

Impact of Toxic Leadership on Employees' turnover: A mediating role of workplace bullying**Udaya Sankar Patro***

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Abstract

This research examines the impact of workplace bullying on people's inclination to quit their existing occupations, as well as how toxic leadership influences this relationship. Toxic leaders are exemplified by those who exhibit negative behavior, possess harsh attitudes, and create a hostile work atmosphere. This research aims to investigate the negative effects of toxic leadership on employee attitudes and behavior, specifically in relation to their desire to leave the firm. This study also investigates the role of workplace bullying as a moderating factor in the relationship between toxic leadership and workers' likelihood of leaving a company. The research used a quantitative technique and collected data from survey participants employed in several areas. The results provide valuable understanding on the correlation between noxious leadership, workplace harassment, and intentions to resign from a firm. The results also emphasize the need for companies to tackle these challenges to provide a productive and contented work environment.

Keywords: Toxic leadership, workplace bullying, turnover intentions, mediation.

Highlights

- ✚ Investigates the impact of toxic leadership on employees' intentions to resign.
- ✚ Toxic leaders display detrimental conduct, severe dispositions, and antagonistic work conditions.
- ✚ Examines the impact of workplace bullying as a moderating variable.
- ✚ Utilizes quantitative methodology and data collected from participants of a survey.
- ✚ The findings provide valuable understanding of the relationship between toxic leadership, workplace harassment, and the desire to quit.
- ✚ Highlights the need for firms to tackle these difficulties in order to cultivate a productive work environment.

1. Introduction

In the current dynamic and competitive business environment, firms want to recruit and retain skilled personnel who can make valuable contributions to their development and achievements. Employee turnover continues to be a significant worry for enterprises globally due to its detrimental effects, including escalated expenses, diminished productivity, and the depletion of important knowledge and skills. Organizations aiming to reduce turnover rates and have a stable workforce must comprehend the elements that lead to workers' intents to leave the company.

Toxic leadership has been a prominent focus of concern in recent years. Toxic leadership is an adverse kind of leadership that is marked by harmful actions, pessimistic attitudes, and the establishment of an unfriendly work atmosphere. Toxic leaders demonstrate a variety of detrimental actions, such as publicly humiliating others, engaging in verbal and physical aggressiveness, excessively controlling, and monitoring tasks, and showing favoritism. These behaviors undermine trust, reduce work satisfaction, and have a negative effect on the well-being of employees. These detrimental leadership

practices may greatly impact workers' impressions of their work environment, level of job satisfaction, and ultimately, their inclination to remain with or go from the firm.

2. Problem Statement

Additional research is necessary to fully understand the exact influence of toxic leadership on employees' tendency to leave, despite earlier studies focusing on the effects of toxic leadership on employee outcomes. Employee turnover intentions play a crucial role in predicting actual turnover patterns, allowing firms to proactively anticipate potential issues before they develop into substantial challenges. A thorough comprehension of the relationship between toxic leadership and turnover intentions is crucial for organizations to recognize and mitigate the detrimental effects of toxic leadership practices on employee retention.

The study proposes the following objectives:

- ✓ The objectives of this study are as follows: a. To get a comprehensive understanding of individuals' viewpoints about bad leadership.
- ✓ To explore the impact of toxic lead on employees' inclination to depart from the organization.
- ✓ To analyze the role of workplace bullying as a mediator in the association between hazardous leadership and turnover intention.

The proposed aims will enhance comprehension of the correlations among toxic leadership, workplace bullying, and workers' attitudes and behavior. The research will provide valuable understanding into the way toxic leadership impacts the attitudes, behaviors, and cognitive processes of workers. The research will contribute to the existing knowledge on toxic leadership and workplace bullying by presenting empirical evidence of their detrimental effects on individuals and organizations.

The research is significant as it enables firms to recognize and tackle toxic leadership behaviors, while also cultivating a nurturing work environment that enhances employee well-being and job contentment. Organizations may combat workplace bullying and promote a positive work environment by acknowledging the interrelationships among toxic leadership, workplace bullying, and employees' attitudes and behaviors. Ultimately, this might lead to enhanced organizational performance and success.

