

The Toxic Leadership Triangle on Health Care Organizations

Evangelia Michail Michailidou

Anaesthesiologist - Intensivist, Life and Leadership Coach, Apollonion Private Hospital, Lefkosia_Cyprus,
evamichailidou@yahoo.gr

Zacharias Nikolaou Apostolakis

German Language and Philosophy, Master's Degree in Marketing and Communication, , Lefkosia_Cyprus,
z.apostolakis@gmail.com

Abstract:

The study of toxic leadership, which is a form of destructive leadership, has intensified in recent years, as the results of its existence are destructive for both health-care organization and employees.

The present work explores the relationship between toxic leadership and more specifically the toxic leadership triangle and the well-being of employees in the public sector.

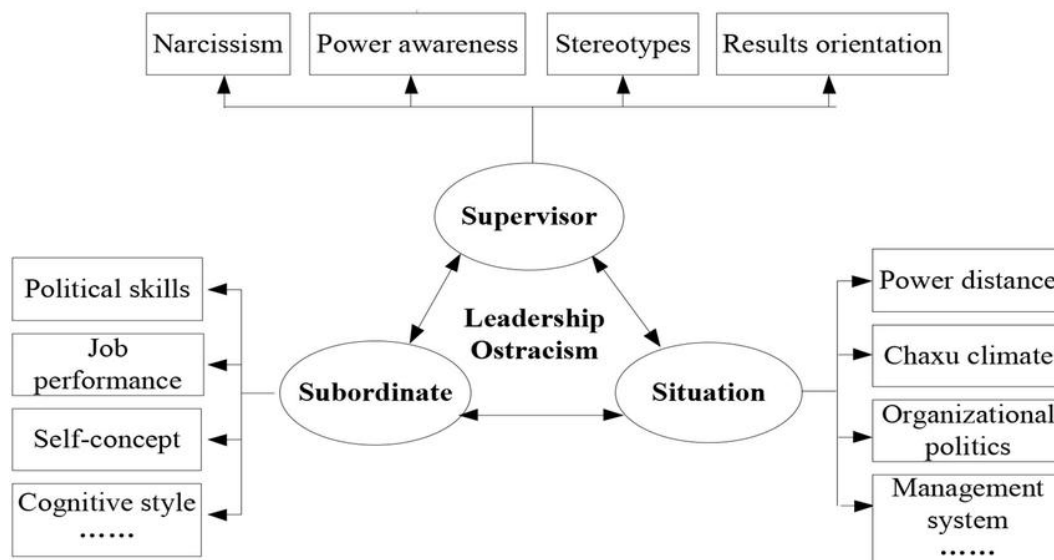
The toxic leadership triangle, which contributes to the existence of destructive leadership, is a theoretical model based on three factors, namely the leader, the subordinates (followers) and the conditions of the environment. Initially, the theoretical background of the concepts of toxic leadership, followers, the health-care organization environment, and employee well-being is studied. The research questions are then formulated and the results are analyzed, which do not reveal a direct

impact of toxic leadership on the well-being of employees in the public sector. The role of followers and the supportiveness of the health-care organizational environment seem to act as mediators.

Keywords: destructive leadership, toxic leadership, the toxic leadership triangle, followers, health-care organizational environment, well-being.

I. Introduction:

The Toxic Leadership Triangle Padilla et al. (2007), based on the literature to date, defined and developed the concept of the toxic triangle, which contributes to the existence of destructive leadership. The toxic triangle is a model based on three factors, namely the leader, the subordinates (followers) and the environmental conditions and is depicted in the figure below:



Padilla et al, 2007

According to Padilla et al. (2007), leadership of any type stems from the interaction of an individual's motivation and ability to lead, the followers' desire for direction and authority, and the situations that

require leadership. This view is consistent with the above system, namely the coexistence of leaders, followers, and situations, and does not examine the characteristics of leaders in isolation.

In order to better understand the concept of the toxic leadership triangle, Padilla et al. (2007) examine and analysed the three components of the triangle, which are then analysed, always according to their research.

Destructive Leader

The first component of the toxic triangle concerns the characteristics of the leader. The analysis of the literature, according to Padilla et al. (2007), gives five critical factors: charisma, the personal need for power, narcissism, the leader's negative personal experiences, and an ideology of hatred.

Charisma

Most scientific analyses of destructive leadership find that charisma is a main characteristic of destructive leaders (Conger, 1990, Hogan et al., 1990, Howell & Avolio, 1992, O'Connor et al., 1995), without this necessarily meaning that all charismatic leaders are destructive. There are several examples where charismatic leaders have made wrong decisions. This does not automatically classify them as destructive leaders. However, it is generally accepted that destructive leaders are considered charismatic (Padilla et al., 2007). Research has shown empirically that destructive leadership and charisma are linked (Beyer, 1999, Conger, 1990, Conger & Kanungo, 1988, Hogan, et al., 1990, Howell & Avolio, 1992, O'Connor et al., 1995). Charismatic leaders sometimes abuse power for personal gain, exaggerate their personal achievements, cover up their mistakes and failures by shifting responsibility to others, and attempt to limit communication and criticism (Yukl, 1999).

Three components of charisma are evident in destructive leaders.

They are vision, self-promotional skills, and high personal energy (Conger, 1990, Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Destructive leaders articulate a vision of a world characterized by threat and insecurity, where personal security depends on whether the leader can dominate and defeat his or her opponents (O'Connor et al., 1995). Many charismatic leaders have acute rhetorical skills. But so do many destructive leaders (e.g., Hitler), who use this ability to self-promotion or to extol their personal achievements (Padilla et al., 2007). In addition, charismatic leaders appear to have incredibly high energy. They work long hours with endurance and perseverance in order to achieve their goals. It is also noteworthy that many charismatic leaders achieve their achievements at a young age by demonstrating particular strength. A typical example is Fidel Castro, who was characterized by his classmates and teachers as tireless (Padilla et al., 2007).

