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The impact of Destructive Leadership on organisational performance in South Africa

Anisha Govender

1569189

A full research project submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration

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DECLARATION

I, Anisha Govender, declare that this full research project is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the Graduate School of Business Administration, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Anisha Govender

Signed at Johannesburg

On the 30 day of March 2019

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the relationship between destructive leadership and the performance of employees in a South African parastatal. The organisation is a market leader and operates within the water industry. The study examines the impact of destructive leadership on work motivation and how constructive leadership can improve the productivity and job motivation of employees.

Specific factors were looked at to address areas of concern, such as voluntary turnover intention, work engagement and organisational commitment behaviour. These areas were determined to be the prominent areas that could potentially be utilised to address change within the organisation. The data was collected through direct in-depth face-to-face interviews, with a sample comprising 14 professional and non-professional employees. The questions posed were open-ended and semi-structured to allow the researcher to probe for more detail.

Data obtained from the interviews was then evaluated by using thematic analysis. The findings of the study show that toxic supervision has an adverse effect on work performance by reducing employees' work motivation, energy and confidence. The research provided the researcher with an opportunity to establish how employees perceived their supervisors' or managers' performance within the work environment. Candidates displayed repressed anger and frustration, due to the malicious experience to which they had been exposed. It was established that unrealistic expectations and unethical behaviour shaped an environment that tolerated aggressive and unprofessional conduct, thereby affecting work motivation, attitude and morale in employees.

Recommendations, such as the need for leaders to modify personal conduct, show empathy, demonstrate equality and compassion were provided as possible ways to curb destructive or toxic leadership in the workplace. Employees stipulated that changes such as: a more understanding supervisor, trust and confidence in employees to do their work, eliminating autocratic leadership styles, treating all employees equally, creating an environment full of respect and honesty would construct a more agreeable environment, one in which employees

would feel empowered by giving their suggestions, where they were given the opportunity to change the situation and make a difference. In the long run, this would create a healthier, happier and more balanced work environment.

The future of a toxic-averse leadership style would go forth to create a more conducive environment in which employees would not be classified as victims. It would create a more content, productive, proficient and effective environment. This environment would inspire improved interaction between supervisors and employees with healthier communication.

It was established that this research contributes to existing knowledge in destructive leadership, especially in South Africa. What could be determined in this research was that abusive supervision, petty tyranny and workplace oppression did exist within this organisation. This study explored the link between this toxic supervision, work attitude and professional growth of employees. It examined the influence that employee's lived experiences had on their personal leadership style.

One of the limitations of the study includes the inability to generalise its findings since the interviews were conducted using a few members of the division. It is therefore possible that the findings may not be a true representation of all the supervisors' attitudes.

1 INTRODUCTION

The challenge of remaining competitive and relevant remains a complex task for parastatals who operate in the South African labour environment. Parastatals, nonetheless, have inconceivable and intricate environments as they struggle in an environment where bureaucracy, traditional leadership methods and chain of command exists whilst competing with more agile and modern approaches to leadership (Grobler, Warnich, Carrell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2002). According to the Global Competitiveness Index 4.0 (2018) Rankings, covering 140 economies and measuring national competitiveness according to institutions, policies and factors that determine levels of productivity, South Africa is positioned at 67. SA dropped in ranking by -5 and by a score of -0.1 compared to 2017. This report covers elements of business efficiency, based on the following criteria: productivity, motivation and managerial competence (Schwab, 2018). For parastatals to become more competitive in the macro environment, they will have to acclimatise their methods to expedite performance. The parastatal chosen for this research was selected predominantly for the accessibility of information, the researcher's understanding of the environment and the prevalence of destructive leadership examples within the organisation.

This chapter provides the background information, problem statement, aims and research questions that form the basis of this study. In addition, it also identifies the research methodology to be adopted in the study, the study limitations, a brief overview of the case study setting and the research outline.

1.1 Context and Statement of the Research Problem

There are a number of media reports about "worst or bad bosses" which has raised a continuous awareness of the need to evaluate the effects of different leadership styles on employees and organisational performance. For example, the evidence provided by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) (O' Leary, 2018) World's Worst Boss Award organised by the 4th International Trade Union Confederation Congress in 2018 in Copenhagen saw Michael O'Leary, CEO of Ryanair, the winner with 58% votes as the world's worst boss and Lee

Kun-hee, Chairman Samsung Group, emerged 2nd with 20% votes. This was closely followed by Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon with 18% votes, who was the winner of the award at the 3rd International Trade Union Confederation World Congress in Berlin. The reasons for the nomination and votes of the candidates ranged from employees' exploitation to unfair employment practices which are key traits of the destructive leadership style (Mackey, Mcallister, Maher, & Wang, 2018).

Krasikova, Green, and LeBreton (2013, pg 1310) define destructive leadership "as the volitional behaviour by a leader that can harm or intends to harm a leader's organisation and/or followers by (a) encouraging followers to pursue goals that contravene the legitimate interests of the organisation and/or (b) employing a leadership style that involves the use of harmful methods of influence with followers, regardless of justifications for such behaviour". Destructive leadership has been argued to exist in many forms which include abusive supervision, petty tyranny, and pseudo-transformational leadership (Tran, Tian, Li, & Sankoh, 2014).

Krasikova, Green, and LeBreton (2013) have argued the lack of compelling empirical evidence to show that the employees react differently to different destructive behaviours. For example, although it is logically compelling to assume that an abusive leader who shouts and humiliates employees is likely to have different effects on employees when compared to the leader who exploits and violates organisational rules, there is a scarcity of comparative evidence in destructive leadership to verify this assumption (Schmid, Verdorfer, & Peus, 2018).

There are, however, a number of studies that have investigated the impact of destructive leadership behaviour on individual and overall organisational studies. In a study by Yalcinsoy & Isik (2018), it was found that destructive leadership increased the number of employees' turnover, as well as their intention to leave. In a previous study by Tran, Tian, Li, & Sankoh (2014), the evidence provided showed the existence of a negative correlation between destructive leadership behaviour and job performance. Tran, Tian, Li, and Sankoh (2014) argued that

one of the reasons for this may be linked to the decline in employees' motivation to complete a task which is likely to lead to a decline in overall organisation performance in the long run.

Although there have been many studies on destructive leadership and employees/organisational performance using Asian countries and other countries in the Western region of the world, there appears to be a lack of research in this area in South Africa. However, in a study by Middleton (2018), using 258 employees working across a wide range of industries in South Africa, it was found that destructive leadership increased the level of Voluntary Turnover Intention and lowered levels of Work Engagement and Organisational Commitment Behaviour.

The aim of this study therefore, is to evaluate how destructive leadership influences the lives of employees and how constructive leadership can improve employees' progress and motivation in South Africa.

1.2 Aim of Research

This study evaluates how destructive leadership influences the lives of employees and how constructive leadership can improve employees' progress and motivation.

1.3 Research Questions

In order to achieve the above aim, this study sought to provide answers to the following research questions

1. What were the leadership styles that the employees regarded as toxic?
2. What is the impact of destructive leadership on subordinates' performance and growth?
3. What personal or organisational changes can be made to correct destructive leadership as suggested by the employees?

4. What improvements may be expected in the work attitude of the subordinate workers after personal and organisational changes have been applied to leaders that practice destructive leadership in the workplace?

Please refer to Annexure 1 for a list of the survey questions used.

1.4 The significance of the Study

This study aims to make empirical contributions to the existing literature on destructive leadership in organisations. The lack of research in the field of management, especially in South Africa, and the potential negative effect of destructive leadership in South African organisations, makes this topic useful.

Consequently, the study examines the forms of destructive leadership in a South African organisation, the reactions of employees to destructive leadership and the overall effect of destructive leadership on employees' performance and growth is investigated.

1.5 Case Setting: A parastatal in Johannesburg servicing the water industry

The company that the study is based upon is a South African water utility. It is the largest water supplier in South Africa and supplies potable water to the Gauteng province and other areas of the country.

The organisation employs over 2 000 employees from different localities, educational backgrounds, areas of specialisation and academic backgrounds.

The leadership issue which plagued the organisation that led to the inauguration of a new board in October 2018, as reported by Barnwell & Barnwell (2018), implied a need to investigate the perception of the employees on the leadership style in place.

This, therefore, serves as the rationale for choosing the organisation as an adequate case study to achieve the aim of this research.

1.6 Research Limitations

The limitations of this study included the likelihood of research participants withholding useful information due to fear of being found out by their superiors which, in turn, might have led to further victimisation. Another possible limitation might have been linked to the impact of the interview environment on the research participants. The participants might not have been very comfortable with the environment where the interviews took place, and this might have led to the provision of rushed answers that were not thought out carefully.

Furthermore, the use of a manual recording system as opposed to the use of a voice recorder could have led to the omission of some key information by the interviewer.

In addition to the above, the limitations of the research approach, design and instrument as will be explained in chapter 3, could also have affected the applicability of the findings of the study.

Finally, the personal experience of the interviewer who had been negatively affected by a destructive leadership style is likely to lead to interviewer-bias during the data collection process.

1.7 Research Assumptions

The following assumptions were made for the purpose of this study:

(1) The participants provided honest responses to the questions; and

(2) the participants fully understood the meaning of destructive leadership, as used in the context of this study.

1.8 Definition of Terms

1.8.1 Destructive leadership

This is defined as callous, intemperate, and rigid leadership that may harm or intends to harm organisations and/or followers by using a leadership style that involves the use of harmful methods of influence and management practices that instilled fear in their followers (Erickson, Shaw, Murray & Branch, 2015).

1.8.2 Constructive Leadership

This is a leadership style whereby the leaders' possible traits serve in the best interest of the organisation. This is portrayed through the exhibition of traits that enhance and support organisational goals, motivates employees and efficiently / effectively utilise the available resources (financial and non-financial) to achieve overall organisational goals (Hogg, 2015).

1.9 The Study Outline

This research study is presented as follows:

Chapter One Introduction to the Study

Chapter Two The Literature Review

Chapter Three Research Methodology

Chapter Four Research Findings

Chapter Five Discussions, Conclusions and Recommendations

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

There has been much research done in the area of leadership. A brief history of leadership theories including the great-man theory, trait theory, contingency theory (situational), style and behaviour theory, process leadership theory, transactional theory and new directions in theory are examined. A theoretical review of the dark side of leadership is carried out with a special focus on the dark triad of personalities (Narcissism, Machiavellianism and Psychopathic personality), trait activation theory and the model of destructive leadership. Various definitions of destructive leadership by different researchers are explored. Destructive leadership behaviour is discussed in terms of abusive supervision, petty tyranny and workplace oppression. The consequences of destructive leadership behaviour and methods to measure it are analysed. Finally, organisational responses to destructive leadership are reviewed.

2.2 Brief History of Leadership Theory

Literature has shown that theories of leadership have been polished and revised over time and none of the theory is absolutely irrelevant. For the purpose of this research, there will only be a focus on the theories that affect and influence destructive leadership. Irfanullah, Zakeer Ahmed and Allah (2016) revealed that autocratic leaders make decisions without involving subordinates, unlike the laissez-faire leaders who allow their subordinates to make the decisions and thus take no real leadership role other than assuming the position, whereas the democratic leaders access the views of their subordinates before taking their decision. The leadership theories mentioned above are hereby expanded upon.

2.2.1 Great Man Theory (1840 onwards)

Great Man Theory, created by Thomas Carlyle in 1847, asserted that leaders are born and that only men endowed with heroic potential could ever become leaders.

He stated that great men were born, not made. Great Man Theory was based on the consequences of outstanding capacities of intelligence, will and character rather than the actions of distinction (Irfanullah, Zakeer Ahmed & Allah, 2016). Nevertheless, the credibility of the theory was challenged by great men like Napoleon who became irrelevant as a result of lack of morals, despite their historic actions and heroic potentials. According to Madanchian, Hussein, Noordin and Taherdoost (2016), the Great Man theory of leadership tried to explain leadership in the view of inheritance, by asserting that the leader is genetically enabled with greater qualities that distinguish him from his followers. The historic timeline shows that the Great Man Theory was popular in the 19th century, but the theory is still relevant in many of today's practical assumptions about leadership (Spector, 2015). This is because of the heroic leader attributes rooted in individualistic cultures that lead us to admire iconic leaders like Abraham Lincoln, Nelson Mandela and Albert Einstein. Nowadays, there is a shift from Great Man Theory to system leaders that have the proficiency to contribute and solve tough human issues through collaboration (Spector, 2015). Destructive leaders are born and not made as supported by the Great Man Theory. However the writer feels that even though leaders are born, the organisation can apply principles to rehabilitate such leadership behaviour.