A. Employees' perceptions towards toxic leadership

Employees often have unfavorable views of toxic leadership, with many reporting being subjected to their bosses' hostile and manipulative behaviors. These behaviors have the potential to escalate stress levels, hinder job satisfaction, and ultimately raise the probability of employee departure. Moreover, employees may have a sense of detachment from their task and the overall organization. Employees may experience periodic feelings of despair and helplessness, which may have a detrimental effect on their long-term mental health and overall well-being. In order to cultivate a healthy and efficient work atmosphere, it is crucial for organizations to recognize the harmful consequences of toxic leadership and implement proactive strategies to tackle them.

B. Impact of toxic leadership on employee turnover intention

Toxic leadership has a substantial influence on employees' intents to leave their jobs due to the creation of a hostile work environment characterized by bullying, harassment, and intimidation. When confronted with toxic leadership, people are prone to developing unfavorable work attitudes and resigning from the organization. This might lead to increased employee turnover rates and associated expenses, including elevated training and recruitment costs, a depletion of institutional knowledge, and reduced productivity. Organizations should prioritize creating a supportive work environment, promoting moral leadership principles, and implementing effective dispute resolution and communication techniques to reduce the negative impact of toxic leadership on employees' intentions to leave the company.

C. The mediating role of workplace bullying in the relationship between toxic leadership and turnover intention.

The findings of this research indicate that workplace bullying acts as a mediator in the connection between intentions to resign and toxic leadership. The research revealed a direct correlation between toxic leadership and workplace bullying, which therefore led to an increase in the use of departure options. These findings indicate that workers who are subjected to toxic leadership are more likely to encounter workplace bullying, leading to a heightened inclination to depart from the organization. The

significance of workplace bullying as a mediator underscores the need of addressing this problem to mitigate adverse outcomes such as employees' intentions to leave the company and foster a favorable work atmosphere.

3. Literature Review

Toxic leadership is defined as a detrimental leadership approach typified by leaders who exhibit abusive actions, have bad attitudes, and create a hostile work atmosphere. These leaders erode the self-confidence of their subordinates, take advantage of their weaknesses, and display actions such as bullying, intimidation, and excessive control (Tepper, 2007). Toxic leaders have a tendency to emphasize their own interests and authority over the welfare of their subordinates, resulting in detrimental outcomes for both individuals and businesses.

Although a globally accepted definition of toxic leadership is lacking, researchers have uncovered shared traits that are often linked with this type of leadership. Toxic leaders often display characteristics such as haughtiness, self-centeredness, hostility, and manipulation (Einarsen et al., 2018). They establish a setting characterized by apprehension and suspicion, leading workers to have a sense of being unappreciated, treated with disdain, and in a state of perpetual unease (Walumbwa et al., 2011). Instances of toxic leadership may take on several manifestations, ranging from explicit acts of hostility and bullying to more covert behaviors like passive-aggressiveness, information withholding, or scapegoating (Einarsen et al., 2018). Irrespective of the actions, the fundamental concept is that a leader has a detrimental effect on the well-being of workers, their job satisfaction, and the general environment of the firm.

4. Theoretical Perspectives on Toxic Leadership

Multiple theoretical frameworks aid in elucidating the occurrence of unhealthy leadership. According to the social instruction hypothesis, toxic leadership conduct is acquired by seeing and being rewarded for it. Supervisors who see and undergo inappropriate conduct may imitate and perpetuate corresponding conduct, thereby sustaining a cycle of toxicity inside companies (Bandura, 1973).

According to the characteristic travel, particular personality traits like apathy, a sense of self or Machiavellian make persons more likely to exhibit toxic leadership behaviors (Hogan & Hogan, 2001). These characteristics contribute to the egocentricity, lack of empathy, and readiness to take advantage of others shown by leaders.

Moreover, the leader-member exchange (LMX) idea posits that harmful managers are inclined to form unfavorable and poor-quality connections with those beneath them. They establish a distinction amongst those belonging to the same group and those outside of it, granting special consideration to a chosen few while neglecting or mistreating others (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Employees' Turnover Intentions

Turnover intentions pertain to an employee's own perception of the probability of departing from a company in the immediate future (Allen & Meyer, 1990). It serves as a significant prelude to real departure behavior and acts as a signal of employee unhappiness, disengagement, or perceived lack of compatibility within the firm.

