



Exploring the impact of toxic leadership on employee turnover intention and performance in the South African corporate business environment

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DECLARATION

In this Mini-Dissertation, "Exploring the impact of toxic leadership on employee turnover intention and performance in the South African corporate business environment," I thus certify that the material is entirely original and has proper citations to all sources consulted. No other university or institution has ever received this work as a prior submission for a degree or exam.

I have provided proper citations and references for all data, figures, and ideas obtained from external sources. I have duly acknowledged any contributions made by others to this work.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'L. Stieger', is positioned above a horizontal line.

L Stieger

Date: 25 November 2024

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my two daughters, Megan and Karla. Through this venture, I hope they have learned that hard work, perseverance, and discipline are the keys to success. Your unwavering support and patience have been a source of strength throughout this journey. I am deeply grateful for your understanding when I focused on this work. Always strive to be better than you are today.

To my late father, who began this journey with me but could not see it to the end, I dedicate this work to your memory. You instilled in me the values of hard work, discipline, integrity, and an unyielding work ethic. Your guidance and principles have been my compass throughout this process and my life, and I am grateful for the legacy you left behind.

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As this journey concludes, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to those who were instrumental in completing this research. Your support made this achievement possible.

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I am also thankful for the wonderful people I have met who have supported and inspired me. Each of you has contributed to my growth and made this journey an unforgettable and rewarding chapter in my life. This accomplishment is a personal milestone and a testament to the collective support, encouragement, and belief I received from those around me.

ABSTRACT

Toxic leadership has become a significant concern in corporate environments, adversely affecting employee outcomes and welfare. It can negatively impact employee performance and turnover, leading to substantial financial losses related to recruitment, training, and talent attrition. Toxic leadership undermines a positive corporate culture, fostering an atmosphere of low morale and diminished productivity, adversely affecting overall performance. Despite the increasing prevalence of toxic leadership in corporate settings, limited research exists on its impact in South Africa.

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between toxic leadership behaviours that influence employee performance and intentions to quit in a South African corporate environment. Furthermore, the study aimed to determine how task and contextual performance mediate the relationship between toxic leadership and the outcome of employees' intentions to leave the organisation. In addition, a moderation analysis was conducted to explore potential factors that influence the strength of the relationships among toxic leadership, performance, and intention to quit.

A quantitative research methodology employing a cross-sectional survey design, supported by the positivism paradigm, was applied. Data were gathered from 146 respondents, sampled using a non-probability convenience sampling method, out of a population of 2 500 employees in a single organisation. Given the study's reliance on an electronic questionnaire, access to email was a critical criterion for participation. Of the 2,500 employees, only 310 had access to email, and the questionnaires were distributed to this subset of the population. Standardised questionnaires assessed aspects of toxic leadership, task- and contextual performance, and intention to resign. Statistical analysis was conducted using Jamovi software and included exploratory factor analysis, which validated the unifactorial structure of the scales, while reliability analysis demonstrated strong internal consistency. Correlation, regression, mediation, and moderation analyses were conducted to investigate the relationships among the variables, with a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

The results revealed that toxic leadership behaviours are moderately prevalent within the organisation. There is a significant negative relationship between toxic leadership and employee performance and a significant positive relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit. However, no direct relationship was found between performance and intention to quit.

This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence of the prevalence of toxic leadership and its impact on employee performance and turnover intention. It underscores the

importance of addressing toxic leadership behaviours to enhance employee well-being and organisational effectiveness. The managerial implications highlight the need for leadership development programmes and organisational interventions to reduce toxic behaviours and foster a positive work environment.

Keywords: toxic leadership; destructive leadership; intention to quit; turnover intention; employee performance

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AS	abusive supervision
AU	authoritarian leadership
CEO	chief executive officer
CI	confidence interval
EFA	exploratory factor analysis
EMS-REC	Economics and Management Sciences Ethics Committee
HRM	human resources management
JD-R	Job Resources–Demands Model
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
LLCI	lower-level confidence interval
MBA	Master of Business Administration
NA	narcissism
NWU	North-West University
POPIA	The Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013
SC	Scientific Committee
SD	standard deviation
SE	standard error
SP	self-promotion
TIS	Turnover Intention Scale
ULCI	upper-level confidence interval
UN	unpredictability

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Leadership is an essential interaction in the workplace, and how leaders provide direction, delegate responsibilities, and manage conflict significantly impacts subordinates. Leadership is significant because it determines the efficiency of an organisation in terms of group coordination and the collective effort to attain shared objectives. Leadership is also substantial from an ethical viewpoint due to the distress that poor and destructive leaders can cause their subordinates (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005:171). Leadership styles derive from leaders' disposition, which portrays their behaviour and ultimately affects their employees' engagement and performance (Farghaly Abdelaliem & Abou Zeid, 2023:2).

Leaders could enhance employees' job performance by establishing a favourable work environment and cultivating a positive organisational climate by implementing strategies that promote optimism among individuals. Applying practices that prioritise respect and open communication is essential to ensuring the delivery of high-quality output and establishing a favourable work environment. By upholding these values, employees can experience a sense of respect and appreciation, which fosters their motivation and commitment to the organisation (Farghaly Abdelaliem & Abou Zeid, 2023:2).

In contrast, a leader exhibiting negative attributes such as self-promotion, manipulation, and dominance results in inadequate employee performance and intentions to quit (Naeem & Khurram, 2020:683). Lipman-Blumen (2010:214-220) states that harmful and destructive characteristics characterise toxic leadership, damaging both the recipients and the organisation. Research has found toxic leadership can lead to adverse outcomes such as decreased motive, substandard output, unsatisfactory performance, lack of commitment, increased financial losses, intention to leave the organisation, absenteeism, and work-related deviant conduct (Naeem & Khurram, 2020:683). Business sectors are currently witnessing an increase in the prevalence of ineffective and destructive leadership practices. This significantly affects employees' job outcomes and performance, warranting attention and intervention (Farghaly Abdelaliem & Abou Zeid, 2023:2).

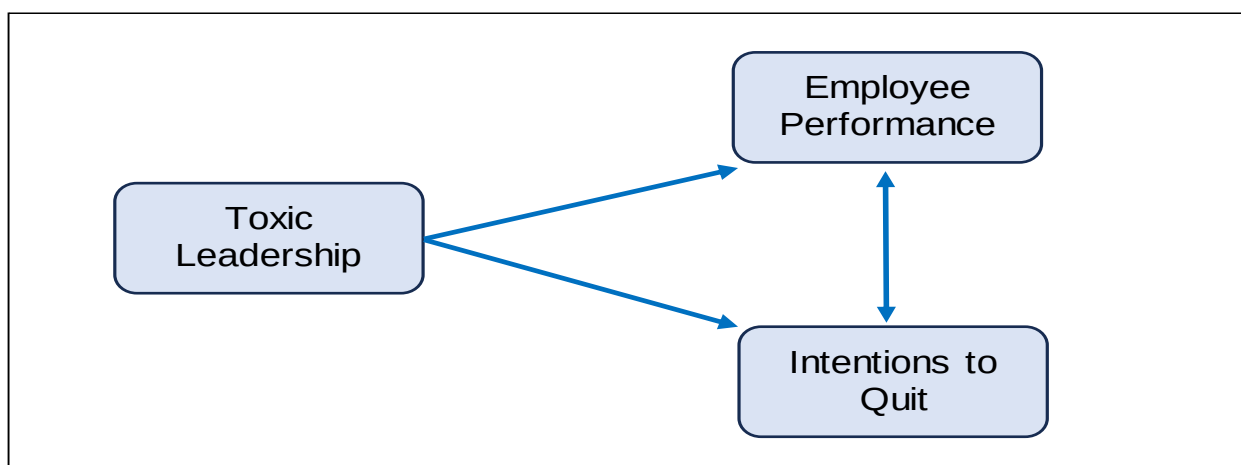
Toxic leadership has gained increasing attention in management literature and has become a subject of interest among numerous scholars in recent years (Farghaly Abdelaliem & Abou Zeid, 2023:2). Toxic leadership refers to a detrimental style of leadership characterised by consistent and harmful practices, resulting in direct or indirect harm to persons and organisations. These

leaders neglect employees' welfare by engaging in practices that undermine, disparage, and demoralise them (Hoffman & Sergio, 2020:27).

