



The Process of Formation and Persistence of Toxic Leadership: A Grounded Theory Discovery Based on Employee Narratives

Fatemeh Bagheri¹, Adel Zahed Babolan^{*2}, Husein Taqavi³, Ali Khaleghkhah⁴

Abstract

Despite research on the destructive consequences of toxic leadership, existing studies predominantly focus on industrial settings using quantitative, outcome-oriented approaches. Consequently, how toxic leadership emerges and persists within educational organizations, particularly regarding employees' lived experiences, remains insufficiently theorized. Addressing this gap, this study aims to uncover and theorize the formation and persistence of toxic leadership by developing a paradigmatic model grounded in employees' narratives within educational organizations. This study employed a qualitative approach using grounded theory methodology, following the systematic procedures proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with 24 employees and subject-matter experts who had direct experience with toxic leadership. Participants were selected through purposive and theoretical sampling, and data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. Data analysis proceeded through open, axial, and selective coding, while trustworthiness was ensured through peer debriefing, member checking, and intra-coder consistency established through a re-analysis procedure. The findings indicate that toxic leadership is not a static or merely behavioral phenomenon, but rather a dynamic, multi-layered, and context-dependent process that emerges and is reproduced through the interaction of leaders' motivations and power resources with dysfunctional organizational structures, toxic cultures, and employees' cognitive-behavioral responses. The analysis yielded 359 concepts, 55 components, and 16 core categories, which were integrated into a paradigmatic model encompassing causal conditions, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, action/interaction strategies, and consequences. The primary contribution of this study lies in conceptualizing toxic leadership not as a set of isolated leader behaviors, but as a processual and institutionalized phenomenon embedded in the interplay between leaders, followers, and organizational contexts. This model provides both a robust theoretical foundation and practical insights for preventing, managing, and mitigating toxic leadership, thereby contributing to the enhancement of organizational health within educational systems.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received:

01/08/2025

Accepted:

20/12/2025

Available

online: Winter
2025

Keyword:

Toxic
Leadership;
Grounded
Theory;
Employees'
Narratives;
Educational
Organizations;
Paradigmatic
Model

Bagheri, F., Zahed Babolan, A., Taqavi, H., & Khaleghkhah, A., (2025). The Process of Formation and Persistence of Toxic Leadership: A Grounded Theory Discovery Based on Employee Narratives, *Journal of School Administration*, 13(4), 73 - 85.

¹ Ph.D candidate of Educational Management, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran

² Professor, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran

*Corresponding Author Email: zahed@uma.ac.ir

³ Associate Professor, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran

⁴ Professor, Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran.

Introduction

Leadership, as the compass of organizational performance, has in recent decades witnessed a shift in scholarly attention from transformational models toward the exploration of its “dark dimensions.” Among these, toxic leadership, characterized by self-centeredness, abuse of power, and the cultivation of a climate of fear, not only disrupts organizational objectives but also jeopardizes employees’ mental health and motivation. In educational organizations, due to their distinctive humanistic and developmental mission, the consequences of this leadership style are considerably deeper and more destructive than in other sectors (Anastasio, 2025; Balaban & Kazanci-Tinmaz, 2024; Rahmani, Ghanbari, & Ardalan, 2022).

This phenomenon, classified under destructive leadership, replaces motivation with humiliation and rigid control, thereby exposing teachers to burnout and anxiety (Hosseini, Mohammadi, & Zarei, 2025). Toxic leadership is not merely an individual pathology; rather, it emerges from the interaction of personal factors such as deficiencies in emotional intelligence (Salim et al., 2023; Watt et al., 2016), organizational dysfunctions including centralization (Milosevic et al., 2020; Demirdag, 2018), and environmental pressures such as ineffective policymaking (Anastasio, 2025; Tashtan, 2017).

The significance of the present study lies in the fact that identifying and containing toxic leadership is directly associated with enhancing teachers’ mental well-being, reducing job burnout, and restoring trust within educational environments (Anastasio, 2025). The elimination of such leadership patterns, through the strengthening of social capital and improvement in teaching quality, ultimately contributes to the cultivation of more creative and resilient citizens in society. Moreover, leadership practices in schools play a critical role in attracting and retaining

teachers and shaping organizational commitment (Gholami, Bolandhematan, & Shirbagi, 2025).

The necessity of conducting this study stems from the observation that, despite the global nature of this phenomenon (Balaban & Kazanci-Tinmaz, 2024), the neglect of specialized leadership training continues to reinforce the cyclical reproduction of toxic administrators (Saban, 2024; Demirdag, 2018). Therefore, the development of comprehensive frameworks to raise policymakers’ awareness and to prevent faculty members’ and teachers’ turnover is of vital importance (Hosseini, Mohammadi, & Zarei, 2025; Petrova & Tahikilan, 2024).