2.2.2 Trait theory (1910-1948)

The trait theory seeks to categorise the characteristics that differentiate leaders from followers (Madanchian, Hussein, Noordin & Taherdoost, 2016). According to Irfanullah, Zakeer Ahmed and Allah (2016), trait theories did not consider the assumptions of whether leadership traits were genetic or acquired. Trait theory was disputed with the realisation that the identified traits lack consistency. This paradigm shift took place in 1948 as a result of Stogdill's survey of 25 years of research in which he concluded that a person does not become a leader through possession of some combination of traits (Spector, 2015). He concluded that leaders overshadowed others in several traits such as Dependability, Intelligence, Social Participation, Scholarship, as well as Social and Economic Status (Spector, 2015). Consequently, leadership research shifted away from

traits and moved towards the external expression of leadership called behaviour. Despite that, the belief that leaders have certain traits has resulted in researchers discovering correlations between leadership and certain personality characteristics like integrity, conscientiousness, charisma, extroversion, and motivation (Spector, 2015). Nowadays, studies using neuroscience have shown that traits can be used to identify potential leaders, explain leadership and play a part in its development (Spector, 2015). Trait theory differs to Great Man theory in that it argues that leaders may acquire the skills necessary to become a leader. The leader may be shaped by circumstance, by being exposed to negative environments or company culture that shape their personalities. Specific traits can be picked up in individuals that would be displayed during the hiring process that would indicate the potential of a destructive leadership style.

2.2.3 Style and behavioural theory (1950-1970)

The style and behavioural theory recognises the significance of basic leadership skills that equip each individual for a distinct style of leadership with which the individual is satisfied (Irfanullah, Zakeer Ahmed & Allah, 2016). It is important to note that one style of leadership cannot be beneficial in all situations. Three types of leaders were propounded by different researchers and they include laissez-faire, democratic and autocratic leaders. The autocratic leader makes decisions without involving subordinates while the laissez-faire leader lets subordinates make the decision and hence, takes no real leadership role other than assuming the position and on the other hand, the democratic leader accesses his subordinates then takes his decision (Irfanullah, Zakeer Ahmed, & Allah, 2016). In the behavioural theory, leaders' behaviour was seen to be shaped by their environment and thus, become the products of nature and nurture (Spector, 2015). The limitation of the behavioural theory is the inconsistency in individuals' behaviours across tasks and situations and this led to the emergence of another theory called contingency theory (Spector, 2015). During the research, it was evident that an autocratic leadership style is prevalent in the organisation.

2.2.4 Contingency Theory (1967-1990)

The contingency theory suggests that there is no precise leadership style that is complete because leadership is dependent on factors such as the condition of the followers, quality or a number of other variables (Irfanullah, Zakeer Ahmed & Allah, 2016). The nature of the organisation, the people involved, tasks required, a situation experienced, and other environmental factors were put into consideration in contingency theory (Spector, 2015). This theory of leadership stated that there is no single right way to lead because the leader is required to adapt to the particular situation presented by the internal and external aspects of the environment. The situational leadership focuses on the leader as well as the importance of group relationships which have led to some of our contemporary theories of group dynamics and leadership (Irfanullah, Zakeer Ahmed & Allah, 2016). According to Irfanullah, Zakeer Ahmed & Allah (2016), there is no outstanding way to lead, but leaders must be able to acclimatise to the situation by applying a task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership style. One of the outcomes of the research was that productivity, turnover and absenteeism are issues being faced by the organisation currently. These outcomes are in line with the contingency theory.

2.2.5 Transactional theory (1970s-1980s)

The transactional leadership theory focuses on the exchanges between the followers and leaders. It was based on a reciprocal approach where leaders are influenced by their followers and at the same time, the followers are influenced by their leaders (Irfanullah, Zakeer Ahmed & Allah, 2016). The transactional leadership theory was subsequently advanced by the introduction of the concept of transformation that gave birth to transformational theory (Spector, 2015). This leadership style conforms to a more militant way of management in that the remuneration system satisfies staff on a short-term basis. One of the outcomes of this study is to ensure that the results of the transactional theory are avoided and mitigated by applying certain principles within the organisation. Ensuring that future destructive leaders are not reciprocated.

2.2.6 New Directions in Theory (2010 onwards)

The new directions, in theory, include a contextual school of leadership, ethics and moral development, as well as biology and neuroscience. The contextual school of leadership focuses on new contextual factors such as national culture, race, hierarchical levels of leadership, gender, and the like. Spector (2015) revealed that contextual factors have the capacity of empowering or inhibiting leadership behaviours and outcomes. Ethics and moral development have been an area of interest to researchers, who are examining the influence of ethics and morals on the behaviour of leaders as it relates to organisational outcomes (Spector, 2015). Biology and neuroscience researchers have been working on the effect of hormones on correlates of leadership, behavioural genetics of leadership emergence, integrative biological perspectives, the socio-biology of leadership, leadership role occupancy, neuroscience perspectives, and evolutionary points of view (Day & Antonakis, 2011). Research has provided evidence that principles can be applied within the organisation to change leadership behaviour by way of collaboration and the exchange of ideas and approaches.

The leadership trait theories provide a theoretical background and suggests approaches to change in terms of a road map or tools that can be utilized to facilitate the operational change required to meritoriously transform the manner in which leaders operate in the organisation. By incorporating rehabilitative leadership behaviour as defined by the Great Man theory, leadership principles in an organisation can be adapted. Preventative measures from the Trait theory where the effects of employing destructive leaders can be mitigated by considering destructive leader traits which are evident when recruiting a new leader. In order to change behaviour, Behavioural theory proves useful in reducing the autocratic leadership behaviour in utilizing other forms of positive leadership behaviour. By changing the internal and external environment in Contingency theories, the variables that are dependent on that environment, such as productivity, job satisfaction and absenteeism, can be adapted to have a more progressive outlook. There are two methods of changing the approach of which one is explained in the Transactional theory and refers more specifically to the

militant style of management for short term satisfaction by implementing short term rewards. The other approaches the problem of destructive behaviour from a different perspective and relates to the New Directions theory. This entails the collaboration with a team of experts that apply focused output sessions that will mitigate the effects of destructive leadership behaviour through a combined approach rather than an individualistic basis.

All the theories discussed above are relevant as they speak to some sort of change that is pending and necessary. The changes that are suggested could be implemented to alleviate the long-term destructive effects of poor behaviour in leadership.

2.3 Theoretical Review of the Dark Side of Leadership

Kaiser, LeBreton and Hogan (2015) argued that leadership traits and behaviours that may be crucial to success in one situation may be unrelated or even negatively related to success in other contexts, giving rise to the bright side of dark characteristics and the dark side of bright characteristics. This argument is further explored in the following section.

2.3.1 The Dark Triad of Personalities

Furnham, Richards and Paulhus (2013) recognise that some individuals possess more than one of the dark triad traits in spite of the fact that the three dark triad traits are distinctive. Kaiser, LeBreton, and Hogan (2015) revealed that the effect of dark-side traits at lower levels is stronger for interpersonally oriented behaviours and weaker for organisational change and task-oriented behaviours. The 27-item SD3, which simultaneously measures narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy were used in the measurement of the Dark Triad traits (Jones & Paulhus, 2014; Rogoza & Cieciuch, 2018). Respondents that took part in the 27-item SD3 rated their responses using the Likert type scale, ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). Buckels, Trapnell and Paulhus (2014) and Maples, Lamkin and Miller (2014) remarked that the Dark Triad traits do not have a simple one-dimensional structure, but they are frequently reduced to a

general score and analysed in the context of variables of interest, leading to superficial and blurred results as a result of the theoretical convergence of the structure of psychopathy and Machiavellianism. Figure 1 shows the Hierarchical structure of the Dark Triad of personalities adapted from Rogoza and Cieciuch (2018), where arrows represent significant correlations between facets larger than 40 and stronger correlations are represented by bolded arrows. The Dark Triad's twelve facets can be summarised by arranging a hierarchical structure where narcissism-related facets are unconnected to the psychopathy and Machiavellianism, whereas psychopathy and Machiavellianism manifest many similar characteristics and can only be differentiated closer to the bottom of the hierarchical structure. This type of hierarchical structure introduces controversy to the current conceptualisations of the Dark Triad of personality, where psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism, are assumed to be structurally equivalent traits (Rogoza & Cieciuch, 2017).

Figure 1 shows that all Dark Triad traits possess grit on some level and that Machiavellianism and psychopathy exhibit compliance with the rule as well as insubstantial interaction with narcissism. Generally, narcissism is differentiated from the Dark Triad on the second level, whereas Machiavellianism and psychopathy could not be adequately differentiated until the 9th level of the hierarchical structure and therefore, it implies that narcissism disassociates from other forms of the Dark Triad at the highest possible level in the hierarchy (Rogoza & Cieciuch, 2018). Also, it was difficult to differentiate between the two additional distinct facets of suspiciousness and foolhardiness that emerged for Machiavellianism on the 10th level and foolhardiness for psychopathy on the 11th level because they share some similar characteristics (Rogoza & Cieciuch, 2018).

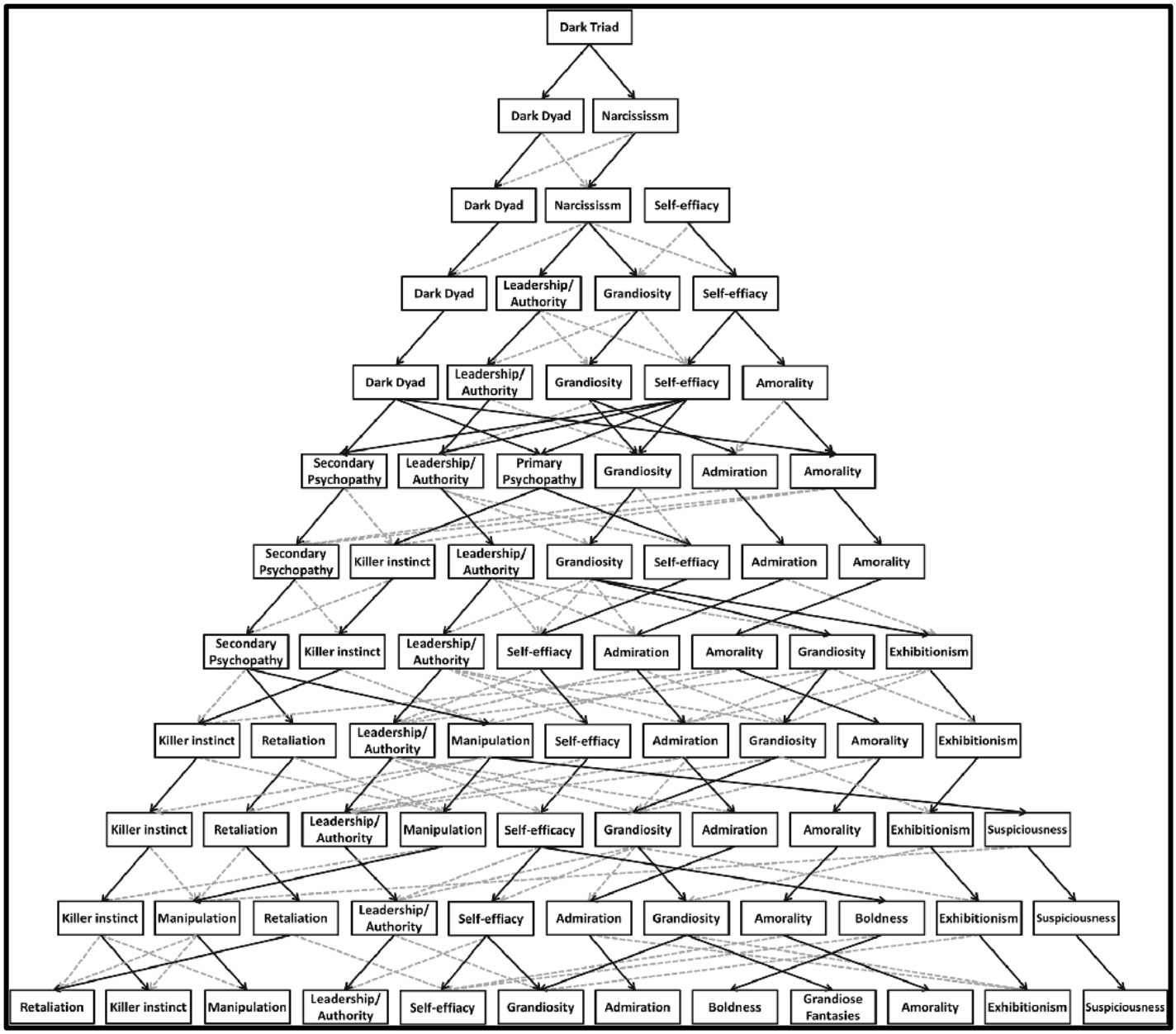


Figure 1 Hierarchical structure of the Dark Triad of Personalities adapted from Rogoza and Cieciuch (2018)

Narcissism

Narcissistic individuals overestimate themselves and their abilities by aspiring for roles that provide them with power and influence as well as demand excessive rewards and recognition because of their low levels of empathy and emotional intimacy in relationships (Grijalva & Newman, 2015). Narcissistic leaders have the tendency of being aggressive with anyone who seeks to resist or oppose them, and they are at risk of isolating themselves once achieving success, despite seeking the admiration and praise of others (Webster, 2015).