There is a lack of empirical information about the correlation between toxic leadership and psychological suffering, as well as the effect thereof on work performance and turnover intention, particularly within mining organisations in the South African context. This study is, therefore, pertinent as it brings new insights from an under-researched sample, addressing a critical gap in the literature specific to this industry and region. The present study's objective, therefore, was to investigate the extent to which toxic leadership predicts the intent to quit, the role of performance in the decision to leave in the presence of toxic leadership, and the effect of toxic leadership's consequences on employee work performance, as illustrated in the framework in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Model of Relationship Constructs

Providing a clear definition of toxic leaders can be challenging, as what one person considers



toxic may be considered heroic by another. This ambiguity arises due to the significant influence of context, history, and perspective in shaping such evaluations (Lipman-Blumen, 2010:1).

1.2 Problem Statement

Toxic leadership engenders adverse consequences such as diminished organisational profitability and increased employee turnover rates, necessitating urgent attention and resolution (Moreno-Jiménez *et al.*, 2009:359). Elevated employee turnover is costly for the organisation and the general economy. Replacing an employee costs approximately 150% of the employee's annual income. Filling vacancies and training newly hired workers increase expenses and reduce profitability, and management should strive to minimise employee resignations (Van Zyl, 2011:7).

Thoroughgood *et al.* (2012) stated that toxic leadership has the most destructive effect on employees, resulting in excessive costs for organisations. Toxic leadership creates counterproductive employee behaviours, negatively affecting employee performance and motivation (Thoroughgood *et al.*, 2012:230-255). Previous studies have shown that toxic leadership caused a 48% decline in work performance and a 38% decline in quality of work (Singh *et al.*, 2018:147-164). It has also been found that 73% of employee resignations resulted from a toxic culture created by toxic management (Singh *et al.*, 2018:147-164).

There is a shortage of scientific data on the parallel between toxic leadership, employee performance, and turnover intention, and the primary objective of this study was to address this gap in research. Another challenge is the lack of empirical data specific to the South African context (Van Niekerk, 2013:2), and the present study contributes knowledge to closing this gap with regard to the South African business sector. A notable deficiency in the present body of literature is the scarcity of studies offering remedies for toxic leadership; therefore, this research sought to investigate relationships among toxic leadership, intention to quit, and employee work performance.

Executive management must be able to recognise a toxic leader and acknowledge the challenges these leaders' subordinates face. It could be argued that when leaders acknowledge this impact on employee turnover, employee performance, and the organisation's financial sustainability, it will encourage them to proactively prevent a toxic culture from developing (Schmidt, 2008:71). This study contributes knowledge to identifying the impact on subordinates serving a toxic leader and provides recommendations on effectively dealing with toxic leadership. The guidance may assist employers in preventing subordinates' psychological suffering. Furthermore, the results inform executives' decisions when recruiting strategic leaders.

Awareness of the severity of toxic leadership's impact and its correlation to employee turnover intention and work performance could assist human resource management in better assessing leadership styles in managing future appointments and may offer executive management insights into the outcomes of destructive leadership.

1.3 Contributions and Significance of the Study

The study makes the following contributions to the body of knowledge in this domain.

1.3.1 Theoretical Contribution

The study contributes to the field of human resources management (HRM) by enhancing the understanding of toxic leadership and its impact on specific job outcomes. The results may assist HR professionals and organisational leaders mitigate toxic leadership and minimise its detrimental effects on the organisation and its personnel.

1.3.2 Practical Contribution

The research results provide useful insights regarding factors to consider in leadership appointments and approaches. By providing employees with knowledge of toxic leadership, this study may enhance their awareness of this leadership style. Understanding the emergence of toxic leadership in the workplace can improve employees' comprehension of its detrimental impact on job satisfaction, intention to leave, and commitment to the organisation.

1.3.3 Industry Contribution

Understanding toxicity's impact may inform mitigating and preventative actions to address destructive behaviour. The timely identification of toxic inclinations allows organisations to correct leaders who exhibit such tendencies, thereby mitigating the potentially detrimental effects of their actions (Schmidt, 2008:58). This study emphasises the need for organisations to be aware of and take proactive measures to address toxic leadership.

Toxic leadership has numerous detrimental effects, such as the erosion of institutional knowledge and increased employee turnover, yet proactive measures to prevent or address this issue are often lacking. The importance of having methods to evaluate toxic leadership and its impact on employee satisfaction, attrition, and commitment cannot be overstated. Moreover, it is vital to comprehend the impact of toxic leadership on organisational culture. This study makes a valuable contribution to the field of leadership development by focusing on identifying possible toxic leaders at an early stage and taking appropriate measures to mitigate potential harm.

1.3.4 Methodological Contribution

The study's methodological contribution lies in its focus on the under-researched mining sector in South Africa, offering empirical insights into the effects of toxic leadership in this unique industrial context. It employs a robust multi-dimensional approach using validated instruments, such as Schmidt's Toxic Leadership Scale, and advanced analytical techniques like factor analysis, mediation, and moderation. The cross-sectional survey design with a large sample ensures

reliable and generalisable findings, while the localised context provides region-specific insights that can inform targeted interventions and future cross-cultural comparisons.

1.4 Demarcation of the Study

1.4.1 Field of Study

The present study is situated in the field of industrial psychology, and specifically organisational behaviour, with a focus on the constructs of toxic leadership and employee performance. This topic relates to leadership and employee attitudes and how they impact employees' performance and intention to quit.

1.4.2 Sector under Study

The study respondents were all permanently employed in an organisation in the corporate business environment that delivered services in the mining industry in South Africa.

1.4.3 Geographical Demarcation

The respondents were permanently employed by a corporate organisation delivering products and services in South Africa's mining sector. The company is an industry leader in providing high-quality cementitious products and services, including general mining- and specialised underground support, to the mining and construction sectors. The company's head office is in Rustenburg, Northwest, with operations in all mining areas across South Africa.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

1.5.1 Toxic Leadership

Toxic leadership is a leadership style that inflicts significant harm on individuals, organisations, and communities through harmful behaviours such as unethical conduct, manipulation, and creating a hostile work environment (Lipman-Blumen, 2005:2). The term refers to a leadership style that exhibits five distinct traits: self-promotion, abusive behaviour towards subordinates, unpredictability in actions, narcissistic tendencies, and authoritarian leadership styles (Ogbonda & Amadi, 2022:1420).

Toxic leadership is a multidimensional concept encompassing five specific negative leadership behaviours: self-promotion, abusive supervision, unpredictability, narcissism, and authoritarian leadership, as assessed by the Toxic Leadership Scale (Schmidt, 2008:1).

1.5.2 Turnover Intentions

Turnover intention refers to an employee's withdrawal behaviour and the conscious desire to leave the organisation, representing the final cognitive decision-making process before an employee officially resigns (Azanza *et al.*, 2015; Lim *et al.*, 2017:28). While turnover intention lacks distinct dimensions, it is typically evaluated through phrases that capture employees' thoughts and intentions regarding their decision to quit. It is measured using the Turnover Intention Scale (TIS-6), which assesses employees' likelihood of resigning through statements such as "How often have you considered leaving your job?" (Bothma & Roodt, 2013:4).

1.5.3 Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to the effectiveness with which employees fulfil the responsibilities and tasks associated with their job roles. It encompasses both task performance, which involves completing job-specific duties that contribute directly to the organisation's core operations, and contextual performance, which includes behaviours that enhance the organisational, social, and psychological environment, fostering a positive workplace atmosphere (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997:99-100).

1.6 Research Objectives

1.6.1 Primary Objective

The primary objective of this research study was to investigate the extent of the impact of a toxic leadership style on employee turnover and employee performance in a corporate business environment in South Africa.

1.6.2 Secondary Objectives

The primary objective was achieved through the following secondary research objectives (SROs):
SRO1: To investigate the relationship between toxic leadership and employee performance;
SRO2: To investigate the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit;
SRO3: To establish the relationship between employee performance and intention to quit;

SRO4: To determine the role of toxic leadership in performance dimensions and intention to quit and

SRO5: To determine whether employee performance mediates the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit.

SRO6: To determine whether employee performance moderates the relationship between toxic leadership and intentions to quit.

1.7 Research Questions

1.7.1 Primary Research Question

The primary research question of this study was: What is the prevalence of the experiences of toxic leadership style, employee performance, and intention to quit?

1.7.2 Secondary Research Question

The primary research question was addressed by answering the following secondary questions:

- What is the relationship between toxic leadership and employee performance?
- What is the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit?
- What is the relationship between employee performance and intention to quit?
- What is the role of toxic leadership in performance dimensions and intentions to quit?
- Does employee performance mediate the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit?
- Does employee performance moderate the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit?

1.8 Research Hypothesis

The hypothesis is an initial, automatic response to the research question, providing an essential and unpremeditated idea. It holds significance in several aspects, such as setting the proper context for research, guiding the research roadmap, choosing the research methodology, and ultimately achieving the best possible solution (Jaberi Ardekani & Gholami, 2020).