Despite the prevalence of this phenomenon, the existing body of research has predominantly focused on industrial settings, while educational organizations have received comparatively limited scholarly attention (Green, 2014; Zarei et al., 2017). Moreover, most available studies have adopted quantitative approaches that emphasize short-term outcomes and have failed to capture the complex interactions among leaders, employees, and organizational culture (Hausman & Miner, 2015; Ross, 2016). In this regard, professional interactions and organizational culture within schools have been identified as key contextual elements shaping educational outcomes (Esmaeili, Hosseingholizadeh, & Sadeghinezhad, 2025). This gap underscores the necessity of designing a paradigmatic model capable of providing a comprehensive understanding of the causes, contextual conditions, and coping strategies related to toxic leadership (Daniel, 2017; Maxwell, 2015). Accordingly, the present study aims to develop a paradigmatic model of toxic leadership within the educational system and seeks to answer the following question: What are the fundamental dimensions and components of this phenomenon based on the lived experiences of educational staff?

Theoretical Foundations

1. Conceptual Examination: From Dark Leadership to Toxic Leadership

In the management literature, toxic leadership is defined as a systematic process in which a leader’s recurrent and harmful behaviors undermine both the legitimate interests of the organization and the psychological well-being of followers (Einarsen et al., 2007). This concept is positioned along a continuum and is distinguished from two related constructs:

Dark leadership: A broader umbrella construct that primarily focuses on underlying personality traits such as narcissism and Machiavellianism, whereas toxic leadership is more explicitly concerned with observable behavioral outcomes and their tangible consequences (Jonason & Webster, 2010).

Dysfunctional leadership: A general spectrum ranging from inefficiency to delinquency; toxic leadership represents the most extreme point on this spectrum, where its intensity and persistence

contaminate the entire organizational culture (Schmidt, 2008).

2. Theoretical Roots and Evolution in Educational Contexts

The roots of this concept extend from political science and sociology into organizational psychology. A pivotal turning point in its development occurred in the 1990s, marked by a shift from a normative perspective (“what leaders should be”) to a realist perspective (“what harm leaders inflict”). Early studies focused on the “dark traits” of personality, while subsequent research progressed toward more comprehensive and structural models (Krasikova et al., 2013).

Within the educational domain, this evolution has entailed a transition from analyzing “individual managerial errors” to examining “structures of selection and accountability.” Toxic leadership in schools and universities erodes emotional capital, leading to the reproduction of collective anxiety, job burnout, and violations of organizational justice (Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Padilla et al., 2007). In essence, this leadership style stands in direct opposition to transformational, ethical, and authentic leadership models, which foster self-awareness and fairness and play a restorative role in educational environments (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

3. The Systemic Model of the “Toxic Triangle”

The most comprehensive framework for understanding the persistence of this phenomenon is the Toxic Triangle model proposed by Padilla, Hogan, and Kaiser (2007). This model emphasizes that toxicity is not solely a product of leaders’ individual characteristics, but rather the result of the convergence of three interrelated components:

Research Background

Petrova and Tahikilani (2024) identified ineffective leadership as the central pillar of toxic culture and argued that its remediation hinges on emotional intelligence. In the same year, Saremi et al. (1403), using a grounded theory approach, attributed employee turnover to managerial divisiveness within dysfunctional structures. Saban (2024) conceptualized toxic management as the intersection of managerial personality and unhealthy organizational culture, while Khalaf (2024) emphasized followers’ resilience in response to preferential and biased relationships. Similarly, Dixon and Isaiah (2024) identified healthy communication as a key mechanism for moderating

a) Destructive leaders: These leaders are characterized by five attributes—charisma, personalization of power, narcissism, negative life narratives, and an ideology of hatred. This configuration transforms power into an instrument of domination and suppression.

b) Susceptible followers: The endurance of toxic leaders depends on two categories of followers:

1. Passive conformers, who remain silent due to low self-esteem or unmet personal needs;
2. Complicit followers, who align themselves with the leader’s ideology to secure personal benefits.

c) Conducive environment: A context marked by instability, perceived threats, authoritarian norms, and the absence of monitoring and accountability mechanisms. Even an autocratic leader requires a structural “absence of checks and balances” to emerge and persist.

4. Dynamics and Stabilization of the Toxicity Cycle

A key feature of paradigmatic models is the feedback interaction among these elements. Toxic leaders manipulate perceptions to extract greater compliance from followers, while the environment legitimizes destructive behaviors, thereby enabling the continuation of this cycle (Padilla et al., 2007). Einarsen et al. (2007), by categorizing destructive behaviors into three levels—organizational undermining, follower abuse, and resource depletion—have provided a systematic pathway for thematic analysis in qualitative research and for identifying the mechanisms that sustain toxicity over time.

toxic environments, and Priesemuth and Schminke (2024), through an integrated model, explicated the cognitive and emotional pathways underlying the formation of hostile climates.

