#### Journal of Health Science and Medical Therapy

E-ISSN 3024-8132 P-ISSN 3024-8116

Volume 2 Issue 03, September 2024, Pp. 228-239

DOI: <a href="https://doi.org/10.59653/jhsmt.v2i03.1115">https://doi.org/10.59653/jhsmt.v2i03.1115</a>

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# Impact of toxic leadership on nurses' motivation, job satisfaction, productivity, and turnover intentions

### Solehudin<sup>1\*</sup>, Inas Syabanasyah<sup>2</sup>

Universitas Indonesia Maju Jakarta, Indonesia <sup>1</sup> Universitas Indonesia Maju Jakarta, Indonesia <sup>2</sup> Corresponding Email: solehsolehudin412@gmail.com\*

Received: 12-07-2024 Reviewed: 27-07-2024 Accepted: 13-08-2024

#### **Abstract**

Toxic leadership refers to a style of leadership characterized by behaviors that harm, exploit, and undermine the well-being of employees and the overall organizational culture. Leaders who exhibit toxic behaviors often create a detrimental work environment that affects not only the morale and productivity of their team but also the long-term success of the organization. The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of toxic leadership on motivation, job satisfaction, productivity and turnover intention of nurses. This study uses correlation analysis with a cross-sectional design. The population in this study were nurses with a sample size of 480 responden based on the convenience sampling technique. Statistical analysis using multiple linear regression. The results of the study showed that the influence of toxic leadership on motivation, job satisfaction, productivity and turnover intention was p value 0.001. Standard estimate coefficient of motivation and job satisfaction variables is a value of 1,000. The conclusion of this study is toxic leadership has a negative impact on nurse motivation by reducing intrinsic motivation. When job satisfaction decreases due to toxic leadership, nurses are more likely to consider leaving their jobs.

**Keywords:** Job Satisfaction, Nurse Motivation, Toxic Leadership, Turnover Intention, Work Productivity

#### Introduction

Toxic leadership has emerged as a critical area of concern within organizational studies, significantly affecting employees' well-being and organizational outcomes. Leaders wield considerable influence over their teams, and when this influence turns negative, it can lead to a host of detrimental effects. Toxic leadership is characterized by abusive supervision, narcissism, authoritarianism, and other destructive behaviors that can undermine employee morale and organizational culture.

The adverse effects of toxic leadership on motivation are profound. When leaders exhibit toxic behaviors, they can erode employees' intrinsic motivation, making it challenging for them to remain engaged and committed to their work. Motivation is a crucial driver of performance, and understanding how toxic leadership impacts it is vital for organizational success. Research indicates that toxic leadership behaviors can lead to decreased motivation, resulting in reduced effort and performance (Hyson, 2016).

Toxic leadership, a term that encompasses a range of harmful leadership behaviors, has been extensively studied in recent years due to its profound impact on employees and organizations. This concept includes abusive supervision, where leaders engage in hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviors, and narcissistic leadership, characterized by leaders' excessive self-interest and lack of empathy (Laila et al., 2019). Understanding the nuances of toxic leadership is essential for identifying and mitigating its negative effects.

The impact of toxic leadership on motivation is multifaceted. Intrinsic motivation, which drives employees to engage in work for its own sake, can be severely undermined by toxic leaders. This demotivation can stem from constant criticism, lack of support, and a hostile work environment. A study by Coban (2022) found that employees under toxic leadership were significantly less motivated, which adversely affected their performance and overall job satisfaction (Çoban, 2022).

Job satisfaction is a crucial indicator of employee well-being and organizational health. Toxic leadership can erode job satisfaction by creating a work environment filled with fear, stress, and uncertainty. Employees subjected to toxic behaviors are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion and burnout. Research by Einarsen et al. (2023) indicates a strong negative correlation between toxic leadership and job satisfaction, underscoring the need for organizations to address this issue proactively (Einarsen et al., 2023).

