Examining the Impact of Toxic Leadership in Public Organizations Using Biblioshiny Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

Leadership at an organizational level is a key factor that will interfere with overall organizational achievements, including the well-being of other relatives who share the same vision. In this sense, leadership is not unidimensional to behavioral positivism. Hence, in a dynamic organizational atmosphere, leadership can be altered positively by managing issues or become toxic leadership in a negative sense. Whether it is positive or negative, the impact of that leadership style does not exactly result in the same way as it is positively or negatively performed. Therefore, identifying factors and criteria by which a leader performs is essential to having better insight into organizational needs. We conduct a bibliometric study to explore the factors and criteria of a toxic leader from open-access Scopus-indexed journals using a biblioshiny application limited to publications in this decade (not older than 2013). The criteria for filtering journal articles is based on PRISMA and JBI standards. Our present study of literature related to leadership suggests that toxic terms share the same explanation with 'bad' and 'ugly' leadership. The term 'bad' in leadership research is the oldest, followed by 'ugly' and then 'toxic', which can be traced to 2013, 2015, and 2018. Overall terms, whether they are toxic, bad, or ugly, share the same meaning: a leader behaves negatively and impacts other subordinates negatively.

Keywords: Toxic leadership; public organizations; Biblioshiny; Bibliometric Analysis.

Leadership as a part of the systematic hierarchy of an organization is key to bringing collective success to achieve shared visions among those involved in the hierarchy of an organization. Learn from the past; leaders are born and created through natural and nurturing experiences. Being born by nobles or a king does not guarantee that the offspring will become a leader, as the son of a servant or an enslaved person does not guarantee everlasting misery. Leadership needs to go beyond privileges as they will be tested by everyone who lives in this world, including knowledge, skills, and persona (Adair, 2012). A lesson from the past tells us that leaders need knowledge, both taught and learned. The taught process is necessary to build the foundation of a leader's knowledge, and through the learning process or internalization, the taught things will create meanings (Niesche & Heffernan, 2020; Ugoani et al., 2015). The next thing is a skill that develops through time and experience in which a leader candidate is involved. Lastly is a persona, also known as influencing others to create followers (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011; Wong & Law, 2002; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). A leader is the key to directing people to shared visions,

so the ability to control roughly everything is necessary.

Changes in an organizational environment, both internally and externally, are inevitable. Those changes influenced everyone in the organization, including the leader. Maintaining a good or healthy environment is necessary to control and direct other subordinates or followers to achieve missions (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). One primary responsibility of a leader is to make a decision or as a decision maker (Adair, 2012). When people from an organization gather to discuss something, crossing opinions between pros and cons is inevitable, which will test the power and authority of a leader to decide something for the forum. A healthy organizational environment is crucial to balancing the others and achieving goals (Raya & Panneerselvam, 2013). However, the word "healthy organization environment" is an evaluation-based term involving a range of metrics. As an evaluation form, the term "toxic" environment existed to contrast the organization's status.

A toxic organization environment can be evaluated by fixed metrics such as QHSE standard (quality, health, safety, and environment) or K3 in Indonesia (translated as work health and safety) and "dynamic" standard created by the leadership of an organization leader. As leadership is always tied to positivity, the exact value of leadership is not always positive. The term toxic leadership exists and is traceable in our history of leadership. Toxic leadership is tied to destructive, abusive, aversive, and bullying workplace or organizational environment (Karp et al., 2019). It is the result of the incompetencies of a leader to control their responsibility over subordinates or the lack of positive charisma needed to lead both others and them.

Toxic leadership is something that should be overcome in any organization. It is well known among researchers that it can jeopardize the overall organizational structure that will infer the accomplishment of the shared vision. It can result more in polarization and division among people who should be well-organized and work in a hierarchy (Heppell, 2011). Toxic leadership substantially negatively influences an organization, resulting in decreased productivity, increased turnover, low employee morale, and a decline in innovation and creativity. Furthermore, toxic bosses frequently encourage favoritism and nepotism, undermining fairness and creating a polarizing environment among employees (Milosevic et al., 2020; Yavaş, 2016). Therefore, exploring the factors, criteria, and current trends for toxic leadership is necessary for future organizational and leadership research improvement. Providing insight through bibliometric study will improve the gaps by identifying the research as a whole.

METHODS

A. Materials

As shown in Fig. 1, we searched Scopus Indexed Journals for papers containing the phrases "toxic OR bad OR ugly AND leadership". We were able to incorporate papers published in journals from a variety of areas, including economics, management, and business, by searching across the databases. The analysis was undertaken by using the Biblioshiny application based on R. The results are then selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria are: 1.) the concept of toxic leadership; 2.) characteristics, impacts, and consequences of toxic leadership; 3.) strategy and intervention method for toxic leadership; and 4.) Study after the year 2013. While the exclusion criteria are: 1.) toxic leadership in non-organizational context (for instance, sports and politics); 2.) restricted access articles (paywall); 3.) articles that only cover workplace stress; 4.) research older than 2013; and 5.) non-English written articles.