Subsequently, Vadasiri (2023) demonstrated that autonomy without accountability intensifies toxicity in educational institutions. Sedighi and Iqbal (2023) found micromanagement to be a significant contributor to the deterioration of mental health in universities. Mohammadalizadeh et al. (2023) extended the consequences of this phenomenon to economic levels. Salim et al. (2022) identified narcissism as a primary source of team trust erosion. Rasoul et al. (2021) developed an instrument to

measure workplace bullying, while Hughes (2021) criticized organizational passivity in restoring cultural integrity. Additionally, Yaghi and Yaghi (2021) introduced hypocrisy and deceit as manifestations of toxicity within academic environments.

In 2020, Eisner (2020) emphasized the absence of standardized protocols in toxic environments. Poursafar and Afkaneh (2020) highlighted the erosion of social capital, while Garcia (2020) underscored organizations' implicit support for toxic leaders. Milosevic et al. (2020) identified incompetence as a defining characteristic of such leaders. Earlier studies by Kouroupets (2019) and Caldwell (2019) focused on the role of technological pressures, while Van Rooij and Fine (2018) examined destructive incentives in sustaining toxic cultures.

In the latter half of the previous decade, Demirdag (2018) identified envy and Tashtan (2017) identified rumor-spreading as catalysts of toxicity. Daniel (2017) conceptualized the role of human resource managers as organizational "shock absorbers." Zarei et al. (2017) identified toxic leadership as the most influential factor in the formation of negative organizational cultures. McCullough (2016) identified five levels of toxicity, while Ross (2016) linked managerial narcissism to employee stress. Watt et al. (2016) emphasized the synergy between toxicity and ambiguous (VUCA) conditions. Roustaei (2015) and Maxwell (2015) identified abuse of power as a source of employee anxiety.

Finally, Green (2014) identified four patterns of ethical failure in educational organizations, whereas Tavanti (2011), Chamberlain and Hudson (2010), and Lipman-Blumen (2005) emphasized organizational chaos and followers' emotional needs as foundational elements of this field. Despite extensive research on the outcomes of toxic leadership, the underlying processes through which it develops and persists—especially in educational settings—remain underexplored. Moreover, employees' behavioral and interpretive responses have received limited attention. This study addresses this gap using a grounded theory approach.

Unlike the Toxic Triangle model, this study proposes a process-oriented and dynamic model of toxic leadership grounded in employees' lived experiences. By distinguishing contextual and intervening conditions and explicating action–interaction strategies, the model explains how toxic leadership emerges and is sustained over time in educational organizations. Employees are conceptualized as active mediators, not merely susceptible followers. The trajectory of research developments indicates a shift in scholarly focus from individual traits toward multilevel consequences. Nevertheless, a significant gap remains in the form of a comprehensive paradigmatic model capable of explaining the processes sustaining toxic leadership within the context of the educational system. This gap necessitates the development of a context-sensitive theory grounded in the lived experiences of educational personnel.

Table 1. The closest previous studies related to the topic of the article

No.	Title of the Study	Author(s)	Year
1	Developing a Model of Managers' Toxic Behaviors	Saremi et al.	2023
2	Examining Toxic Leadership: An Integrated Framework for Organizational Recovery	Hughes	2021
3	Assessing Organizational Hypocrisy in Universities as a Manifestation of Toxic Leadership Behavior	Yaghi & Yaghi	2021
4	A Typology of Toxic Employees in Public Organizations	Poursafar & Afkaneh	2020
5	Escalating Darkness: Integrating Toxic Leadership with Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA)	Watt, Javidi, & Normore	2016
6	Toxic Employees	Hausman & Miner	2015
7	Toxic Leadership: Prevalence, Characteristics, and Early Warning Indicators	Green	2014
8	Dysfunctional Patterns in Organizational Leadership and How to Address Them	Tavanti	2011

No.	Title of the Study	Author(s)	Year
9	The Allure of Toxic Leaders: Why Followers Rarely Escape Their Clutches	Lipman-Blumen	2005

Research Method

Research Approach and Strategy

The present study adopts a qualitative paradigm and employs a Grounded Theory strategy to systematically explain the phenomenon of toxic leadership in educational organizations. This inductive strategy enables the researcher to move beyond existing theories and to derive an emergent model directly from participants' lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). Accordingly, the systematic approach of Strauss and Corbin (1998) was utilized to organize the findings into a paradigmatic model comprising six core components: causal conditions, the central phenomenon, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences.

Population, Sampling, and Theoretical Saturation

The study population consisted of all stakeholders who possessed deep understanding and direct experience of toxic leadership. To achieve theoretical richness, two purposively selected groups were identified:

1. Experiential participants (employees and middle managers with lived experience), and
2. Theoretical participants (experts in management and organizational psychology).

