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Psychological Profile: Characteristics of Abusive Leaders Abus manipulating and exploiting others to achieve their own goals. Additionally, traits such as impulsivity, a need for control, and a lack of emotional regulation are often characteristic of these leaders. Furthermore, many abusive and authoritarian leaders exhibit traits associated with the Dark Triad - a trio of personality traits comprising narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. These traits collectively facilitate manipulative and exploitative behaviours, allowing these leaders to exert control over others without regard for their well-being. Let's see some characteristics of the Dark Triad and is characterized by an inflated sense of self-importance and a desire for admiration. Individuals with high narcissistic tendencies often excel in self-promotion, confidently presenting their skills and accomplishments. Machiavellianism: Manipulation and Strategic behaviour to achieve personal goals. Individuals with Machiavellian tendencies are adept at navigating office politics, forming alliances, and making calculated moves to advance their careers. Psychopathy, the third trait in the Dark Triad, involves traits like superficial charm, lack of empathy, and a tendency to manipulate others for personal gain. While extreme psychopathy is detrimental, moderate levels of psychopathic traits can manifest as charisma and charm. Such individuals might come across as charismatic leaders who can inspire and influence their teams. Risk-Taking and Confidence in Uncertainty. The Dark Triad traits are often associated with higher risk tolerance and a willingness to venture into uncertain territory. Individuals with Dark Triad traits often exhibit a focus on short-term gains and immediate rewards. This can translate to a strong drive to achieve rapid success and a willingness to do whatever it takes to climb the corporate ladder swiftly. Behaviours of Abusive Leaders Abusive Leaders Abusive Leaders are known for their verbal and nonverbal aggression, belittling, and demeaning subordinates. They often set unrealistic expectations and employ fear tactics to maintain control. Micromanagement and a refusal to accept dissent are common, stifling creativity and autonomy. Furthermore, these leaders frequently engage in favouritism, pitting team members against each other to solidify their power. They may also manipulate performance evaluations to maintain a sense of dependency among employees. These behaviours not only create a toxic workplace but also erode trust and collaboration within teams. Effects of Abusive Leadership on Individuals and the Organisation The effects of Abusive Leadership reverberate through the individuals they lead and the organisations they oversee. Employees subjected to such leadership often experience heightened stress, anxiety, and even depression. The constant fear of retribution stifles creativity and innovation, leading to decreased job satisfaction and engagement. Moreover, the turnover rate under abusive leadership tends to be higher, as talented individuals seek healthier work environments. Those who remain may become disengaged, resulting in decreased productivity and overall organisation, hindering the organisation's ability to adapt and thrive in a dynamic business landscape. Navigating the Storm: Dealing with an Abusive Leader Dealing with an abusive Leader Can be a challenging and emotionally draining experience. However, there are several strategies you can employ to protect yourself and maintain your well-being. Document Everything: Keep a record of interactions, including emails, messages, and any instances of aggressive behaviour or unreasonable demands. This documentation can serve as evidence should the need to address the situation formally arise. Seek Support: Reach out to colleagues, mentors, or friends who can offer you emotional support and guidance. Sharing experiences can provide a sense of validation and help you cope with the stress of the situation. Know Your Rights: Familiarize yourself with your organisation's policies and procedures regarding workplace behaviour and harassment. If your leader's behaviour violates these policies, you can consider reporting the issue to the appropriate channels. Maintain Professionalism: Even in the face of adversity, try to remain professional and composed. Responding with professionalism can help you avoid escalating the situation and can be a crucial point in your favour should the need to report the behaviour arise. Explore Internal Resources: If your organization has resources such as an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), use them. These programs often provide counselling services that can help you manage stress and anxiety. Seek Clarity: When given tasks or instructions, ask for clarification if they seem unclear or unreasonable. This can help you better understand expectations and potentially prevent misunderstandings. Establish Boundaries: Set clear boundaries for yourself in terms of work hours, workload, and acceptable behaviour. Communicate these boundaries respectfully to your leader when necessary. Focus on Self-Care: Engage in activities that promote your physical and mental well-being. Regular exercise, meditation, hobbies, and spending time with loved ones can help you manage stress and maintain a positive outlook. Develop a Supportive Network: Cultivate relationships with colleagues who share similar experiences. A supportive network can provide emotional relief and a platform for sharing strategies to cope with the situation. Consider Escalation: If the abusive behaviour persists and your efforts to address it internally prove ineffective, you may need to escalate the matter to higher management, human resources, or an