B. Method

Selection criteria are based on PRISMA and JBI categories, which generally divide the process into four stages: 1. Identifications; 2.

Screening; 3. Eligibility; 4. Included. Firstly, we identify all documents uploaded to the database. Then, the documents are screened by their full-text availability. Next, the eligibility criteria were selected according to inclusion and exclusion criteria. The last included documents were then imported to biblioshiny for further analysis. The term 'toxic' leadership is often tied with other terms as synonyms such as 'bad' and 'ugly' leadership (Allio, 2007; Higgs, 2009; Weberg & Fuller, 2019). Those three terms discuss the same matter about the negative side of leadership, ' positivism'. Continuing this study, we do bibliometric research related to those three terms.
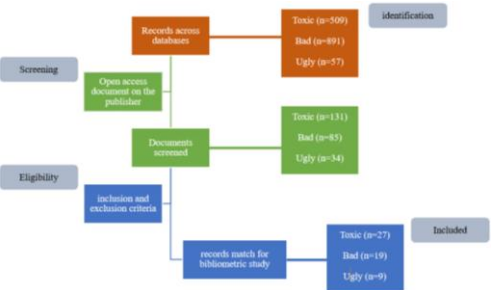

Fig. 1 Conceptual filtering from database based on PRISMA and JBI standards

RESULTS

Our data suggest that the terms 'toxic' and 'bad' have the same annual growth rate research at about 14.87%, followed by the 'ugly' leadership term, which only scored 9.05%. The research of toxic leadership is the youngest term traced back to 2018, with 'bad' leadership as the oldest and 'ugly' leadership as the second, traced back to 2015 only. However, as the youngest term used in this research scope, the term 'toxic' has been better studied internationally by growing international co-authorship, scoring 29.63% vs 22.22% for 'ugly' term, as shown in Fig. 2.

Fig. 2 Main info for the term: a) toxic; b) bad; c) ugly

On the annual growth of paper production and citations, declining production happened for the term 'toxic' with terms 'bad' and 'ugly' in a rapid contrast annual trend. The citation declined steeply for 'toxic' leadership research, followed by a slight increase in 'bad' leadership term citation growth, while the term 'ugly' leadership skyrocketed. The trend suggests that research using the term 'ugly' leadership has seemingly grown in popularity among researchers. However, with little sustainability trend on 'ugly' paper production and citations across years (some years got zero scores), the trend for 'ugly' leadership had just begun (See Fig. 3).
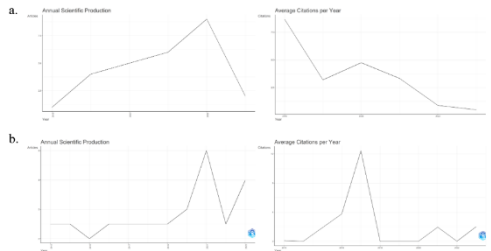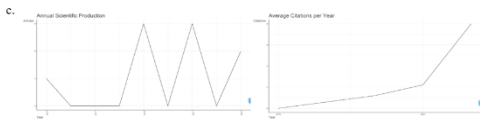
Fig. 3 Annual scientific production and citations for term: a) toxic; b) bad; c) ugly

Deeper to the publication production trends, research using 'toxic' leadership terms seemed to skyrocket in 2022, while 'bad' and 'ugly' leadership references went down to zero. However, the trend reversed by 2023, with the 'toxic' term going down and 'bad' and 'ugly' leadership references rising. Judging by its continuity, research using toxic leadership seems promising with continuous growth.

Based on country-scale research, toxic leadership scope is popular in the United Kingdom and Canada, while bad and ugly leadership trends in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. On the Asian mainland, toxic leadership term is popular in China, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Turkey. In contrast, bad leadership research was not found on the Asian mainland except in Indonesia.