The sampling process began with purposive sampling and continued through theoretical sampling. Data collection followed an iterative process and continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. Although saturation of emerging

codes occurred during the 21st interview, the total number of interviews was increased to 24 to ensure the adequacy of sources and to strengthen the dimensions of the model.

Data Collection Instrument and Analysis Procedure

The primary data collection instrument was the semi-structured in-depth interview, designed to uncover the hidden layers of behaviors and destructive consequences of toxic leadership. Data analysis was conducted through three consecutive stages of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Bashkhouh Ajirloo et al., 2020). During this process, raw data were initially fragmented into discrete concepts and subsequently integrated through systematic relationships among categories, resulting in the final structure of the conceptual model.

Trustworthiness and Quality Criteria

To ensure the trustworthiness and robustness of the findings, multiple validation strategies were employed, including peer debriefing and member checking. To assess reliability, the test-retest reliability method was applied, whereby a portion of the data was re-coded by the researcher across two different time intervals. Statistical analysis indicated a test-retest agreement coefficient of 91.23%, which exceeds the accepted standard threshold (60%) and demonstrates high stability and optimal validity of the analytical process. Finally, an audit trail was established, and all documentation was systematically organized to facilitate future review and enhance the study's confirmability.

Table 2. Calculation of Test–Retest Reliability

No.	Study Title and Author	Number of Codes	Agreements	Disagreements	Test–Retest Reliability
1	Dysfunctional Patterns in Organizational Leadership and How to Address Them (Tavanti, 2011)	57	52	5	91.23%
2	The Allure of Toxic Leaders: Why Followers Rarely Escape Their Clutches? (Lipman-Blumen, 2005)				
3	Escalating Darkness: Integrating Toxic Leadership with Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (Watt & Javidi, 2016)				
4	Toxic Leadership in the Field of Human Resources (Garcia, 2020)				
5	What Are the Consequences of Toxic Leadership? (Sedighi & Iqbal, 2023)				

Research Findings

Within the systematic framework of Grounded Theory, data analysis was conducted through open, axial, and selective coding. The outcome of this process is a paradigmatic model (Table 3) that, by explicating causal, contextual, intervening

conditions, strategies, and consequences, provides a comprehensive framework for examining the phenomenon of toxic leadership in educational organizations.

Table 3. Paradigmatic Model of Toxic Leadership in Educational Organizations

Paradigmatic Element	Dimension	Components
Causal Conditions	Personal Factors	Protective motivations; Advancement motivations
	Sources of Influence	Administrative power; Academic power; Personal power; Reward and punishment power; Informational power
Contextual Conditions	Extra-organizational Contexts	Socio-economic conditions; Unstable and non-linear organizational environments; Political considerations
	Intra-organizational Contexts	Weak preventive controls; Absence of constraining mechanisms; Toxic job structures; Destructive organizational incentives
	Interpersonal Contexts	Toxic (deviant) learning; Biased interpretation; Collective stress; Interpersonal conflict
	Individual Contexts	Personality traits; Incompetence (deficiency in competencies); Physical and psychological health
Intervening Conditions	Inefficient Organizational Infrastructures	Dysfunctional and toxic socio-structural factors; Role conflict; Hidden managerial systems; Disruption in institutional accountability; Ineffective

Paradigmatic Element	Dimension	Components
		support mechanisms; Breakdown in organizational communication infrastructures
	Individual-Centered Cognitive-Behavioral Responses	Observable behavioral reactions; Conscious and self-regulatory strategies
	Organizational Barriers to Effective Coping	Negative and unhealthy organizational culture; Policy conflicts; Productivity prioritized over well-being; Senior management indifference
	Interpersonal and Social Barriers	Passive submissiveness (blind obedience); Divisiveness (strategic isolation); Familial barriers
Strategies	Dominance-Oriented Strategies	Psychological and behavioral domination; Structural and managerial domination; Neglect; Creation of dysfunctional communication climates; Suppression of creativity and innovation
	Deviant Strategies	Structural corruption resulting from toxic leadership; Exclusionary authoritarianism; Loyalty-based networking; Engineering of deviant policies
	Unethical Strategies	General unethical behaviors; Profession-specific unethical behaviors
	Demotivating Leader Behaviors	Threatening and punitive behaviors; Indifferent and passive behaviors; Motivation-undermining and inhibiting behaviors
Outcomes and Consequences	Intra-organizational Outcomes	Individual-level consequences; Group- and organizational-level consequences
	Extra-organizational Outcomes	Community-related consequences; Consequences related to school stakeholders and clients

3. Data Analysis Process

In the first stage, open coding was conducted with the aim of decoding participants' in-depth narratives. At this stage, raw data were meticulously fragmented through a detailed analytical process, resulting in the identification of 456 initial indicators, which, after refinement, were reduced to 359 core concepts. These concepts constituted the primary foundation for understanding the phenomenon.