In the study by Batool (2013), the author found that leaders who showed narcissist tendencies by a lack of the show of empathy for their often place a barrier on the learning and development of their employees as well as their overall productivity. In addition, tendency if the narcissist leader to keep to themselves even while seeking the praises of others as asserted by Webster (2015) often make them lack social awareness (Batool, 2013).

Machiavellianism

Machiavellian leaders have a predisposition for engaging in amoral manipulation, in an attempt to control and discredit others, as well as to seek status for themselves (Webster, 2015). There has been controversy over the conceptual difference between Machiavellian leaders and organisational psychopaths (Boddy, 2015; Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus, 2013).

Psychopathic Personality

Workplace psychopathy consists of effective interpersonal traits of psychopathy of egocentricity, impulsivity, guiltlessness, lack of empathy, grandiosity, superficial charm as well as irresponsibility and lack of behavioural controls (Smith & Lilienfeld, 2013). Boddy (2015) suggested that leaders displaying psychopathic characteristics will produce a disillusioned, disheartened and disengaged workforce and employees with higher levels of anger, fear, insecurity, distress, despair, frustration, and lower levels of well-being. He indicated that approximately 3-4% of individuals in higher level positions in organisations display subclinical psychopathy traits. Employees who are perceived by a

psychopath leader in an organisation as a threat to the progression of the leader's career are likely to be threatened, undermined, targeted, and eventually removed from the organisation (Boddy, Miles, Sanyal & Hartog, 2015). Some researchers have disputed that mild expressions of some of its characteristics can be adaptive in certain settings, such as entrepreneurial activities and in negotiating business dealings, notwithstanding the extensively held view that psychopathy is consistently maladaptive (Webster, 2015). For instance, it has been suggested that an individual with psychopathic traits such as grandiosity, fearlessness, and charm may be prone to maladaptive and/or adaptive behaviours, depending on situational moderating variables (Smith & Lilienfeld, 2013). The negative behaviours of psychopath leaders and their lack of insight as well as the fear they instil in those around them, make it an extremely difficult area to study.

2.3.2 Trait Activation Model of Destructive Leadership

The Trait activation model of destructive leadership shown in Figure 2 demonstrates that situation strength, situation trait release and situation behavioural appropriateness that make up the leadership traits and behaviours that result either in leaders' effectiveness or leaders' destructiveness (van Knippenberg, 2012).

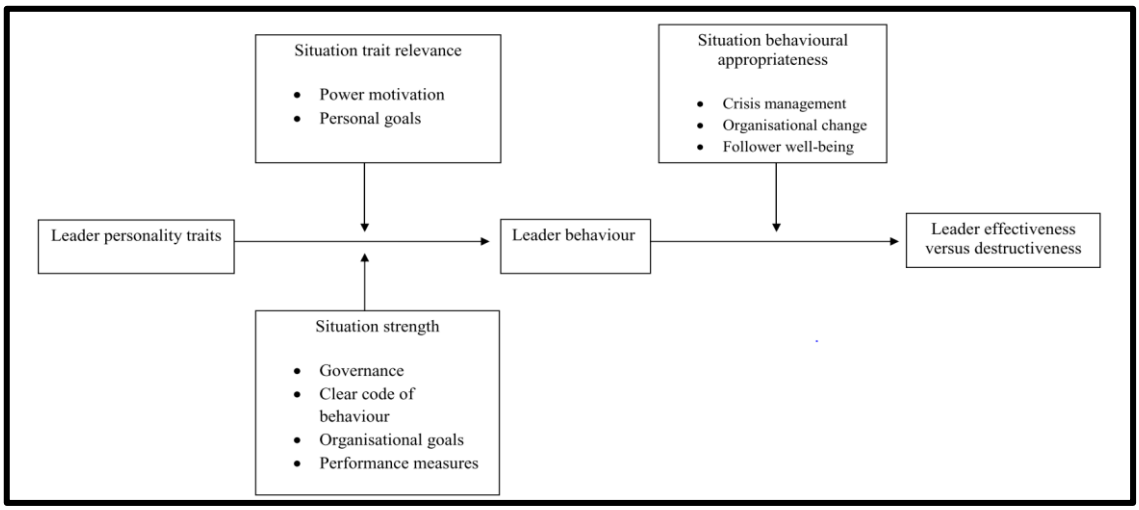


Figure 2 - Trait activation model of destructive leadership (van Knippenberg, 2012)

2.4 Definition of Destructive Leadership

Erickson, Shaw, Murray and Branch (2015) define destructive leadership as callous, unrestrained, and rigid leadership that may harm or intends to harm organisations and/or followers by using a leadership style that involves the use of harmful methods of influence and management practices that instil fear in their followers. He noted that destructive leaders did not harm only their immediate followers but also the organisations in which they worked as leaders. Also, Kaiser and Craig (2013) define destructive leadership as behaviour by a manager, a leader, or supervisor that knowingly violates the legitimate interest of the organisation, its members, or other legitimate stakeholders by sabotaging or undermining their goals, wellbeing, motivation, effectiveness, tasks, and resources. According to Webster, Brough and Daly (2016) destructive leadership is exhibited by a pattern of selfish behaviour by a leader that hinders the achievement of subordinates and/or organisations. During the last decades, researchers working on leadership have been interested in facilitating the understanding of the bright side of leadership in the areas of personal, interpersonal and organisational leadership and paying less attention to the darker side of leadership (Aravena, 2016)

2.5 Destructive Leadership Behaviours

Tran, Tian, Li, and Sankoh (2014) identified the characteristics of destructive leadership as being; hostility and trait negative affectivity, personal charisma, a pessimistic view of the world, personal power demands, as well as a dark triad of personalities (Narcissistic, Machiavellian, and Psychopathic). Destructive leadership behaviour influences individuals and organisations because of the interaction between followers and leaders.

Evidence provided by Erickson, Shaw, Murray and Branch (2015) who accessed the effect of destructive leadership 2000 United States workers shows that excessive control and being unreal with expectations are common characteristics of toxic supervision which have been reported to be detrimental to the workplace

relationship between leaders and their assistants (Erickson, Shaw, Murray, & Branch, 2015).

2.5.1 Abusive Supervision

The integrated model of the mechanism leading to abusive supervision, as shown in Figure 3, indicates that identity threat, social learning, and self-regulation impairment adversely contribute to abusive supervision (Tepper, Simon & Park, 2017).

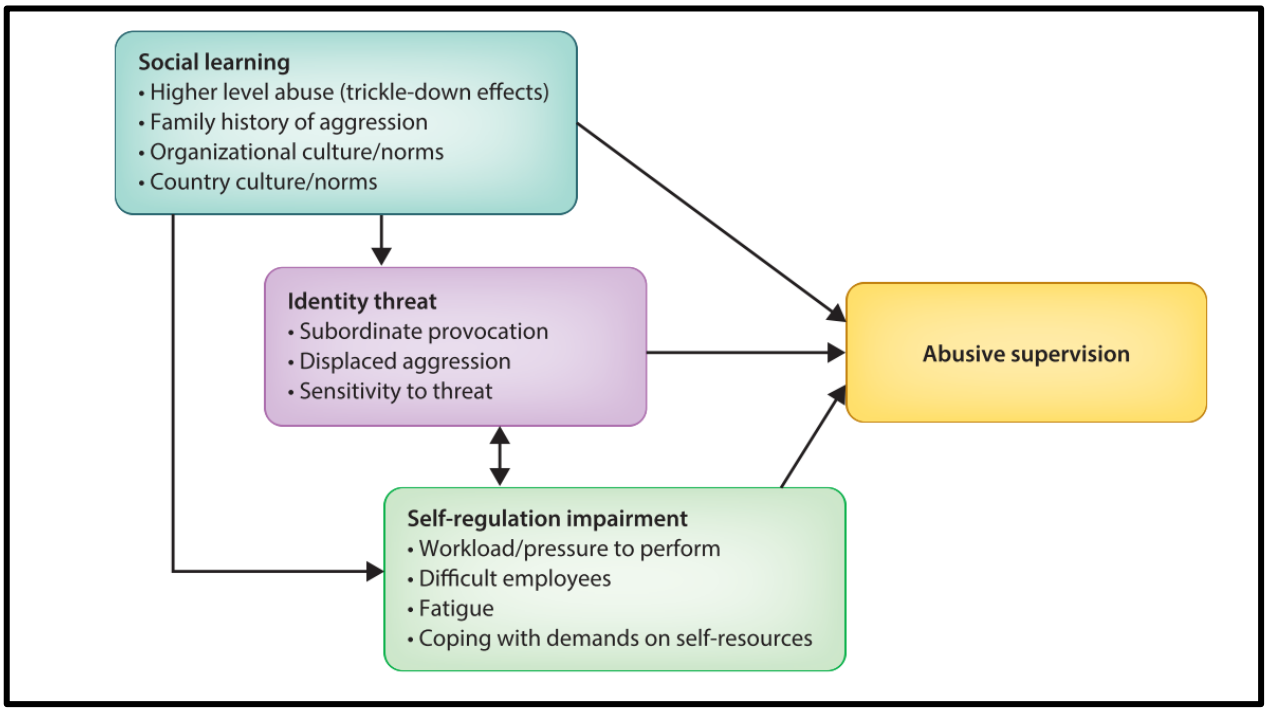


Figure 3: Integrative model of the mechanisms leading to abusive supervision adapted from Tepper, Simon and Park (2017).

2.5.2 Petty Tyranny

Petty tyranny has a lot in common with abusive supervision. Tyrannical leaders have little or no regard for their followers and this is evident in the way they mistreat subordinates to ensure they achieve success in the organisation (Tran, Tian, Li & Sankoh, 2014). Another destructive leadership behaviour that researchers are interested in is workplace oppression.

2.5.3 Workplace Oppression

Distinctive workplace behaviours were recently simulated by asking student respondents to predict how they would react to a variety of scenarios and the result shows that narcissists claim to use soft manipulation tactics; psychopaths adopt hard tactics; and the most flexible, Machiavellian, adopt both soft and hard tactics (Furnham, Richards & Paulhus, 2013). Tran, Tian, Li and Sankoh (2014) indicated that in workplace oppression, the manager or supervisor abuses the subordinates to achieve personal success.

A core form of workplace oppression often found in organisations with destructive style of leadership is ingroup favouritism (Palermo, Carnaz & Duarte, 2018) where toxic leaders will only favour followers who are susceptible to their style of leadership. The perception of favouritism in the workplace is usually described using the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory which suggests that supervisors do not treat all their subordinates the same way (Hsiung & Bolino, 2017). Hsiung and Bolino (2017) further argue that toxic leaders who engage in workplace favouritism often leave the group that is not favoured, feeling oppressed, which in turn, reduces their motivation and confidence to perform their work responsibilities.

2.6 Consequences of Destructive Leadership Behaviour

Research has shown that destructive leadership has negative consequences on individuals, groups, teams, and organisations. Destructive leadership behaviour results in subordinates resisting the leader's attempts at influencing their work behaviour and this can contribute to a variety of human resource losses in organisations (Webster, Brough & Daly, 2016). Destructive leadership has been noted for increased negative feelings, such as bitterness, irritation or anger by increasing the level of psychological stress subordinates experience, resulting in an overall decline in the wellbeing and performance of the employee within and outside the organisation (Erickson, Shaw, Murray & Branch, 2015). Also, the climate of fear produced by destructive leaders leads to lack of trust and instability in an establishment as well as the inability to ensure long-term organisational

success (Erickson, Shaw, Murray & Branch, 2015). The causes and effects of destructive leadership behaviour in individuals and organisations which is adapted from Aravena (2017) are presented in the model shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4: Causes and effects of destructive leadership behaviour adapted from Aravena, (2017).

2.7 Measures of Destructive Leadership Behaviour

Leadership traits and behaviour are the measures used to identify potentially derailing characteristics that can be useful for selection purposes, and for raising leaders' awareness of potential derailers, but are unable to make leaders change their behaviour (Webster, 2015). He also noted that using clinical personality assessments for purposes other than that for which they were designed, is not recommended as it is likely to lead to ethical and legal implications. He suggested that the organisations assess candidates through multiple measures of destructive leadership behaviours to screen out destructive leaders during selection, succession management, and promotion as well as to prevent poor selection of leaders. There are a limited number of inventories designed to specifically measure dark side traits and behaviours in the workplace, and a significant proportion of them are based on the DSM-IV (Webster, 2015).