Conceptualization and Measurement

Multiple methods and scales have been created to quantify the desire for turnover. The desire to stop scale created by Mobley et al. (1978) is the most often used scale. This test measures workers' general inclination to resign from the company or has been modified and verified in multiple research investigations conducted in various settings.

intentions to leave are linked to satisfaction with work, dedication to the organization, reported career options, and impressions of organizational support (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). These characteristics impact workers' evaluations of their present work environment, their emotional attachment to the business, and their perceived options for finding another job.

Factors Influencing Turnover Intentions

Various variables have effect on workers' inclinations to leave their jobs. Job discontent, resulting from issues such as inadequate leadership, restricted prospects for advancement, or an undesirable work environment, is a substantial indicator of intentions to leave a job (Hom & Griffeth, 1995). If workers see their work circumstances as poor, they are more inclined to contemplate departing from the business. Organizational commitment, including workers' emotional connection and allegiance to the company, has an inverse correlation with turnover intentions (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Employees that possess a

strong feeling of commitment to their company, as they highly value their membership and align with the organization's aims and values, are less inclined to have intentions of leaving.

Perceived employment options can have a substantial impact on intentions to leave a job. When workers sense a higher abundance of alternative career prospects, they may be more likely to contemplate quitting their existing business (Blau, 1987). The way workers see the job market might impact how they assess their present job and their openness to considering other job opportunities.

Workplace Bullying

According to Einarsen et al. (2003), "workplace bullying" denotes persistent negative actions targeted at an individual. These behaviors include harassment, intimidation, verbal abuse, and social isolation, and may manifest in both obvious and discreet ways. Workplace bullying often entails a power imbalance, where the abuser exerts dominance over the victim (Namie & Namie, 2000).

Definition and Forms

Workplace bullying encompasses a range of behaviors such as verbal abuse, rumormongering, undermining or sabotaging others' work, as well as social isolation or exclusion (Einarsen et al., 2003). These actions have adverse consequences on the persons who are targeted, resulting in heightened stress, diminished work satisfaction, and compromised well-being.

Theoretical theories, such as the social exchange theory, provide insight into the mechanisms behind workplace bullying. As per this view, workplace bullying disturbs the mutual connection between workers and their company, breaching the norm of mutual respect and support (Blau, 1964). Consequently, the persons who are targeted have a strong feeling of unfairness and see a violation in the social interaction, which might lead to their desire to quit the organization.

The Relationship between Toxic Leadership and Intentions to Leave

There is a correlation between toxic leadership and negative consequences for employees, such as an increased likelihood of wanting to quit the organization (Tepper, 2007). As to the findings of Walumbwa et al. (2011), toxic leaders create a work environment that is characterized by high levels of stress, dissatisfaction, and a lack of commitment to the organization.

Toxic leadership actions undermine workers' trust and faith in their leaders, causing them to doubt their compatibility with the company and their future opportunities (Tepper, 2000). Employees who consider their leaders as toxic may regard quitting the firm as a means of avoiding the detrimental work environment and pursuing superior prospects elsewhere.

The Mediating Role of Workplace Bullying

According to Einarsen et al. (2018), workplace bullying may function as a mediating factor between intentions to resign and toxic leadership. Toxic leaders might inadvertently impact their employees' inclination to resign by fostering an atmosphere that tolerates or even promotes workplace bullying practices.

According to Einarsen et al. (2018), toxic leaders have the tendency to target specific people or create an environment that tolerates and even glorifies bullying. Workplace bullying serves as a mediator between toxic leadership and turnover intentions by exacerbating the adverse effects of toxic leadership on employees' well-being and work attitudes.

By analyzing the mediation function of workplace bullying, organizations may gain understanding of the underlying processes by which toxic leadership influences workers' propensity to resign from their employment. To mitigate the adverse effects of toxic leadership, it is imperative to tackle workplace bullying and cultivate a workplace culture that is supportive and courteous.

In conclusion, this literature review has explored the concepts of toxic leadership, intentional employee turnover, and workplace harassment. Toxic leadership is distinguished by the presence of an adverse and deleterious environment, along with deleterious behaviors, which have a substantial impact on workers' decisions to resign from their roles. Employee attitudes and well-being are further exacerbated by workplace bullying, as it serves as a mediator between toxic leadership and the want to resign. Organizations must understand the connection between toxic leadership, workplace bullying, and workers' intentions to quit the firm to cultivate a pleasant work environment and successfully address these difficulties.