During the axial coding phase, toxic leadership was selected as the central phenomenon, and the structural reconstruction of concepts was initiated. At this stage, categories were positioned based on their logical interrelationships across the levels of causal conditions, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences, thereby mapping the processual dynamics underlying the emergence and persistence of this phenomenon.

Finally, in the selective coding stage, the final theory was developed through the integration and refinement of relationships. By employing a coherent storyline, the interactions among variables and the transformation of strategies into specific outcomes were explicated.

The outcome of this analytical trajectory was the formulation of a paradigmatic model of toxic leadership, illustrated in Table 2 and Figure 1. Upon reaching theoretical saturation, this model offers a comprehensive and structured framework for understanding the complex mechanisms of toxic leadership within educational organizations.

Contextual conditions refer to relatively stable structural and cultural settings, whereas intervening conditions represent dynamic factors that shape actors' responses and strategies. This distinction increases analytical transparency.

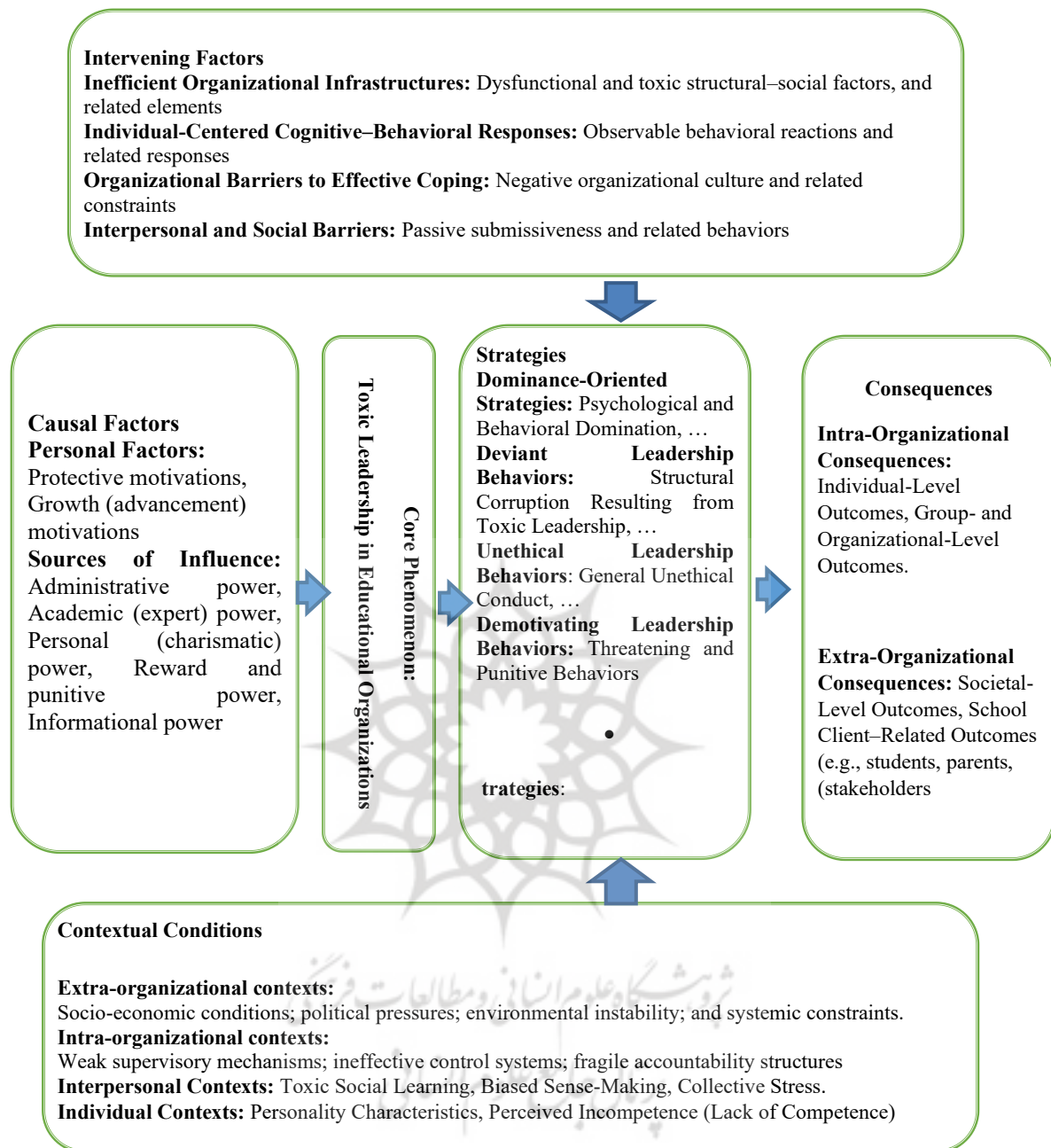


Figure 1. Qualitative Research Model: Toxic Leadership (Based on the Systematic Grounded Theory Approach)
 Source: Findings of the present study

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that toxic leadership in educational organizations is a multidimensional phenomenon that emerges from the complex interaction of individual characteristics, organizational structures, and environmental pressures. With regard to personal factors, protective motivations and fear of position loss serve as primary drivers of the reproduction of toxic behaviors (Vadasiri, 2023; Caldwell, 2019). Within educational systems, competition for higher administrative positions and excessive reliance on administrative and punitive power, rather than academic influence, create conditions that facilitate the coercion and control of teachers (Demirdag, 2018).