The hypotheses (H) for the study are presented as follows:

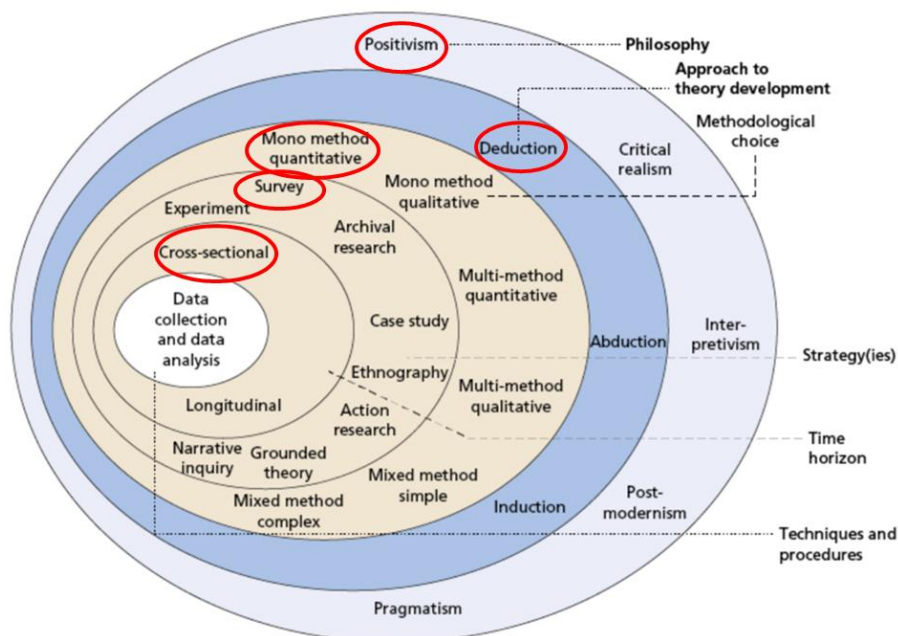
- H1: Toxic leadership dimensions are significantly adversely related to employee performance.
- H2: Toxic leadership dimensions are significantly positively related to employees' intentions to quit.

- H3: A negative correlation exists between employee performance levels and intentions to quit.
- H4: Toxic leadership dimensions are statistically significant in task and contextual performance and intentions to quit.
- H5: Performance (task and context) mediates the relationship between toxic leadership and intentions to quit.
- H6: Performance (task and context) moderates the relationship between toxic leadership and intentions to quit.

1.9 Research Methodology

A study's methodology comprises the processes and techniques utilised to identify, gather, investigate, and evaluate data to answer the research question. It is also a systematic approach to overcoming research difficulties. It describes the procedures required to explain, foresee, and evaluate events. The primary purpose of a research strategy is to structure the study (Goundar, 2012:10-11). Saunders *et al.*'s (2019:130) Research Onion, shown in Figure 1.2, informed the structuring of the present study.

Figure 1.2: Research Onion



Source: (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:130)

The subsequent sections discuss how the Research Onion was applied in the present study.

1.9.1 Research Paradigm

The paradigm is the researcher's view of what knowledge is (ontology) and how it could be gained (epistemology). The interlinked assumptions underlie a researcher's thinking and form the basis for decisions regarding approach, design, and methods (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006:2). It entails abstract ideas and notions that affect how a researcher sees, understands, and acts. It is also the analytical view with which the researcher scrutinises the methodological components of the study to identify the methods to be utilised (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:26). Methods include sampling, data collection and analysis. Researchers have proposed numerous paradigms, mainly categorised into four taxonomies: positivist, interpretivist, transformative, and pragmatic (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006:6).

A positivist paradigm underpinned the present study, also referred to as a scientific and theoretical research method and a deterministic and rationalistic philosophy aimed at determining consequences or results. It is predicated on the idea that only empirical observation and the use of a scientific process can lead to knowledge. To anticipate and exert control over the forces around us, positivists seek to put a theory to the test or clarify an experience through observation and capacity for empirical validation, relying on measurable and objective data to form conclusions about reality (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006:6).

Positivism strongly emphasises using observable, verifiable, and objective data to comprehend and explain the world. It adheres to impartiality, knowability, and deductive reasoning (Blackstone, 2018:6). Positivism is the philosophical view of a natural scientist who employs observed social reality to develop assumptions that resemble principles. The paradigm emphasises on the use of strictly scientific empirical techniques to generate data and facts free of prejudice and human interpretation. Positivism is categorised within the epistemology of objectivism, which represents a methodological philosophy in quantitative research that employs the methods of the natural sciences in the examination of social science (Crotty, 1998:8). Positivism is strongly related to the quantitative approach, which Saunders et al. (2019:144) term the quantitative 'methodological choice', which entails gathering and analysing numerical data and identifying fundamental principles or patterns that govern the phenomenon under investigation (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:144).

1.9.2 Approach to Theory Development

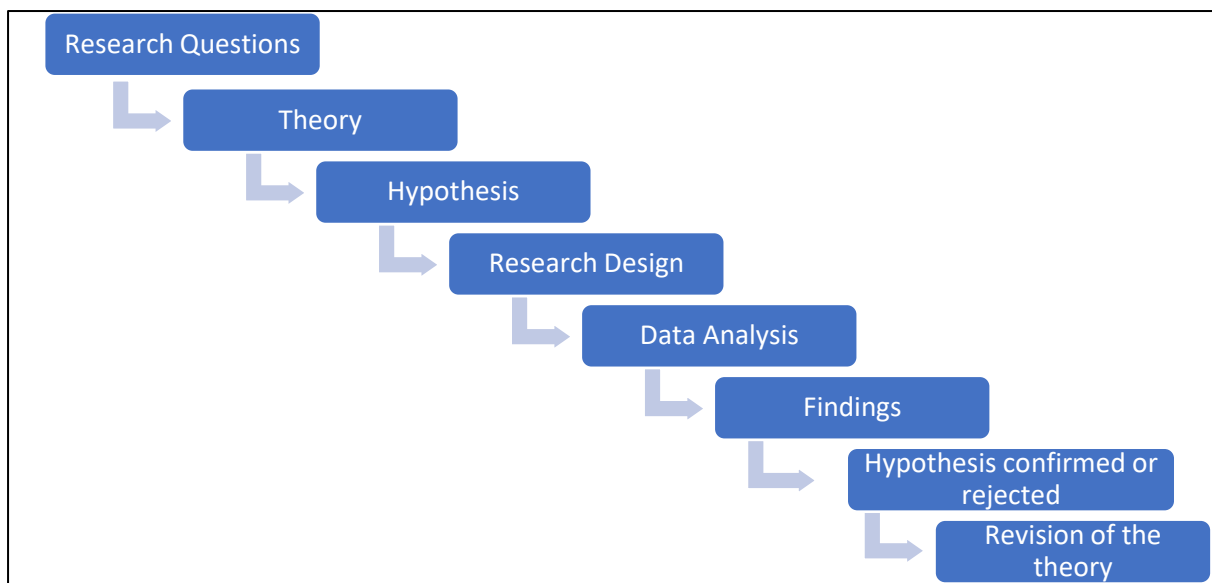
The approach to theory development can be inductive, deductive, or abductive. In deductive reasoning, which was the approach followed in the present study, the conclusion is derived rationally from an accumulation of theory-derived assumptions, and the decision is valid if all the

premises are true (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:152). In quantitative research, the deductive approach requires that an assumption be subjected to rigorous testing. It is the predominant strategy in the natural sciences, where laws provide the basis for an explanation, permit the expectation of phenomena, forecast their occurrence, and thus enable their control (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:117). In short, the deductive method is employed when researchers use existing philosophy or build on it to develop their theory (Bryman *et al.*, 2021:7).

Following the deductive approach, the researcher formulated precise research questions. Then, hypotheses of the expected relationships between variables of interest were formulated based on existing theories and the results of previous studies (see Bryman *et al.*, 2021:24), which were tested in analysing the data gathered in the study.

The deductive approach to theory development in the present study is illustrated in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3: The Deduction Process



Adapted from: Bryman *et al.* (2021:25)

1.9.3 Methodological Choice

This study followed a mono-method quantitative approach through numerical illustration and treatment of observations to interpret the phenomena that the statements reflect. Quantitative research seeks a nomothetic conceptualisation of the phenomenon being investigated (Blackstone, 2018:55). Quantitative analysis can yield empirical evidence supporting the efficiency of the numerous solutions considered and promotes impartiality (Fryer *et al.*, 2018:11). Quantitative data are analysed using statistical analysis (Sukamolson, 2007:3) and are

summarised using descriptive statistics. Quantitative research is applied in various domains of life, including fields such as medicine, biology, epidemiology, sociology, and business studies (Adams *et al.*, 2014:6).