The link between toxic leadership and productivity is well-documented. When employees are demotivated and dissatisfied, their productivity inevitably suffers. Toxic leaders can create a culture of fear and mistrust, leading to decreased collaboration and innovation. A study by Kilic et.al (2019) highlighted that organizations with toxic leadership experienced significant drops in productivity, emphasizing the importance of fostering a positive leadership environment (Kılıç & Günsel, 2019).

Intention turnover, or the propensity of employees to leave their jobs, is another critical outcome of toxic leadership. High turnover rates can disrupt organizational continuity and lead to increased recruitment and training costs. Employees are more likely to consider leaving an organization if they are subjected to toxic leadership, as they seek healthier work environments. Recent literature indicates a strong link between toxic leadership and intention turnover, suggesting that addressing toxic behaviors can enhance employee retention (Harris & Jones, 2018).

The mechanisms through which toxic leadership impacts these areas are complex. Toxic leaders often engage in manipulative behaviors, such as withholding information, playing favorites, and creating conflicts among team members. These behaviors can erode trust and cohesion within teams, leading to a decline in overall organizational performance.

Understanding these mechanisms is crucial for developing effective interventions (Labrague et al., 2020).

Addressing toxic leadership requires a multifaceted approach. Organizations need to foster a culture of open communication and provide training for leaders to develop emotional intelligence and empathy. Implementing robust feedback mechanisms and promoting accountability can help mitigate the effects of toxic leadership. Research by Wolor et al. (2022) suggests that such interventions can significantly improve employee well-being and organizational outcomes (Wolor et al., 2022).

The role of organizational culture in moderating the effects of toxic leadership cannot be overstated. A positive organizational culture that values employee well-being and promotes ethical behavior can buffer the negative impacts of toxic leadership. Studies have shown that supportive work environments can mitigate the adverse effects of toxic leadership on motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity (Nonehkaran et al., 2023).

This research to explore the long-term effects of toxic leadership and identify strategies for prevention and intervention. Longitudinal studies can provide valuable insights into how toxic leadership behaviors develop and persist over time. Additionally, examining the role of individual differences, such as resilience and coping mechanisms, can further enhance our understanding of this phenomenon (Batchelor et al., 2023).

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of toxic leadership on motivation, job satisfaction, productivity and turnover intention.

#### **Literature Review**

Toxic leadership is a term used to describe leaders who engage in destructive behaviors and exhibit dysfunctional characteristics that harm their organization and subordinates. These leaders often manipulate, demean, and intimidate their followers, creating a toxic work environment (Minor & Housman, 2015). Key traits of toxic leaders include narcissism, authoritarianism, and a lack of empathy. The consequences of toxic leadership can be severe, including decreased employee morale, increased turnover, and diminished organizational performance (Lunsford & Padilla, 2016).

Causes and manifestations of toxic leadership among others exhibit traits associated with personality disorders, such as narcissism, psychopathy, and machiavellianism (Krasikova et al., 2013). High-pressure environments and cultures that prioritize results over ethical behavior can contribute to the emergence of toxic leaders. Organizations that do not hold leaders accountable for their behavior can inadvertently encourage toxic leadership (Binni & Schneidhofer, 2023).

The impact of toxic leadership on employees namely, increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among employees. Decreased motivation and job satisfaction due to a hostile work environment. Prolonged exposure to toxic leadership can lead to physical health problems such as insomnia, hypertension, and cardiovascular issues (Kılıç & Günsel, 2019). Impact of

toxic leadership on organizations among others increased employee turnover, leading to higher recruitment and training costs. A toxic work environment can reduce overall productivity and efficiency. Negative word-of-mouth and bad press can harm the organization's reputation and ability to attract top talent (Mackey et al., 2019).