2.7.1 Self-Report Leadership Profiles

Most dark side inventories continue to link their scales to the DSM-IV criteria for personality disorders despite the fact that the review of the literature identified five self-report measures of the characteristics of the dark side of leadership designed to be used within a normal population (Webster, 2015). He suggested that the use of a valid assessment, which is developed using a normal population and is not based on DSM-IV/DSM-V criteria, may be a more suitable measure of destructive leadership behaviour.

2.7.2 Third Party Inventory

According to Webster (2015), there are a number of third-party inventories designed for managers to measure destructive leadership behaviour in individuals. Though multi-source feedback measures are frequently used for the development of leaders, third-party diagnostic inventories may empower followers in determining whether they work for a toxic manager or not (Webster, 2015).

2.7.3 360-Degree Feedback

The fear of reprisals which may result in appraisers choosing not to be truthful in their feedback or participation can hinder the effectiveness of the 360-degree feedback assessments on destructive managers who exhibit manipulative behaviour (Webster, 2015). However, he indicated that the 360-degree feedback tool lacks comprehensive items designed to cover the range of dark side leadership behaviours and characteristics, such as destructive leadership, abusive supervision and derailed leadership.

2.8 Mechanisms of Preventing Destructive Leadership

The best way to prevent destructive leadership is by early detection and intervention which primarily depends on the willingness and ability of senior management to identify and promptly deal with destructive leaders (Erickson,

Shaw, Murray & Branch, 2015). He adopted three key stages at which destructive leaders can be identified and dealt with, they include training of those who are tasked with selecting new leaders on how to identify destructive leadership traits such as a narcissistic personality and tendencies toward destructive behaviours; the application of 360-degree feedback mechanisms like the one that is currently used within the U.S. military to ensure employees are able to honestly and anonymously evaluate their superiors, and senior management must be seen to be dealing with the issue of destructive leadership in an effective manner. It is important to note that dealing with destructive leaders can be a difficult task, but it can be prevented by the management of organisations through selective hiring and promotion practices that clearly state and model the positive leadership values as well as behaviours important to the organisation (Erickson, Shaw, Murray & Branch, 2015).

2.8.1 Leaders' Self-Regulatory Mechanism

Researchers have shown that impaired leader self-regulation has been associated with facilitating destructive leadership behaviours in individuals (Kaiser, LeBreton & Hogan, 2015; Krasikova, Green & LeBreton, 2013). Researchers have been studying the negative consequences that undesirable goals can have on individuals by identifying the goal difficulty and the extent to which rewards are given upon goal attainment, encourage destructive leadership behaviours through their effect on levels of stress (Webster, 2015). Krasikova and Lebreton (2013) suggested that, especially in leaders with a high need for individual achievement, perceived goal blockage was a predictor of the choice to engage in destructive leadership. He argued that leaders with self-regulation impairment are more likely to react to goal blockage by choosing to engage in destructive leadership. Krasikova, Green and LeBreton (2013) further explained that leaders with high negative affectivity have a negativity bias when interpreting events and are more likely to perceive their goals as being blocked by the organisation or their subordinates. Depletion of resources to deal with role overload, organisational constraints, or interpersonal conflict may cause failure of self-regulatory processes (Byrne, et al., 2014). In order to ascertain the

determinants and effects of an individual's behaviour, self- regulatory mechanisms in human motivation and action are essential for self-observation and self-monitoring (Webster, 2015).

Mikkelson, York and Arritola (2015) argue that the ability of toxic leadership to overcome the self-regulation impartment will lead to the development of a positive relationship between them and their followers. This positive relationship is further argued by Boies, Fiset and Gill (2015) to effective communication and employees who in turn lead to positive outcomes such as job satisfaction, motivation, and organisational commitment. The evidence from the studies by Mikkelson, York, and Arritola (2015) and Boies, Fiset and Gill (2015) showed that clear and efficient communication increases employees' motivation and focus, thereby increasing work output and organisational growth.

2.8.2 Leaders' Intervention Mechanism

Individuals may be enabled to improve their resiliency of responding effectively to stressful situations via programmes that deliver Acceptance Commitment Training, such as, strategies for dealing with aversive feelings and moods, thoughtful planning of actions, reframing unhelpful thoughts, clarifying values and mindfulness techniques to leaders (Webster, 2015). He determined that there was little empirical research, to date, into the development of leaders with dark side characteristics to determine the best approach for intervention. Nevertheless, the evaluation of the effectiveness of the practices used to develop leaders, such as managerial training, networking and action learning, executive coaching, and formal or informal mentoring have not been given much attention (Nieminen, Smerek, Kotrba & Denison, 2013).

2.9 Organisational Responses to Destructive Leadership

This section focuses on how organisations deal with managers or heads of department displaying destructive leadership behaviours. Webster (2015) noted that managers may engage in dispositional negative affectivity when faced with difficulty in achieving organisational goals, especially when punitive measures

are given for failure or underperformance. He further explained that the likelihood of activation of dark side traits, leading to engagement in derailing behaviours increases by creating an environment where negative effects is likely to be triggered in leaders. He argued that organisations that place equal emphasis on the behaviours demonstrated in organisational goal achievement, together with goal outcome, are less likely to encourage destructive behaviours to ensure goal attainment. Also, Erickson, Shaw, Murray and Branch (2015) demonstrated that leaders may become destructive in an organisation when they feel that their personal goals, such as career promotion and financial rewards, cannot be achieved in the organisation using legitimate means. Even though the use of a prevention strategy of screening out leaders prone to engage in destructive leadership behaviours is done during selection processes for recruitment and succession management, organisations continue to experience their share of destructive leaders (Webster, 2015). Therefore, Executives and HR professionals have the responsibility of removing such leaders through disciplinary processes or performance management, when recurring and comprehensible behaviours that cause distress and harm to subordinates are identified (Webster, 2015). However, he revealed that it can be difficult to remove destructive leaders because they are politically and socially ingenious and often hold relationships with people in powerful positions.

2.10 Conclusion

The review on leadership theory and destructive leadership behaviour gives us the opportunity to explore the demands placed on leaders of today. The various areas examined help the understanding of individual traits and the behaviours associated with successful leadership as well as the nature of followers and their relationship to the leader. The key roles organisations' management play in preventing destructive leadership were also discussed to ensure high productivity of the workers.

3 Research Methodology

This is a qualitative research done to examine the effect of destructive leadership on employee performance at a leading company in South Africa. The specific aim of the research was to assess the impact of destructive leadership on the work motivation and progress of subordinate employees in their workplace. This chapter is divided into various sections describing the approach and design of the research, the description of the participants and how they were chosen, the process of collection, interpretation and analysis of data, ethical considerations, the role of the researcher and concludes with the validity and reliability of the study.

3.1 Research Approach

The study adopts the social constructivism worldview philosophy which is a worldview that depends on the respondent's understanding of the events they have lived through (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006). This qualitative research approach was suitable for the study as it aims to make sense of the experiences of the employees of the water company from their viewpoint. The social constructivism paradigm considers the link between the interviewer and interviewee as intricately connected (Creswell & Creswell, 2014).

This research approach served as a guideline for choosing the appropriate research design and appropriate procedures suitable for my study. This is to follow the suggestion of Creswell (2014) that a research approach is comprised of (1) a philosophical paradigm (2) the related study plan to the paradigm and (3) the distinct procedures that transform the approach into practice.

According to Yilmaz (2013), the social constructivism paradigm tends to explore a socially constructed diverse conception of reality through a value-laden, flexible, descriptive, holistic and content-sensitive structure. This research approach employed in-depth interviews, direct engagement and open-ended conversations, multiple sources of data as methods of data collection – all of which were essential for reaching quality data in this study.

3.2 Research Design

The qualitative research design used, as determined the research question and goal, is the phenomenological design (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). Phenomenology is appropriate for the study because it focuses on the common experiences of the respondents. Also, it helps to gain deep insights into their experiences from their individual points of view (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). It is the goal as the researcher to make meaning of the lived experiences, viewpoints and emotions of the interviewees while minimising bias. The purposive sampling technique and open-ended in-depth interview method was used, as generally employed in a phenomenological design research (Padilla-Diaz, 2015).

This study adopted a single case study design where data was retrieved from a single case setting. The rationale for choosing this research design is because the case study research design aims to analyse a specific issue within a specific location or organisation (Walliman, 2016). Thus, the study focused on the effect of Destructive Leadership on organisational performance in the South African company being studied.

The case study adopted an exploratory approach since the study aimed at providing an in-depth investigation and analysis of a concept (Neuman, 2014) which in this case is Destructive Leadership and its impact on organisational performance in this company. This chapter highlights the ethical considerations that had to be taken into account. The study is aimed at investigating the relationship between destructive leadership and subordinate performance in a South African parastatal.

3.3 Research Questions

This study evaluated how destructive leadership influences the lives of employees and how constructive leadership can improve employees' progress and motivation. Therefore, this study sought to provide answers to three research problems.

1. What were the leadership styles that the employees regarded as toxic?
2. What is the impact of destructive leadership on subordinates' performance and growth?
3. What personal or organisational changes can be made to correct destructive leadership as suggested by the employees?
4. What improvements may be expected in the work attitude of the subordinate workers after personal and organisational changes have been applied to leaders that practice destructive leadership in the workplace?

3.4 Participant Selection

Purposive sampling method was adopted and respondents were categorised based on job level, skills set, experience and duration of employment in the company. In participant selection, the purposive sampling method is used to incorporate a distinct criterion that can enhance the interpretation of the researcher while exploring the lives of respondents (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2013). It requires diversity and symbolic representation of the entire population size (Palinkas, et al., 2013). The study participants consisted of 14 professional and non-professional staff members across various levels of the Water Company, South Africa (see Table 1 for Participant selection criteria). The Parastatal has five operating entities, of which one of them are divided into five departments: namely Operations, Risk, Human Resources, Maintenance and Finance. This research is focused on the Bulk Water Distribution division. The population is made up of 650 staff members and cuts across all levels of the five departments, 150 staff members hold managerial/supervisory roles. The researcher divided the distribution division's employees into 5 categories for the purpose of this research. The sample was drawn from the following role titles: Management, Supervisory, Technical Specialist, Technical Support and Support.

The District Superintendent and Regional Operations Manager were interviewed from the Management section. The Financial Administrator and Auxiliary Services Co-ordinator were interviewed in the Supervisory section. The Welder, Artisan and a Plumber were interviewed from the Technical Specialist section. The Workshop Assistant, Accounts Assistant, Chain Saw Operator, Electrical

Assistant were interviewed in the Technical Operations section. From the Support section, Secretary Risk, Secretary Finance and Human Resource Receptionist, were interviewed (See Table 1). The participation of the employees in this study was voluntary.

Table 1 - Participant Selection Criteria

Participant	Department	Job Type	Skill Set	Experience	Period employed by Company
P1	Management	District Superintendent	Trade	Skilled	27 years
P2	Management	Regional Operations Manager	Trade	Skilled	28 years
P3	Supervisory	Auxiliary Service Co-ordinator	Matric	Experience	14 years
P4	Supervisory	Financial Administrator	Matric	Experience	8 years
P5	Technical Specialist	Welder	Trade	Skills	13.5 years
P6	Technical Specialist	Artisan	Trade	Skills	7 years
P7	Technical Specialist	Plumber	Trade	Skills	19 years
P8	Technical Support	Workshop Assistant	National Diploma	Skills	18 years
P9	Technical Support	Chain saw operator	G12	Experience	7 years
P10	Technical Support	Accounts Assistant	Grade 12	Skills	6 years

Participant	Department	Job Type	Skill Set	Experience	Period employed by Company
P11	Technical Support	Electrical Assistant	Trade	Skills	10 years
P12	Support	Receptionist	Grade 12	Experience	13 years
P13	Support	Finance Secretary	Grade 12	Experience	19 years
P14	Support	Risk Secretary	Grade 12	Experience	5 years

Note: The table shows the participant identifier as P1 for participant 1.

3.5 Interview Setting

Delimitation

This study confined itself to collecting qualitative data via semi-structured interviews from the purposively selected staff of the company that formed the basis of this study.

Individual interview sessions were conducted for each participant. Owing to the nature of interviews, it was imperative that the venue and time of the interview was convenient for the interviewees. Doody and Noonan (2013) suggest that interviews should be done in a relaxed environment, devoid of any form of pressure for participants. The participants chose the venue and time that was suitable for them outside the work area so that they would be more relaxed and truthful about the questions asked.