The rigour of quantitative research is determined according to the criteria of reliability and validity (Fryer *et al.*, 2018:3). Reliability is measured using Cronbach's alpha to assess the internal consistency of constructs and validity is established through exploratory factor analysis to measure construct validity. Quantitative research requires the measurement procedure because it bridges the distance between empirical observation and the mathematical expression of quantitative relationships. Examples of quantitative data include statistics, percentages, and other numerical data (Van der Merwe, 2023:71).

This methodological choice was considered suited for this study because it enables a comprehensive exploration of relationships between variables, applies extensive samples for pattern recognition, and quantifies incidents and trends with precision and uniformity. Due to using a larger, randomly selected sample, this method typically allows findings to be extrapolated to a broader population or a specific subgroup (Mohajan, 2020:24-26). Additionally, quantitative research benefits from faster and simpler data analysis facilitated by statistical software like SPSS (Rahman, 2017:106) and Jamovi (Jamovi, 2022).

1.9.4 Research Strategy

The present study employed an explanatory survey strategy. This strategy uses the survey data to propose possible reasons for specific connections between variables and to build models illustrating these relationships. Explanatory research focuses on understanding the relationships between variables and elucidating the causes of observed patterns or phenomena. It aims to discover the causal relationships, mechanisms, and influencing factors that drive particular outcomes (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:140).

Data collection requires an instrument of measurement. Measurement instruments are tests that guide the researcher in gathering and evaluating information. Tool complexity, interpretation design, and administration can vary. Each device is appropriate for collecting a specific type of information. The researcher must identify an instrument that gathers the data necessary for hypothesis testing (Pandey & Pandey, 2021:57).

A survey study involves a researcher presenting a predefined set of questions to an entire group or a sample of individuals for measurement purposes. Survey research aims to elucidate the features of a sizable or diverse group. This approach can also be employed to swiftly gather basic

information about the target population in preparation for a more thorough study using time-intensive methods like in-depth interviews or field research (Blackstone, 2018:90).

In the present study, data were collected using structured, self-administered, internet-mediated questionnaires. This method was chosen due to its cost- and time efficiency. This is generally the fastest method of collecting responses, which was beneficial, considering the time constraints of this study. This survey strategy is not limited to geographical coverage; respondents could complete questionnaires at their convenience. Social bias, sensitivity and ethical issues are uncommon, as the respondents are neither intentionally exposed nor personally contacted (Bryman *et al.*, 2021:239-240).

1.9.5 Time Horizon

Research can be longitudinal, in which data are gathered intermittently over an extended period, enabling comparisons and developments over time, or they can be cross-sectional, which means the data were gathered at a particular point in time (Wang & Cheng, 2020:65). The present study was cross-sectional. These surveys provide researchers with a snapshot of our respondents' current state (Blackstone, 2018:93). A cross-sectional time horizon was selected primarily due to financial and time constraints.

1.9.6 Study Population

The study population is the collection of all people, objects, events, or other phenomena that are the subject of a study. Blackstone (2018:78) refers to the population as the 'who' or 'what' of interest to a researcher. In the present study, the population was employees of any race, age, educational status, socio-economic status, and residential area employed at a corporate organisation delivering services in the mining sector. The population comprised 2 500 employees. Given the study's reliance on an electronic questionnaire, access to email was a critical criterion for participation. Of the 2,500 employees, only 310 had access to email, and the questionnaires were distributed to this subset of the population.

1.9.7 Sampling Technique

Sampling is selecting members or a subdivision of the entire population to determine the characteristics of the population. A robust sampling strategy is essential in a cross-sectional study due to the substantial heterogeneity typically observed in the target population (Wang & Cheng, 2020:68). The sample should thus be representative of the population (Bryman *et al.*, 2021:209).

In the present study, non-probability convenience sampling was used, which is a deliberate sampling method, as some population members are more likely to be selected than others. Convenience sampling entails selecting the easiest-to-obtain cases (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:241). This sampling technique contrasts with probability sampling, where respondents are randomly selected, and each unit in the population has an established likelihood of being selected (Bryman *et al.*, 2021:211). Convenience sampling was chosen because the researcher does not have access to the sampling frame, making it impractical to employ probability sampling methods

Convenience sampling offers advantages in terms of its ease and cost-effectiveness. This method entails including readily available individuals, enhancing the efficiency of data collecting. This method is particularly advantageous for researchers with limited financial resources or when more efficient sampling is required (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020:192).

1.9.8 Sample Size

Determining sample size is significant in addressing a study's objectives. The sample size must create statistically substantial, robust, justifiable results representative of the population (Adams *et al.*, 2014:77). The sample size should be optimal, meaning that it should neither be exceedingly vast nor too small. It needs to be sufficiently large to yield the desired width of the confidence interval. Therefore, it is essential to determine the sample size rationally before selecting individuals from the population (Kothari, 2004:174). The larger the sample, the more likely it is to be representative. Sampling errors decrease as the sample size increases (Bryman *et al.*, 2021:229).

There are two methods of calculating sample size. The first approach is a commonly used mathematical solution where the desired level of estimation accuracy is defined, and then the sample size required to ensure an adequate outcome. However, this method does not account for the cost of obtaining information or its anticipated value. Another approach is Bayesian analysis to evaluate the cost of additional information against its expected value, which is rarely used due to the challenges associated with quantifying the value of information (Kothari, 2004:175)

Hill (1998:4) stated that sample sizes of less than 30 or greater than 500 are rarely justifiable in behavioural research, recommending a sample of approximately 10% of the size of the population (within the 30–500 range). It is rarely essential to study more than 10% of a population (Hill, 1998:4). In the present study, the population size was 2 500; therefore, the recommended sample size was 250. Given the study's reliance on an electronic questionnaire, access to email was a critical criterion for participation. Of the 2,500 employees, only 310 had access to email, and the

questionnaires were distributed to this subset of the population. In previously published work, a 95% confidence level was indicated with a 5% margin for error (Hill, 1998:5). The realised sample comprised 310 respondents, which would sufficiently account for non-responses and sampling errors.

1.9.9 Data Collection Instrument

The study used the instruments listed in Table 1.1, to measure the dimensions of interest.

Table 1.1: Measuring Instruments

Dimension	Source	Instrument
Toxic leadership	Schmidt (2008)	Toxic Leadership Scale
Intention to quit	Bothma & Roodt (2013)	Turnover Intention Scale (TIS 6)
Employee performance	Andrade <i>et al.</i> (2020)	Self-Assessment Scale of Job Performance

Toxic leadership: According to Schmidt (2008:1), toxic leadership consists of five essential behaviours, which the Toxic Leadership Scale measures, namely *Self-promotion*, *Abusive supervision*, *Unpredictability*, *Narcissism*, and *Authoritarian leadership*. The instrument utilises a five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement. All statements start with the phrase “My current supervisor...”; examples of items are: “My current supervisor changes his/her demeanour when his/her supervisor is present” (*Self-promotion*), “My current supervisor holds subordinates responsible for a thing outside their job descriptions” (*Abusive supervision*), “My supervisor allows his/her current mood to define the climate of the workplace” (*Unpredictability*), “My current supervisor has a sense of personnel entitlement” (*Narcissism*) and “My current supervisor controls how subordinates complete their tasks” (*Authoritarian leadership*). The following reliabilities (Cronbach alphas) of the scale were reported by Schmidt (2008:116): *Self-promotion* ($\alpha = 0.85$), *Abusive supervision* ($\alpha = 0.79$), *Unpredictability* ($\alpha = 0.85$), *Narcissistic* ($\alpha = 0.81$), and *Authoritarian leadership* ($\alpha = 0.84$).

Turnover intention (the intent to quit or stay) was measured using the six-item Turnover Intention Scale (TIS-6) adapted from the 15-item scale by Bothma and Roodt (2013:4). The scale is used in organisational psychology and human resource management to evaluate employees' intent to depart from their current organisation. The one-dimensional scale seeks to determine the likelihood that an employee will voluntarily resign in the near future. The scale comprises a series

of statements about employees' attitudes, emotions, and perceptions regarding their employment, workplace, and overall job satisfaction, using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Never") to 5 ("Always"). An example of an item is: "How often have you considered leaving your job?" A higher score indicates a higher intention to quit. The TIS-6 achieved a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.80 (Bothma & Roodt, 2013:1).