Personal need for power

Ethics is a factor that can separate positive forms of leadership from negative ones (O'Connor et al., 1995,

Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999, House & Howell, 1992, Howell & Avolio, 1992). Ethical leaders use their position of authority to serve their health-care organization, while unethical leaders use it for personal gain and self-promotion (Conger, 1990, Howell & Avolio, 1992). In addition, unethical leaders, in order to impose their goals, use control and coercion, while condemning opposing views (Howell & Avolio, 1992, Sankowsky, 1995). This control can be overt in obvious ways. However, it can also appear in subtle ways and target followers' need for power and security, their need to belong to a group, or even be based on their fear of being isolated from the group (Lipman-Blumen, 2005). Destructive leaders aim to weaken their internal opponents and isolate them, while at the same time promoting solidarity within the group for the rest. They are characterized by intense aggression and act to the detriment of their subordinates and their health-care organizations. They are usually irresponsible, impulsive, and have a strong desire to punish others. The effects of destructive leadership are often associated with leaders who have a strong personal need for power (Padilla et al., 2007).

Narcissism

Narcissism is closely associated with charisma and a personal need for power. It also includes dominance, megalomania, arrogance, entitlement, and the selfish pursuit of pleasure (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Many authors argue that narcissism is associated with destructive leadership (Conger, 1990, O'Connor et al., 1995, Sankowsky, 1995). Narcissistic leaders are primarily concerned with themselves, seek attention, and disregard the opinions or well-being of others (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). They often claim to have special knowledge or privileges and demand unquestioning obedience (O'Connor et al., 1995), while their sense of entitlement leads them to abuse power (Conger, 1990, Sankowsky, 1995). Their leadership style is typically authoritarian (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Their grandiose dreams of power and success make them ignore the external environment or question their judgment (Conger, 1990). Their grand visions often fail (Padilla et al., 2007).

3.2.4 Negative personal experiences of the leader.
According to Padilla and colleagues (2007), when leaders harm their health-care organizations, this action essentially reflects personal negative life experiences. Conflicts between parents, low socioeconomic status, parental criminality, parents with psychiatric problems, childhood abuse, and a traumatic childhood in general can lead the individual to exhibit destructive behaviours. Abused children often distance themselves from painful situations. The adoption of such behaviour and the ability to

ignore the feelings of others in order to gain personal gain is a defining characteristic of psychopathy, which is however linked to narcissism and the use of power for personal gain (Padilla et al., 2007).

Ideology of hatred

Bad experiences from childhood may lead the individual to hate themselves, resulting in channelling this hatred as hatred towards others. Whatever the source of anger and resentment, hatred is a key element of the worldview of destructive leaders and legitimizes the use of any form of violence (Padilla et al., 2007).

According to Padilla and colleagues (2007), the above characteristics must coexist in order for one leg of the toxic triangle to appear. One element alone is not sufficient to meet the requirements for the appearance of a destructive leader. Individuals who are filled with hatred, driven by a selfish need for power, but who lack rhetorical skills and resilience may not achieve significant power. In many contexts and in combination with specific followers, potentially destructive leaders may not succeed in rising to power. At this point, the issues of followers and the appropriate environment should also be analysed. However, no matter how smart or deceitful leaders are, they alone cannot achieve toxic results (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). Destructive leaders are able to achieve their toxic goals with the help of vulnerable followers and enabling environments (Kellerman, 2004, Lipman-Blumen, 2005, Padilla et al., 2007).

Vulnerable – Susceptible Followers

As has been mentioned previously, according to the definitions that scholars have given, leadership, whether constructive or destructive, is a process that involves the existence of a leader who influences other people (followers) in a specific environment. A leader's authority must be recognized by followers willingly or unwillingly (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Once in power, the destructive leader's ability to organize plans, gather resources, rally support, and execute his visions depends on followers carrying out his orders (Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

Vulnerable followers are unable or unwilling to resist authoritarian and abusive leaders (Padilla et al., 2007). This is because they need to be in a safe and stable environment and want to maintain group unity (Kellerman, 2004, 29; Lipman-Blumen, 2005), as they have needs for social cohesion and order, group identity, and the need to feel that they are in sync with the collective activity. Some followers actually benefit from the destructive action and thus contribute to the creation of the toxic vision of the leader (Padilla et al., 2007). There is also a natural tendency for people to obey people in positions of authority (Milgram, 1974), to copy the behaviour of

their superiors (Baharody & Stoneman, 1985), and to generally conform to group rules (Asch, 1951). Lipman-Blumen (2005) in order to answer the question of why followers obey toxic leaders so willingly, notes that there are three general categories of followers and that they actually enable and support bad leaders. The first category, "benevolent followers," consists of followers who are naive and agree without question with what the toxic leader says, while following for practical reasons, such as keeping their job. The second category, called "leader entourage," is the toxic leader's alter ego and truly commits to him.

The third category, called "malicious followers," includes those who are driven by greed, envy, or competitiveness. These followers work against the leader and may actually have the goal of removing the leader so that they can become leaders themselves (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Weierter (1997) divided followers into those who do not self-identify and those who share the leader's values. Kellerman (2004) distinguishes between "bystanders" who allow bad leadership to happen and followers, "true believers," who participate in the destruction. Padilla and colleagues (2007) combined these concepts and, in order to formulate the toxic leadership triangle model, distinguished two groups of followers. Those who conform to the situation, i.e., "conformers," and those who conspire with the leader, i.e., "colluders." The first group is those individuals who cooperate with the leader out of fear, while individuals in the second group actively participate in the entire process. Both groups are motivated by their self-interest, but their concerns are different (Higgins, 1997).

When conforming followers accept the vision of a destructive leader, they try to minimize the consequences of non-compliance with the leader, while colluding followers seek personal gain through this cooperation with the leader (Padilla et al., 2007). Extending Padilla et al.'s (2007) toxic triangle model, Thoroughgood et al. (2012) delved into the follower leg of the triangle. Drawing on Barbuto's (2000) theory of follower compliance, they described the psychological processes that lead followers to comply with destructive leaders.