Research Instrument

The researcher was the main instrument of data collection in this study. Individual face-to-face interview method was used which required active involvement in the

data collection process. An interview is a dialogue which is conducted by the researcher to get information from the interviewee and explore perspectives on a particular idea or situation (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). It is a powerful instrument used in qualitative research as it allows researchers to explore people's views in great depth and allows interviewees to express their deepest thoughts (Anyan, 2013).

In this study, the interview was based on 34 semi-structured questions (See Appendix 1) aimed at getting information on the consequences of leadership style on the personal and professional lives of the employees. These questions were reviewed by experts in the field of qualitative research to evaluate their credibility. During the course of the interview, a relaxed ambience was established to build some level of trust with the interviewees, thereby reducing apprehensions that may have served as a hindrance to the quality of data collected.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The participation of interviewees was voluntary, and they implied consent to be involved in this study by signing an informed consent form, which included the detailed importance and procedures of the research, the role of interviewees and the option to withdraw consent at any point of the interview.

Due to the sensitivity of the study, it was important that anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was maintained. Pseudonyms were employed for the data collected. This study was conducted in the most credible way possible. Bias was avoided as much as possible during the course of this research.

It is important to note however, that this type of sampling could present problems, in the sense that it may deceptively allude to being representative of the population as a whole. Hussey and Hussey (1997) warn that bias may occur if samples are chosen deliberately by individuals as they may allude to favouritism. The criteria used for selection was that candidates were chosen based on skill set, job role, tenure, gender and ensuring that all departments were duly

represented. The sample size was made up of 14 candidates of which 4 were managers/supervisors.

Unintended consequences of this research

Due to work commitments the sample interviewed was smaller than initially intended. The results and analysis would have yielded more credible results with a bigger sample. Two of the candidates were uneasy during the interview based on a fear of being marginalised should their supervisors become aware of their participation.

3.7 Data Collection and Procedure

3.7.1 Data Collection and Analysis

The study adopted a qualitative research approach which focused on providing in-depth knowledge on a studied concept as opposed to seeking for a cause and effect relationship which is the major tenet of the quantitative research approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2014).

Consequently, data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted on 14 staff members from different departments and levels in the organisational hierarchy.

The research participants were selected using the purposive sampling technique where only participants that satisfy the outlined criteria were selected (Rossman & Marshall, 2016).

The preceding chapters have reviewed the literature pertaining to destructive leadership and the impacts on an organisations performance and its employees' behaviour.

The most appropriate method of data collection for the study was individual interviews. This method of data collection requires a great deal of effort as the researcher serves as the main instrument and also allowed the researcher to save on time and costs.

3.7.2 Individual Interviews

The respondents were interviewed through direct face-to-face in-depth interviews. In-depth interviewing is one of the most efficient qualitative research techniques of collecting primary data as it helps to uncover in-depth details of interviewees' experience and perspective on a particular subject (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013). It was suitable for the study as it helped to explore the deep thoughts and feelings of the respondents. It provided the opportunity to treat each employee as an important source of data. The interview questions were semi-structured and open-ended. This was done to elicit a conversational mood with the participants so that they could discuss freely and to gain deeper insights into the study, this allowed straying away from the guide when appropriate. The interview was scheduled with respect to each participant's convenience. Each interview was scheduled at a time convenient for the participant and each interview lasted approximately one hour. Each participant received an email, text, or voicemail reminder the day before the interview.

3.7.3 Collecting verbal data

A good qualitative interview should be naturally interactive and seek quality responses (Alshenqeeti, 2014). A conducive environment was created for the interviews. The interview was semi-structured and open-ended. Participant responses were acknowledged. To secure precision of the discussion, the interviews were manually and digitally recorded. The recordings of all the respondents were sent to a professional service for transcription.

3.8 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation are key components of research (Russell, 2014). Analysing and interpreting data affects the quality, validity and reliability of a research (Alshenqeeti, 2014). For this study, the six-point method of data analysis as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2014) was adopted. The six points include:

1. Organising and preparing collected data for analysis;
2. Reflecting on the data as a whole;
3. Coding the data;
4. Identifying categories/themes for analysis;
5. Interrelating the themes to present data;
6. Data interpretation.

3.9 Organising and reading data for analysis

Data was collected, the interviews were transcribed from third party transcription professionals and matched with the interviews from manually documented information to check for errors. Using the transcribed interviews, the interviews were sorted into the right order. This presented the opportunity of discarding unnecessary data and shifted the focus on the salient points and important parts of the collected data. No important data was lost in the bid to select the key points necessary for the research objectives.

3.10 Data Coding

The NVivo software was used to code and categorise the raw data. Coding is an important step of analysis after data has been organised. Coding was employed to quantify the data and give it structure. By looking through the data the sense of the relationship between the research questions and the interpretation of the data was provided. The storyline as developed and summarised the research. This storyline assisted in determining the concepts and themes that could be used to organise and code the data (Stuckey, 2015). Data was categorised with similar meanings into codes. By looking through the data again, new codes were discovered and codes that could be split into two. The data dictionary (code book) was created to boost the validity of the study. Reading through the code dictionary ensured that it aligned to the research objectives.

3.11 Categories and themes

After coding, similar codes were grouped into four categories which includes: (1) Destructive leadership behaviour; (2) employees' experiences in the company; (3) impact on progress of employees; and (4) personal leadership style (see Table 2 for category characteristics).

Categorising the code segments helped to recognise the themes. Careful effort was exerted to make sure that the theme reflected the research purpose and that credibility and trustworthiness had been incorporated into the data analysis.

Table 2 - Category Characteristics

#	Categories	Characteristics
1	Destructive leadership behaviour	Supercilious, unprofessional, autocratic, unfair expectations, irascible, obstinate, inflexible
2	Experience in company	Low energy, unmotivated, fear, distrust, public embarrassment, feeling unqualified
3	Impact on Progress	Sadness, frustration, anger, pain, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, seeking a way out
4	Personal leadership awareness	Learnt from bosses, good communication, compassion, trust, respect, empowerment, servant leadership, empathy
5	Expected Changes	Motivation, focus, happiness, confidence, work satisfaction, growth

3.12 Synthesis and Conclusion of Data

This research targets the impact of destructive leadership behaviour on work motivation and progress of employees of a water company in South Africa through individual perspectives. The aim was to assess improvements in the lives of the employees who would expect changes after organisational changes had been applied to toxic leaders. Data was collected through individual interviews that were manually documented and digitally stored on recording devices. There was a need to respect their decisions as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2014). The data was transcribed and organised into transcripts.

3.13 Role of Qualitative Researcher

The role of the researcher has been argued to be an important aspect in qualitative data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2014). This is due to the likelihood of the researcher to influence the outcome of the study thus raising a question on the reliability and credibility of the research findings (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

The researcher was motivated to conduct this study through personal experience and anecdotal tales, having been affected by destructive leadership styles in the past. The impact of destructive leadership affected the researcher in the workplace and in their personal life, to the point where it created inferiority complex issues. The researcher felt as if they lacked talent and could not perform their job properly, this contributed to depression. Discussions with friends found that they could relate, having them narrate their experiences in a toxic environment. Realisation dawned that the impact of destructive leadership on performance and progress was not well discussed.

The researcher being actively involved in the data collection and analysis process, created a comfortable ambiance in order to obtain quality data for this study. Employing emotional intelligence as a qualitative researcher improves the connection between the researcher and participant and enhances the quality of data (Collins & Cooper, 2014). The researcher was able to control bias and apply

emotional intelligence. Furthermore, confidentiality was maintained for the participants.

3.14 Trustworthiness and Credibility

There was a high degree of thoroughness in the methods and procedures employed to achieve the findings. The trustworthiness and credibility of a qualitative research is vital for the validity of the research results (Cope, 2014). The trustworthiness of the research can be assessed through its credibility, reliability and generalisability (Leung, 2015).

The credibility of this study is seen in the validity of the research design, sampling method, data collection and analysis, and results. Evaluation was maintained through the credibility of the research through triangulation and participant validation. Reliability was tested by using the popperian dictum of falsifiability. Reliability refers to the reproducibility of the procedures the research is to achieve similar results (Grossoehme, 2014). Generalisability was achieved by the use of systemic sampling, triangulation and constant comparison (Leung, 2015)

3.15 Triangulation

Triangulation was used in combining all findings from the individual interviews, the manually recorded interview events and other observations. Observations include fear, hesitation and body language of participants. Triangulation enabled the utilisation of the data completely (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014).

3.16 Participant Validation

The need for research participant to validate the authenticity of collected data has been argued by Creswell and Creswell (2014) to enhance the credibility and reliability of qualitative research. Copies of the transcribed interview was provided to each participant so that they could assess the validity of the study findings and compare their responses with the drawn conclusions.

3.17 Conclusion

This chapter illustrates the approach and design of this study, the techniques used in data collection, organisation and interpretation which were quantified into codes, categories and themes. The researcher was actively involved in the data collection process and ensured anonymity of respondents. Ethical consideration was taken into account with regards to company information, employee privacy and employee participation.

Throughout the data collection process it remained difficult to persuade the candidates to participate and answer all the questions posed. Bless and Higson-Smith (2000) stipulated that the ethical rights of a participant were the right to privacy, voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality. Babbie and Mouton (2001) inclined that partaking in research interrupts the standard sequence of undertakings and could possibly invade the individual's privacy. It is important that participation is voluntary giving candidates the right to abstain from revealing personal information. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), the risk exists that personal information may be revealed that is unknown to others and that could be harmful. Participants were sensitised to this risk. Bless and Higson-Smith (2000) indicate that candidates might be willing to divulge private information should anonymity be maintained. It was agreed with the Parastatal that the information would only be used for research and that the employee information, such as names, would not be made public. The protection of the candidate's identity to prevent information being revealed was maintained by omitting names and using numbers to represent candidates, thereby ensuring anonymity. Bless and Higson-Smith (2000) maintain that confidentiality be ensured whilst Babbie and Mouton (2001) support this by maintaining that this can be done by changing information. In this case numbers were used to represent candidate names. The parastatal in this research requested that the organisation's name and the employee names not be mentioned in the study. This was ensured by coding completed interviews and removing personal information.

4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This study was done to evaluate the impact of destructive leadership styles on work motivation and progress of employees in the Company through their individual perspective. In this chapter, the findings of this study are presented. The data was collected through individual interviews with 14 staff members, who were selected via the purposive sampling technique. The interview questions were semi-structured and open-ended to allow the researcher to enquire if further data was required. In this section, the demographics and profiles of the respondents (see Table 4 for participants' demographic characteristics) are described as well as how the emerging themes answered the research questions.

4.2 Participant's Profiles

P1 is a female who works as a secretary in the Risk Control Department under the support section of the Company. She joined the company 5 years ago with the intention of extending her studies through the opportunities offered by the company. She is dedicated to her job. She considers herself as the heart of the department and ensures everything is carried out properly.

P2 is a female secretary in the Finance department who falls under the support section. She was attracted to the company, 19 years ago, because she believed it would provide job stability and lots of benefits. She has spent a total of 19 years in the company but has worked as a secretary in the Finance Department for 8 years. She was satisfied with her former boss as he was good to her, she does not derive satisfaction from her job anymore. She believes her years of experience with the company make her understand the demands of the company better.

P3 is a male receptionist at the Human Resource department under the support section. Prior to taking this job, he was unemployed. He took this job for financial reasons. He did not like his job initially, he has always performed his duties

diligently and would abide by the rules of the company. He has worked for the company for 13 years and his goal is to become an HR administrator in 3-4 years.

P4 is a female assistant at the Operations department under the technical support section who has worked at the company for 10 years. She joined the company because she could identify with the company values, she believed that she had the potential to add value to the company. Her belief is that the company goals are aligned to her career goals. Apart from handling her own work, she also assists her superiors.

P5 is an accounts assistant in the Finance department on the technical section. She joined the company because of the benefits it offered. Having spent six years with the company, she is dedicated to her work and willing to work outside the scope of her work responsibilities.

P6 is a male employee in the Operations department in the technical section. He has worked in the Company for seven years as a saw operator. The company's good reputation attracted him to apply for his job. He is active in his department and encourages his lazy colleagues to work.

P7 is a female workshop assistant. She applied to the company because it operates in the water sector; in her view, they provide life through water dispensation and she chose to be a part of that. She believes water industries should be supported as they are valuable as a source of life. She has worked for the company for 18 years. She plays as active role as a value champion and volunteers as a safety representative.

P8 is a male staff member who works in the Operations department in the technical section as a welder. He has worked in the company for 19 years. He applied to the job because he was looking for a job, he later developed welding skills which gave him technical exposure. He believes in putting in the best effort when doing his job and has a good relationship with his colleagues.