On the paper authorship, we found one author, Arnold KA, working in bad and ugly leadership writings. Moreover, based on the most frequently used words in those three terms, research is leadership with a seemingly strong association with health scope. We found that all term's word cloud plot contains health-related terms such as 'pandemic', 'nurse', and even 'covid-19'.
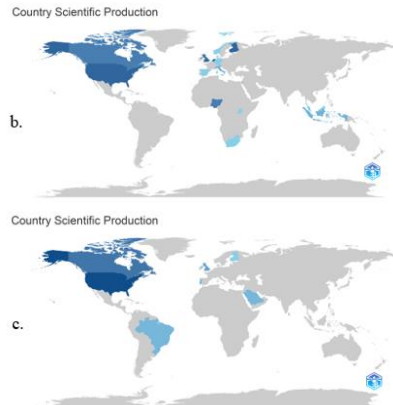

Fig. 4 Country paper producer. a) toxic leadership; b) bad leadership; c) ugly leadership
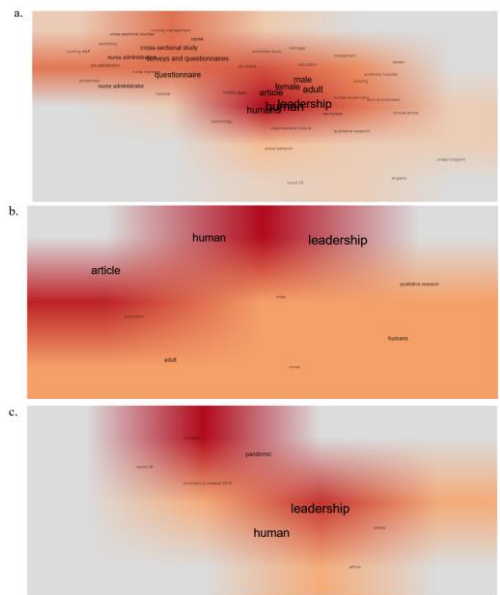

Fig. 5 Word cloud heatmap for: a) toxic leadership; b) bad leadership; c) ugly leadership

DISCUSSION

A. Toxic Leadership

Toxic leadership refers to leaders who engage in damaging activities such as bullying,

misuse of power, and lack of empathy, which have a negative impact on their subordinates and the organization as a whole (Ofei et al., 2022). Several similar themes appear in the articles about identifying and dealing with toxic leadership. To begin, toxic leadership has a negative impact on employees' well-being, job satisfaction, and performance. Articles (Edwards et al., 2019a; Oyewunmi & Oyewunmi, 2022) highlight the harmful impact of toxic leadership on employee mental health, job happiness, and productivity, which leads to greater turnover intention and poor organizational performance. Second, toxic leadership is prevalent in various fields, including healthcare, education, and business. Toxic leadership behaviors encourage employees to engage in counterproductive work behaviors such as absenteeism, sabotage, and incivility, generating a toxic work environment (BAKKAL et al., 2019; Fahie, 2019). Following that, other articles (Labrague, 2021; Labrague et al., 2021; Malik et al., 2020; Riley et al., 2021) underline the significance of ethical leadership as an antidote to toxic leadership. Ethical leadership, defined by empathy, honesty, and inclusivity, fosters a healthy work environment by improving employee well-being and cultivating a culture of trust and collaboration. Fifth, publications (Farghaly Abdelaliem & Abou Zeid, 2023; Labrague, Nwafor, et al., 2020) emphasize the importance of nurses' silence as a moderator in the relationship between toxic leadership and organizational outcomes. Toxic leadership reduces employees' willingness to speak up and share their ideas, stifling creativity and progress. Researchers have created scales and questionnaires to analyze toxic leadership traits in order to identify toxic leadership. Articles (El Fatah Shipl et al., 2022; Labrague, 2021; Labrague, Lorica, et al., 2020; Malik et al., 2020; Semedo et al., 2022) present numerous validated scales to assess toxic leadership behaviors and their influence on employees and organizations, such as the Toxic Leadership Scale, Toxic Leadership Behaviors of Nurse Managers Scale, and Multidimensional

Work Motivation Scale. Finally, the literature on toxic leadership indicates a consistent pattern of negative consequences on individuals and organizations across various industries. Toxic leadership behaviors contribute to poor work cultures, low employee well-being, and poor organizational performance. Ethical leadership practices and fostering a psychologically safe work environment are critical in mitigating the impact of toxic leadership. Identifying toxic leadership through validated assessment tools allows organizations to implement targeted interventions and promote a healthier and more productive work environment. Addressing toxic leadership is imperative to ensure employee satisfaction, retention, and overall organizational success (Farghaly Abdelaliem & Abou Zeid, 2023; Labrague, Nwafor, et al., 2020; Semedo et al., 2022).