external regulatory body if applicable. Seek Legal Advice: If the situation becomes untenable and you are unable to find a resolution, consider exploring new job opportunities where you can work in a healthier work environment. Remember, protecting yourself in an abusive work environment is essential for your mental and emotional well-being. Each individual's circumstances are unique, so it's important to assess the situation and choose the strategies that best fit your needs and goals. Ultimately, your well-being should be a priority, and seeking help when needed is a sign of strength, not weakness. #LeadershipInsights #ManagementStrategies #ProfessionalDevelopment #PositiveLeadership #EmployeeEngagement #DarkTriadTraits #WorkplaceEthics #LeadershipImpact #WorkplaceMentalHealth #EffectiveLeadership Source: Thomas Andre Fure/ShutterstockOver the past few years, our culture has seemed to arrive at a reckoning. Abusive behavior from leaders is far less tolerated than it once was, and those that have used their power to create hostile environments and harm their colleagues, co-workers, and employees are increasingly facing the consequences of their actions. The waves are being felt across multiple institutions, including business, academia, and the arts. This paradigm shift is being met not so much with a feeling of relief that it has finally arrived. Still, a huge question looms. If these destructive leaders are so blatantly harmful, how do they manage to achieve and hold onto their level of power for so long? The root of the problem is the behavioral redundancies that many leaders demonstrate, along with the depths they will go to in order to ensconce themselves, avoid consequences, and cover up their negative impact. The Dark TriadResearchers continue to expand their understanding of destructive leadership and the impact it has on humans and organizations. A more recently observed phenomenon is The Dark Triad: the combination of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. Leaders who have all three of these characteristics use their character flaws to engage followers. After all, being an openly flawed person makes a leader appear vulnerable and self-aware, which is likely to appeal to others who have flaws themselves. However, while engaging and charming in short encounters, these leaders cannot sustain positive interactions under stress. Thats where the destructive tendencies come in, doing harm to those around them. Still, though, these leaders do sustain power, which only means that their stress continues, as do the outbursts and destructive behavior. When it comes to the Dark Triad, its important to understand the differences between the three core traits. Despite the similarities, each predicts unique outcomes. And while the dark triad personality traits may exist independently, they tend to be correlated behaviors MachiavellianismA Machiavel political world, Russian President Vladimir Putin seems to be a true, modern Machiavellian. In 2013, as the U.S. prepared to intervene in Syria, Putin took to the pages of The New York Times and urged caution. As the Guardian pointed out, Putins op-ed was a rebuke of Americas morally guided foreign policy initiatives, a move that showed he wasnt so much concerned with morality as he was in achieving his desired outcome. And it worked, with pundits and politicos who dislike Putin nodding their heads in agreement. In getting that outcome, he could manipulate his followers into believing he had the strength and resolve to solve any problem. NarcissismThis trait is all too common in leadership roles. It presents as an inflated self-view, delusions of grandeur, attention-seeking behavior, and a focus on ego reinforcement. As Ive written before, the ability to successfully engage and inspire in a corporate setting strongly corresponds with narcissism. In certain people, this results in negative consequences, which leads to the destructive behavior we see. Narcissism runs amok in our political system, where its not hard to find elected leaders filled with delusions of grandeur and undertaking attention-seeking behavior. We also see negative consequences among narcissistic celebrity CEOs such as ex-Nissan CEO Carlos Ghosn, who smuggled himself out of Japan while on bail and is now on the lam in Lebanon. His larger-than-life, self-aggrandizing guru persona often led to decisions that put his interests over those of the company. PsychopathyThe final trait is perhaps the most jarring to many. PsychopathyThe final trait is perhaps the most jarring to many. PsychopathyThe final trait is perhaps the most jarring to many. PsychopathyThe final trait is perhaps the most jarring to many. narcissistic and Machiavellian traits, and as a result, we accept it. But psychopathy can often be shocking, which is why so much of the news for various misdeeds, including throwing computers at his assistants. But what remains most shocking of all is that his behavior has been considered an open secret across the industries he excelled in, and was largely viewed as the by-product of an eccentric man, as New York put it. Rudins behavior seems to be a good example of psychopathyspecifically, corporate psychopathyand understanding this unique trait gets at the heart of how leaders like this can hold onto power for so long. Corporate Psychopathy Corporate Psychopathy refers to individuals who function inside an organizational setting, and exhibit dominating behaviors in pursuit of positions of power and influence, as well as personal gain and affluence (Boddy, 22 2013; Spencer & Byrne, 2016; Walker & Jackson, 2016). Psychopathy in the workplace is distinguished from the psychopathology studied in the psychop criminality. Corporate psychopathy exists on a continuum, and can include any or all of the following traits: Reduced guilt/reduced