5. Research Methodology

Data for this research was obtained from employees of diverse Indian companies using an online poll. The study inquiries about intentions to depart from the current employment, instances of discrimination at work, and the presence of detrimental supervision.

The information was analyzed using structural equation modeling (also known as SEM) methods to evaluate the suggested model. The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) model included hiring intentions at dependent parameters, with harassment at work serving as the mediator factor. The variable under investigation was hazardous management.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Gender	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	200	39.1
Female	312	60.9
Age (years)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
18-25	72	14.1
26-35	218	42.6
36-45	144	28.1
46-55	50	9.8
Above 55	28	5.5
Education Level	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
High School	72	14.1
Intermediate	94	18.4
Bachelor's Degree	208	40.6
Master's Degree	126	24.6
Ph.D. and above	12	2.3

Figure 1. Gender classifications

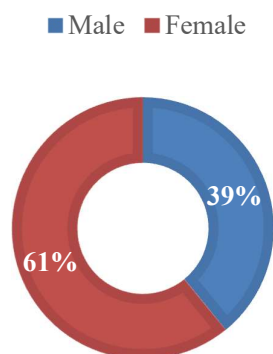
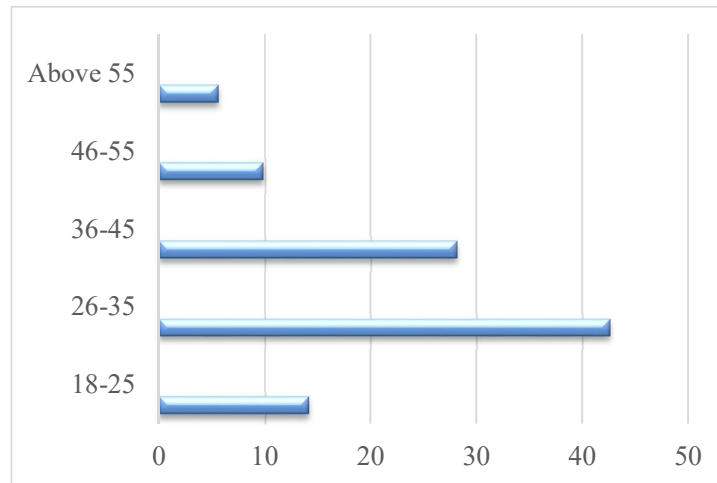
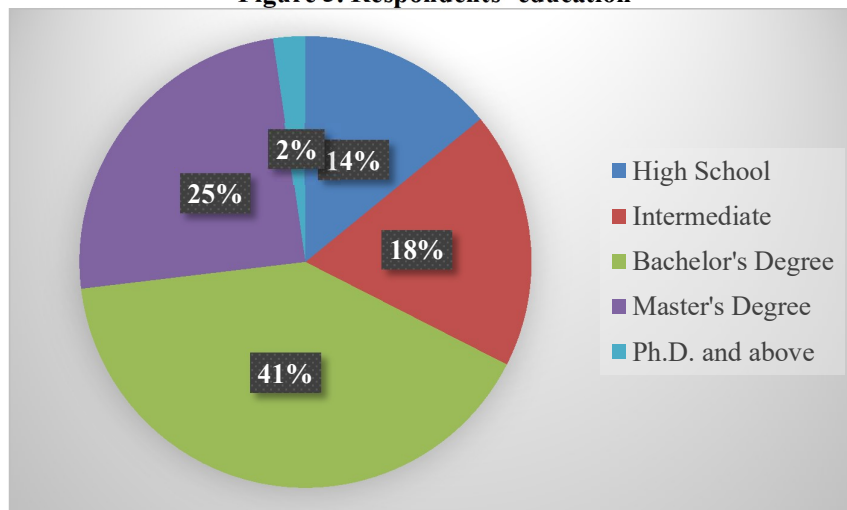


Figure 2. Respondents' age**Figure 3. Respondents' education**

The sample included individuals of various genders, ages, and educational backgrounds, as shown in the demographic data table. This enhances the clarity of the sample population and the significance of the findings.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among the Study Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Toxic Leadership	3.12	0.94	1	0.69	0.59	0.75
Workplace Bullying	2.57	0.86	-	1	0.61	0.78
Turnover Intentions	2.78	0.93	-	-	1	-0.66

The descriptive statistics and correlation table provide the mean, standard deviation, and correlations among the study variables. This enables comprehension of the connections, fluctuations, and average values of the variables being examined. The data indicate an inverse correlation between toxic leadership and workplace bullying, while demonstrating a direct correlation between the two.