The contexts in which this phenomenon develops can be analyzed across three levels. At the extra-organizational level, environmental volatility and politically driven appointments undermine meritocracy (Poursafar & Afkaneh, 2020). At the intra-organizational level, the absence of effective supervision, temporary employment contracts, and inequitable reward systems transform organizations into environments conducive to negative behaviors (Petrova & Tahikilan, 2024). At the individual and interpersonal levels, traits such as narcissism and lack of empathy, combined with toxic learning and employees' modeling of negative leaders, reproduce cycles of unethical behavior (Saremi et al., 2024; Priesemuth & Schminke, 2024).

Intervening conditions play a decisive role in intensifying this phenomenon. Inefficient infrastructures, role ambiguity, and covert managerial systems function as protective shields for toxic behaviors (Sadeghi & Iqbal, 2023; Milosevic et al., 2020). Employees' responses are also critical; passive strategies such as organizational silence or active strategies such as whistleblowing constitute integral components of the cycle that either constrain or perpetuate toxic leadership (Lipman-Blumen, 2005).

The strategies of toxic leadership manifest across four dimensions: domination, deviant behaviors, unethical actions, and demotivating behaviors. By humiliating employees, constructing loyalty-based networks, and instrumentally exploiting positional power, toxic leaders obstruct formal pathways of professional advancement (Yaghi & Yaghi, 2021; Tashtan, 2017). In schools, these practices erode

teachers' professional dignity and marginalize ethical values (Garcia, 2020; Green, 2014).

The consequences of this model extend beyond the individual and affect the entire educational system. At the individual level, outcomes such as job burnout, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are evident (Petrova & Tahikilan, 2024; Mohammadalizadeh et al., 2023). At the organizational level, the breakdown of team cohesion and the emergence of a culture of silence diminish the quality of teaching (Saban, 2024; Maxwell, 2015). Ultimately, at the societal level, this phenomenon reduces school effectiveness and leads to the erosion of social capital and increased dissatisfaction among key stakeholders, including parents and students.

Overall, this study emphasizes that addressing toxic leadership requires a multilevel approach. Transparency in appointments, enhancement of leaders' emotional intelligence, and the reconstruction of organizational culture are essential prerequisites for transitioning toward healthy educational environments. Although limitations such as reduced generalizability are inherent in qualitative research, the proposed paradigmatic model provides a principled framework for preventing the erosion of human capital within the educational system. Following an in-depth examination of the phenomenon of toxic leadership, the provision of practical and actionable strategies becomes essential to enable organizations to break free from its destructive cycle. At both individual and institutional levels, transparency in managerial appointments, the revision of reward and incentive systems, and the strengthening of competence-based sources of influence can effectively restrain authoritarian and domineering behaviors. Enhancing managerial competencies and emotional intelligence, providing training for coping with occupational pressures, and establishing supportive mechanisms can significantly reduce the likelihood of unethical conduct. Although developed in educational organizations, the model shows analytical transferability to other hierarchical and public-sector contexts. Future studies may test it in different organizational settings.

Moreover, improving organizational communication, encouraging creativity, redesigning jobs, and cultivating a positive organizational culture contribute to the restoration of employees' trust and motivation. At the societal level, transparent oversight, ethics education, and support for distributive justice

can further enhance public satisfaction and trust. Overall, adopting a preventive and human-centered approach can transform organizations into healthy, dynamic, and resilient environments capable of withstanding toxic leadership.