Although leaders need followers to achieve their group's goals, much of the previous literature on leadership has been leader-focused. That is, it emphasizes the leader's core characteristics, behaviours, and effectiveness as perceived and evaluated by subordinates or superiors (Kaiser et al., 2008). However, according to Thoroughgood et al. (2012), leader-focused approaches do not explain why followers, board controls, or other internal and external health-care organizational controls and

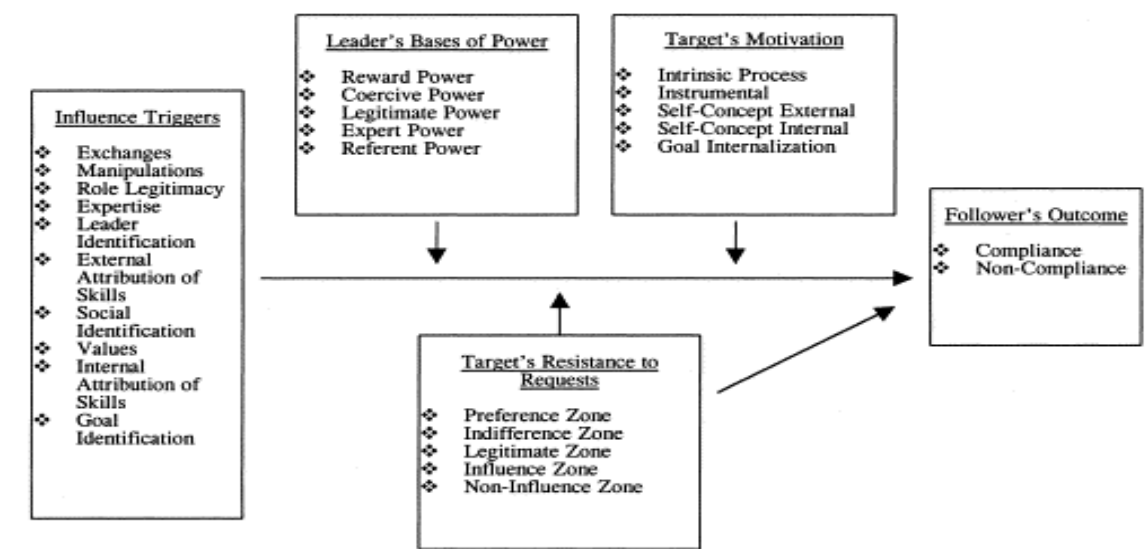
processes enable a leader's persistently destructive attitudes. Such behaviors may be directed at followers and may be hostility, coercion, intimidation, or they may be behaviors that are detrimental to the health-care organization, such as corruption, theft, or sabotage. This raises the question of why some groups and health-care organizations retain these "bad" leaders while others do not. Leader-focused approaches do not provide a basis for understanding why such leaders are hired in the first place or why individuals who exhibit these systematic and repetitive attitudes remain in leadership positions long enough to undermine the goals, tasks, and resources of the health-care organization. These approaches do not examine the role of followers or environmental conditions in explaining why destructive leadership occurs or persists.

Continuing, Thoroughgood et al. (2012) draw on Barbuto's (2000) interdisciplinary theory, which provides a useful framework for understanding followers' compliance with destructive leaders. The theory argues that power and influence are relative, stating that the impact of a leader's behavior on followers' compliance is related to how the follower

perceives that attitude. Using the concept of "influence triggers," it argues that followers react to these "influence triggers" with automatic reactions, i.e., to the leader's attempt to influence them, and this explains why followers respond in specific ways to specific attempts at influence by the leader. Every time a leader seeks to influence a given follower, he will use a specific type of "influence trigger", which will be perceived by the follower in a specific way, leading him to comply or not with the leader. For example, some followers could interpret a leader's attempt to influence as a threat, because they will consider that if they do not comply with his orders, they will have negative consequences. Others may see the leader's "influence trigger" as an opportunity to gain his acceptance, because they will consider that if they comply, they will identify with him. According to Barbuto (2000), the probability of a specific "influence trigger" leading to the follower's compliance depends on three variables, which are:

1. The level of power-power of the leader.
2. The level of agreement of the initiator with the follower's motivations.
3. The level of resistance of the follower to the leader's attempt to influence.

The variables are also depicted in Figure 2 below:



Thoroughgood et al., 2012

For example, the follower perceives that the leader threatens him, knows that he can and will punish him if he does not comply. He wants to avoid punishment at all costs and is not particularly opposed to carrying out his orders, therefore he will comply.

Barbuto's (2000) framework includes three categories of "influence triggers":

1. Power-derived: That which comes from the perception of the leader's level of power.

2. Relations-derived: That which comes from the followers' relationships with others.

3. Values-based: That which is based on the followers' values.

Barbuto and Scholl (1998) classified followers' motivations into five categories. This classification is used to describe the sources of followers' motivations and are as follows:

1. Instrumental: Those based on the pursuit of external, tangible results.
2. External self-concept: Those based on the search for self-affirmation and acceptance by external factors.
3. Internal self-concept: Those based on performance behaviors that reinforce internal standards of characteristics, abilities, and values.
4. Intrinsic process: Those based on the simple enjoyment of performing a task.
5. Goal internalization: Those based on the pursuit of goals that are consistent with one's values.

Different vulnerable followers have different triggers of influence that reflect their vulnerability to destructive leaders. Next, the typology of followers will be analyzed according to the toxic leadership triangle model of Padilla et al. (2007), as well as its extension according to the sensitive circle model of Thoroughgood et al. (2012).