regret/lack of remorse/low on shame/low embarrassment, with individuals begging for forgiveness not out of guilt but to reduce potential consequences. Faking morals and emotions Taking without reciprocity High levels of anger, rage, and indignationCorporate crimeIts difficult to evaluate just how prevalent corporate psychopathy is across the business world, because by definition, these leaders have traits that mask their behavior. Theyve become adept at making it difficult to measure the depth of the harm theyve caused. How Do People Gain This Power? The present moment is showing us just how common corporate psychopathic behavior is, and while the first step is to hold these leaders accountable for their actions, the next reckoning will be examining just how we allow it to continue. Culture is a key factor, as so much of our language around business is tied to success at all costs and a winner-take-all attitude. Once again looking at Scott Rudin, his abusive behavior was often written off as a sign of his eccentricities. He was successful, so he was allowed to remain abusive. That level of success also comes with freedom from consequences, for both the perpetuates. This is an example of the Toxic Triangle, the combination of a destructive leader, susceptible followers, and a conducive environment. This perfect storm is responsible for so much of the pain and destructive leader, susceptible followers, and a conducive environment. This perfect storm is responsible for so much of the pain and destructive leader, susceptible followers, and a conducive environment. if you are a leader in an organization that has allowed a corporate psychopath to prosper, or if you work for someone who fits the description? Working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath to prosper, or if you work for someone who fits the description? Working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yourself working for a psychopath is never easy. If you find yo yourself, certainly, but also for the sake of others who may be experiencing this leader, and the organizations that they may negatively impact. Weve reached an inflection point where there is more opportunity to speak up and voice concerns than ever before. However, the opportunity isnt always equally applied, and one effect of larger-than-life personalities is that those who cast aspersions their way are often viewed with skepticism. It took years for the open secret of Rudins behavior to be taken seriously by the press, and not everyone has access to media contacts who can break the dam. Its imperative that organizations take steps now to ensure that there are clear channels for those suffering under psychopathic leadership to pursue help, gain internal support, and make a career change if they so desire. A huge part of this process is for boards and the senior decision-makers who are putting these leaders into power to understand that they may be producing unsustainable short-term business outcomes, due to the human cost surrounding them. Human resources professionals and other leaders can get educated on the signs/indicators of corporate psychopathy. After all, so many of the examples Ive provided have remained hidden, and that may be the case right now. LinkedIn and Facebook image: Thomas Andre Fure/Shutterstock INTRODUCTION Toxic leadership is a type of leadership that is destructive to members of a team, an organization, and society at large. It is ubiquitous and has been for centuries. Yet, within the larger body of the leadership literature, toxic leadership accounts for appears to occur in every industry and at every level of government (Lipman-Bluman, 2005). As Wright (2015) points out from a military context, there are almost a countless number of historical examples whereby leaders place an emphasis on service and sacrifice above anything else resulting in the destruction of follower morale. More disturbingly nobody is immune to toxic leadership. This paper endeavors to examine toxic leadership. It starts the journey by exploring the multi- faceted elements of toxic leadership. The paper then reviews the behaviors, characteristics, and consequences of toxic leadership, exposed to toxic leadership at some point in their lives whether in a workplace, family setting, or even within a community context and volunteer activities. Toxic leadership impacts all of us, which is why we so desperately need to understand it. The primary purpose of this paper is to examine what healthy and toxic leadership look like, drawing an important comparison and juxtaposition between the two for current and aspiring leaders to examine. This comparison becomes important because, while Itzkovich, Heilbrunn, and Aleksic (2020), rightly assert that there are many other complex variables that can contribute to leader behavior. Thus, the objective of this paper is to develop a working definition of toxic leadership based on the existing research surrounding both healthy leadership looks like both in theory and practice Second, the paper will review some of the behaviors, characteristics, and consequences of toxic leadership from which future research can be built from. Finally, the paper will present a working definition of toxic leadership from which future research can be built from. leadership is defined is essential to the discourse surrounding toxic leadership. As Stogdill argues in his study, there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are a few definitions that have permeated academic and popular press resources consistently throughout the years. Previous research and publications by the authors of leadership, accounting for deep research into each of the widely accepted styles of leadership as follows: An intentional means by which a leader influences a group of people in an organization to a