P9 is a male staff member in the Operations department working under the technical section. He joined the company seven years ago because he liked the

work environment. His experience and knowledge has built him up in his job. He believes he is valuable to his team members because he teaches them new skills.

P10 a male staff member who has worked in the Operations department, in the technical section for 13.5 years. He works as a welder and plumber. His passion to be an artisan made him join the company. He is confident that his skills make him an outstanding staff member that brings value to the company. He is focused and dedicated to his job.

P11 is a male staff member who works in a supervisory capacity in the Finance department, in the operations section as a financial administrator. He was nominated for the job and has spent eight years with the company. He believes that he would have enjoyed the job better earlier in his career. He applies his past experience in order to improve the processes and progress of the company.

P12 is a female who works as an Auxiliary services co-ordinator in the Human Resources department in the operations section. She joined the company because she needed a job and has since spent 14 years in the company. She believes that she does not add value to the job and her job is annoying; but she still tries to stay focused.

P13 is a male who works as a District superintendent and has been working for the company and in the same industry for 27 years. He is concerned about the quality of water delivered to communities and the supply process since there is an aging infrastructure and that was his original motivation for taking the job.

P14 is a male who works as a Regional operations manager in the Operations department. He joined the company due his passion for growth and has spent 28 years there. Having spent almost three decades in the company, he believes his experience adds greatest value to the company.

Table 3 – Participants Demographic Characteristics

Participants ID	Gender	Years Employed	Skill Level	Department
P1	Male	28	Skilled	Management
P2	Male	27	Skilled	Management
P3	Female	14	Skilled	Operations (Supervisory)
P4	Male	8	Skilled	Operations (Supervisory)
P5	Male	13.5	Skilled	Tech Specialist
P6	Male	7	Skilled	Tech Specialist
P7	Male	19	Skilled	Tech Specialist
P8	Female	18	Skilled	Tech Support
P9	Male	7	Semi-skilled	Tech Support
P10	Female	6	Semi-Skilled	Tech Support
P11	Female	10	Semi-Skilled	Tech Support
P12	Male	13	Skilled	Support
P13	Female	19	Skilled	Support
P14	Female	5	Skilled	Support

Table 4: Participants Demographic Characteristics

Note: The table shows the participant identifier as P1 for participant 1.

4.3 Emerging Themes

The emerging themes from the interviews were: (1) pernicious conduct experienced by employees; (2) employees' experiences in a toxic workplace; (3) consequences on employees' performance and progress; (4) employee's personal leadership style shaped by experiences; and (5) expected changes after organisational changes have been applied toxic leaders (see Table 3 for theme characteristics).

Table 4 – Theme Characteristic

#	Themes	Characteristics
1	Pernicious conduct experienced by employees	Unwelcoming to other's ideas, easily angered, unrealistic expectations from employees, micromanagement, unethical behaviour, self-centred
2	Consequences of abusive leadership on employees' performance and progress	Under motivation to work, feeling unqualified to handle work, highly prone to mistakes,
3	Employees personal leadership style shaped by experiences	Better leader from experiences, compassionate, good communication with subordinates, showing understanding to the feelings of subordinate, building trust and respect
4	Changes after organisational changes have been applied to toxic leaders	Motivation to work, confidence in abilities, readiness to learn more to be better at the job, excitement and good mental health

4.4 Findings

An in-depth analysis was conducted to check for similar patterns, consistencies, contrasts and redundancy in the data. Information was than categorised from the collected data to recognise the themes that reflect the respondents' narratives. The emerging themes were aligned with the research aims and provided solutions to the research problems.

1. What were the leadership styles that the employees regarded as toxic?
2. What is the impact of destructive leadership on subordinates' performance and growth?
3. What organisational changes can be made to correct destructive leadership as suggested by the employees?
4. What improvements will be observed in the work attitude of the subordinate workers after organisational changes have been applied to leaders that practice destructive leadership in the workplace?

4.4.1 Research Question One

What were the leadership styles that the employees regarded as toxic? For the first research question, an emerging theme arose from the collected data that indicated the respondents' viewpoint (See Table 5 theme for question one).

The resultant theme is:

Pernicious conduct experienced by employees

Table 5 – Theme Outcomes (Research Question One)

#	Themes	Characteristics
1	Pernicious conduct experienced by employees	Unwelcoming to other's ideas, easily angered, unrealistic expectations of employees, micromanagement, unethical behaviour, self-centred

What were the leadership styles that the employees regarded as toxic?

Theme #1: Pernicious conduct experienced by employees.

The first emerging theme illustrates the destructive leadership styles experienced by the employees. It is imperative for the focus of this study, to establish from the participants the leadership style and decisions that they consider to be toxic. The toxicity of a leadership style is determined by the followers' individual interpretation of the leader's behaviour (Chua & Murray, 2015). When asked the respondents described the destructive leadership styles that affected them, repressed feelings were uncovered with most of the participants. As a result, they were allowed to vent their frustration and anger. Empathy and consideration was exerted when asking questions and responses were noted. The display of empathy and consideration assisted the researcher in building rapport and created a sense of trust.

Destructive leaders are known to misguide, mortify, terrify and manipulate their subordinates for their selfish interests (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014). The similar characteristics that emerged from the participants' individual narratives include: unwelcoming to other's ideas, being easily angered, unrealistic expectations of employees, micromanagement, unethical behaviour and being self-centred. The main attributes as described by the employees are:

Destructive Leadership

Unwelcoming to ideas

P3: *My boss uses a military approach, similar to the one that he used when serving in the army. He does not communicate with his team members and he only wants things to go a certain way because of his selfishness.*

P2: *Things have to be done her way or no other way.*

P5: *My boss is an autocrat. He is very stern and our interactions are strictly work related. My opinion does not matter to him and he does not allow suggestions and questions.*

P11: *Her leadership style is autocratic. She is very strict and always wants things to go her way.*

P13: *He gives you a job and expects you to do it without asking for your opinions or suggestions. He believes he has the power to always do things without being questioned.*

Easily angered

P2: *I do not feel comfortable when she is around. I dislike approaching her for questions to avoid her anger. I prefer to hear information and seek clarity from my other colleagues.*

P3: *He is easily irritated and does not allow us to talk freely.*

Unrealistic expectations from employees

P2: *She expects you to work outside your job scope without feeling any remorse. She will also insult you if you do not do the job properly and she does not care if it affects work hours.*

P8: *He expects one to do lots of running around without prior notice.*

P11: *My manager is very demanding. She always wants things to go her way but never wants to provide support when needed.*

Unethical behaviour

P2: *My boss treats me like I do not exist because I am a low-level staff. She trusts and respects the other team members. I used to attempt to be seen and heard by her but it has proved abortive so far.*

P4: *She makes decisions detrimental to the department and blames us for it. Sometimes, it seems like she intentionally wants us to make mistakes so that she can put us down.*

P12: *He does not treat all his staff members fairly. He ensures that most benefits go to his favourites and more work is done by the employees he does not like.*

Micromanagement

P1: *I really do not like her management style. She acts as though I am not capable of doing my job efficiently without being closely monitored.*

P5: *He is an autocratic leader. He excessively tries to control everything that goes on in the department.*

Self-centred

P3: *He behaves as if he has hidden agendas every time. He is not trustworthy and does not care about his staff members. He has no empathy at all for anybody.*

P5: My supervisor does not support his staff members. He only cares about his own reputation. He does not recommend us for training.

Conclusion of Research Question One

Researching the leader's historic behaviour and the progression to the current state, is important and should be shared with senior managers in the organisation. The creation of a coalition of managers who are able to address destructive behaviour, which will address matters in a manner that is not punitive or aggressive, but will set benchmarks through realistic timelines in addressing

objectives of participants. Coaching and mentoring and training are also options that could be utilised to address destructive behaviour. Since it is difficult for a destructive leader to see his behaviour, the organisation needs to be willing to be patient with such individuals.

4.4.2 Research Question Two

What is the impact of destructive leadership on subordinate's performance and growth? The question is answered by three emergent themes. These themes describe the experiences of the employees and how destructive leadership decision is affecting their personal lives, work motivation and progress (See Table 6 themes for question two). The emergent themes are (2) consequences of abusive leadership on employees' performance and progress (3) of employees' personal leadership style shaped by experiences.

Table 6 – Theme Outcomes (Research Question Two)

#	Themes	Characteristics
2	Consequences of abusive leadership on employees' performance and progress	Under motivation to work, feeling unqualified to handle work, highly prone to mistakes
3	Employees personal leadership style shaped by experiences	Better leader from experiences, democracy, compassionate, good communication with subordinates, servant leadership, showing understanding to the feelings of subordinate, building trust and respect

What is the impact of destructive leadership on subordinate's performance and growth?

Theme # 2: Consequences of abusive leadership on employees' performance and progress.

The second theme explores the employees' individual experiences and the impact of abusive leadership on personal and professional progress. Toxic leaders inflict intense, enduring and deep-rooted consequences that impact employees severely for a long time into the future inflicting damage, in an indirect manner onto the company and directly onto the subordinates' in terms of their individual and professional lives (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014). Many different emotions were uncovered while gathering data. Observations revealed anger, pain, fear, regret, desperation and hatred for leaders from some of the employees. Non verbal cues were noted (deep sighs, silence, staring blankly, shaky voices, and vehement head shaking) from some of the respondents. The experiences as narrated by the employees are:

Under motivated to work

> P2: *My current manager is so hard to work with. I am not happy with my job and feel no motivation to work. I liked working with my previous manager.*

> P14: *My bosses' destructive style of leadership frustrates the way I work. I do not work according to my pace so sometimes I really do not feel like working at all.*

Feeling unqualified to handle work

> P1: *I feel like I lack creativity and I cannot improve my work effectiveness.*

> P8: *I believe I do not have the power to make any decisions about my work as only leaders own the right to decision making.*

Highly prone to mistakes

> P2: *I make lots of mistakes because I do not like approaching her for questions or suggestions. I prefer to seek clarity from my other colleagues which sometimes may lead to misinformation and get me into trouble.*

P4: *Sometimes, her toxic decisions lead to mistakes which affect the company. When this happens, we are blamed for it and she does not take responsibility for her actions.*

P5: *Being scared of making mistakes makes me highly prone to mistakes. This scares me because it could make me lose my job.*

Theme # 3: Employees' personal leadership style shaped by experiences.

Leaders are often regarded as the paragon of work ethics and may thus influence the behaviour of their subordinates (Gachter & Renner, 2018). Employees that have been victims of destructive leadership may consider toxic behaviour as normal in the work environment and become abusive leaders. The employees were asked if their experiences influenced their personal leadership style.

Two respondents claimed to have picked up abusive leadership traits from their bosses, four respondents claimed that their personal leadership is independent of their experiences and eight respondents have learnt constructive leadership from their lived experiences.

Personal leadership

P1: *I have learnt that excessively controlling and monitoring your subordinates is counterproductive. It can affect the work performance of the person and make them feel unqualified. It can be really annoying.*

P2: *A leader should not feel too superior and bossy. My boss is a tyrant and I try to avoid dealing with her even if it will affect my work performance. She has made me hate a job I used to enjoy before she got transferred to the department. It should not be that way. I will never treat people like that, not just my subordinates but anyone at all.*

P3: *My supervisor is manipulative and lacks empathy. Just like every other normal person, he does not acknowledge my disability. It will be hard not*

to be wicked to people as learnt from my experiences. It is a constant struggle.

P4: *I have learnt patience from dealing with her. I have also learnt not to blame my subordinates for my wrong doings and decisions.*

P5: *Autocracy will only slow down productivity. Team members can bring up brilliant ideas that could make the job easier and the outcome better. I ensure that I listen to suggestions from my subordinates. I ask for their opinions and I believe it makes the job easier.*

P6: *My boss is very strong. She treats her subordinates with love and respect. I want to adopt her leadership style.*

P7: *My personal leadership style is independent of my experiences. My boss is highly focused and dedicated to his job. He is empathetic and understanding.*

P8: *He is my work role model. He is experienced and focused. He does his work efficiently and asks for suggestions.*

P9: *He is a servant leader and a good human being but I am not influenced by his actions. I believe being a good leader comes naturally. It reflects your core values as a human being.*

P10: *I do not pick up any behavioural traits from my boss.*

P11: *The actions of my boss have shown me the type of leader I should not be. She is totally intolerant to other people's ideas. She refuses to make changes when others point out her mistakes, even when she knows they are right. She is so full of herself.*

P12: *I have realised that as a leader, you should not have obvious favourites. Also, I should endeavour to control my feelings and not be openly biased to some employees. My boss makes his least favourite people do the most difficult work, and that is unfair. Being partial creates*

hatred between staff members, and that is unhealthy for the growth of the company.