Followers

According to Padilla et al. (2007), the vulnerability of "compromised" followers is based on unmet basic needs, negative self-evaluation, and psychological immaturity. On the other hand, "followers" are ambitious, selfish, and share the same perceptions of the leader about the world. Then, the main factors that influence the attitude of "compromised" and "collaborative" followers are analyzed, leading them to align with the line set by the leader. Unmet Basic Needs: In order to analyze the first factor, namely unmet basic needs, that influence the vulnerability of "compromised" followers, Padilla and colleagues (2007) relied on the formulation of Maslow's (1954) and Burns' (1978) hierarchy of needs theory, which argued that followers' basic needs must first be satisfied before their higher aspirations can be met, and the same applies to destructive leadership. There are several historical examples, such as the citizens of Germany, Russia and Italy, who, after the end of World War I and the aftermath of the economic crisis, were driven to the brink of poverty and hunger, with the subsequent rise of Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini respectively to power (Arendt, 1951).

People who have not satisfied their basic needs such as food and security, live in daily fear and are easier to control (Padilla et al., 2007). However, the same can happen for followers who come from more privileged backgrounds, but who have not satisfied their social needs. Destructive leaders can provide them with a sense of belonging to a group and being an integral part of it (Padilla et al., 2007). Negative Self-Evaluation: A second factor that contributes to the vulnerability of compromised followers is negative self-evaluation, which in turn depends on low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, and

the belief that one's fate is determined by external factors.

The self-evaluation that individuals make is related to life satisfaction, job satisfaction, motivation, and professional performance (Judge & Bono, 2001). Self-esteem is the overall value that individuals attribute to themselves. Low self-esteem is likely to make people want to identify with a charismatic person, such as a leader, because they feel that this way they will become more accepted. Leaders, in turn, want to control and manipulate people with low self-esteem (Padilla et al., 2007).

Low self-esteem distinguishes followers from leaders (Judge et al., 2002). Self-efficacy is about an individual's belief in their ability to perform the tasks they are assigned to perform, as well as the decisions they need to make about the activities they should undertake and the effort they should expend on them (Padilla et al., 2007). Many people believe that they determine their own destiny, while others believe that it is determined by external factors. People who believe that they cannot determine their own destiny are more easily manipulated and are attracted to people who appear powerful and willing to take care of them. Thus, individuals with low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, and the belief that their fate is determined by external factors are prone to destructive leaders.

Psychological Immaturity: The third factor contributing to the vulnerability of "compromised" followers is psychological immaturity. Psychologically immature individuals are more likely to conform to authority and engage in destructive acts. Freud (1921) argued that, within a crowd, people's superego collapses and is symbolically replaced by the leader, who then becomes the individual's guide to action. This conformity can lead to immoral behavior and, therefore, according to Freud, mature adults must be prepared to oppose their leaders. According to Kohlberg's (1969) theory of moral development, people who respect rules are capable of behaving immorally in the name of authority. This behavior is likely to occur in adults who are in the average stage of ego development, i.e., in their maturity stage. It is worth noting that this percentage ranges from 60% to 75% of adults in the Western world. For this reason, psychological maturity is needed to oppose destructive authority (Padilla et al., 2007). Erikson's (1959) developmental theory suggests that maturity involves the formation of a complete identity that enjoys social esteem. Individuals who do not know themselves well tend to identify with mythical heroes and adopt their values. Weierter's (1997) model of charismatic relationships also suggests that followers who do not know themselves well will adopt the

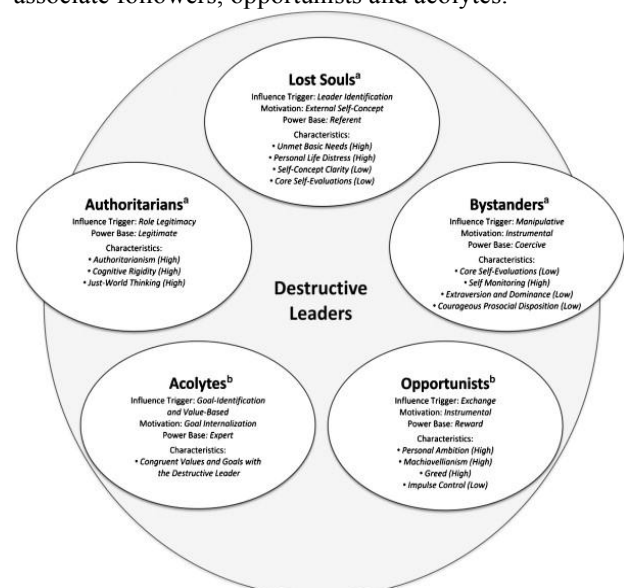
values of charismatic leaders, which will then enhance their self-esteem. While all of these vulnerabilities may apply to any immature adult, they are also true for young people (Popper, 2001). When susceptible followers accept the vision of a destructive leader, they can become part of his destructive plans and evolve from “compromised” followers to “accomplices” (e.g., Hitler’s Youth, Mao’s Red Guard) (Padilla et al., 2007). Ambition: Although destructive leadership produces negative outcomes for health-care organizations, there will still be some members who will thrive (Offerman, 2004). These are the individuals who are close to the leader. But there will be others willing to implement his destructive vision (Kellerman, 2004, Offerman, 2004). They are the ambitious people who seek a position and sometimes exploit their connections, or are willing to pursue coercive policies if they are to advance their personal benefit, acting in a way that pleases their leader (McClelland, 1975). One such example is Hitler’s Nazi Germany, where ambitious individuals who were officials began to compete with each other, implementing policies aimed at pleasing Hitler, with the tragic result of the Holocaust (Padilla et al., 2007). It is also very likely that there is a convergence of values and beliefs between followers and the leader. When this happens, these individuals become committed to the leader in order for him to achieve his goals (Shamir et al., 1993).