widely understood future state that is different from the present one. (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). The word intentionality required to practice leadership, as well as to cultivate and develop leadership skills. Two important points are noteworthy: One, while this paper is not about leadership styles per se, every leadership style does in fact require intentionality (Gandolfi & Stone, 2017). Second, it cannot be assumed that all intentional efforts to build and grow leadership skills is done so for the mutual benefit of the leader and the follower, or even if this is the intent that it will remain that way indefinitely. The notion of organizational variables discussed previously (Itzkovich, Heilbrunn, & Aleksic, 2020) can influence the intentionality and ultimately the output of a leader. Influence is one of the most important elements of the stated leadership definition. Good, or healthy leadership is influence driven by motivation, inspiration, and prioritization, which can engender a sense of calm and safety (McDermott, Kidney, & Flood, 2013). Whether it is top down, matrix, or a flat organizational structure, leaders must be able to influence others. Gandolfi (2016) asserts that the combination of five components render a potent working definition of leadership - (i) there must be one or more leaders, (ii) leadership must have followers, (iii) it must be action oriented with a (iv) legitimate course of action, and there must be one or more leaders, fill one of action oriented with a (iv) legitimate course of action, and there must be action oriented with a (iv) legitimate course of action, and there must be (v) goals and objectives. Several important points are made here. One, there is an inherent leader/ follower dynamic. Two, goals and action steps become very important in that the leaders and followers must work together to achieve the goals set out by the leader(s). The question then arises as to what end? Are followers giving their time joyfully or forcefully? For instance, when organizational advocates joyfully give their time and talents to the organizational mission, they in turn enhance the value of the organization (Stone, 2015). When the followers are subjected to do the inverse, they become robbed of their joy and resentful of the organization and Patterson (2006) definition of leadership. They discuss a distinct bond between the leader(s) and the follower(s). One that points to traits, skills, and abilities on the part of the follower(s) that can be utilized in a healthy way for the benefit of both the organization and the follower(s), where the follower(s) that can be utilized in a healthy way for the benefit of both the organization and the follower(s) that can be utilized in a healthy way for the benefit of both the organization and the follower(s) feel they are truly valued in the grand vision toward achieving the mission, and not just a cog in the corporate wheel (Winston & Patterson, 2006) This is important because it places equal emphasis on both relationship and purpose between the leader(s) and the follower first is important because it places equilibrium, it generates trust, commitment, and longevity. The reason is that follower first is important because it places equal emphasis on both relationship reaches equilibrium, it generates trust, commitment, and longevity. The reason is that follower first is important because it places equal emphasis on both relationship and purpose between the leader(s) and the follower first is important because it places equal emphasis on both relationship and purpose between the leader(s) and the follower first is important because it places equal emphasis on both relationship reaches equilibrium, it generates trust, commitment, and longevity. arguably the most unselfish posture that leaders can take toward their followers. This is significant in creating organizational humility and essential in discerning if the leader/follower relationships are positively influential or coercive. In his seminal work, Collins (2001) defines five levels of leadership, where the Level 5 leader blends extreme personal humility with intense professional will (p. 21). There is a clear balance here - results versus humility. The two can live in harmony, but it is not an easy line to walk for any leader. Driven leaders can easily forget about followers, and humility in the wrong context or without the proper understanding of what humility is can be perceived as weakness. Effective leadership is not linear, nor is it a one-way form of communication or event; rather it is highly interactive (Northouse, 2007). Interactive, it simply will not happen. This encompasses another key element of the authors of this papers definition of leadership, how the leader moves the organization. It is the proverbial fork in the road where healthy leadership and toxic leadership start to noticeably deviate from one another determining the all-important means by which the future organizational state gets achieved. Achieving the desired future state begins to bring about difficult questions that are beyond the scope of this current paper but are worth serious consideration for future research. For instance, are there leadership styles that start with the best of intentions that are beyond the scope of this current paper but are worth serious consideration for future research. For instance, are there leadership styles that start with the best of intentions that are beyond the scope of this current paper but are worth serious consideration for future research. and become toxic? If so, what styles are most susceptible? Does toxic leadership become pervasive from the idea of results at any cost? There is a clear understanding at this point that healthy leadership considers the mission, vision, and followers equally. An