P13: *My supervisor lacks experience and is under qualified for the position he occupies. This affects my growth as his subordinate and affects my work progress.*

P14: *Dealing with my boss has taught me that a leader has to strike a balance between strictness and leniency. He gives us freedom to operate without interference. He is not available to give directions or correct mistakes. He expects you to just do the job on your own without help.*

Conclusion of Research Question Two

The focus should be on the staff for this solution rather than management. Action should be taken immediately to address the destructive behaviour. Listening to concerned employees and taking their input seriously helps them deal with a destructive leader. However it should be noted that upon taking the input, it is necessary to take action, otherwise the possibility exists to drive morale lower. Rules about behaviour should be documented and the organisation should drive a culture of willingness to act upon these rules.

4.4.3 Research Question Three

What personal or organisational changes can be made to correct destructive leadership as suggested by the employees?

For the third research question, there was an emerging theme that arose from the data that answered the question from the respondents' perspective (See Table 7 theme for question three).

Table 7 – Theme Outcomes (Research Question Three)

#	Themes	Characteristics
4	changes that can be applied to correct toxic leadership.	Empathy, Improved Communication, Equal treatment of staff

What personal or organisational changes can be made to correct destructive leadership as suggested by the employees?

Theme #4: Changes that can be made to correct toxic leadership.

Singh, Sangupta and Dev (2017) emphasised that toxic leadership should be exposed by executive managers. They recommended that taking appropriate measures to curb destructive leadership will increase productivity of employees and lead to the growth of organisations. The participants described the changes that their supervisors can make in correcting toxic leadership and its expected impact on their individual lives, job motivation, work output and organisation as a whole. They confessed that describing the expected changes they seek made them feel better. The changes as described by the participants include:

Empathy

> P2- My boss should be more empathetic towards me due to my disability and understand why I may be slow sometimes.
>
> P3- She has to show deep concern for her subordinates.
>
> P4- My supervisor should try to understand other people. She needs to stop being too harsh and imagine herself in the situation before making judgment. I believe she needs to be trained on how to deal with problems in the department.

P5- He needs to learn how to listen and understand. As a leader, he must stand up for what is right, and not only follow what is dictated to him. He should stop being insolent to his subordinated and treat those with personal problems properly.

P8- My boss needs to be more patient with us.

P11- She should go easy on her staff members. She must realise that the world does not revolve around her and everything cannot be about her. She should try to be more understanding.

P14- My supervisor should interact with his subordinates. He should be endeavour to be more caring. He should check up on us and not wait for us to reach out to him always.

Improved communication

P2- My boss should allow me to express ideas and opinions. He should make me feel free to try new things

P3- Communication is a two-way street, she needs to put effort to build relationships. Also, she has to show concern.

P4- I want more training and management interaction. I need more supervisory skills to work more professionally

P5- He needs to stop being rude and talk to me like a human being.

P6- My supervisor should assist me in performing my tasks

P10- As a manager, he ought to be more involved in meetings and the job but he is just nonchalant.

P11- She should speak slowly so that everyone can understand her since we all learn at different pace.

P13- My supervisor should communicate openly. She should take suggestions from me and give feedbacks whether positive or negative.

P14- My boss ought to endeavour to interact with lower level staff and not just his direct subordinates.

Equality in Treatment of Staff

P2- My supervisor looks down on me and makes me feel inferior. She should stop treating me differently from others.

P3- She should stop looking down on any of her subordinates and strive to treat everyone equally. My job will be more fulfilling if my relationship with my manager improves and I am able to work directly with her.

P11- She should try to understand that humans learn at different pace and go easy on me.

P12- My boss should treat everyone the same way and quit favouritism.

Conclusion of Research Question Three

Inculcating a culture of transparency and fairness in the organisation alleviates the possibility of destructive behaviour amongst leaders. These changes would impact the motivation levels and work performance of staff members. The organisation must find a balance between their commitment to toxic managers, to other employees' as a team, and to the business itself.

4.4.4 Research Question Four

What improvements may be expected in the work attitude of the subordinate workers after personal and organisational changes have been applied to leaders that practice destructive leadership in the workplace?

The theme "Expected changes after personal and organisational changes have applied to toxic leaders" will provide the solution to this research problem. (See table 8 theme for question four).

Table 8 – Theme Outcomes (Research Question Four)

#	Themes	Characteristics
4	Expected changes after personal and organisational changes have been applied to toxic leaders	Motivation to work, confidence in abilities, willingness for growth and trust

What personal or organisational changes can be made to correct destructive leadership as suggested by the employees?

Theme #5: Expected changes after changes have been made by toxic leaders.

The participants described how a change in leadership style could affect their work performance and progress levels. Faces lit up in this section of the interview. Their narrative is as described:

Confidence in abilities

> P1: If my boss stops being a control freak, I will perform my duties efficiently. I will feel qualified to handle my work and my output will be better.
>
> P2: That my supervisor looks down on me, makes me feel inferior. She does not trust me because I am a low-level employee. I will be more

comfortable and confident in my department if she stops looking down on me.

P5: My boss should be more understanding. He should stop being a dictator and welcome accept ideas. It will make me feel valuable to the department.

P12: Our leader should apply equality and fairness in dealing with all of us and not make some of us feel worthless.

Motivation to work

P2: If my manager treats me with respect. I will be more inspired to do my work diligently. Now, I hate my job because I feel like I do not add value to the company.

P3: I will be more motivated to work if my supervisor treats me with respect and acknowledge my disability. I pretend to work when he is around because he feels I am lazy and incapable.

P14: My work performance will greatly increase if my boss communicates more with me. He does not guide me through projects or even correct my mistakes.

Willingness for growth

P1: She should implement new ways of doing things in the department and give us the opportunity to explore novel areas.

P10: My boss should bring up new challenges and set target goals for all team members. We are tired of doing the same thing over and over.

P13: My supervisor should let us explore new opportunities as a team so that we can grow and garner experience. His lack of experience hinders our growth.

Trust

P3: Accountability and trustworthiness are values my manager needs to incorporate to earn my respect as a leader.

P14: His dishonesty and nonchalant attitude affect our work output as a unit. If he could change that, the department will perform better

Conclusion of Research Question Four

The solutions described above will enable the business and corporate culture to thrive. There would be a marked improvement in work motivation and growth of employees in the organisation. Through highly dedicated, committed and inspired employees. The participants felt better by suggesting possible changes that their abusive leaders could make. They described how it will make a great impact on their motivation and work performance and also take their company to greater heights.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter elucidates the results of my study. The toxic leadership behaviours described by the respondents can be categorised into previously documented constructs of destructive leadership such as abusive supervision and exploitative leadership. It was observed that the most common toxic characteristic of the leaders was autocracy from over 50% of the respondents. The responses of the employees showed that destructive leadership on the employees affected the employees' work performance and progress, and also shaped the personal leadership styles of some subordinates. Out of the fourteen interviewees, two respondents claimed to have picked up abusive leadership traits from their bosses, four respondents claimed that their personal leadership is independent of their experiences and eight respondents have learnt constructive leadership from their lived experiences. Nine respondents explained that an improvement in

communication will improve their work output. Another solution commonly listed by the respondents is empathy and compassion. Four employees described how favouritism of some subordinates led to destructive leadership behaviours and how equal treatment of staff can improve their productivity. The participants described how a change in leadership style can affect their work performance and progress levels and boost their confidence. Three respondents described that a change in leadership style will improve their job motivation. The study used a qualitative phenomenological approach to delineate the experiences of employees that have experienced toxic leadership, its effect on their work motivation and performance, the possible solutions to curb toxic leadership and the improvements that would be experienced if there is a change in toxic leadership style. The phenomenological approach sums up all the individual employees' perception of the phenomenon. It aims at describing the experiences of the employees through their view points and not the researcher's interpretation. The focus of the approach is examining the meaning and importance of experiences and not the causes and explanations (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). The next chapter will discuss the research findings.

5 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having presented the results of the research in Chapter 4, the inferences of the outcomes are discussed in context of the literature reviewed in the earlier chapters of this research. The limitations and implications of this research will be expanded upon in detail.

Centred around the literature that has been reviewed, a significant link was established between destructive leadership and the deterioration of work motivation of staff members. Findings corroborate with earlier studies that suggest an adverse effect of destructive leadership on job motivation and health of subordinates is corroborated by Schmidt (2014); Ross, Matteson and Exposito (2014) and Burke (2017) who stipulate that destructive leadership has a huge impact on work motivation of employees of the company, which further suggests that an adverse effect of destructive leadership on the health and job motivation of subordinates exist. In addition, the employees described pragmatic solutions that could limit the effect of the abusive behaviour of their supervisors in their work life. This chapter discusses the results, makes conclusions and recommends actions that can be employed by organisations to enable better leadership and thus limit the effects mentioned in this research. It points toward a negative affiliation between destructive leadership and work morale. Furthermore, it illustrates the implications of the theory, implications of practice and recommendations are made for future research. Having deliberated upon the results of the research and remarked on the relation to the theory, it is necessary to expand on the limitations and implications of the study.

Until recently, researchers have been focused on exploring the bright side of leadership and its impact on leaders, subordinates and the organisation whilst paying less attention to the darker side of leadership (Aravena, 2017). The dark side of leadership, also referred to as destructive leadership, is exhibited by a pattern of selfish behaviour by a leader which hinders the achievement of subordinates and/or organisations (Webster, Brough, & Daly, 2016). Destructive leadership has been documented to exist in many forms which include, abusive

supervision, exploitative leadership, petty tyranny, workplace bullying and pseudo-transformational leadership (Tran, Tian, Li, & Sankoh, 2014).

Toxic leaders have been reported to inflict profound and long-lived harm indirectly to their company and directly on their subordinates' individual and professional lives (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014). Evidence from literature shows that destructive leadership adversely affect mental health (Erickson, Shaw, Murray, & Branch, 2015), and job satisfaction (Webster, Brough, & Daly, 2016) leading to turnover rate of employees (Roche, Duffield, Dimitrelis, & Frew, 2015). However, there is a dearth of information on the solutions that can be implemented to curb destructive leadership. This research study aims to fill that gap.

5.1 Discussion

This study evaluates the impact of destructive leadership on employees' work motivation and progress and the expected improvements that could occur if the toxic supervision styles were corrected. The staff members of the company described their personal experience with toxic supervisors through their individual perspective. Interpreting their narratives provided answers for three research questions. Discussing the emergent themes from the collected data confirms the extent of damage of toxic supervision on not only the staff members' professional lives, but also on the growth of the company.

Research Question One: What were the leadership styles that the employees regarded as toxic? The theme that answered this research question is the "*pernicious conduct of leaders experienced by employees.*"

Leaders' toxic behaviour: This theme is of imperative value to the research. It is important to the focus of this study and to the validity of the respondents' narratives, that the behaviours they considered as toxic are actual destructive behaviours as defined by Mehta and Maheshwari (2014). The main pernicious behaviours recounted by the employees are: unwelcoming to other's ideas, easily angered, unrealistic expectations of employees, micromanagement, unethical behaviour and self-centeredness. The characteristics described agree with the results of Erickson, Shaw, Murray and Branch (2015) where toxic leaders have

been found to exhibit pettiness, abusive leadership and oppression in the workplace in a bid to satisfy their personal goals and objectives.

Furthermore, autocratic managers are known to impose their decisions on their assistants. While this might be beneficial at first, it is counterproductive in the long run as it decreases the motivation of assistants (Iqbal, Anwar, & Haider, 2015). Also, self-centred and autocratic toxic supervision styles have been reported to reduce vigour and elicit mental stress in employees (Lasakova & Remisova, 2015). The supervision styles that the respondents described as toxic are valid and in harmony with documented reports, the collated data solved the first research problem.

Research Question Two: What is the impact of destructive leadership on subordinate's performance and growth? From the collected data, the themes *consequences of abusive leadership on employees' performance and progress* and *employee's personal leadership style shaped by experiences* emerged in response to the second research question.

Impact on work motivation and progress: The employees narrated an adverse effect of abusive supervision on their work motivation and professional lives. Toxic supervision has been linked to the negative job attitude of employees. Moreover, this negative reaction can elicit more toxic behaviours from supervisors, like a positive feedback system (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). The most common impact of toxic supervision, as recounted by the participants, was lack of motivation, lack of focus and lack of confidence as a result of toxic abusive supervision. This result is in line with the model of effects of destructive leadership behaviour in individuals and organisations according to Aravena (2017). A respondent described how scared she was of her tyrannical boss and explained that she could not approach her for questions and clarifications regarding her work; and how it decreases her work productivity. Another respondent gave details of the impact of micromanagement on her job performance; she described it as counterproductive as it made her question her competence and reduced her motivation to work. This result is consistent with the report of Webster, Brough and Daly (2016) who reported a decrease in subordinates' effectiveness,

motivation and satisfaction due to toxic supervision. The candidate also reported stress, depression, self-doubt, and loss of personal and professional esteem as consequences of abusive supervision on followers.