Values and beliefs congruence: Empirical studies show that the greater the value alignment between the leader and his followers, the greater their satisfaction, commitment, and motivation (Jung & Avolio, 2000), creating emotional bonds with the leader (Shamir et al., 1993). The greater the alignment, the stronger the bond and the greater the motivation to follow. Thus, in this way, the followers’ self-esteem and self-efficacy are strengthened (Shamir et al., 1993, Weierter, 1997).

Non-socialized values: The followers’ values are equally important. Specifically, individuals who embrace greed, egotism, and self-interest are more likely to follow destructive leaders and engage in similar attitudes (Hogan, 2006). Ambitious but antisocial followers are likely to engage in destructive acts, especially if they are punished or encouraged by a leader (McClelland, 1975). In conclusion, according to Padilla et al. (2007), there are two types of followers who support the existence of destructive leadership. The “compromised” followers passively allow bad leaders to take power because their unmet needs, low self-esteem, and psychological immaturity make them vulnerable to such influences. On the other hand, there are the “complicit” followers who actively support destructive leaders because they

want to advance their personal ambitions, are possessed by greed and selfishness, and are in alignment with the leader’s personal value system.

According to Thoroughgood et al. (2012), and in line with what was mentioned above regarding Barbuto’s (2000) theory, different people will inevitably react differently to the same destructive leader, suggesting that a classification of different vulnerable followers would be useful. Based on the above, Thoroughgood et al. (2012) formulated the vulnerable circle model in which they create more categories of vulnerable followers (Figure 3). In this model, there is a distinction between destructive followers’ behaviors that are carried out in response to authority and those initiated by followers. While compliant followers are prone to obedience and therefore do not engage in destructive attitude alone, collaborators actively contribute to the leader’s mission. Thoroughgood et al. (2012) first agree with Padilla et al.’s (2007) model, which divides followers into two categories, conformers and colluders. They then go on to propose three different types of compliant followers: lost souls, authoritarians, and bystanders. They also propose two different types of associate followers, opportunists and acolytes.



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Lost Souls: Lost souls are perhaps the most frequently mentioned group of followers in the literature. This type of compromised follower is plagued by negative self-evaluations and an unclear and volatile self-perception (Padilla et al. 2007, Weierter, 1997). Lost souls are attracted to charismatic leaders who they believe can provide them with increased self-esteem and a sense of

belonging. In such cases, lost souls tend to attribute exceptional qualities (charisma) to the leader (Conger & Kanungo, 1987) and develop a personal identification with him and a strong desire to imitate him in order to gain his acceptance. However, their intense love, devotion, and idealization of the leader leads them to dependency and makes them vulnerable to manipulation, tending to obey immoral orders, given their devotion to the leader and their desire for acceptance (Barbuto, 2000). The main motivations of lost souls are mainly based on the desire for self-affirmation from others (self-concept external), especially from leaders, and the main trigger for influence is identification with the leader. They behave in ways that satisfy the leaders, in order to first gain acceptance and then self-improvement and self-esteem (Howell & Shamir, 2005). In lost souls, when the motivation for self-affirmation from others increases, their resistance to the leader's attempts to influence them decreases, and the leader's perceived power increases, then the likelihood of compliance with the leader increases (Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

According to Thoroughgood and colleagues (2012), the vulnerability of lost souls is due, in part, to the following factors, which increase the likelihood that these individuals will comply with the leader's orders. Non-satisfaction of basic needs. As Padilla and colleagues (2007) have argued, drawing on Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs, followers' basic needs must first be met before their higher aspirations can be met. When destructive leaders are able to fulfill the unmet needs of the lost souls, these followers often develop strong emotional bonds with the leader, an idealized perception of him, and a desire to imitate and gain his approval (Howell & Shamir, 2005). However, the personal identification of the lost souls with the leaders creates the possibility of blind obedience (Howell & Shamir, 2005, Lipman-Blumen, 2005). By offering a sense of belonging to a group, but also acting as a source of unconditional love and acceptance, destructive leaders are able to attract lost souls who will sacrifice their autonomy and obey unethical orders to please their leaders (Padilla et al., 2007).

Personal life anxieties. This is a factor related to the lack of satisfaction of basic needs. Lost souls' anxieties regarding their personal life seem to reinforce the need for power, companionship and meaning in their lives. In times of great need and confusion, lost souls seek simple solutions and immediate fulfillment of their needs, leading them to identify with destructive leaders, which makes them vulnerable to them (Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

Clear self-image. Research shows that individuals who lack a clear sense of self are more vulnerable to

charismatic leaders. Without a mature and integrated self-image that is socially valued, lost souls are unable to evaluate the leader's messages and influences. Furthermore, Howell & Shamir (2005) noted that individuals who lack a clear sense of self-image tend to be particularly weak followers who become confused and disoriented before entering the charismatic relationship. As a result, they tend to develop personal relationships with charismatic leaders and adopt a self-image based on that relationship. These followers accept the leader's beliefs and values, identifying with them in order to gain self-confidence from this recognition (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). Negative self-evaluations. Research shows that lost souls have low self-esteem and tend to see themselves as worthless and empty. They are predisposed to being manipulated by charismatic leaders, in part because they believe they deserve it. They also have low self-efficacy ratings, which is why they need the leader to find simple solutions to problems that they cannot solve on their own (Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