example of this is the leadership of Herb Kelleher, Co-founder of Southwest Airlines. Freiberg and Freiberg (2019) state that Southwest Airlines became a beacon on a hill. Herb and the people of Southwest Airlines showed that it is possible to love people, employees, and customers alike, have fun, and make money simultaneously. Kelleher never believed that the discipline necessary to run an on-time airline with fantastic service was mutually exclusive with treating people like family and making work fun. Kelleher famously said, A company is stronger if it is bound by love rather than by fear. (Freiberg & Freiberg, 2019). Kelleher treated mission vision, and people equally and the result was the emergence of the largest domestic airline in the United States. An understanding of healthy leadership coupled with a concrete definition as well as a practical example, form the basis of a framework that acts as a catalyst for exploring toxic leadership, as well as, understanding the stark differences between the two. This discourse is critical since it identifies how the mission, vision, and followers are treated differently under healthy leadership versus toxic leadership. UNDERSTANDING TOXIC LEADERSHIP So, what is toxic leadership? Undeniably, it has very specific characteristic that shines the light on toxic leadership. Rather, it is a cumulative effect of the many elements of a leadership style (p. 67). Though the academic community is yet to settle on a definition of toxic leadership, individuals in the public and private sectors recognize that toxic leadership has profound consequences of toxic leadership. The aim is to demonstrate the stark contrast between healthy leadership and toxic leadership and toxic leadership is an important to create a working definition on toxic leadership that can be examined and applied across industries, cultures, and academic settings. Identifying the behaviors and characteristics of toxic leadership is an important first step in differentiating between healthy and toxic leadership. Boddy and Croft (2015), put it bluntly by stating that toxic leaders employ and demonstrate dysfunctional characteristics (p. 46). While this is a true statement, it is important to go deeper for the purposes of understanding and clarification. Dysfunctional characteristics (p. 46). different people, can be applied across various contexts, and most certainly are observed through different lenses that must account for industry type, geography, and local customs and cultures. This is not to say that toxic leadership should be excused in some cultures or industries and not in others. Rather, a more finite examination of toxic behaviors and toxic leader characteristics can help the academic and business communities reach consensus on what toxic leadership is, how to identify it, and how to see the gaps between toxic and healthy leadership is, how to identify it, and how to see the gaps between toxic and healthy leadership is, how to identify it, and how to see the gaps between toxic and healthy leadership is, how to identify it, and how to see the gaps because, in stressful work environments, followers attention can be diverted from their work and focus on where the stress is coming from, thus reducing their own performance and traits impact both the followers and organizations overall effectiveness (Srikanth, 2020). Therefore, a review of how toxic behaviors and traits impact both the followers and organizations overall effectiveness (Srikanth, 2020). Therefore, a review of how toxic behaviors and traits impact both the followers and organizations overall effectiveness (Srikanth, 2020). there are key leader behaviors associated with toxic leadership which include, intimidating, bullying, manipulating (Machiavellianism), micromanaging, arrogance (narcissism) and engaging in abusive or unethical behaviors that are designed to produce the precise results that one person or group of individuals desire for an organization whether it be in the short-term or long-term. Left unchecked, these behaviors can be woven into the very fabric of the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and once this occurs, it becomes extremely difficult to shift the organization and occurs and occurs are also accurs and occurs a Williams (2019), include shaming, passive hostility, the sabotaging of teams, and a genuine lack of compassion for others. As noted previously, every leadership style, decision, and action have intentionality (Gandolfi & Stone, 2017) and these behaviors are not excluded from that statement. When examining each of these behaviors and characteristics of toxic leadership, they are a clear pathway to disciplinary, punitive, and fear- based relationships between leaders and followers on an equal plane with the mission and vision that an organization might be seeking to achieve. Additionally, they place extreme mental, emotional, and sometimes physical pressure on the followers who are trying to execute and achieve the desired organizational outcomes. Lipman-Blumen (2005), aptly notes that toxic leaders play into followers anxiety, psychological needs, and their fear of rapid change to achieve their desired result. The sustained pressure of this variety on followers creates tension within leader/follower dynamics and they inevitably have consequences. In the case of toxic leadership, these consequences can be severe and irreparable. At the follower level, toxic leadership is a direct cause of emotional exhaustion (Tiwari & Jha, 2022). This statement alone should be enough to give any leader pause, as emotional exhaustion leads to burnout, which is when followers get completely overcome by stress and are no longer able to sustain the pressure of their jobs (Weisberg, 1994). With mental health deeply under the research microscope on a global