Employees' personal leadership style: Leaders are often looked up to as epitomes of propriety. It is not uncommon for followers to adopt the behaviours of their leaders (Gachter & Renner, 2018). Out of the 14 respondents interviewed for this study, two respondents claimed to have picked up toxic supervision traits from their bosses and eight respondents have learnt constructive leadership from their lived experiences. However, four respondents claimed that their personal leadership style is independent of their experiences. It was observed that the four participants who claimed not to be influenced by their bosses have non-abusive supervisors. This could suggest that followers have higher tendencies of adopting and learning behavioural traits from toxic leaders.

More than half of the staff members with destructive leaders benefitted from their experiences and are determined not to become abusive leaders. Statements like "*The actions of my boss have shown me the kind of leader that I should not be*" from a participant and "*I will never treat people like that, not just my subordinates but anyone at all*" from another participant express their resolve. The staff members learnt constructive guidance behaviours such as democracy, compassion, good communication with their assistants, respect, servant leadership, showing understanding to the feelings of subordinate and building trust from their lived experiences (Kurec, 2016).

Research Question Three What personal or organisational changes can be made to correct destructive leadership as suggested by the employees? The theme that answered this question is the "Expected changes after personal changes have been applied to toxic leader".

Changes that can be applied to correct toxic leadership.

The employees described the changes that their supervisors can make in correcting toxic leadership and its expected impact on their individual lives, job motivation, work output and organisation growth. According to Padilla's theory of

toxic triangle (Padilla-Diaz, 2015), the triumph of a destructive leadership style depends on a conducive environment and susceptible followers (Pelletier, Kottke, & Sirotnik, 2018). Toxic leadership behaviour will continue to thrive if the employees and management of the company used in this study, do not strive to curb the destructive behaviours. It has been documented that taking appropriate measures to curb destructive leadership will increase productivity of employees and lead to the growth of organisations (Singh, Sangupta, & Dev, 2017). The solutions to correct toxic leadership as explained by the participants include empathy, improved communication and equal treatment of staff.

The most common attribute the employees want their toxic leaders to change is communication. 65% of the participants in this study agree on improved communication as a solution to curbing destructive leadership. They describe that effective communication will improve their motivation and output. Some respondents expressed that their supervisors need to interact freely with them while others expressed that their work performance is affected by vague instructions. This assertion corroborates with the works of Mikkelson, York and Arritola (2015) and Boies, Fiset and Gill (2015) who examined the relationship between effective communication and employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, motivation, and organisational commitment.

In addition, 50% of the respondents described that empathy and compassion from their supervisors, will increase their job motivation and progress. This result is in harmony with Batool (2013) who described that empathy is an essential attribute that a constructive leader must possess to effectively manage a team. Empathetic leaders imagine themselves in their subordinates' situation, they facilitate learning and development of their subordinates through training to improve work productivity (Batool, 2013). He therefore suggested that leaders should put themselves in the subordinate's position as well as learning how to pay attention and properly respond to the subordinate's body language and non-verbal cues. To improve work productivity, leaders are advised to regularly encourage and appreciate their subordinates and strive not to overwork them. Treating employees with compassion improves factors such as job performance

and job satisfaction, thereby leading to the growth and profitability of the organisation (Saks & Gruman, 2014).

More also, four respondents in this study explained that the less preferential treatment they get from their managers makes them feel inferior and lose confidence to work efficiently. It was observed that the respondents who have low-quality relationship with their supervisors think that it is because something is wrong with them, thereby contributing to low self-esteem. Participant 3 explained that his supervisor probably maintains a low-quality relationship with him because of his disability, "just like everyone else". The respondents described that equal treatment of all team members will improve their work motivation and productivity.

This finding corresponds with the study of Hsiung and Bolino (2017) who relied on the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory to identify favouritism in the workplace as a form of workplace oppression by supervisors. Hsiung and Bolino (2017) therefore advised that leaders should strive to make all their subordinates believe they have high-quality relationship with them by maintaining transparency in within their team and providing professional support for them individually. Also, Cappelli (2017) advised that supervisors should not classify employees as A, B and C (best, better, good), as this could limit the work motivation and progress of some employees which in turn, adversely affect work output and organisational growth.

Research Question Four: The last emerging theme answered the question "What improvements will be observed in the work attitude of the subordinate workers after personal and organisational changes have been applied to leaders that practice destructive leadership in the workplace?"

Expected changes after intervention: This theme describes the changes that the abusive leaders could incorporate to improve the work attitude of their assistants. The workers elucidated how incorporating changes will positively affect their professional lives. The most common characteristics they claimed would be improved are confidence, motivation, trust and professional growth. Trust is an important factor in the relationship between managers and assistants (Bligh &

Kohles, 2013). Constructive guidance style increases work performance by inspiring, motivating and boosting confidence levels of subordinates, which builds trust between the leader and the follower (Yasir, Imran, Irshad, Mohamad, & Khan, 2016).

5.2 Conclusion

Destructive leadership styles have a poisonous effect on the work performance and professional growth of staff members of the company. However, if the abusive behaviour is corrected, there will be a great improvement in the work output of the employees. This study assessed the effect of abusive supervision on work performance and the possible intervention strategy that could evoke improvement.

The data was collected by conducting individual interviews with 14 employees of the company. The respondents were individually interviewed in a central location. The researcher was the main instrument in the interview and was actively involved in the data collection process. The data was collected through direct in depth face-to-face interviews, with 34 questions being open-ended and semi-structured to allow the reach for more data (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013). Due to the sensitivity of the topic, every effort was made to create a relaxed environment. The average duration of the interviews lasted twenty-five minutes and the interviews were recorded by noting down the responses, non-verbal cues and relevant data.

The data was analysed using the six-point method of data analysis as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2014). The code book was developed by organising and categorizing the raw data into codes, than grouping similar codes into four categories identifying the themes, which were than used to describe the experiences.

Findings of the study shows that toxic supervision has an adverse effect on their work performance by reducing their work motivation, energy and confidence. It is also clear that it hinders their professional growth and affects their work productivity thereby impeding the growth of the company as previously

documented by Mehta and Maheshwari (2014); Maxwell (2015). Ten of the respondents have toxic leaders and have undergone abusive supervision as defined by Mehta and Maheshwari (2014). The candidates divulged the malicious behaviour that they had experienced, the effect on their work performance and the influence it had on them. The respondents have listed solutions that can be implemented by their toxic leaders and also expressed that changes in leadership style will positively impact their lives, their work and their organisation.

After interpreting the experiences recounted by the staff members, it is clear that toxic supervision has an adverse effect on their work performance by reducing their work motivation, energy and confidence. It is also clear that it hinders their professional growth and affects their work productivity thereby impeding the growth of the company (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014). Repressed emotions were uncovered while conducting the interviews. The researcher commends the participants for their confidence and contributions to this study.

5.3 Implications for Theory

Parastatals have not been performing too well in the current economic environment in South Africa, having being marred by allegations of bribery and corruption and constantly finding themselves in business rescue. This research fills some gap in the existing knowledge of destructive leadership. This study explored the link between toxic supervision, work attitude and professional growth of assistants. It examined the influence their lived experiences have on their personal leadership style. This study does not only investigate the toxic behaviours but also seeks for possible interventions to correct them. The respondents were asked to suggest changes that their supervisors could implement to improve their professional lives. The individual interview was open-ended using semi-structured questions so that more data could be reached. Woolley, Edwards and Glazebrook (2018) argues that individual interview provides maximum participation of respondents and ensures the richness of data. Future research could compare data from homogenous demographic populations as this research does not take the demographic variables into account. Future

research may target other industries and environments to test the generalisation of this study such as different industries.

5.4 Implications for Organisational Practice

Companies need adequate scientific information to develop policies that can combat the impact of toxic supervision in their organisations (Martinko, Harvey, Brees, & Mackey, 2013). The study results show that 10 out of the 14 staff members of the water company that were interviewed have abusive supervisors. Also, all interviewed employees with destructive leaders have a substantial decline in work productivity, due to the abusive supervision they encountered. As recounted by the workers, the decrease in their work productivity not only affected their departments but hindered the growth of the company.

Remarkably, this study examines the changes that could be adopted by destructive leaders to improve work motivation and progress; through the employees' perspectives. The company is advised to look into the results of this study for key strategies that could be implemented.

5.5 Limitations

Any research will have limitations. In this research the candidates were fearful that their colleagues and managers would find out about their involvement and that it could have a negative connotation to their work situation. To ensure confidentiality and make the respondents comfortable, interviews were conducted in the work environment. This however, would have inhibited their responses to a certain degree since interruptions by their supervisors could prohibit privacy. The interviews were conducted with only a limited number of staff members of the various departments, so the findings may not be a true representation of the supervisors' attitudes. Subordinates' perspective of their supervisor is dependent on their personal interactions with the supervisor (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014). There was a sense of apprehension with regards to anonymity with some of the participants. This might have affected the richness of the collected data. This study had time limitations. The data gathered by this

research is limited to the demographic restrictions of the random sample population. This study has suggested strategies that the company could incorporate to tackle destructive leadership.

Suggestions for future research:

1. It would have been materially helpful to examine the long-lasting impact of abusive supervision on work productivity. This opens up the opportunity for future research.
2. There is room for further research for a long-term study on the work performance and company growth after the suggestions have been applied.
3. Due to limited resources, there exists an opportunity for future research to compare various demographic populations.
4. Target other industries and environments to test generalisations made in this research.
5. Build upon the current results to increase the accuracy and determine other reasons and solutions to destructive behaviour.

The likelihood of research participants to withhold useful information due to fear of being found out by their superiors which in turn may lead to further victimisation is identified as one of the key limitation of the study. Another possible limitation is linked to the impact of the interview environment on the research participants. The participants displayed body languages that showed that they were not comfortable with the environment where the interview took place even when the choice was made by them. Hence their responses to questions asked were rushed.

Furthermore, the use of a manual recording system as opposed to the use of a voice recorder made it difficult for the interviewer to take field notes and listen to the participants at the same time. Hence some salient points made by the respondents might have been omitted.

5.6 Recommendations

The following recommendations should be made to this organisation:

1. Conduct a training session for the toxic leaders, addressing the issues, the solutions and the consequences of such destructive behaviour.
2. Create a support system for affected members of staff such as counselling and encourage them to report destructive behaviour.
3. Conduct a training programme for all workers of the company on how to recognise and deal with abusive supervision.
4. Research the leader's historic behaviour and the progression to the current state, is important and should be shared with senior managers in the organisation.
5. Focus attention on the staff for this solution rather than management.
6. Inculcate a culture of transparency and fairness in the organisation.

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ANNEXURE 1 – Survey Questions

1. Questions asked during the interview process:
2. Define the leadership style in your department?
3. Do you feel empowered when doing your work?
4. Do you feel disempowered while doing your work?
5. Would you like to see a difference in the organisation or department?
6. What type of culture exists within your department?
7. Ask the question about position and level; use the information to split the skilled staff members from the semi-skilled staff members.
8. Categorise the candidates by Educational level requirements and experience or seniority.
9. How long have you worked for the company?
10. How engaged are you in your job?
11. Would you recommend this company as a place to work to family and friends? If so, why?
12. Can you recommend any changes that could be made to improve the department?
13. What attracted you to join the company? Are you still satisfied with your progress?
14. What growth opportunities exist for you?
15. Do you experience any challenging aspects in your job? Does your Manager/Supervisor support you?
16. Does your Supervisor recommend training for you?
17. Do you feel that you add value to this organisation? If so, how?
18. Is there a reasonable balance between your work time and family time?
19. Are there any positive or negative traits that you have picked up in your direct Supervisor?
20. How does your team work with your Supervisor?
21. Have you ever been affected by discrimination or been victimized in the workplace?
22. What sort of relationship do you have with your Supervisor?

23. How do your performance rating sessions usually go? Do you understand it? What sort of ratings do you get?
24. How can your manager improve in terms of leadership or direction with regards to his staff members?
25. Is the leadership and management structure effective?
26. What types of policies or red tape makes your work more difficult?
27. Have you had any encounters with your manager in the past?
28. Do you understand your role in the business? Has it been explained to you?
29. Do you feel comfortable approaching your manager with a personal problem?
30. Do you feel comfortable when your manager is around?
31. Do you understand the organisation's strategic goals?
32. How can your manager improve on his communication style?
33. What are the qualities that you like about your manager?
34. What are the qualities that you dislike about your manager?
35. Is there anything that could be improved to make your job more fulfilling?