Job performance was measured using Andrade *et al.*'s (2020:542) Self-assessment Scale of Job Performance, which is a compact instrument used to evaluate an individual's opinion of their job-related performance. It consists of a series of expressions to which individuals assign a level of disagreement or agreement. This scale assists individuals in evaluating their work performance and offers suggestions for self-development (Andrade *et al.*, 2020:542). This self-assessment scale uses a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Extremely low") to 5 ("Extremely high"), measuring two dimensions, namely *Task* and *Context*. Items include "I perform hard tasks properly" (*Task*) "I try to update my technical knowledge to do my job" (*Context*). In addition to focusing on examples, bias in responses and submission is controlled with four inverted items (two each for *Task* and *Context*). Andrade *et al.* (2020:545) reported the following Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients: *Task* ($\alpha = 0.82$) and *Context* ($\alpha = 0.88$) (Andrade *et al.*, 2020:545).

1.9.10 Data Collection Process

The researcher initiated contact with the management of the organisation. However, as the researcher was employed in a management capacity in the organisation where the study was conducted, the HR manager was assigned as the gatekeeper, with the permission of the company's chief executive officer. Thus, the researcher had no contact with the respondents.

The survey was created and shared via Microsoft Forms, a web-based tool. The acquired data were automatically downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet. A WhatsApp message containing a link to the study, including the informed consent form, was sent to the respondents. This WhatsApp invitation will describe the purpose and context of the study and the anticipated completion time. Once the respondent had consented to participate in the study, the link automatically proceeded to the survey.

1.9.11 Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis was performed using Jamovi (Version 2.3), a Windows statistical software solution for data management, sophisticated analytics, and multivariate scrutiny, widely used in business intelligence and criminal studies. Factor analysis was performed to reduce the number of data elements in a particular data set. Factor analysis is a statistical approach to identifying

fundamental trends or factors that describe the relationships between observed variables. The objective is to create new variables by discovering a linear combination of highly correlated variables (Adams *et al.*, 2014:222).

Jamovi offers efficient and dependable solutions with its dynamic functionalities, such as generating tables and graphs. It provides efficient data management capabilities, ensuring effective information handling, and the user interface is designed to be intuitive and user-friendly. It effectively reduces errors and enables users to select appropriate graph types that align with their data distribution requirements (Jamovi,2022).

To examine the data, descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis were computed to determine the distribution pattern of the data. Descriptive statistics was employed to summarise the data and aid better comprehension (see Adams *et al.*, 2014:171). The internal consistency of the constructs measured was determined using Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient (Field, 2018:1045).

Pearson's product correlations were used to determine the extent and direction of relationships between toxic leadership, employee performance, and turnover intention. Correlation analysis aims not to assess causality, but to confirm the presence or absence of observable relationships between the variables (Adams *et al.*, 2014:199-201).

The objectives of regression analysis are to establish a relationship between variables and develop a model (Adams *et al.*, 2014:202). Linear regression was used to describe how certain phenomena change because of influencing variables. It is necessary to estimate the explanatory variable, independent variable, and stimulus coefficients used to predict the dependent variable or response (Adams *et al.*, 2014:202).

1.10 Ethical Considerations

The overarching ethical concern is that research must not expose individuals or groups to undue harm or adverse consequences such as humiliation, maltreatment, or any other material burden (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:160).

Bryman *et al.* (2021) emphasise critical ethical principles for conducting research. These principles revolve around ensuring the well-being and integrity of research participants by avoiding harm to participants, prioritising their dignity, obtaining informed consent, safeguarding their privacy, maintaining the confidentiality of research data, preserving anonymity, refraining from deception or exaggeration, disclosing affiliations and conflicts of interest, promoting honest

and transparent communication in all research-related activities, and preventing the dissemination of misleading or biased information derived from primary data (Bryman *et al.*, 2021:162-176).

The researcher adhered to Northwest University's Ethical Guidelines and Code of Ethics throughout the study. Ethical clearance to conduct the study was obtained from the NWU Business School and the Economics and Management Sciences Ethics Committee (see Appendix A. The researcher complied with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), No. 4 of 2013 by ensuring respondents remained anonymous in the reporting.

Participation was voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any point without any consequences. Respondents were fully informed of the study's aims and what participation entailed and had to indicate informed consent before they were given access to the survey. Informed consent was obtained by requiring respondents to acknowledge their participation agreement before accessing the survey. The respondents were assured of anonymity, and no personal identifying information was used in the reporting (see Wiles *et al.*, 2008:418). The principles of anonymity and confidentiality were upheld throughout the research process. Anonymity was ensured by not collecting personal identifiers, while confidentiality was maintained by securely storing data in a password-protected file accessible only to the researcher. Furthermore, no individual responses were disclosed, and results were reported in aggregate to protect participants' identities. The data collected were used exclusively for research purposes and not shared with third parties. No incentives were provided for their involvement in the study. The study adhered to the North-West University referencing guide, ensuring that all materials utilised were appropriately acknowledged.

By incorporating these ethical principles, the study ensured the protection of participants' rights and maintained the integrity of the research process

1.11 Overview

This chapter provided an introduction to the study, which was aimed at investigating the impact of toxic leadership on employee turnover and performance within the corporate business environment of South Africa. Motivated by the increasing prevalence of such leadership styles in corporate settings, the researcher seeks to highlight the detrimental effects of toxic leadership on employees' intentions to leave and their overall job performance. The study's significance is rooted in addressing existing gaps in the literature while offering practical insights to improve leadership strategies in South African businesses. This chapter provided a brief overview of the study methodology, clearly delineating the scope of the research, defining key concepts, and

detailing the ethical guidelines to which the researcher adhered. The next chapter provides a review of the literature in this domain.

CHAPTER 2 SCIENTIFIC ARTICLE

Title: Examining the role of toxic leadership in performance and intentions to quit

2.1 Abstract

Toxic leadership has become a significant concern in corporate environments, adversely affecting employee outcomes and welfare. It can negatively impact employee performance and turnover, leading to substantial financial losses related to recruitment, training, and talent attrition. Toxic leadership undermines a positive corporate culture, fostering an atmosphere of low morale and diminished productivity, adversely affecting overall performance. Despite the increasing prevalence of toxic leadership in corporate settings, limited research exists on its impact in South Africa.

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between toxic leadership behaviours that influence employee performance and intentions to quit in a South African corporate environment. Furthermore, the study aimed to determine how task and contextual performance mediate the relationship between toxic leadership and the outcome of employees' intentions to leave the organisation. In addition, a moderation analysis was conducted to explore potential factors that influence the strength of the relationships among toxic leadership, performance, and intention to quit.

A quantitative research methodology employing a cross-sectional survey design, supported by the positivism paradigm, was applied. Data were gathered from 146 respondents, sampled using a non-probability convenience sampling method, out of a population of 2 500 employees in a single organisation. Standardised questionnaires assessed aspects of toxic leadership, task- and contextual performance, and intention to resign. Statistical analysis was conducted using Jamovi software and included exploratory factor analysis, which validated the unifactorial structure of the scales, while reliability analysis demonstrated strong internal consistency. Correlation, regression, mediation, and moderation analyses were conducted to investigate the relationships among the variables, with a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

The results revealed that toxic leadership behaviours are moderately prevalent within the organisation. There is a significant negative relationship between toxic leadership and employee performance and a significant positive relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit. However, no direct relationship was found between performance and intention to quit.

This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence of the prevalence of toxic leadership and its impact on employee performance and turnover intention. It underscores the importance of addressing toxic leadership behaviours to enhance employee well-being and organisational effectiveness. The managerial implications highlight the need for leadership development programmes and organisational interventions to reduce toxic behaviours and foster a positive work environment.

Keywords: toxic leadership; destructive leadership; intention to quit; turnover intention; employee performance

2.2 Introduction

Leadership is an essential interaction in the workplace, and how leaders provide direction, delegate responsibilities, and manage conflict significantly impacts subordinates. Leadership determines the efficiency of an organisation in terms of group coordination and the collective effort to attain shared objectives. Leadership is also substantial from an ethical viewpoint, due to the distress that poor and destructive leaders cause in subordinates (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005:171). Leadership styles derive from leaders' disposition, which portrays their behaviour and ultimately affects their employees' engagement and performance (Farghaly Abdelaliem & Abou Zeid, 2023:2).

Leaders could enhance employees' job performance by establishing a favourable work environment and cultivating a positive organisational climate by implementing strategies that promote optimism among individuals. Applying practices that prioritise respect and open communication is essential for ensuring both the delivery of high-quality output and establishing a favourable work environment. By upholding these values, employees can experience a sense of respect and appreciation, which fosters their motivation and commitment to the organisation (Farghaly Abdelaliem & Abou Zeid, 2023:2).