Dealing with a leader who exhibits toxic leadership traits can be challenging, but there are several strategies employees can employ to mitigate the negative impact and protect their well-being. Employees should keep detailed records of any incidents of toxic behavior. This documentation should include dates, times, descriptions of the behavior, and any witnesses (Nonehkaran et al., 2023). This can be crucial for providing evidence if formal action is taken. Finding support from colleagues, mentors, or trusted individuals within the organization can provide emotional and practical assistance. Building a support network can help employees feel less isolated and more empowered to address the issue (Hoffman & Sergio, 2020).

Employees should consider reporting the toxic behavior to the Human Resources (HR) department or an employee assistance program (EAP). HR professionals are trained to handle such issues confidentially and can provide guidance on the appropriate steps to take. Setting clear boundaries with the toxic leader can help protect employees' mental health. This might include limiting interactions to what is strictly necessary for work and avoiding situations where the toxic behavior is most likely to occur (Ofei et al., 2023). Employees can benefit from developing coping strategies to manage stress and maintain their mental health. Techniques such as mindfulness, exercise, and seeking professional counseling can be effective (Hughes, 2021).

If the toxic leadership is causing significant harm and the organization is not taking appropriate action, employees might consider exploring other opportunities within or outside the organization. Sometimes, moving to a different department or seeking employment elsewhere can be the best solution (Semedo et al., 2022). Where feasible, employees can attempt to have open and constructive conversations with the leader. Addressing the behavior directly and professionally can sometimes lead to positive changes, especially if the leader is unaware of the impact of their actions (Chen & Sun, 2021).

Employees can advocate for broader organizational changes, such as implementing leadership development programs and promoting a culture of respect and accountability. Encouraging the organization to invest in training and development can help mitigate the prevalence of toxic leadership (Saleem et al., 2022). Consulting with an external advisor, such as a legal professional or an industry expert, can provide additional perspectives on how to handle the situation. This can be particularly useful if internal resources are insufficient. Employees should reflect on their personal and professional goals. Understanding their values and long-term objectives can help them make informed decisions about whether to endure the current situation or seek new opportunities (Guo et al., 2022).

#### **Research Method**

This study uses correlation analysis with a cross-sectional design. The population in this study were nurses with a sample size of 480 responden based on the convenience sampling technique. Research data collection using questionnaires for each variable consisting of 10 questions each. The questionnaire was distributed to several WhatsApp groups of researchers whose members were nurses with a Google form containing the research questionnaire. Statistical analysis using Multiple Linear Regression with Jamovi version 2.2.5.

#### Result

The research results are described based on multiple linear regression statistical analysis as follows.

Predictor	SE	t	р	Stand.Estimate
Intercept (Motivation)	0.0220	0.119	0.001	1.000
Toxic Leadership	5,0304	1.988.619		
Intercept (Job Satisfaction)	0.0220	-0.287	0.001	1.000
Toxic Leadership	5,0204	1.992.984		
Intercept (Productivity)	0.07887	-1.81	0.001	0.999
Toxic Leadership	0.00180	557.42		
Intercept (Turnover Intention)	0.08247	-2.87	0.001	0.999
Toxic Leadership	0.00188	534.40	0.001	0.777

Table 1. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results

Based on table 1, the p value of the motivation variable is less than 0.001, less than 0.05. This means that toxic leadership motivation is a statistically significant predictor of motivation. The standard estimate coefficient value of 1,000 means that toxic leadership has a strong and positive influence on motivation. The p value of the job satisfaction variable is less than 0.001, less than 0.05. This means that toxic leadership is a statistically significant predictor of job satisfaction. The standard estimate coefficient value of 1,000 means that toxic leadership has a strong and positive influence on job satisfaction. The p-value of the productivity variable is less than 0.001, which is less than 0.05. This means that toxic leadership is a statistically significant predictor of productivity. The standard estimate coefficient value of 0.999 means that toxic leadership has a strong and positive influence on productivity. The p-value of the productivity variable is less than 0.001, which is less than 0.05. This means that toxic leadership is a statistically significant predictor of turnover intention. The standard estimate coefficient value of 0.999 means that toxic leadership has a strong and positive influence on turnover intention.