B.   Bad Leadership

Bad leadership is a complicated and complex issue with far-reaching consequences for individuals, organizations, and even entire countries. It refers to a set of behaviors, attitudes, and characteristics that harm followers and the overall performance of a group or institution. The prevalence of autocratic leadership is one common factor mentioned in the articles. Autocratic leaders have excessive control and influence over their subordinates, frequently neglecting their input and freedom. This leadership style has been linked to undesirable results such as poorer motivation, lower work satisfaction, and higher follower turnover rates. The focus of the authoritarian leader on their power and authority can produce a poisonous work atmosphere in which subordinates feel oppressed and disengaged (Heath & McCann, 2021). Another common requirement mentioned in the articles is a lack of ethical considerations and corrupt behavior in leadership (Milligan et al., 2022; Omoyibo, 2013). Various leadership approaches are studied in (Hancock et al., 2023a), including harsh supervision and laissez-faire leadership, which are also associated with ineffective leadership. When a manager adopts a

harsh and demanding attitude towards their subordinates, it causes elevated stress, burnout, and reduced job satisfaction among employees. On the other hand, laissez-faire leadership, characterized by a lack of guidance and support from the leader, can lead to uncertainty, a lack of direction, and subpar performance. The two attitudes have destructive consequences for the welfare and output of adherents, influencing a toxic performing environment.

Bad leadership refers to a detrimental form of management characterized by leaders who take advantage of and manipulate their subordinates, instilling fear and intimidation within them while putting their gains above the welfare of the organization and its members. Leadership type can be disadvantageous, leading to worsened anxiety, sensitive fatigue, and weakened work pride among the adherents. A denial of vision and planned leadership, weak decision-making, poor communication, and a failure to enthuse and promote people are all characteristics of poor leadership (Koç et al., 2022). A leader's disadvantageous effect on their followers' emotional well-being is a crucial sign of bad leadership (Braun, 2017; Reunanen & Eckhaus, 2020). The failure of leaders to acknowledge the needs and concerns of their subordinates and provide a work environment that fosters support and empowerment can result in a toxic workplace that hampers productivity and undermines the organization's overall success.

Addressing bad and toxic leadership is critical for ensuring a healthy and productive workplace. Organizations must be proactive in detecting and correcting symptoms of poor leadership, offering leadership development and training, and holding leaders accountable for their actions (Lefort, 2019a; Omoyibo, 2013). Developing a culture of ethical leadership, teamwork, and respect can help offset the negative effects of poor leadership while fostering a healthy and thriving workplace for everybody involved.

C.   Ugly Leadership

Ugly leadership refers to a variety of bad attributes and behaviors displayed by leaders that have a negative impact on their followers, organizations, and even society as a whole. These articles highlight the darker sides of leadership that can cause significant pain and damage, ranging from toxic leadership styles to a lack of empathy and ethical misbehavior. Leaders who prioritize short-term profits while ignoring the impact of their actions on the environment and society display ugly leadership in the context of climate change and inequality (Edwards et al., 2019b). They may exploit resources without concern for sustainability, ignoring the long-term effects of their decisions on future generations' well-being. Similarly, in Enron, executives motivated by a desire for personal beauty and recognition may engage in unethical acts, exemplifying the ugly.

Healthcare workers faced extraordinary challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, and leaders' responses were critical in creating the team's well-being and safety culture (Aylott, 2021; Hancock et al., 2023b). When leaders neglect to prioritize their employees' emotional and physical well-being, it results in emotional tiredness, diminished resilience, and compromised patient safety. Leaders' lack of empathy and support can have far-reaching effects on employees and patients. Political leadership can also exhibit characteristics of bad leadership (Kligler, 2015). Leaders who use affective memorialization to manipulate and exploit their followers' emotions can create divisions and preserve control. This leadership style can contribute to political instability and polarization inside a country, hampering its progress and development. Leaders battling ego-driven decision-making and a lack of humility in integrative healthcare settings might display ugly leadership (Rehder et al., 2023). Prioritizing personal ego and adoration over team well-being can stymie effective participation and problem-solving, resulting in organizational tensions and inefficiencies. In addition, the research on

various subpopulations of followers gives information on passive and abusive leadership practices (Lefort, 2019b). Leaders who engage in abusive supervision and passive management can have a bad impact on their followers' physical and psychological health, leading to burnout and low morale within the organization. Such leaders may purposefully undercut their followers, resulting in a poisonous work climate and hampering teamwork.

CONCLUSION

The articles on toxic, bad, and ugly leadership illuminated the negative effects these undesirable leadership styles can have on individuals, organizations, and society. Toxic leadership, defined by bullying, power abuse, and a lack of empathy, reduces employee well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness. Bad leadership, encompassing autocratic, unethical, and ineffective leadership styles, creates toxic work environments and hampers followers' productivity and motivation. Ugly leadership, characterized by leaders who prioritize short-term benefits, lack empathy, and exhibit egocentric attitudes, can have far-reaching implications ranging from environmental damage to political instability. Recognizing and correcting damaging leadership practices is critical for building healthy and effective workplaces.

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