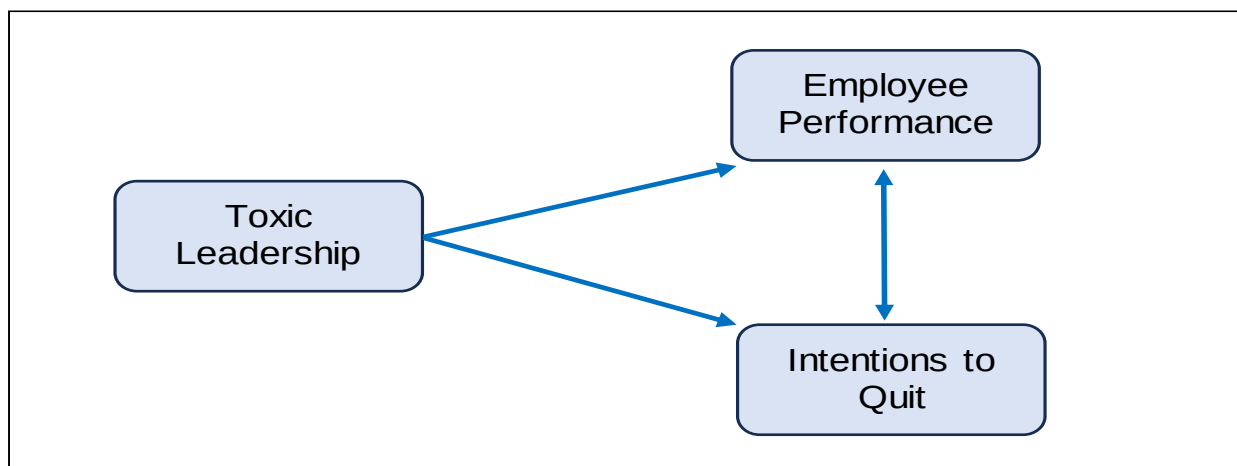
In contrast, a leader exhibiting negative attributes such as self-promotion, manipulation, and dominance results in inadequate employee performance and intentions to quit (Naeem & Khurram, 2020:683). Lipman-Blumen (2010:214-220) states that harmful and destructive characteristics characterise toxic leadership, damaging both the targets thereof and the organisation. Research has shown that it can lead to adverse outcomes such as decreased motive, substandard output, unsatisfactory performance, lack of commitment, increased financial losses, intention to leave the organisation, absenteeism, and work-related deviant conduct (Naeem & Khurram, 2020:683). Business sectors are currently witnessing a rise in the prevalence of ineffective and destructive leadership practices. This significantly affects employees' job

outcomes and performance, and thus warrants attention and intervention (Farghaly Abdelaliem & Abou Zeid, 2023:2).

Toxic leadership has gained increasing attention in management literature and has become a subject of interest among numerous scholars in recent years (Farghaly Abdelaliem & Abou Zeid, 2023:2). This leadership style refers to a detrimental style of leadership characterised by consistent and harmful practices, resulting in direct or indirect harm to persons and organisations. This is described as neglecting employees' welfare by engaging in practices that undermine, disparage, and demoralise them (Hoffman & Sergio, 2020:27).

Given a lack of empirical information about the correlation between toxic leadership and psychological suffering and the effect on work performance and turnover intention, particularly within mining organisations in the South African context. This study is, therefore, pertinent as it brings new insights from an under-researched sample, addressing a critical gap in the literature specific to this industry and region. The present study's objective was to investigate the extent to which toxic leadership is a predictor of the intent to quit, the role of performance in the decision to leave in the presence of toxic leadership, and the effect on employee work performance consequences of toxic leadership, illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Model of Relationship Constructs



Providing a clear definition of toxic leaders can be challenging, as what one person considers toxic may be considered heroic by another. This ambiguity arises due to the significant influence of context, history, and perspective in shaping such evaluations (Lipman-Blumen, 2010:1).

2.3 Problem Statement

Toxic leadership leads to adverse consequences such as diminished organisational profitability and increased employee turnover rates, necessitating urgent attention and resolution (Moreno-Jiménez *et al.*, 2009:359). Elevated employee turnover is costly for the organisation and the general economy; replacing an employee costs approximately 150% of the employee's annual income. Filling vacancies and training newly hired workers increase expenses and reduce profitability. Management's objective should thus be to minimise employee resignations (Van Zyl, 2011:7).

Thoroughgood *et al.* (2012) stated that toxic leadership has a destructive effect on employees, resulting in excessive costs for organisations. Toxic leadership creates counterproductive employee behaviour, negatively affecting employee performance and motivation (Thoroughgood *et al.*, 2012:230-255). Previous studies have shown that toxic leadership caused a 48% decline in work performance and a 38% decline in quality of work (Singh *et al.*, 2018:147-164). It has also been shown that 73% of employee resignations resulted from a toxic culture created by toxic management (Singh *et al.*, 2018:147-164).

There is a shortage of scientific data about the parallel between toxic leadership, employee performance, and turnover intention, and the primary objective of this study was to address this gap. Another challenge is the lack of empirical data specific to the South African context (Van Niekerk, 2013:2). Consequently, this study aimed to contribute to the South African business sector literature. A notable deficiency in the present body of literature is the scarcity of studies offering remedies for toxic leadership; therefore, this research was aimed at investigating the association among toxic leadership, intention to quit, and employee work performance.

The study emphasises that executive management must recognise toxic leaders and their subordinates' challenges. It could be argued that when leaders acknowledge the impact on employee turnover, employee performance, and the organisation's financial sustainability, executives will encourage them to proactively prevent a toxic culture from developing (Schmidt, 2008:71). This study contributes knowledge on identifying the impact on subordinates serving a toxic leader and provides recommendations for effectively dealing with toxic leadership. Employers are also offered guidance on preventing subordinates' psychological suffering and recommendations for executives to consider when recruiting and appointing strategic leaders.

Knowing the severity of toxic leadership's impact and its correlation to employee turnover intention and work performance can assist human resource practitioners in better assessing leadership

styles in managing future appointments and offer executive management insights into the results of destructive leadership.

This study aimed to examine the effects of toxic leadership on employee performance and intention to quit, to offer valuable insights that could help improve the work environment, enhance employee performance, and reduce turnover intentions. By understanding the negative outcomes of toxic leadership, the research results may inform targeted interventions and policy adjustments to foster a more positive and productive workplace. The study identifies the direct impacts of toxic leadership on employees' desire to leave and their performance levels, offering strategic recommendations that could support organisational efforts to create a healthier and more effective work environment.

2.4 Research Objectives

2.4.1 Primary Objective

The primary objective of this research study was to investigate the extent of the impact of a toxic leadership style on employee turnover and employee performance in a corporate business environment in South Africa.

2.4.2 Secondary Objective

The secondary objectives were:

SRO1: To investigate the relationship between toxic leadership and employee performance;

SRO2: To investigate the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit;

SRO3: To establish the relationship between employee performance and intention to quit;

SRO4: To determine the role of toxic leadership in performance dimensions and intention to quit and

SRO5: To determine whether employee performance mediates the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit.

SRO6: To determine whether employee performance moderates the relationship between toxic leadership and intentions to quit.

2.5 Research Questions

2.5.1 Primary Research Question

The primary research question of this study was: What is the prevalence of the experiences of toxic leadership style, employee performance, and intention to quit?

2.5.2 Secondary Research Question

The primary research question was addressed by answering the following secondary questions:

- What is the relationship between toxic leadership and employee performance?
- What is the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit?
- What is the relationship between employee performance and intention to quit?
- What is the role of toxic leadership in performance dimensions and intentions to quit?
- Does employee performance mediate the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit?
- Does employee performance moderate the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit?

2.6 Literature Review

A literature review is a thorough synopsis of formerly done research on a specific study. It investigates academic articles, books, and other resources relevant to a particular study area and provides a theoretical basis for the research and the nature of the study. The literature review acknowledges, evaluates, and assimilates prior researchers' efforts (Machi & McEvoy, 2021:57). The literature review examines the complex correlation between toxic leadership, employee performance, and the intention to resign within an organisational setting.