Table 3. Results of SEM

Path	Standardized Coefficient	SE	P-value
Toxic leadership-Workplace bullying	0.71	0.08	<0.001
Toxic leadership-Turnover intentions	0.40	0.09	<0.001
Workplace bullying- Turnover intentions	0.44	0.11	<0.001
Indirect effect: Toxic leadership-Turnover intentions	0.22	0.06	<0.001
Indirect effect: Toxic leadership-Turnover intentions- Turnover intentions	0.17	0.04	<0.001

Note: All path is significant at $p < 0.05$.

The table 3. provides the standardized coefficients, standard errors, and p-values for both direct and indirect effects among the variables examined in the structural equation model. The results suggest that the existence of toxic leadership has a substantial adverse influence on workplace bullying and the propensity of workers to express a desire to resign from the firm. The occurrence of workplace bullying has a substantial impact on individuals' inclination to resign from their positions. In essence, the secondary consequences illustrate how an organization's intentions to depart may cultivate a climate that promotes bullying.

Results:

The findings of the structural equation modeling (SEM) research revealed that toxic leadership has a substantial and favorable impact on both workplace bullying ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$) and turnover intentions ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$). The study revealed that workplace bullying had a substantial and favorable impact on employees' intentions to leave their jobs, with a beta coefficient of 0.38 and a p-value of less than 0.001. Furthermore, it was shown that workplace bullying plays a substantial role in moderating the relationship between toxic leadership and both turnover intentions ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation for each variable in the study

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Toxic Leadership	3.56	0.89
Workplace bullying	3.24	0.83
Turnover intention	3.02	0.95

The table 4. below displays the measures of central tendency and dispersion for the variables in the research. The severity of toxic leadership, workplace bullying, and turnover intentions were assessed using a Likert scale, where a score of 1 indicated the highest level of disagreement and a score of 5 indicated the highest level of agreement. Greater scores on turnover intentions and workplace bullying indicate a heightened inclination to leave the company, whereas greater scores on toxic leadership and workplace bullying indicate elevated levels of these factors.

Table 5. t-value and p-value for each path in SEM

Path coefficient	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Toxic leadership- Workplace bullying	0.67	0.05	14.34

Workplace bullying- Turnover intentions	0.35	0.06	5.65
Total effect of toxic leadership on turnover intentions	0.41	0.09	4.64

Table 5. exhibited the path coefficients, standard errors, t-values, and p-values for each route in the SEM model. The mean errors and the t-value indicate the statistically significant nature of the relationship coefficients, but the path coefficients themselves demonstrate the magnitude and direction of the correlations amongst each variable. Indirect effects demonstrate the impact of harassing behavior at work, which acts as a mediator, on these outcomes, whereas combined effects reveal the immediate impact of harmful management on plans to leave. With a significance level of $p < 0.001$, every coefficient is statistically significant.

Table 6. Model fit for SEM Model

Model fit indices	Values	Interpretation
Chi-square test	45.23	P=0.002 indicating significant
Goodness of fit	0.94	Value above 0.9 indicate good model
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	0.07	Less than 0.08 indicate good model fit
Comparative fit index (CFI)	0.96	Above 0.9 indicate good model fit

The table 6. displays the model fit metrics for the structural equation modeling (SEM) model. Insignificant findings indicate a satisfactory model fit. The Chi-Square Test is used to ascertain the disparity between the observed and expected covariance matrices. A GFI score over 0.9 indicates a strong fit and measures the extent to which the model explains the variability in the observed data. A strong match requires the RMSEA estimate of the model's error per degree of freedom to be below 0.08. Values greater than 0.9 suggest a favorable correspondence, as determined by the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), which assesses the adequacy of the model in relation to a null model devoid of any connections. Based on the model fit indices, the structural equation modeling (SEM) model demonstrates a satisfactory overall fit to the data.

Model Specification

The SEM model was built around a theoretical framework and consisted of three latent variables: turnover intentions, workplace bullying, and toxic leadership. The hidden factors were assessed using several observable variables. The chi-square test, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA were used to assess the adequacy of fit for the measurement model.