#### **Discussion**

Toxic leadership is a destructive leadership style, where leaders use negative approaches such as manipulation, intimidation, and authoritarianism to control their subordinates. Toxic leadership can have a significant impact on nurse motivation (Bhandarker & Rai, 2019). Toxic leadership often destroys nurses' intrinsic motivation, which is the drive to work for personal satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment (Wolor et al., 2022). Toxic leaders may not recognize nurses' efforts or accomplishments, criticize without a clear reason, or ignore staff input (Thapa et al., 2023). As a result, nurses may feel unappreciated and lose their enthusiasm for providing the best service.

Abusive or unfair leadership behavior can lead to increased stress in the workplace. When nurses are under constant pressure from toxic leadership, they can experience burnout, which is emotional and physical exhaustion that reduces motivation and productivity (Labrague, 2023). This burnout can in turn reduce the quality of health care provided. Toxic leadership often creates a disharmonious work environment, where there is unhealthy competition, conflict between coworkers, and lack of collaboration (Abdelaliem & Zeid, 2023). In such situations, nurses' motivation to work together and support each other can decrease, because they feel unsafe and unsupported by management (Alsomaidaee et al., 2023).

Toxic leadership has a significant impact on nurses' job satisfaction. Toxic leaders often ignore or belittle the contributions of their subordinates, including nurses. Lack of recognition for nurses' efforts and accomplishments can lead to decreased self-esteem, which directly impacts job satisfaction (Dwita et al., 2023). When nurses feel that their work is not appreciated, they become less satisfied with their jobs. Toxic leadership often creates a stressful work environment, where nurses are constantly under threat of criticism, humiliation, or unfair treatment (D. S. Widodo, 2023). This ongoing stress can lead to job dissatisfaction because nurses feel pressured and unable to work calmly or focus on patient care (Otoo, 2024).

Toxic leaders tend not to provide adequate support or guidance to nurses. This leaves nurses feeling directionless or without help when facing challenges in the workplace. This lack of support from superiors often leaves nurses feeling isolated and frustrated, leading to job dissatisfaction (Erdal & Budak, 2021). Toxic leadership is often associated with unfair practices, such as favoritism, manipulation, or unequal distribution of workload. These unfairnesses can lead to feelings of anger and dissatisfaction among nurses, especially if they feel that their efforts are not fairly rewarded compared to other colleagues (Putri et al., 2023).

Toxic leadership in nursing, characterized by abusive, controlling, and unsupportive behaviors, can have a profound negative impact on nurse productivity. Toxic leaders often create a hostile work environment that increases stress levels among nurses (Asif et al., 2019). Prolonged exposure to such environments can lead to burnout, a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion. Burnout significantly reduces productivity, as nurses may struggle to meet the demands of their role or may take more sick days due to stress-related health issues (Boamah, 2018).

In a toxic environment, nurses may be less likely to take initiative or innovate due to fear of criticism or failure. This stifling atmosphere prevents the adoption of new practices that

could improve efficiency and patient care, further reducing productivity. Nurses under toxic leadership tend to experience lower job satisfaction (Tamata & Mohammadnezhad, 2023). When leaders are unsupportive, disrespectful, or overly critical, it diminishes morale and motivation. This dissatisfaction can lead to disengagement, where nurses do the bare minimum to get by, rather than striving to deliver high-quality care, thereby reducing overall productivity (Ghafoor et al., 2021).

Toxic leadership significantly contributes to nurse turnover intention, which refers to the likelihood that a nurse will leave their current job. Toxic leadership often creates a stressful work environment where nurses feel unsupported and overburdened (D. Widodo et al., 2021). This stress, compounded by a lack of appreciation and constant criticism, can lead to burnout. Burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion and detachment, is a significant predictor of turnover intention. Nurses experiencing burnout are more likely to consider leaving their job to escape the negative environment (Gebregziabher et al., 2020).