References

- Ahmed, A. K., Atta, M. H. R., El-Monshed, A. H., & Mohamed, A. I. (2024). The effect of toxic leadership on workplace deviance: the mediating effect of emotional exhaustion, and the moderating effect of organizational cynicism. *BMC nursing*, 23(1), 669 .<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-024-02308-x>
- Anastasiou, S. (2025). Counteracting toxic leadership in education: Transforming schools through emotional intelligence and ethical leadership. *Administrative Sciences*, 15(8), 312. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci15080312>
- Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(3), 315–338. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.001>
- Azeez, F., & Aboobaker, N. (2024). Echoes of dysfunction: A thematic exploration of toxic leadership in higher education. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, 16(4), 439–456. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-03-2024-0888>
- Balaban, F., & Kazancı-Tınmaz, A. (2024). An examination of how toxic leadership behaviors of school principals relate to teachers' perceived stress. *International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research*, 11(1), 86–99. <https://doi.org/10.52380/ijcer.2024.11.1.538>
- Bashokooh-Ajirloo, H., Zahed Babolan, A., Akbari, T., & Khaleghkhan, A. (2022). Qualitative And Data Base Model of Teachers' Talent Development (Case Study: Ardabil Primary School Teachers). *Journal of Research in Teaching*, 10(2), 144-169. <https://doi.org/10.34785/J012.2022.031> [In Persian]
- Chamberlain, L. J., & Hodson, R. (2010). Toxic work environments: What helps and what hurts. *Sociological Perspectives*, 53(4), 455-477. <https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2010.53.4.455>
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry&research design: choosin among five approaches*. Sage publication.
- Coldwell, D. A. (2019). Negative influences of the 4th industrial revolution on the workplace: Towards a theoretical model of entropic citizen behavior in toxic organizations. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 16(15), 2670 . <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16152670>
- Daniel, T. A. (2017). Managing toxic emotions at work: HR's unique role as the "organizational shock absorber". *Employment Relations Today*, 43(4), 13-19 .DOI 10.1002/ert.21599
- Demirdağ, S. (2018). The perceptions of academicians on organizational toxicity. *Kastamonu Education Journal*, 26(4), 1319-1334, <https://doi.org/10.24106/kefdergi.346652>
- Dickson, R. K., & Isaiah, O. (2024). Overcoming toxic work environment through effective leadership strategies. *International Journal of Business Management and Economic Review*, 7(1), 182-202. <http://doi.org/10.35409/IJBMER.2024.3559>
- Eisner, D. C. (2020). Identifying and eliminating the toxic work environment in the clinical setting: a narrative review. *Journal of Health Ethics Administration*, 10(2), 1-14 . <https://doi.org/10.22461/jhea.9.7169>
- Einarsen, S., Aasland, M. S., & Skogstad, A. (2007). Destructive leadership behaviour: A definition and conceptual model. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 18(3), 207-216. DOI: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2007.03.002
- Esmaili, F. , Hosseingholizadeh, R. and Sadeghinezhad, M. (2025). The Role of Intra- and Inter-School Professional Interactions in Teacher Professional Learning: A Social Network Analysis of Primary Schools in Mashhad. *School Administration*, 13(1), 36-51. doi: 10.22034/jsa.2025.143541.2574
- Garcia, K. (2020). *Toxic Leadership in Hr* (Doctoral dissertation, Creighton University). <https://B2n.ir/hd9604>
- Gholami, P. and Bolandhematan, K. (2025). Investigating the Role of School Principals in Attracting Teachers to Schools based on Invitational Theory: A Mixed Method Research. *School Administration*, 13(1), 1-19. doi: 10.22034/jsa.2024.141501.2526

Green, J. E. (2014). Toxic Leadership in Educational Organizations. *Education Leadership Review*, 15(1), 18-33 .<https://B2n.ir/ys2824>

Hassanein, F. R., Mohammadi, S., & Zargar, P. (2025). Toxic leadership and job satisfaction in the middle eastern education sector: the influence of organizational culture and trust. *Administrative Sciences*, 15(5), 171. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci15050171>

Hughes, B. C. (2022). Examining toxic leadership: An integrated framework for organizational recovery. *Journal of Behavioral and Applied Management*, 22(3), 309-344 .<https://B2n.ir/dj7363>

Jonason, P. K., & Webster, G. D. (2010). The Dirty Dozen: A Concise Measure of the Dark Triad. *Psychological Assessment*, 22(2), 420-432. DOI: 10.1037/a0019265

Khalaf, H. (2024). Toxic Leadership and Workplace Climate: Exploring the Role of Followers in Maintaining a Positive Organisational Culture. Available at SSRN 5109330 .<https://B2n.ir/qj6674>

Khasawneh, S., Abu-Alruz, J., Oliemat, A., Hailat, S., & Bataineh, O. (2024). Toxic leadership in higher education: A typology of behaviours. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 29(3), 363-380. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2024.2371644>

Krasikova, D. V., Green, S. G., & LeBreton, J. M. (2013). "Destructive Leadership: A Theoretical Review, Integration, and Future Research Agenda." *Journal of Management*, 39(5), 1308-1338. DOI: 10.1177/0149206312471388

Lipman-Blumen, J. (2005). The allure of toxic leaders: Why followers rarely escape their clutches. *Ivey Business Journal*, 69(3), 1-40. <https://B2n.ir/nm9479>

Maxwell, S. M. (2015). An exploration of human resource personnel and toxic leadership. Walden University .Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection <https://B2n.ir/zk3487>

Milosevic, I., Maric, S., & Lončar, D. (2020). Defeating the toxic boss: The nature of toxic leadership and the role of followers. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 27(2), 117-137. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051819833374>

McCulloch, A. (2017). Toxic work environments (Doctoral dissertation, Carleton University .