The individual's belief that they control their own destiny. As mentioned, individuals who believe they cannot determine their own fate are more easily manipulated and are attracted to people who appear strong and willing to take care of them (Padilla et al., 2007). Neuroticism, which is related to anxiety and manifests itself in fear of new situations and feelings of dependency and cowardice. Lost souls derive a sense of relief from the charismatic relationship, but at the same time they become vulnerable to charismatic leaders who wish to exploit them (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). Individuals who share more characteristics of the Lost Soul Follower type, including high levels of unmet needs, high levels of anxiety about their personal lives, an unclear self-image, and negative self-evaluations, are more likely to conform to the leader than those who share fewer characteristics of the Lost Soul Follower type (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). Authoritarian: In contrast to Lost Souls, authoritarian followers have a rigid stance and believe in the legitimate right of leaders to exercise authority over them and a tendency to accept such influence unconditionally. Researchers have proposed that this personality type is characterized by fascist tendencies. Some individuals have strong internal values that emphasize obedience to legitimate authorities and compliance with rules within the health-care organization. In contrast to the lost soul, the authoritarian feels an obligation to obey based on the leader's status and position, which reflects the legitimacy of his or her authority. Therefore, authoritarians do not obey because they seek approval or to avert fear, but simply because the

leader holds a higher position in the health-care organization. Thus, the legitimate authority of a destructive leader can be a powerful influence on authoritarian followers to take actions of obedience. The dominant influence trigger for authoritarians is the legitimacy of the leader's role. As the leader's legitimate power increases and the authoritarians' resistance to the leader's influence decreases, their likelihood of compliance with destructive leaders also increases (Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

Authoritarian followers have some characteristics, such as a deeply rooted authoritarian ideology, a cognitive rigidity, and a belief in a just world, that enhance their likelihood of compliance with destructive leaders (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). Authoritarian ideology is based on three types of behavior: submissiveness, i.e., the uncritical acceptance of the leader's authority; conventionality, i.e., the strict acceptance and adherence to the rules and social conventions within the health-care organization; and authoritarian aggression, i.e., a general intolerance and punishment of dissent. Authoritarian followers, who support unethical leaders who seek to maximize their power, can create a toxic union. Authoritarians are also more likely to demonstrate unconditional respect and trust in legitimate authorities, engage in hostile acts against others in the name of power, willingly oppose non-group members, and are less likely to hold those who punish offenders accountable. Furthermore, their rigid ideology may be partly a product of a strict, authoritarian upbringing that emphasizes obedience at the expense of autonomy (Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

Cognitive rigidity. The literature suggests that people who implicitly accept legal principles are characterized by a rigid intolerance of ambiguity and a preference for a simple, clear, and unambiguous world (Rump, 1985). These individuals may be less motivated to process information and tolerate uncertainty, and are inherently more likely to support legal principles and social institutions that serve needs for stability, clarity, and order. Authoritarians do not seek and process information frequently, have a greater resistance to change, and prefer strict adherence to pre-existing social structures. In terms of leadership, it is not surprising that such individuals often adopt authoritarian ideologies, emphasizing compliance with strong leaders who desire stability, order, and discipline (Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

Belief in a just world (BJW) is associated with cognitive rationalization of inexplicable acts of violence and injustice through the devaluation of the victims involved, as victims are considered to deserve such behavior. It is also associated with authoritarianism, possibly because it is based on the

idea that strong and powerful people are good and weak and powerless people are bad. As a result, these attitudes may be the cause of the blind trust and obedience that authoritarians display to destructive leaders and allow them to justify their participation in immoral acts committed at the behest of such leaders (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). Individuals who share more characteristics of the authoritarian follower type, including high levels of authoritarian attitudes, high levels of cognitive rigidity, and high levels of belief in a just world, are more likely to experience triggers of leader role legitimization influence than individuals who share fewer characteristics of the authoritarian follower type (Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

Bystanders: In contrast to lost souls and authoritarians, bystander followers are characterized by a passive attitude and are motivated primarily by fear (Padilla et al., 2007). They are perhaps the most common type of vulnerable follower. Followers try to minimize the costs of non-compliance with the leader, such as losing their job, by enabling destructive leadership (Kellerman, 2004, Padilla et al., 2007). Because their motivations are based on fear, they choose to comply with the leader in order to avoid possible punishment from the leader (Barbuto, 2000). In contrast to other followers, followers are often more independent and their feelings towards destructive leaders range from anger and disapproval to indifference and apathy. This type of follower may keep their negative views of the leader to themselves, but will often publicly support the leader in order to be seen as a "good" follower. Since the destructive leader does not tend to personally support the leader, but rather acts out of fear, his behavior can range from disengagement to obedience, depending on the degree to which he is forced to act (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). 43 Bystanders tend to comply with the leader's orders because they believe that non-compliance will have negative consequences for themselves. The influence triggers used are based on obedience due to the fear that if they resist the destructive leader or if they fail to achieve his goals, then this will lead to revenge or some kind of punishment. Bystanders interpret the leader's orders as threats, regardless of whether the leader intends to send such a message (Barbuto, 2000). The influence triggers that affect their compliance are those that are characterized as manipulative, while their motivations are characterized as instrumental. Therefore, as instrumental motivations increase and their resistance to the leader's influence attempts decreases, but the leader's coercive power increases, the more likely it is that manipulative triggers will

lead to compliance by the bystander in destructive leadership (Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

Bystander followers are vulnerable because they mainly make negative self-evaluations, high self-monitoring, while they have low extraversion and assertiveness and a lack of strong social positive attitude.

Negative self-evaluation: Like lost souls, bystanders make a negative self-evaluation. However, there are differences between them, as the low self-esteem of bystanders leads them to passivity rather than identification with the leader. In addition, people with low self-esteem are less likely to report irregularities due to fear of possible retaliation from the leader, are more trusting, adaptable and cooperative, and may be more easily victimized in the workplace. Low self-esteem is associated with a fear of confrontation and weakness to social pressures, especially when they come from people in power. People with low self-esteem are less able to defend themselves against aggression, deal constructively with conflicts, or resist those who seek to exploit them. Therefore, while followers may be critical of leaders who conflict with their values, resisting the leader's commands causes them anxiety and challenges their low self-esteem (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). Also, their low self-efficacy, combined with their belief that their fate is determined by external factors, makes them unable to confront the destructive leader, as they believe that fate determines the type of leadership they must tolerate and submit to (Padilla et al., 2007). Their neuroticism leads them to try to avoid conflict, punishment, and negative evaluation by passively complying with authority out of fear. Such individuals often become easy targets of aggression (Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