2.6.1 Theoretical Frameworks Underpinning the Study

2.6.1.1 Equity Theory

Equity theory, developed by John Stacey Adams, explains how individuals assess fairness in social exchanges by comparing their input-output ratios to those of others. Inputs include factors like effort, skills, and experience, while outputs encompass rewards such as recognition, compensation, and career growth. When individuals perceive a balance between their contributions and rewards relative to others, they experience equity (Watters, 2021). Conversely, inequity arises when this balance is disrupted, leading to dissatisfaction, stress, and corrective

actions to restore fairness. The theory highlights the importance of perceived fairness in fostering motivation, engagement, and well-being in both personal and professional contexts (Davlembayeva & Alamanos, 2023).

Equity theory serves as the foundation for the study, offering a framework to analyse the impact of toxic leadership on employee performance and turnover intentions. Toxic leadership behaviours such as self-promotion, unpredictability and abusive supervision distort employees' views of equity by compromising the equilibrium between their contributions and the acknowledgement or incentives they obtain. This perceived imbalance engenders dissatisfaction, demotivation, and withdrawal behaviours, corroborating the study's findings of heightened turnover intentions and diminished performance under toxic leadership. The theory elucidates the mediating function of task and contextual performance since unfairness affects employee satisfaction, productivity, and commitment, ultimately influencing decisions to depart from the organisation. By addressing perceptions of fairness, organisations can alleviate the adverse effects of toxic leadership and cultivate a healthier, more equitable workplace.

2.6.1.2 Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory examines the nature of connections between leaders and their subordinates inside organisations (Qi et al., 2023). It asserts that these relationships exist on a continuum from high-quality exchanges marked by trust, respect, and mutual support to low-quality exchanges confined to formal, contractual interactions (Qi et al., 2023). High-quality leader-member exchange (LMX) enhances job happiness, organisational commitment, and performance, whereas low-quality LMX frequently leads to disengagement and conflict (Sahlueller et al., 2022). LMX theory highlights the reciprocal nature of leader-follower interactions, elucidating how the varied treatment of subordinates influences group dynamics and individual outcomes (Qi et al., 2023).

LMX theory provides a framework for examining the impact of toxic leadership on team dynamics, employee performance, and turnover intentions. Toxic leadership undermines establishing high-quality LMX connections, supplanting trust and respect with fear and uncertainty. This misalignment intensifies role conflicts, diminishes task and contextual performance, and heightens turnover intentions as employees grapple with subpar exchanges. The study's examination of leader-member subgroup similarities and their impact on team identification aligns with LMX's focus on interpersonal and group dynamics. Enhancing the quality of LMX interactions enables organisations to alleviate the detrimental impacts of toxic leadership, thereby cultivating a healthier and more efficient work environment.

2.6.1.3 Organisational Justice Theory

The organisational justice theory investigates employees' views of equity within their workplace and the impact of these beliefs on behaviour and attitudes. The theory comprises three fundamental dimensions: distributive justice (equity in outcomes such as compensation or promotions), procedural justice (equity in the processes employed to ascertain outcomes), and interactional justice (equity in interpersonal treatment and communication). When employees see equity, they demonstrate enhanced satisfaction, dedication, and trust in their organisation. In contrast, perceptions of injustice may result in detrimental behaviours, including counterproductive work behaviours (CWBs), diminished performance, and increased turnover intentions (Mehmood et al., 2023).

The theory of organisational justice serves as a foundation for the study, offering a framework to comprehend how beliefs of fairness affect employee behaviour about toxic leadership. Toxic leadership frequently undermines perceptions of procedural and interactional justice, resulting in feelings of injustice among employees. These beliefs may incite counterproductive work behaviours and diminish task and contextual performance, as the study emphasises. The theory elucidates the mediation function of organisational embeddedness, wherein perceptions of fairness enhance affiliations with the organisation, alleviating toxic leadership's adverse impacts. Addressing organisational justice can mitigate the detrimental effects of toxic leadership, enhance employee performance, and decrease turnover intentions, thus fostering a more equal and productive workplace.

2.6.2 Toxic Leadership

2.6.2.1 Conceptualisation of Toxic Leadership

Toxic leadership goes beyond the traditional concepts of authoritarianism and abuse (Abbas & Saad, 2020:2318; Maxwell, 2015:12). Toxic leaders display maladaptive traits and engage in detrimental behaviours that have a significant and enduring impact on individuals, the organisation, and their communities. This harmful leadership style undermines the well-being and functionality of those whom they are responsible for leading (Lipman-Blumen, 2006:44). Schmidt (2008:86) defined toxic leadership as a combination of negative behaviours, including unpredictable displays of extreme emotions, a lack of emotional intelligence, cultural and interpersonal insensitivity, and a focus on self-interest. They often employ negative managerial techniques, such as micromanagement and ridicule, to influence others (Schmidt, 2008:86).

Toxic leadership is characterised by behaviours that hinder productivity through interference with others' ability to perform their work. Toxic leaders use harmful influence tactics such as creating obstacles, withholding important information, demeaning followers' work, and making subjective judgments about employees' abilities. Toxic leaders focus on maintaining control and power, often without a strong intent to cause harm (Milosevic *et al.*, 2020:5). Toxic leaders are maladaptive, dissatisfied, and frequently spiteful or malicious. They thrive by 'bringing others down'. Driven by a deeply hidden sense of personal inadequacy, they prioritise selfish values and are talented at deception (Whicker, 1996a).

Researchers' definitions of toxic leadership differ, but their fundamental concepts are consistent. While some might focus on certain aspects of toxic leadership, such as intent, emotional intelligence, or destructive behaviours, the underlying message is the same: toxic leadership involves harmful behaviours that negatively impact individuals, teams, and organisations.

The term 'toxic leader' was first introduced by Whicker in 1996, and it is associated with the broader concept of 'dark' leadership. The two terms are often used interchangeably to describe leaders who exhibit severely destructive conduct and dysfunctional personal characteristics (Whicker, 1996:12). Schmidt (2008:6) developed a measurement for toxic leadership and characterised it as intentionally destructive behaviours that leaders inflict upon their subordinates. Toxic leadership is a multidimensional construct encompassing elements of abusive supervision, narcissism, and authoritarianism. The negative impact of toxic leaders extends beyond their direct victims, affecting even those who merely witness these harmful behaviours (Schmidt, 2008:12).

Jean Lipman-Blumen (2010) characterises toxic leadership as involving destructive interpersonal behaviours that hinder an individual's capacity to obtain and wield power, ultimately undermining the functioning of organisations (Lipman-Blumen, 2010:3). This leadership style manifests in a systematic, repetitive, and consistent set of destructive actions that threaten and undermine an organisation's values and interests, creating obstacles to goal achievement and depleting resources (Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018:137-138). These leaders prioritise their own goals while disregarding the well-being of their team members (Budak & Erdal, 2022:2; Wolor *et al.*, 2022:2).

A distinction is made between toxic leaders who deliberately harm followers or enrich themselves to the detriment of others and inadvertently toxic leaders, those who unintentionally harm others through irresponsible, incompetent, and erratic behaviour (Budak & Erdal, 2022:2). However, both impede goal achievement and foster a demoralised state that gradually undermines organisations internally (Gandolfi & Stone, 2022:25). The interaction between a targeted subordinate, a destructive leader, and an uncontrolled or undisciplined environment is known as the 'toxic triangle' (Nonehkaran *et al.*, 2023:2). It is important to note that a leader's toxic behaviours are

not always apparent; they may be subtle and indirect, such as neglecting to encourage employees and engaging in insulting and offensive nonverbal gestures (Labrague *et al.*, 2020a:848).

2.6.2.2 Dimensions of Toxic Leadership

The term 'toxic leadership' includes various harmful behaviours and attitudes leaders exhibit. Toxic leadership includes qualities like being "destructive" (Schmidt, 2008:12), "abusive and tyrannical" (Pelletier, 2010:373), "narcissistic" (Schmidt, 2008:28), and having an "aversive" style of leadership (Bligh *et al.*, 2007:529). Whicker's (1996) initial characterisation of toxic leaders includes a deeply embedded but well-disguised perception of personal inadequacy, egotistical values, and cleverness in disguising deception (Whicker, 1996:12). They may berate, belittle, and bully their subordinates, assigning responsibilities beyond their control, causing overwork (Flynn, 1999; Labrague *et al.*, 2020a:3). Other aspects are excessive micromanagement, stifling constructive criticism, and discouraging the questioning of their judgment (Lipman-Blumen, 2010:3). Toxic leaders often reward yes-people and exclude those who engage in critical thinking (Wilson-Starks, 2003:2).