level more than ever before, this is something to be concerned with for a myriad of reasons from leader/follower relationships, employee engagement and satisfaction, and employee retention in what has become a hyper-competitive war on talent in many parts of the world. For the follower, the traits and behaviors of toxic leaders can result in physical and mental health issues, and an overall heavy burden of personal distress (Webster, Brough, & Daly, 2016). When one or a combination of these consequences of toxic leadership become reality, the logical conclusion for many followers is to leave the organization. Beyond the important concept of the emotional and mental health issues, and an overall heavy burden of personal distress (Webster, Brough, & Daly, 2016). mental exhaustion of employees, there are several other deceptive tactics that toxic leaders use to manipulate and coerce followers, particularly when they are in a vulnerable mental or emotional state. Winn and Dykes (2019) articulate the connection between toxic leadership and familial origin. Inevitably, people bring personal experiences to work These translate to success, trauma, heartbreak, joy, and many other emotions. It is these very emotions that toxic leaders comfort us with reassuring and often grand illusions, we can work on our immortality projects. There are only two catches. For one, to achieve this desired state, we must agree to do just as the leader saysno ifs, and or eos, we now trade our obedience and autonomy for the toxic leaders pledges pledges. There are only two catches. For one, to achieve this desired state, we must agree to do just as the leader saysno ifs, and or eos, we now trade our obedience and autonomy for the toxic leaders pledges. of security, certainty and other goodies. (Winn & Dykes, 2019, p. 39). This type of maternalistic dysfunctional behavior described by Wynn and Dykes (2019) is concerning on several levels. First, one must seriously consider whether this type of relationship is appropriate in any workplace setting. With an understanding of truly healthy leadership, it is not difficult to conclude that it is not good, healthy, or appropriate (Collins, 2001; Winston & Patterson, 2007; Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). Further, the notion that the characteristics and behaviors of toxic leaders can produce these kinds of interpersonal relationships is alarming. However, the challenging aspect for followers is that toxic leaders often come off as pleasant and talented individuals but have the propensity to degrade others in either passive or aggressive ways, all for the purposes of self-gain (Williams, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial to understand the behaviors and characteristics of toxic leadership, as this type of understanding can provide greater opportunity for identifying toxic leaders, situations, and environments. Even if followers make the active or passive choice to continue to follow a toxic leader, in toxic work environments where the leaders are driving the toxic behavior, followers will often seek coping mechanisms to deal with the toxicity, which distills down to environmental adaptation (Srikanth 2020). Coping mechanisms often have long term consequences and can lead to the more serious mental and physical health manifestations of toxic leadership can elicit three common follower responses, assertion, avoidance, or adaptation (Bhandarker & Rai, 2019). More specifically assertion can lead to severed relationships in a toxic work environment. Avoidance on the part of a follower can easily translate to a state of disengagement with their job and the organization, as well as a lack of productivity. Finally, adaption is almost never going to manifest into a healthy outcome in a toxic environment, because the adaptor inevitably becomes part of the toxicity. In addition to the individual consequences for followers, the organizational consequences of toxic leadership must be considered. Based on the known characteristics and behaviors of toxic leadership must be considered. Based on the known characteristics and behaviors of toxic leadership must be considered. leadership. Viscuso (2018) states that not to suggest that this is the only box toxic leaders fit in, we do know that an autocratic management style and a history of retaliatory behavior can foster a demoralizing culture (p. 66), a direct result of toxic leadership, as culture is paramount to achieving organizational mission, vision, and objective. Culture is people centric, not process or product centric, which can truly compound the problem and affect day-to-day performance and provide the breeding ground for negative interpersonal relationships (p. 1312). Saquib and Arif (2017) demonstrate that toxic leadership can stunt organizational learning. The type of dynamic described here instantly reduces organizational outcome. Additionally, Toor and Ogunlana (2009) make a compelling argument about toxic leadership behaviors for followers to create a cyclical and repetitive pattern that erodes relationships, trust, and abuse power (Tiwari & Jha, 2021). Sadly, in the end, there are no winners in that no-one is getting what they want on either a professional or personal level. Furthermore, a noteworthy organizational consequence of toxic leadership is a perceived lack of psychological safety. This is paramount as psychological safety has been reported as the number one priority for building and nurturing effective teams (Viscuso, 2018). Unfortunately, nothing in the existing literature about toxic leadership characteristics, behaviors, outcomes, or consequences point toward psychological safety for followers. Toxic leadership is also in direct conflict with leadership effectiveness. Kouzes and Posner (2007), authorities on leadership effectiveness. Specifically, in