

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-54919

Title: The Hidden Mechanisms of Toxic Leadership: A Multilevel Analysis of How Leader Dark Traits Create Fear, Silence, and Reduced Psychological Safety in Organizations.

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision.

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality	✓			
Techn. Quality		✓		
Clarity		✓		
Significance		✓		

Reviewer Name: Dr. Bishwajit Rout

Reviewer's Comment for Publication.

(To be published with the manuscript in the journal)

The reviewer is requested to provide a brief comment (3-4 lines) highlighting the significance, strengths, or key insights of the manuscript. This comment will be Displayed in the journal publication alongside with the reviewers name.

- Significance:** This study is significant because it advances understanding of toxic leadership through an integrated multilevel perspective, revealing how individual distress, team dysfunction, and organizational climate interact. By focusing on real workplace contexts, it highlights systemic patterns often overlooked in leadership research. Its findings offer meaningful implications for leadership development, employee well-being, institutional accountability, and the design of healthier organizational cultures in complex professional environments.
- Strength:** A notable strength of the paper is its rigorous qualitative design, supported by rich participant narratives and systematic thematic analysis. The multilevel framework provides depth and nuance, enabling a holistic understanding of toxic leadership. The study effectively triangulates interviews, observations, and document review, enhancing trustworthiness. Its strong conceptual grounding and practical recommendations make it useful for scholars, HR practitioners, and organizational leaders.
- Key Insight:** The key insight of the paper is that toxic leadership is not an isolated behavioral issue but a cascading, interconnected phenomenon that shapes individual emotions, team dynamics, and organizational culture simultaneously. The study reveals how fear, silence, and psychological insecurity reinforce one another, creating long-term systemic harm. Addressing toxic leadership therefore requires comprehensive interventions targeting personal, interpersonal, and structural levels within organizations.

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Reviewer's Comment / Report

The paper titled “*The Hidden Mechanisms of Toxic Leadership: A Multilevel Analysis of How Leader Dark Traits Create Fear, Silence, and Reduced Psychological Safety in Organizations*” delivers a compelling multilevel synthesis of toxic leadership, tracing how dark traits narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy foster fear, silence, and eroded psychological safety via manipulative behaviors like gaslighting and coercion. It dissects cascading harms: individual stress/turnover, team conflict/contagion, organizational ethical lapses/reputational decline. Drawing on extant literature, it argues for proactive interventions to break self-reinforcing cycles. Rigorous and insightful, though secondary-data reliant; a vital resource for scholars and practitioners addressing workplace toxicity.

Suggestions for Improvement:

1. Include recent references (post-2020) on toxic leadership and psychological safety.
2. Integrate explicit research gap inside the statement, not separately.
3. Ensure RQs explicitly align with thematic findings (individual/team/organization).
4. Discuss limitations of scope with more precision (e.g., qualitative generalization limits, cultural constraints).
5. Expand citations beyond foundational works (1999–2007) to include recent empirical studies (2018–2024).
6. Strengthen the research gap section by making it sharper and directly tied to objectives.
7. Provide sample recruitment procedure (how participants were identified).
8. Add justification for why 30 participants is sufficient using saturation logic.
9. Explain coding validation methods (inter-coder agreement, peer review).
10. Include more direct comparison between participant responses and literature.
11. Provide clearer explanations of why certain mechanisms emerged more strongly in certain sectors (banking, RMG, telecom).
12. Add deeper discussion on cultural-contextual influences unique to Bangladesh.

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The paper offers a comprehensive and well-structured multilevel exploration of toxic leadership and its effects on individuals, teams, and organizations. Its qualitative approach, rich thematic insights, and strong conceptual grounding make it academically valuable. However, enhancements in methodological justification, literature currency, and theoretical integration are needed to refine the study's rigor. With these revisions, the work has strong potential for publication and contributes meaningfully to contemporary leadership scholarship. Addressing the identified weaknesses will make it suitable for publication in IJAR.

I recommend this paper for publication after minor revision.