- Illusions
- Desire to be dependent
- Fear
- No other option
- Individual Requirements
- Organizational Requirements

It is emphasized that there are three steps to get rid of the negative effects of toxic leadership and toxic environment in the organization (Holderied, 2006):

- The first step is to be careful. It is emphasized that it should not be ignored that even the smallest details can contribute to the formation of a toxic environment by paying attention to all the details as much as possible.
- The second step is to eliminate the lack of communication. Not only the lack of communication between subordinates and superiors, but also the lack of communication between all units in the institution should be prevented. The other factor of this lack of communication is the passive communication problem. In passive communication, employees take the bad behavior of their superiors as an example. It is stated that if the employee sees that the manager arrives late for work, he also exhibits the same behavior and starts to come to work late.
- The third step involves correcting the toxic situation that is difficult to correct. In order to do this, it is necessary to try to correct the mistakes made in the management before.

## 2.8. Precautions to be Taken by the Manager in Organizational Sense

Some measures to be taken in order to prevent the spread of toxicity in organizations are expressed as follows (Frost, 2003):

Leader; "It should be able to define the internal dynamics well, provide support, place the toxin traps at the strategic points of the organization, create a healthy communication channel, and spread the support culture to the organization".



When we look at the domestic and international studies on toxic leadership, it is seen that toxic leadership reduces the motivation and productivity of the employees and reduces the reputation, effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. In addition, it is understood that those who are in the close circle of the employees who have to work with these leaders are also affected by these negative behaviors.

### 3. Conclusion

In this study, views are proposed to identify, address and transform toxic leaders in the organization; An overview of its typology and its results in organizations is presented. Toxicity that exhibits narcissistic or bullying styles is a common reality of many organizations. As Kusy and Holloway (2009) stated, dealing with toxic leaders requires a systematic approach that starts with diagnosing them appropriately. Unfortunately, toxic leaders often thrive in a toxic environment. Therefore, the transformation of the dynamic of a dysfunctional leader requires a process of organizational systematic change. It is important to raise awareness that toxic dynamics pose a serious threat to corporate health in the long run. Toxic leaders paralyze the organization by consuming its energy in the demoralizing and frightening atmosphere they create within the organization.

Toxic leadership destroys people as well as institutions. It creates a frustrated and unmotivated workforce with its disruptive behavior patterns and dysfunctional interactions. This cancer of toxicity threatens the well-being of both individuals and organisations. It also affects the performance of a society and country. Therefore, there is an urgent need to understand the nature, dynamics and evolution of toxic leadership and organizations.

In order to prevent toxicity in the organizations of which we are a part, it is important to have basic mechanisms such as feedback systems of human resources as well as a functioning within the organization where leaders are accountable and the fight against toxic leaders in the workplace. Unfortunately, the lack of effective monitoring or evaluation mechanisms in organizations pushes employees into silence, which helps develop toxic leaders. If the structure of the organization is insufficient to provide an antidote to the leader's toxicity, it is essential to develop personal coping mechanisms to survive against these leaders. In these mechanisms, regaining the health and productivity of the individual is an important strategy.

Leaders' behavior and performance should be monitored and evaluated before developing an antidote for toxicity in organizations. Mentors, who evaluate the interaction between the employee and the leader, should provide feedback on dysfunctional managerial behaviors and train managers (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014). Based on the understanding of "prevention is better than cure", toxic leadership behaviors are revealed by detecting abnormal leader behaviors. Thus, with early diagnosis, the possibility of recurrence of these behaviors is reduced.

According to Lanz (2019), it is too easy to ignore a toxic culture and think of it as the unfounded complaints of an insignificant few. It's also common to blame a negative atmosphere at work on a number of incomprehensible factors beyond our control. But often a toxic culture starts at the top. A traditional view of effective leadership has been to lead from the top down, maintain strong control and be authoritarian. People who work in a fear-free work environment are best utilized, but a toxic culture is a huge potential waste of brainpower (Lanz, 2019). According to Adams (2014), organizations are responsible for screening toxic leaders. Before this poison progresses, mechanisms should be used to identify them such as 360-degree assessment, protection for whistleblowers, mentoring, holding toxic leaders accountable and removing them when necessary (Adams, 2014).

There are also some psychological reasons that make employees vulnerable to toxic leaders. Unquestioned superiority can also be blamed for sprouting toxicities. In a study conducted by Green (2014) in educational organizations, 90% of the participants stated that they had a toxic leader experience in their current or previous workplace. The key question to be answered regarding toxicity, which is often an inevitable situation, is how organizations should prepare for this situation and how employees should protect themselves. First, organizations must have a system to warn, identify, and

address toxic behaviors. If the system is not created, or if it is created but not operated effectively, toxic leaders will survive and deepen within the organization like poison ivy.

According to Silk (2019), developing a toxic leader and making them less toxic is not easy, but it can be done. First, they must want to change. They must also be provided with data showing that they are toxic. When their awareness about themselves and the negative effects of their behavior increases, coaching can be done to learn and develop the emotional intelligence features of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills. With greater emphasis on leader development methods such as coaching and mentoring, toxic leaders can be identified earlier and developed through a learning and change process to become more emotionally competent leaders (Silk, 2019).

In summary, since toxic leadership behaviors in organizations will reduce intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction, toxicity in the organization should be reduced before these situations occur. Toxic behaviors should be avoided and individuals should be motivated and satisfied. The organizational environment should be shaped according to these conditions.

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**ETİK VE BİLİMSEL İLKELER SORUMLULUK BEYANI**

Bu alıřmanın tm hazırlanma srelerinde etik kurallara ve bilimsel atıf gsterme ilkelerine riayet edildiđini yazar(lar) beyan eder. Aksi bir durumun tespiti halinde Business, Economics and Management Research Journal'ın hibir sorumluluđu olmayıp, tm sorumluluk makale yazar(lar)ına aittir. Bu alıřma etik kurul izni gerektiren alıřma grubunda yer almamaktadır.

**ARAŐTIRMACILARIN MAKALEYE KATKI ORANI BEYANI**

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