Mohammadallizade, M., Taghipourian, M. J., & Farokh Seresht, B. (2024). Analyzing the drivers of toxic leadership in organizations using Meta-synthesis. *Journal of Executive Management*, 15(30), 7-27 .DOI 10.22080/jem.2023.24202.3795 [In Persian]

Padilla, A., Hogan, R., & Kaiser, R. B. (2007). The toxic triangle: Destructive leaders, susceptible followers, and conducive environments. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 18(3), 176-194. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2007.03.001> .

Petrova1, I., & Taghikilani, L. (2024). Building a Culture of Excellence by Transforming Toxic Corporate Environments. Available at SSRN 5045633. <https://B2n.ir/py4315>

Poursafar, M., & Afkaneh, M. (2020). Typology of toxic employees in governmental organizations. *Strategic Management Thought*, 14(2), 493-552 .DOI 10.30497/smt.2021.240437.3197 [In Persian]

Priesemuth, M., & Schminke, M. (2024). Toxic work climates: An integrative review and development of a new construct and theoretical framework. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 109(9), 1355 .<https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/apl0001188>

Rahmani, E. , Ghanbari, S. and Ardalan, M. R. (2022). The Effect of Managers' Toxic Leadership on Creating Organizational Trauma in Secondary Schools. *School Administration*, 10(2), 42-56.

Rasool, S. F., Wang, M., Tang, M., Saeed, A., & Iqbal, J. (2021). How toxic workplace environment effects the employee engagement: the mediating role of organizational support and employee wellbeing. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 18(5), 2294. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18052294>

Ross, D. B. (2016). Creating a Survey for Analyzing a Culture of Narcissistic, Toxic, and Power Behaviors in an Organization . <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/51098323.pdf>

Saleem, F., Andi, H. K., Jamil, A., & Saba, F. (2020). SURVIVING THE NARCISSIST'S PSYCHOLOGICAL GAME: DISARMING THE TOXIC WORKPLACE COWORKERS . <https://B2n.ir/zd1777>

Saban, J. (2024). Toxic management-how to discover, prevent and cure negative impacts to productivity of individuals, teams and organizations (Doctoral dissertation, Technische Universität Wien . <https://B2n.ir/nq9161>

Siddiqui, H., & Iqbal, J. (2024). What Happens When a Leader is Toxic? A Qualitative Investigation. *Bulletin of Business and Economics (BBE)*, 13(1 . <https://doi.org/10.61506/01.00225> [In Persian]

Schmidt, J. A. (2008). Toxic leadership: Recognizing and avoiding its harms. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 29(7), 923-946. DOI: 10.1002/job.555

Taştan, S. B. (2017). Toxic workplace environment: In search for the toxic behaviours in organizations with a research in healthcare sector. *Postmodern Openings*, 8(1), 83-109. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18662/po/2017.0801.07>

Tavanti, M. (2011). Managing toxic leaders: Dysfunctional patterns in organizational leadership and how to deal with them. *Human Resource Management*, 2011, 127-136 .<https://B2n.ir/gw4989>

Tepper, B. J. (2000). Consequences of abusive supervision. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43(2), 178–190. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1556375>

Van Rooij, B., & Fine, A. (2018). Toxic corporate culture: Assessing organizational processes of deviancy. *Administrative Sciences*, 8(3), 23. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci8030023>

Vedhathiri, T. (2023). Strategies to Resolve Toxic Leadership Actions in Engineering Institutions which Impede Faculty Performance and Innovation . <https://doi.org/10.32388/OEK247>

Watt, S. R., Javidi, M., & Normore, A. H. (2016). Increasing darkness: combining toxic leadership and volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). In *The dark side of leadership: Identifying and overcoming unethical practice in organizations* (Vol. 26, pp. 195-206). Emerald Group Publishing Limited .DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-366020160000026015>

Wolor, M., et al. (2025). Counteracting Toxic Leadership in Education: Transforming Schools through Constructive Practices. *Behaviors*, 15(8), Article 312. <https://doi.org/10.3390/behaviors15080312>

Yaghi, A., & Yaghi, M. (2021). Evaluating organizational hypocrisy within universities as toxic leadership behavior. *Public Integrity*, 23(4), 385-400. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999922.2021.1888536>

Name: Fatemeh Bagheri

Email: bagheri1400f@gmail.com

Ph.D candidate of Educational Management,
Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of
Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of
Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran



Name: Adel Zahed Babolan*

Email: zahed@uma.ac.ir

Professor, Department of Educational Sciences,
Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology,
University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran



Name: Husein Taqavi

Email: taqavi2004@gmail.com

Associate Professor, Department of Educational
Sciences, Faculty of Educational Sciences and
Psychology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili,
Ardabil, Iran



Name: Ali Khaleghkhah

Email: alikhaleg@gmail.com

Professor, Department of Educational Sciences,
Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology,
University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran

