

Perceived Toxic Leadership, Job Satisfaction, and Organizational Commitment: A Correlational Quantitative Study

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Abstract

*This study examined the relationships between perceived toxic leadership (PTL), job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (OC) among Pakistani employees working in Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). A cross-sectional correlational research design was employed, and data were collected from 120 participants using purposive sampling. Standardized instruments included the Toxic Leadership Scale (Schmidt, 2008), Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss et al., 1967), and Organizational Commitment Scale (Allen & Meyer, 1990), all demonstrating satisfactory reliability. Correlation analyses indicated that PTL was strongly negatively associated with job satisfaction ($r = -.81, p < .01$) and moderately negatively associated with OC ($r = -.52, p < .01$), while job satisfaction was positively correlated with OC ($r = .55, p < .01$). Regression analyses showed that PTL significantly predicted lower job satisfaction ($\beta = -.81, p < .001, R^2 = .69$) and lower OC ($\beta = -.52, p < .001, R^2 = .27$). Independent samples *t*-tests revealed no significant differences in PTL ($t(118) = 1.77, p = .07$, Cohen's $d = 0.32$) or job satisfaction ($t(118) = -1.81, p = .07$, Cohen's $d = 0.33$) between employees in Pakistan and the UAE, but OC was significantly higher among UAE employees ($t(118) = -3.37, p = .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.61$). These findings highlight significant associations between toxic leadership perceptions and employee attitudes and indicate contextual differences in organizational commitment across work environments.*

Keywords: Perceived toxic Leadership, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Cross-Cultural, Leadership Behaviour.

Introduction

Toxic leadership, characterized by abusive, harmful, and unethical behaviours by supervisors or higher authorities, has become an increasingly critical concern in contemporary organizations. Such leadership behaviours create a hostile work environment, manifesting as favouritism, public criticism, intimidation, excessive monitoring, and bullying, which can significantly impair employee motivation, engagement, and productivity (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007; Farghaly Abdelaliem & Abou Zeid, 2023; Mdhlalose, 2025). The adverse effects of toxic leadership extend beyond immediate workplace interactions, influencing employee commitment to the organization

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and overall job satisfaction (Gilbert et al., 2012; Jantjies & Botha, 2024; Rucker Sr, 2025; Soomro et al., 2024; Tassabehji et al., 2024).

Abusive leadership practices, a key component of toxic leadership, involve intentional behaviours that humiliate, intimidate, or undermine employees. Examples include verbal aggression, unfair treatment, excessive criticism, and public shaming (Howard, 2024; Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2008; Matic, 2025; Singh & Ramdeo, 2025; Tepper, 2000; Tunio, 2025). Such practices have been consistently linked to reduced job satisfaction and lower organizational commitment. For instance, a study in Ghanaian hotels found that abusive leadership negatively affected organizational commitment and job satisfaction by reducing work engagement (Ampofo et al., 2023). In Pakistan, a cross-sectional study of 250 police personnel found that abusive supervision reduced job satisfaction and organizational commitment while increasing turnover intentions (Saleem et al., 2021).

Job satisfaction refers to the extent to which employees feel content, fulfilled, and positive about their work roles and environment. Higher job satisfaction is associated with increased engagement, motivation, and reduced turnover intentions, whereas low job satisfaction is linked to absenteeism and disengagement (Dziuba et al., 2020; Gupta et al., 2024; Irfan et al., 2024; Loo et al., 2024; Quesada-Puga et al., 2024; Rahmanda et al., 2024; Singh & Jain, 2013; Sulistio & Darmastuti, 2024).

Organizational commitment is an employee's attachment to, loyalty to, and willingness to contribute to organizational goals. Higher commitment enhances job satisfaction, reduces turnover, and supports overall organizational performance (Brown, 1996; Mowday et al., 1979; Noordin et al., 2010; Swailes, 2002; AlKahtani et al., 2021; Wibawa & Suprayetno, 2025).

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides a framework for understanding the effects of abusive leadership on employees. According to SET, workplace interactions are reciprocal, where employees respond to perceived support or mistreatment from supervisors. Abusive behaviors are perceived as low organizational support and unfair treatment, eliciting negative emotional and behavioral responses, such as disengagement, reduced satisfaction, and diminished commitment (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Davlembayeva & Alamanos, 2023).

Rationale

The objective of examining differences in perceived toxic leadership, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment between Pakistani employees working in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Pakistan is based on the contrasting work environments of the two contexts. Although employees share a common national background, leadership styles and organizational cultures differ across host countries. The UAE's expatriate-dominated, hierarchical, and performance-oriented workplaces may shape employees' perceptions of toxic leadership in different ways. In contrast, employees in Pakistan work in a culturally familiar organizational environment. These contextual differences may influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Comparing these groups helps isolate the role of work context rather than nationality alone and contributes to cross-cultural leadership research.

Hypotheses

H1: There is likely to be a significant negative relationship between perceived toxic leadership and job satisfaction among Pakistani employees working in Pakistan and the UAE.

H2: There is likely to be a significant negative relationship between perceived toxic leadership and organizational commitment among Pakistani employees working in Pakistan and the UAE.

H3: There is likely to be a significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment among Pakistani employees working in Pakistan and the UAE.

H4: Perceived toxic leadership is likely to significantly predicts lower job satisfaction and reduced organizational commitment among Pakistani employees.

Methodology

The study employed a cross-sectional correlational design and a purposive sampling technique to collect data from employees of various organizations in Pakistan. The inclusion criteria comprised being at least 19 years old, working for at least 1 year in a specific organization, and possessing at least a matriculation or O-level education.

Instruments

The study comprised four instruments to measure the study variables: the Toxic Leadership Scale (to measure narcissistic and abusive practices), Allen and Meyer's Organizational Commitment Scale (to measure organizational commitment), and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (to measure job satisfaction).

Perceived toxic leadership was measured using the Toxic Leadership Scale (TLS) developed by Schmidt (2008). The scale consists of 30 items, and responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), with higher scores indicating greater perceived toxic leadership.

The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) was developed by Weiss et al. (1967). It is a 20-item questionnaire. The Likert scale ranges from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating higher job satisfaction. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale is .80 to .90, according to recent studies.

The Organizational Commitment Scale was introduced by Allen and Meyer in 1990. It is a 24-item instrument that measures organizational commitment. The instrument's Likert scale ranges from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating greater organizational commitment. The Cronbach alpha of the scale is .85.

Ethical Considerations and Procedures of the Study

The study strictly adhered to the APA 7th edition ethical standards. First of all, the topic was selected on the basis of a gap in Pakistan to provide literature and implications to the employees who are victims of toxic practices in Pakistan. The authors were subsequently approached via email to request permission. Upon the authors' permission, the authors prepared a consent form, a demographic questionnaire, and the study instruments. The consent form clearly stated that participation is voluntary and that participants may withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. The confidentiality of all participants would be maintained. Various organizations were approached in major cities of Pakistan, i.e., Lahore, Islamabad, Faisalabad, and Karachi. Out of 180 employees, 120 completed the data form. The participants' participation was acknowledged. The data were entered into IBM SPSS version 26 for analysis.

Results

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Participants

	Frequency	Percentage	M	SD
Age			34.80	10.63
Gender				
Men	30	25		
Women	90	75		
Education				
Matric/O-Level	16	13.3		
Intermediate	38	31.7		
Bachelor	40	33.3		
Master	20	16.7		
Ph.D.	6	5		
Years of Experience				
1-5 Years	61	50.8		
6-10 Years	32	26.7		
11-15 Years	19	15.8		
More than 15 Years	8	6.7		
Types of Organizations				
Information Technology	21	17.5		
Construction and Engineering	22	18.3		
Telecommunications	10	8.3		
Banking/Finance	17	14.2		
Education	13	10.8		
Healthcare	16	13.3		
Manufacturing	21	17.5		
Employment Residency				
Pakistan	59	49.2		
United Arab Emirates	61	50.8		

Note: N=120, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

The sample consisted of 120 employees with a mean age of 34.80 years (SD = 10.63), of whom 25% were men (n = 30) and 75% were women (n = 90). Regarding education, 13.3% had completed Matric/O-Level (n = 16), 31.7% had Intermediate education (n = 38), 33.3% held a bachelor's degree (n = 40), 16.7% had a master's degree (n = 20), and 5% had a Ph.D. (n = 6). In terms of work experience, 50.8% had 1–5 years (n = 61), 26.7% had 6–10 years (n = 32), 15.8% had 11–15 years (n = 19), and 6.7% had more than 15 years (n = 8). Participants were employed across a variety of sectors, including information technology (17.5%, n = 21), construction and engineering (18.3%, n = 22), telecommunications (8.3%, n = 10), banking/finance (14.2%, n = 17), education (10.8%, n = 13), healthcare (13.3%, n = 16), and manufacturing (17.5%, n = 21). Employment residency was nearly evenly split, with 49.2% working in Pakistan (n = 59) and 50.8% in the United Arab Emirates (n = 61), indicating a diverse sample in terms of demographics, education, work experience, organizational sector, and work location.

Table 2: Correlational Analysis between Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3
1. Perceived Toxic Leadership	-	-.81**	-.52**
2. Job Satisfaction		-	.55**
3. Organizational Commitment			-

Note: N=120, ** $p < .01$

Table 2 presents the correlational analysis between perceived toxic leadership, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Results indicate that perceived toxic leadership is significantly negatively associated with both job satisfaction ($r = -.81, p < .01$) and organizational commitment ($r = -.52, p < .01$), suggesting that higher levels of narcissistic and abusive leadership behaviors are linked to lower employee satisfaction and commitment. Additionally, perceived toxic leadership and its components are positively correlated, reflecting the co-occurrence of narcissistic and abusive practices. Job satisfaction is significantly positively related to organizational commitment ($r = .55, p < .01$), indicating that higher job satisfaction is associated with stronger organizational commitment.

Table 3: Regression Analysis: Predicting Job Satisfaction from Perceived Toxic Leadership

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% <i>CI</i>		β	<i>p</i>
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>		
Constant	92.62	2.62	87.43	97.82		<.001
PTL	-.37	.02	-.41	-.32	-.81	<.001

Note: N=120, $R^2 = .69$, $F = 239.13$, *** $p < .001$, PTL = Perceived Toxic Leadership

Table 3 presents the regression analysis predicting job satisfaction from perceived toxic leadership (PTL). Results indicate that perceived toxic leadership is a significant negative predictor of job satisfaction ($B = -.37, SE = .02, \beta = -.81, p < .001$), suggesting that higher levels of narcissistic and abusive leadership behaviors are associated with lower employee job satisfaction. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 118) = 239.13, p < .001$, explaining 69% of the variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = .69$).

Table 4: Regression Analysis: Predicting Organizational Commitment from Perceived Toxic Leadership

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% <i>CI</i>		β	<i>p</i>
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>		
Constant	133.59	4.65	124.73	143.18		<.001
PTL	-.28	.04	-.36	-.19	-.52	<.001

Note: N=120, $R^2 = .27$, $F = 43.89$, *** $p < .001$, PTL = Perceived Toxic Leadership

Table 4 presents the regression analysis examining the effect of perceived toxic leadership (PTL) on organizational commitment. Results indicate that PTL is a significant negative predictor of organizational commitment ($B = -.28, SE = 0.04, \beta = -.52, p < .001$), suggesting that higher levels of perceived toxic leadership are associated with lower organizational commitment among employees. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 118) = 43.89, p < .001$, and

explained 27% of the variance in organizational commitment ($R^2 = .27$). This finding highlights that toxic leadership behaviors substantially reduce employees' attachment, loyalty, and willingness to contribute to organizational goals.

Table 5: Perceived Toxic Leadership, Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment among Employees working in Pakistan and UAE

Variables	EWIP (n=59)		EWI UAE(n=61)		<i>t</i> (118)	<i>P</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
PTL	109.37	32.14	98.59	34.38	1.77	.07	0.32
Job Satisfaction	51.47	14.62	56.47	15.56	-1.81	.07	0.33
OC	99.11	15.12	109.88	19.51	-3.37	.001	0.61

Note. *N* = 120, ** $p \leq .001$, *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation, *PTL* = Perceived Toxic Leadership, *OC* = Organizational Commitment, *EWIP* = Employees working in Pakistan, *EWI UAE* = Employees Working in UAE

Table 5 presents a comparison of perceived toxic leadership (PTL), job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (OC) among employees working in Pakistan (EWIP; *n* = 59) and the UAE (EWI UAE; *n* = 61). Results indicate that there were no statistically significant differences in perceived toxic leadership between Pakistani employees (*M* = 109.37, *SD* = 32.14) and UAE employees (*M* = 98.59, *SD* = 34.38), $t(118) = 1.77$, $p = .07$, Cohen's $d = 0.32$, or in job satisfaction between employees in Pakistan (*M* = 51.47, *SD* = 14.62) and the UAE (*M* = 56.47, *SD* = 15.56), $t(118) = -1.81$, $p = .07$, Cohen's $d = 0.33$. However, a significant difference was observed in organizational commitment, with UAE employees (*M* = 109.88, *SD* = 19.51) reporting higher commitment than Pakistani employees (*M* = 99.11, *SD* = 15.12), $t(118) = -3.37$, $p = .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.61$, indicating a medium to large effect size. These findings suggest that while perceptions of toxic leadership and job satisfaction are similar across the two contexts, employees in the UAE exhibit stronger organizational commitment than their counterparts in Pakistan.

Discussion

The present study examined the relationships between perceived toxic leadership, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment among Pakistani employees working in Pakistan and the UAE. Consistent with prior research, the findings indicate that toxic leadership behaviors—such as narcissistic and abusive practices—have a detrimental impact on employee attitudes (Schmidt, 2008; Tepper, 2000; Soomro et al., 2024). Specifically, perceived toxic leadership was strongly and negatively associated with job satisfaction and moderately negatively associated with organizational commitment. These results suggest that employees exposed to toxic leadership experience lower satisfaction with their work and reduced attachment to their organizations (Gilbert et al., 2012; Saleem et al., 2021).

Regression analyses further confirmed that perceived toxic leadership is a significant negative predictor of both job satisfaction and organizational commitment, explaining substantial portions of variance in these outcomes ($R^2 = .69$ for job satisfaction and $R^2 = .27$ for organizational commitment). This highlights that toxic leadership behaviors are critical factors influencing employees' attitudes and organizational loyalty (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Weiss et al., 1967).

Interestingly, while job satisfaction and organizational commitment were positively correlated, the strength of this relationship underscores that satisfied employees are more likely to demonstrate higher commitment (Brown, 1996; Swales, 2002).

The cross-cultural comparison revealed that employees in the UAE reported significantly higher organizational commitment than those in Pakistan, despite similar levels of perceived toxic leadership and job satisfaction. This finding may reflect differences in organizational culture, work environment, and structural or policy factors in UAE-based organizations, such as performance-based rewards, hierarchical systems, or stronger enforcement of organizational rules (AlKahtani et al., 2021; Jantjies & Botha, 2024).

Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of addressing toxic leadership in organizational settings. Leadership development programs, training in ethical and supportive leadership practices, and organizational policies that discourage abusive behaviors can mitigate the negative effects on employee satisfaction and commitment (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007; Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2008). Future research should examine additional moderators, such as organizational support, leadership style interventions, or individual resilience factors, to better understand conditions that buffer employees from the adverse effects of toxic leadership (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Shahid et al., 2024).

Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that perceived toxic leadership is negatively associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment among Pakistani employees. While perceptions of toxic leadership and levels of job satisfaction were similar across employees in Pakistan and the UAE, organizational commitment was higher among UAE-based employees, suggesting that contextual and environmental factors may influence employees' attachment and loyalty to their organizations. These findings highlight the importance of addressing toxic leadership in organizational settings and considering cultural and organizational context when developing strategies to improve employee satisfaction and commitment. Future research should explore additional factors that may buffer employees from the negative effects of toxic leadership and include larger, more diverse samples.

Implications

The findings carry important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, they contribute to the literature on toxic leadership in cross-cultural contexts by demonstrating that leadership behaviors are strongly associated with employee attitudes across diverse organizational settings. Practically, organizations should recognize the detrimental effects of toxic leadership and adopt targeted interventions. Awareness programs, leadership development workshops, emotional intelligence training, and stress management interventions can help supervisors develop supportive leadership styles. Organizations may also consider counseling services and mentorship programs to support employees in coping with challenging leadership dynamics. Regulatory bodies and labour departments should monitor workplace practices to ensure safe, equitable, and psychologically healthy environments. By addressing toxic leadership, organizations can foster employee satisfaction, commitment, and overall engagement, ultimately improving organizational performance and sustainability.

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