High self-monitoring: Self-monitoring refers to the extent to which people monitor their social environment and adjust their behavior based on how others perceive them, in order to present a positive self-image to their environment. These individuals can change their behavior to adapt to the situation, but these attitudes can also conflict with their personal values. People who are not subject to high self-monitoring want to have continuity between their personal values and their actions and are less likely to care about what others think of them, and therefore are less likely to obey unethical orders that are incompatible with their values. Bystanders, however, tend to be high self-monitoring individuals who view passive compliance as necessary to avoid punishment. These people, because they fear retaliation, do not offer their help to others and are less likely to report ethical violations. Thus, high self-monitoring individuals, because they cannot bear the

costs of non-compliance, are likely to change their behavior (Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

Low extraversion and assertiveness: People with low extraversion tend to be quiet, reserved, more shy, calculating, and cautious. They are less likely to report ethical violations, while on the contrary they are more likely to remain silent in cases of ethical misconduct, as they are vulnerable to pressure and are more easily victimized in the workplace. Studies also show that these individuals are more sensitive to punishment or warnings of punishment. Therefore, they may be more likely to weigh and choose to passively comply rather than suffer the consequences of resisting a destructive leader (Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

Lack of strong prosocial attitude: Bystander followers are unlikely to engage in strong prosocial behavior, such as participating in a protest that goes against the leader's intentions, due to fear of the personal and professional costs they may incur (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). Individuals who score more on the bystander follower type, including negative self-evaluation, high self-monitoring, low extraversion and assertiveness, and a lack of strong prosocial behavior, are more likely to experience manipulative triggers from the leader than individuals who score fewer on the bystander follower type (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). **Opportunists:** Followers who are characterized as opportunists belong to the category of colluders. Their dark personalities resemble that of the destructive leader (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). These followers see their alliance with the leader as a vehicle for personal gain and willingly follow him in order to obtain financial, political, or professional benefits (Lipman-Blumen, 2005, Padilla et al., 2007). Opportunists carry out the orders of the destructive leader because they believe that there is an intermediate link between their compliance and the potential rewards they will receive (Bass, 1985). The influence triggers that make them vulnerable to the destructive leader are those that have to do with transaction (Barbuto, 2000). Therefore, as organic motivation increases and resistance to the leader's influence attempts decreases, but the leader's reward power increases, the more likely transaction triggers are to lead to compliance by the opportunistic follower with destructive leadership (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). According to Thoroughgood et al. (2012), although additional research is needed on this specific type of follower, their research showed that factors such as personal ambition and antisocial traits, namely Machiavellianism, greed, and lack of self-control, increase the likelihood of destructive leaders activating transaction triggers for opportunists. 46 **Personal ambition:** Opportunists,

due to their insatiable ambition and willingness to conspire with those who can reward them for their services, are able to promote the leader's destructive plans in order to advance. Research shows that highly ambitious employees are more likely to violate codes of conduct, backstab their colleagues, and engage in corruption (Zyglidopoulos et al., 2009).

They are also more likely to exploit others and pursue coercive policies to advance their own interests (McClelland, 1975, Padilla et al., 2007). Antisocial traits: There is a psychological overlap between opportunistic followers and destructive leaders, indicating that they share certain antisocial traits such as Machiavellianism, greed, and lack of self-control (Padilla et al., 2007). Machiavellianism refers to a tendency to deceive, manipulate, and engage in ostentatious attitude to achieve personal results. Individuals high in Machiavellian traits tend to display cunning, manipulation, deception, and strong persuasion to gain personal power and control, just like opportunists.

They use their influence tactics and methods of deception to gain power and status (Padilla et al., 2007), while they flatter their leader and do not express their criticism of him. Machiavellianism may initially lead opportunists to conspire with the destructive leader, but then to cause him to fail in order to gain their own power. Thus, opportunists may become destructive themselves (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). Greed refers to a selfish desire to accumulate goods, social status, or power beyond any reasonable limits, without regard for others or the common good. Finally, lack of self-control is a major explanation for criminal behavior and refers to the "tendency to avoid actions whose long-term costs exceed immediate benefits" (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1994, p. 4). Self-control theory suggests that individuals with high levels of self-control refrain from engaging in deviant activities because they adequately process the long-term consequences of their behavior (Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

Individuals who score higher on the opportunistic follower trait, including high personal ambition, high levels of Machiavellianism, high levels of greed, and low levels of self-control, are more likely to experience transactional triggers from the leader than individuals who score lower on the opportunistic follower trait (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). Helpers: Lipman-Blumen (2005) argued that opportunistic followers support their loyalty to destructive leaders because they have the potential for personal reward. Kellerman (2004) and Padilla et al. (2007) reported that some cooperate because they share the same values and goals as the leader. Thus, in addition to opportunists, we encounter a second type of complicit follower, the helper (Thoroughgood et al.,

2012). In contrast to lost souls, helpers have a stable sense of self and seek the expression of their ideological values and beliefs through the leader's mission (Howell & Shamir, 2005, Padilla et al., 2007). Thus, the helpers' motivations to follow the destructive leader are rooted primarily in the goal internalization motive, which causes the helper to behave in ways that are consistent with his or her personal values (Barbuto, 2000, Barbuto & Scholl, 1998).

Followers are "warm supporters," who do not require strong persuasions from the destructive leader to help organize and achieve his toxic goals (Barbuto, 2000). The influence triggers that the leader uses to get followers to comply with him have to do with the identification of the individual's goals with the health-care organization's vision and the belief that compliance will facilitate its goals. Since, therefore, these goals are in line with the followers' values and their pursuit serves the followers' values. Furthermore, when followers believe that the leader has the qualifications and skills needed to achieve the health-care organization's toxic goals, this further increases the chances that followers will comply with the destructive leader (Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

Therefore, as the motivation to internalize their goals increases and their resistance to the leader's influence attempts decreases, and the leader's specialized power increases, the more likely it is that goal and value identification triggers will lead to follower compliance with destructive leadership (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). Individuals who share more characteristics of the follower type of helpers, including a high correlation between their goals and values and those of the leader, are more likely to experience goal and value identification triggers from the leader than individuals who share fewer characteristics of the follower type of helpers (Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

Contributing Environment

The third leg of the toxic triangle is the appropriate environment in which the leader and followers interact. According to Padilla et al. (2007), four factors, namely instability, potential threat, cultural values, lack of checks and balances, and institutionalization, are important and contribute to an health-care organization's destructive leadership.

