


Chapter 10

Enough Is Still Not Enough: Heir of Abusive Supervision and Toxic Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Workplace bullying, abusive supervision, and toxic leadership are destructive behaviors that disrupt organizational harmony and hinder productivity. These phenomena are interconnected, fueled by subjectivity and jealousy, and often intensified by the misuse of power. Leaders who prioritize personal biases or ulterior motives foster climates of fear and mistrust, undermining employee collaboration, engagement, and morale. Victims frequently suffer anxiety, depression, and reduced performance, while teams experience conflict and isolation. The ripple effects include knowledge hoarding, increased turnover, and diminished organizational resilience. Addressing these issues requires ethical leadership, cultural inclusivity, transparent decision-making, and support systems that prioritize well-being and trust.

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INTRODUCTION

Workplace environments are shaped by the actions, intentions, and interpersonal dynamics of their leaders and employees. While leadership is often celebrated as a driving force for innovation and organizational success, it can also become a vehicle for destructive behaviors that erode morale and productivity. Among the myriads of challenges faced by organizations today, workplace bullying, abusive supervision, toxic leadership, and ulterior motives emerge as particularly insidious problems (Tepper, 2000; Zhang & Liao, 2015; Yuan et al., 2020; Ambrose & Ganegoda, 2020; Fischer et al., 2021). When these behaviors are fueled by subjectivity and jealousy, and wielded by individuals in positions of power, their impact can be devastating—not only for the targeted individuals but also for the organization as a whole.

Toxic leadership, abusive supervision, and workplace bullying are distinct yet interconnected phenomena. Toxic leadership refers to a pattern of behaviors where leaders exploit their power to belittle, intimidate, or manipulate their subordinates. Abusive supervision focuses on the deliberate mistreatment of employees by supervisors, including public humiliation, verbal abuse, and unwarranted criticism. Workplace bullying, on the other hand, encompasses a broader range of harmful actions, from social ostracism to professional sabotage, often perpetuated by peers or leaders.

These behaviors share a common thread: the misuse of power to serve personal agendas or ulterior intentions. In many cases, leaders succumb to subjectivity, allowing their decisions to be swayed by personal biases, favoritism, or emotional impulses. Jealousy further exacerbates these issues, driving individuals to undermine perceived rivals or those who pose a threat to their authority. When subjectivity and jealousy intersect, they become a fatal combination that distorts judgment and perpetuates toxic dynamics within the workplace, (Tepper, 2000).

The correlation between destructive leadership traits and reduced organizational productivity is well-documented in academic research. Toxic behaviors create a climate of fear and mistrust, where employees are reluctant to voice their opinions, share knowledge, or collaborate effectively. This suppression of open communication not only stifles creativity but also impedes the organization's ability to adapt to changing market conditions.

Moreover, the psychological toll of workplace bullying and abusive supervision manifests in decreased employee engagement, higher turnover rates, and increased absenteeism. When employees are subjected to consistent mistreatment, their sense of loyalty to the organization diminishes, leading to a loss of intellectual capital and institutional knowledge. The ripple effect extends to team dynamics, where trust and cohesion are replaced by conflict and isolation, (Tepper, 2000).

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