a span exceeding thirty years of global research, they arrived at five key attributes of effective leadership. These are (i) to model the way, (ii) to inspire a shared vision, (iii) to challenge the process, (iv) to enable others to act, and (v) to enable others to act, and (v) to enable others to enable others to act, and (v) to enable others to act, and (v) to enable others to enable others to act, and (v) to enable others to enable others. ego of the leader and does not threaten their immediate success (p. 501). With an understanding of the attributes pointed out by Kouzes and Posner (2007), this type of leadership intention does not align with healthy leadership, as organizational success and individual satisfaction cannot coexist in an environment perpetuated by toxicity. Toxic leadership can even manifest itself in seemingly desirable or attractive forms of a leadership style for an employee or prospective employee or prospective employee. A recent well-documented case of now defunct Theranos and its enigmatic leader Elizabeth Holmes proves this account of the control very point. According to Linda Neider of the University of Miami, Elizabeth Holmes is a fascinating case study of charismatic leadership gone wrong in that she possessed many of the classic characteristics that we normally associate with charismatic leadership gone wrong in that she possessed many of the classic characteristics that we normally associate with charismatic leaders (Malone, 2021; p. 1). Having obtained a holistic understanding of toxic leadership, the next step is to arrive at a working definition of toxic leadership provides a critical junction for defining toxic leadership provides a critical junction for defi leadership are familiar or at least acquainted with what good or healthy leadership looks like. Yet, few individuals take a deeper look at the dark side of leadership primarily since several terms have appeared including but not confined to abusive, destructive, narcistic, controlling, and toxic leadership. As noted, there have been several correlations between destructive leadership and abusive leadership to toxic leadership to toxic leadership to toxic leadership and abusive leadership has been considered toxic and a potential source of stress associated with negative emotional and behavioral responses (p. 1309). With this known reality of abusive leadership, it becomes important to examine an already existing definition of destructive leadership that can highlight its unique attributes, as well as those of toxic leadership from a definition based on the notion of destructive leadership Destructive leadership had been defined as the systematic and repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor, or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organization by undermining and/or sabotaging the organization of subordinates. (Einarsen Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007, p. 208). It appears that the aspects we have come to understand about toxic leadership are the behaviors, characteristics, and consequences of those traits and actions, which have been identified and documented in this paper. However, hitherto, there is no universally or even widely accepted definition of toxic leadership Thus, the authors of this paper assert that there is a critical need to establish a baseline for this phenomenon that has plagued individuals, organizations, and governments of every type for hundreds if not even thousands of years (Wright, 2015). Consequently, the authors put forth the following working definition of toxic leadership within an organizational context: Toxic leadership is the intentional or unintentional or unintentional or unintentional or personal gain above the needs of followers, creating a demoralized state that deteriorates organizations from the inside out. This definition of toxic leadership is important because it delineates toxic leadership focuses on the whole organization with less consideration for the people between healthy leadership and potentially toxic leadership. This understanding is derived based on a review of the existing literature and supports the notion that values are paramount to the leadership, how it manifests, and if it can be correlated to any of the existing known and widely accepted leadership styles. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS The primary purpose of this paper was to examine healthy and toxic leadership and toxic leadership styles. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS The primary purpose of this paper was to important in order to allow the academic community to build upon for further study and research. However, more systematic work is required, and future research will need to continue to unpack the concept of toxic leadership. For instance, toxic leadership must be discussed in relation to popularized leadership styles including but not limited to charismatic, visionary, and transformational leadership in its truest form looks like creates a monumentally important path to our understanding of toxic leadership in its truest form looks like creates a monumentally important path to our understanding of toxic leadership. based on the research depicted in this paper, thus creating a bridge to the definition of toxic leadership that is going to enrich the leadership discourse. REFERENCES Bhandarker, A. & Rai, S. (2019). Toxic leadership discourse and coping strategy, International Journal of Organization Theory & Behavior, 22 (1), pp. 65-78. Boddy, C. & Craft, R. (2016). Marketing in a time of toxic leadership, Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 19 (1), pp. 44-64. Brookes, S. (2014). Is selfless leadership in Public Services, 10 (4), pp. 200-216. Collins, J. (2001). 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