Chapter 14
The Detrimental Effects of Toxic Followership on Workplace Wellbeing:
A Social Identity Approach

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ABSTRACT

The examination of employee well-being has emerged as a compelling area of study within organizational behavior (Ali & Hamakareem, 2024). Organizations are progressively recognizing the importance of their employees and their well-being in excelling in competitive environments, as employee well-being significantly influences employee performance (Kun & Gadanecz, 2022) and organizational success. The theories of Social Identity and Self-Categorization offer a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals form their self-concept based on group affiliations and how these identities shape their behavior and interactions within the workplace. Using an integrated theoretical framework grounded in the social identity approach, encompassing both Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory, this chapter will examine the detrimental effects of toxic followership on employee well-being by synthesizing existing literature with fresh insights.

INTRODUCTION

Employee well-being has emerged as a compelling study area within organizational behavior (Ali & Hamakareem, 2024). The nature of work has changed due to the global pandemic. Individuals are not connected to the workplace in the same way as in previous times, with hybrid and remote work becoming more prevalent in the current workplace. The work environment and individual factors impact work well-being (Tuisku et al., 2012). The widespread adoption of hybrid and remote work roles has highlighted significant challenges to an individual's workplace well-being (Krug et al., 2021).

Well-being is a holistic, thriving state where individuals experience high life satisfaction and happiness (Dodge et al., 2012). Intrinsic elements like an individual's character and coping mechanisms shape Well-being, and extrinsic factors such as socio-economic standing and environmental circumstances intertwine throughout an individual's life course (Diener et al., 1999). Well-being is associated with outcomes like quality of life, positive and negative emotions, personal development and thriving, capabilities, self-acceptance, positive connections, autonomy, and happiness (Dodge et al., 2012).

Well-being researchers promote two primary perspectives to understanding well-being: The two primary perspective are hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Both hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives emphasize the significance of pleasure and purpose for achieving optimal functioning (Ryff & Singer, 2008). Demographic factors such as age, socio-economic status, gender, race, and ethnicity influence the dimensions of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Ryff et al., 2021). Hedonic and eudaimonic well-being consists of diverse facets, including the physical, psychological, and social aspects of an individual's well-being (Danna & Griffin, 1999).

Work significantly impacts an individual's well-being (Ariza-Montes et al., 2019). Well-being, encompassing satisfaction in work and life, is crucial for fostering a productive workforce (Schulte & Vainio, 2010). One determinant of work well-being is the group an employee belongs to. An individual's sense of security, social support, and validation comes from being connected to a group (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The theories of Social Identity and Self-Categorization integrated into the Social Identity Approach offer a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals form their self-concept based on group affiliations and how these identities shape their behavior and interactions within the workplace. The Social Identity Approach relies on the premise that understanding an individual self-categorizing concerning others is essential to comprehending their ideas, attitudes, and behaviors (Jetten et al., 2017).

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