Instability

In times of instability, leaders can enhance their power by arguing that a radical change can restore the lost order (Bass, 1985, Burns, 1978). Leaders who thrive in unstable environments also gain more power because instability requires rapid action and unilateral decision-making (Vroom & Jago, 1974). However, when decision-making becomes

centralized, this is difficult to reverse over time (Kipnis, 1972). The extent to which governance rules are clearly defined and consistently applied over time, i.e. the structural stability of the social system, is also important (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). Astute leaders can therefore exploit fluid and transitional structures that are not subject to control (Padilla et al., 2007). 49 3.4.2 Potential threat The perception of potential threat is related to structural and health-care organizational instability. A potential threat can be as simple as feeling mistreated by a superior or when a person's company faces bankruptcy. When people feel threatened, they are more willing to accept strong leadership (Padilla et al., 2007).

Research on the theory of terror management shows how threat increases followers' support for and identification with charismatic leaders, especially those who do not support participative leadership (Solomon et al., 1991). It is worth noting that potential threats are not necessarily objective threats. All that is needed is the perception of threat. Leaders also often use the perception of threat or an external "enemy" (Padilla et al., 2007). 3.4.3 Culture and Values Hofstede (1991) defines culture as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes members of a group or category of people from others. Researchers seem to agree that culture can be an important factor in determining how well an individual fits into an health-care organizational context (Kilmann et al., 1986, Schein, 1985).

Schneider (1987) argued that individuals may be attracted to health-care organizations that they perceive to have values similar to their own. Furthermore, health-care organizations try to select and recruit individuals who are likely to share their values. New employees are then more socialized and assimilated, and those who do not fit leave. Thus, core individual values or preferences for specific ways of behaving are expressed by individuals by choosing specific health-care organizations that suit them, and then these values and preferences are reinforced within health-care organizational contexts (O'Reilly et al., 1991). Research has shown that individuals from similar backgrounds and with similar attitudes and experiences have mutual liking (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989). Similarly, health-care organizations, by rewarding behaviors and characteristic outcomes, may become more or less attractive to different types of people (O'Reilly et al., 1991). Values are the starting point, with common methods of selection and socialization acting as complementary means to ensure the individual's adaptation to the health-care organization (Chatman, 1991). Thus, the congruence between an individual's values and those of an health-care organization may

be the essence of the individual's adaptation to the health-care organization's culture (O'Reilly et al., 1991).

According to Hofstede (1991), culture shapes emergent leadership. Luthans et al. (1998) comment that "dark leaders" are likely to emerge in cultures that support collectivism (as opposed to individualism), uncertainty avoidance, and high power distance. Cultures that emphasize cooperation and group loyalty, as well as discrimination within and outside the health-care organization, are defined as collectivistic. Power distance is one of the dimensions of Geert Hofstede's (1991) theory of cultural dimensions. It is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of a country's institutions and health-care organizations accept that power is distributed unequally. It relates to the fact that inequality in a society is supported by followers as well as by leaders. It is a term that describes the way in which people in a particular culture view power relations between superiors and subordinates, as well as relationships between people, including the extent to which people who are not in power accept that power is distributed unequally.

People in cultures with high power distance are more respectful of forms of power and generally accept an unequal distribution of power, while people in cultures with low power distance directly challenge it and expect to participate in decisions that affect them (Hofstede, 1991).

Lack of controls and procedures and institutionalization Strong health-care organizations, like nations, tend to have strong institutions and strong countervailing centers of power. Madison in the U.S. Federalist Papers proposed the need for checks and balances to prevent abuses of absolute power, emphasizing the dangers of unilateral control (Hamilton et al., 2000). In this model, multiple branches of government have independent authority and responsibility. Each branch can also set limits on the power of the others. Systems that lack such checks, such as corporations without independent boards of directors, allow individuals or parties to abuse power (Gandosy & Sonnenfeld, 2004). In the management literature, "discretion" refers to the degree to which managers are free from institutional constraints (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1990). Although leaders need discretion to do their job, discretion allows destructive leaders to abuse their power (Kaiser & Hogan, 2007). The concept of managerial discretion suggests that destructive leadership is more likely to occur in senior positions where there is less supervision, in smaller health-care organizations with limited oversight mechanisms, and in high-growth industries (Hambrick & Abrahamson, 1995). When followers are dominated

by a culture of dependency and apathy, this can also contribute to the concentration of power. Such attitudes, especially when combined with instability and ineffective institutional bodies, lead to the concentration of power in a leader, leading to greater dependence on followers and the weakening of opposition and dissent. When decision-making in an health-care organization is at the top, i.e., there is centralized management, then structures based on autonomous units with effective and professional institutions that share responsibility and authority for governance do not exist (Padilla et al., 2007).

In conclusion, Padilla and colleagues (2007) conclude that it is difficult for destructive leaders to succeed in stable systems with strong health-care organizations and adequate controls and processes. Effective health-care organizations, system stability, and appropriate controls and procedures, along with strong followers, will be barriers to attempts to abuse the system. A conducive, enabling, and appropriate environment helps destructive leadership emerge, and leaders and their followers are sometimes in a position to seize power. When destructive administrations gain power, they will consolidate their control by undermining existing institutions and laws. They do this by replacing constructive institutions with ones designed to reinforce central control, by eliminating opponents and dissenters, by manipulating the media, and by exploiting educational systems, using propaganda to legitimize their own processes (Padilla et al., 2007).

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