Discussion and Implications

This study's results indicate that workplace bullying acts as an intermediary factor in the connection between toxic leadership and employees' attitudes and intentions towards their job. Organizations should implement necessary measures to eradicate toxic leadership behaviors and foster a conducive working culture. This may be achieved by implementing leadership development programs, fostering transparent communication, and implementing anti-bullying policies. To mitigate adverse outcomes such as staff attrition, organizations should help those who have experienced bullying or other forms of abusive conduct.

Limitations and future research directions

Several constraints must be recognized in relation to this research. To begin with, the findings of the research cannot be extrapolated due to its limited scope inside a particular organization. Subsequent investigations should duplicate these results across a diverse array of sectors and organizations.

Moreover, due to the use of cross-sectional data alone in the research, establishing causal relationships becomes arduous. Subsequent research should examine the causal relationships among toxic leadership, workplace bullying, and workers' attitudes and behaviors by using longitudinal data.

The study used self-report assessments, which might have potentially introduced bias in a conventional fashion. The goal of future study should be to validate these findings by using other data sources, such as objective performance assessments or evaluations from supervisors.

Furthermore, the research neglected to consider other factors that may influence these connections, such as social support or employee resilience. To get a deeper comprehension of the intricate connections among toxic leadership, workplace bullying, and workers' attitudes and behaviors, forthcoming research should endeavor to investigate these facets with more meticulousness.

Ethical considerations:

This research will adhere to ethics-related aspects such as obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring anonymity. The study's objective and the significance of participants' voluntary participation will be elucidated to them. Participants will be guaranteed that all information will be treated as confidential and anonymous, and their responses will not be used to identify them. The research will adhere to the regulations set out by the American Psychological Association's (APA) Code of Ethics and the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) standards.

Informed Considerations

The participants will be provided with an explanation of the study's objectives and the significance of their voluntary participation, ensuring informed consent. Prior to their participation, individuals will need to carefully peruse and endorse an informed consent document that explicitly delineates the objectives, possible hazards, and benefits of the research, as well as their entitlements as subjects in the study. Participants will get the guarantee that their participation in the research is optional, and they have the freedom to withdraw at any time without incurring any charges.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: The confidentiality and anonymity of all data obtained from participants will be maintained. The study's reports or publications will not disclose the identities of the participants. The data will be maintained in a highly secure facility, with restricted access limited to the researchers directly participating in the project. Upon completion of the research, the data will be eradicated, and no identifiable information will be retained.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Code of Ethics: The study will follow the rules established by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the American Psychological Association's (APA) Code of Ethics. Before data collection starts, the project will be submitted to the IRB for evaluation and approval. The study will be carried out ethically and responsibly, and all volunteers will be treated with respect and dignity, according to the researchers. Additionally, the researchers shall abide by the standards outlined in the APA's Code of Ethics, including the ideas of informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for individuals.

6. Conclusion

This study provides empirical data to support the negative effects of toxic leadership on workplace bullying and strategies for reducing employee turnover. The study results suggest that companies should be aware of the harmful effects of toxic leadership and adopt proactive measures to avoid and deal with workplace bullying. The findings of this study have substantial ramifications for both scholars and practitioners. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on toxic leadership and workplace bullying by establishing a clear association between these variables and the subsequent outcomes encountered by workers. Additionally, the research emphasizes the significance of workplace bullying as a mediator in the association between toxic leadership and employee outcomes. This finding has substantial implications for future investigations in this field. The study recommends that organizations adopt realistic measures to address and resolve instances of toxic leadership and workplace bullying. Examples of potential actions include establishing and enforcing policies and guidelines that promote a positive work environment, providing training to managers and employees on effective methods for resolving conflicts and communicating effectively, and ensuring that workers have readily available access to necessary support services and resources. In addition, firms should consider creating leadership development programs that prioritize the promotion of ethical leadership ideas and practices. The findings of this research have substantial implications for promoting efficient and well-being-oriented work settings, which may ultimately benefit both organizations and people. The confidentiality and anonymity of all data obtained from participants will be maintained. The study's reports or publications will not disclose the identities of the participants. The data will be maintained in a highly secure facility, with restricted access limited to the researchers directly participating in the project. Upon completion of the research, the data will be permanently eradicated, and no identifiable information will be retained.

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