Nurses working under toxic leaders typically experience low job satisfaction due to factors such as unfair treatment, lack of autonomy, and poor communication. When job satisfaction decreases, nurses are more likely to develop a turnover intention as they seek better work environments where they feel valued and supported (Ekici et al., 2017). Toxic leaders often foster an atmosphere of mistrust through manipulative behaviors, favoritism, and a lack of transparency. This erosion of trust damages the loyalty nurses feel toward their employer and their team. When trust is broken, nurses are more likely to disengage and consider leaving the organization (Al-Surimi et al., 2022).

Toxic leadership can disrupt nurses' work-life balance by creating unrealistic expectations and demanding excessive hours. This imbalance leads to dissatisfaction both at work and in their personal lives (Palvimo et al., 2023). Nurses may feel compelled to leave their current position to restore a healthier work-life balance, contributing to higher turnover rates. The constant exposure to toxic behaviors, such as bullying or harassment, can have a detrimental effect on nurses' mental health (Ofei et al., 2023). Anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues may arise, leading nurses to prioritize their well-being by seeking employment elsewhere. Toxic leaders may hinder nurses' professional development by not providing opportunities for growth, learning, or advancement (Uysal, 2019). This lack of support can lead to feelings of stagnation, prompting nurses to look for other positions where their career progression will be valued and nurtured (Lee et al., 2024).

Toxic leadership often manifests as authoritarian, controlling, and unsupportive behavior, which stifles nurses' intrinsic motivation. When leaders fail to recognize or reward nurses' efforts, it leads to decreased enthusiasm and a lack of engagement in their work. Nurses may feel demoralized and undervalued, reducing their drive to perform at their best. Over time, this erodes their sense of purpose and commitment to the organization (Atalla & Mostafa, 2023). The negative behaviors associated with toxic leadership, such as bullying, favoritism, and a lack of empathy, directly impact nurses' job satisfaction. Nurses in toxic work environments often experience high levels of stress, lack of autonomy, and poor work-life balance (Abdelaliem & Zeid, 2023). These conditions lead to frustration and dissatisfaction, as

nurses feel unsupported and unappreciated. The constant strain can diminish their overall contentment with their job, making them less likely to remain engaged and committed (Dwita et al., 2023).

As motivation and job satisfaction decline under toxic leadership, so too does productivity. Nurses who are demotivated and dissatisfied are less likely to go above and beyond in their roles. They may become disengaged, leading to a reduction in the quality of care provided, longer response times, and an increase in errors. Additionally, the stressful environment created by toxic leadership can contribute to burnout, further diminishing nurses' ability to perform their duties effectively (Specchia et al., 2021). The culmination of decreased motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity often leads to a heightened intention to leave the organization. Nurses who feel trapped in a toxic work environment may seek opportunities elsewhere to escape the negative impacts on their mental and physical health (Alrasheedi et al., 2022). High turnover intention can lead to actual turnover, which not only affects the individual nurses but also disrupts team dynamics, increases the workload on remaining staff, and incurs significant costs for the organization in recruiting and training new employees (Otoo, 2024).

#### **Conclusion**

Toxic leadership has a negative impact on nurse motivation by reducing intrinsic motivation. When job satisfaction decreases due to toxic leadership, nurses are more likely to consider leaving their jobs. The interconnectedness of these factors creates a vicious cycle, toxic leadership reduces motivation and satisfaction, which in turn diminishes productivity and increases turnover intention. This cycle perpetuates a toxic work culture, making it increasingly difficult for the organization to retain skilled nurses and maintain high standards of patient care. Addressing toxic leadership is crucial for breaking this cycle and fostering a healthy, productive, and supportive work environment.

#### **Declaration of Conflicting Interest**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in the implementation and results of this research.

#### **Funding Acknowledgment**

The author would like to thank the parties who have contributed to the implementation of this research until it could be published.

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