Abusive leadership can manifest as both personal and task-related mistreatment, often intersecting. Personal abuse involves direct attacks on an individual's character or welfare through mockery, derogatory remarks, rudeness, and misinformation. Task-related abuse aims to undermine an employee's work performance or duties through excessive monitoring, unjust criticism, and assigning pointless tasks. Isolation is a strategy that encompasses both types of abuse, creating a climate where workers feel unsupported and underappreciated emotionally and professionally. This isolation exacerbates the negative impacts on their well-being and job performance (Rodwell *et al.*, 2014:358).

The dominant characteristics of toxic leadership are: **self-promotion** (Dobbs, 2014:37; Gandolfi & Stone, 2022:23; Kılıç & Günsel, 2019:52; Ogbonda & Amadi, 2022:1419; Schmidt, 2008:1), **abusive supervision** (Abalkhail, 2022:316; Flynn, 1999; Kılıç & Günsel, 2019:52; Labrague *et al.*, 2020a:840; Pelletier, 2010:38; Rodwell *et al.*, 2014:363; Schmidt, 2008:1), **unpredictability** (Abbas & Saad, 2020:2320; Kılıç & Günsel, 2019:52), **narcissism** (Kılıç & Günsel, 2019:52; Ofei *et al.*, 2023:2; Schmidt, 2008:1), and **authoritarian leadership** (Kılıç & Günsel, 2019:52; Schmidt, 2008:1).

Self-promotion involves leaders excessively advertising their accomplishments, taking credit for others' work, blaming others, and deflecting responsibility for their mistakes (Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:3; Dobbs, 2014:37; Ogbonda & Amadi, 2022:1420).

Abusive supervision is the persistent display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviours by supervisors (Dai et al., 2019:70; Rodwell et al., 2014:357; Tepper, 2000:178). These behaviours continue until the employee leaves, often leading to decreased job satisfaction, lower organisational commitment, and higher turnover intentions (Mathieu & Babiak, 2016:102).

Unpredictability refers to leaders demonstrating inconsistent behaviour, such as fluctuating approachability and mood swings, including emotional outbursts or explosive anger without a clear cause (Batchelor *et al.*, 2023:132; Schmidt, 2008:62-63). Unpredictable leaders leave subordinates unsure of how to react or prepare for interactions. This uncertainty forces employees to focus on avoiding potential outbursts, which increases stress and reduces their ability to perform effectively.

Narcissism is defined as an exaggerated feeling of self-importance, the absence of empathy for others, and a contemptuous attitude towards the capabilities and endeavours of others (Schmidt, 2008:88). Narcissistic leaders exhibit grandiosity, self-importance, and an inflated sense of superiority (Schmidt, 2008:10). They have a sense of entitlement, and are self-focused and competitiveness, prioritising power and status (Krasikova *et al.*, 2013:1323). However, narcissistic leaders may be charismatic and provide visionary leadership (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006:617).

Authoritarian leadership refers to a rigid, dictatorial approach in which the leader enforces strict adherence to rules and hierarchy, often through excessive control over work processes (Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:3; Pyc *et al.*, 2017:2). This style is associated with dominance, limited employee autonomy, higher job stress, job dissatisfaction, exhaustion, and the intention to quit (Pyc *et al.*, 2017:2).

Other documented characteristics are controlling management, dictatorial leadership, instability, degrading fury towards others, and compulsivity (Abbas & Saad, 2020:2318). Toxic leaders also engage in disparaging, ridiculing, discouraging, and ignoring followers; using intimidation, deceit, and sabotage; eliminating rivals; setting members against each other; excluding them from social groups; and depriving them of social and political rights (Bakkaal *et al.*, 2019:90; Padilla *et al.*, 2007; Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018:137-138; Labrague *et al.*, 2020a:3).

2.6.2.3 Consequences of Toxic Leadership

Previous research has demonstrated that toxic leadership can lead to various negative outcomes, which were touched on in earlier discussions. Research has confirmed the following negative outcomes of toxic leadership: **increased anxiety** (Kayani & Alasan, 2021; Khan *et al.*, 2021:62; Nauman *et al.*, 2021; Saleem *et al.*, 2021; Wilson-Starks, 2003:3), **reduced individual**

performance (Bakkal *et al.*, 2019:90; Erdal & Budak, 2021:2; Farghaly Abdelaliam & Abou Zeid, 2023:1; Flynn, 1999; Kayani & Alasan, 2021:2; Khan *et al.*, 2021:56; Kılıç & Günsel, 2019:54; Labrague *et al.*, 2020b:1106; Nauman *et al.*, 2021; Ofei *et al.*, 2023:2; Pradhan *et al.*, 2020:1270; Reyhanoglu & Akin, 2022:156; Rodwell *et al.*, 2014:358; Saleem *et al.*, 2021:3; Wilson-Starks, 2003:3), **impeded work engagement** (Frost, 2004; Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018; Kılıç & Günsel, 2019:52; Naeem & Khurram, 2020:683; Rasool *et al.*, 2021:1), **decreased job satisfaction** (Bakkal *et al.*, 2019:90; Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:1; Erdal & Budak, 2021:4; Farghaly Abdelaliam & Abou Zeid, 2023:2; Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018:86; Ofei *et al.*, 2023:3; Ogbonda & Amadi, 2022:1420; Pradhan *et al.*, 2020:1271; Uysal, 2019:55; Wodociag *et al.*, 2022), **emotional exhaustion and burnout** (Erdal & Budak, 2021:5; Ghanbari & Majooni, 2022; Koç *et al.*, 2022), **deteriorating employee well-being** (Bhandarker & Rai, 2019:66; Budak & Erdal, 2022; Dyck & Roithmayr, 2001:214; Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018:84; Kılıç & Günsel, 2019:55; Naeem & Khurram, 2020:683; Rasool *et al.*, 2021:6; Wolor *et al.*, 2022:2), **mental health issues** (Bakkal *et al.*, 2019:100; Morris, 2019:7; Saleem *et al.*, 2021:3; Wolor *et al.*, 2022:3), **intention to quit** (Akca, 2017; Bakkal *et al.*, 2019; Brouwers & Paltu, 2020; Erdal & Budak, 2021:6; Farghaly Abdelaliam & Abou Zeid, 2023:2; Flynn, 1999; Gandolfi & Stone, 2022; Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018; Hattab *et al.*, 2022; Manaa, 2022; Naeem & Khurram, 2020:695; Ofei *et al.*, 2023:2; Ogbonda & Amadi, 2022:1420; Reyhanoglu & Akin, 2022:156; Saleem *et al.*, 2021), **eroded self-esteem** (Frost, 2004:111), **reduced motivation** (Bakkal *et al.*, 2019:89; Farghaly Abdelaliam & Abou Zeid, 2023:2; Ofei *et al.*, 2023:7), **reduced commitment** (Pradhan *et al.*, 2020:1271), **a hostile culture** (Abbas & Saad, 2020; Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018:85; Maxwell, 2015; Schmidt, 2008:67), **embarrassment** (Morris, 2019:89); **fear** (Morris, 2019:89; Ogbonda & Amadi, 2022:1420), **increased organisational costs** (Kayani & Alasan, 2021:13; Ogbonda & Amadi, 2022:1423; Thoroughgood *et al.*, 2012; Wolor *et al.*, 2022:7), **depression** (Morris, 2019:197), **post-traumatic stress** (Morris, 2019:64), **isolation** (Rodwell *et al.*, 2014:361), and **counter-productive work behaviours** (Hattab *et al.*, 2022; Kayani & Alasan, 2021:1; Macklem, 2005; Manaa, 2022; Ofei *et al.*, 2023:7).

Thus, research has clearly demonstrated that the effects of toxic leadership are severe and impact the entire organisation, including its culture (Abbas & Saad, 2020; Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018:85; Maxwell, 2015; Schmidt, 2008:67), resulting in significant costs (Kayani & Alasan, 2021:6; Ogbonda & Amadi, 2022:1420; Thoroughgood *et al.*, 2012; Wolor *et al.*, 2022:7).

The next section reviews the literature on turnover intentions.

2.6.3 Turnover Intention

2.6.3.1 Conceptualisation of Turnover Intention

Intent is defined as the mental state that directs an individual's actions toward a specific behaviour (Otache & Inekwe, 2022:6). Turnover intention, also known as intention to leave or to quit involves a cognitive process wherein an individual contemplates resignation and departing from the organisation (Al-Suraihi *et al.*, 2021:3; Hyson, 2016:40; Otache & Inekwe, 2022:6; Theriou *et al.*, 2020:949). The desire to quit is seen as the concluding phase of the withdrawal process, commencing with employees' evaluation of their present circumstances and advancing through several phases until they decide to depart (McCallaghan, 2020:19). It is considered the final stage in a series of withdrawal thoughts, including contemplating resignation and the intention to seek alternatives (Hattab *et al.*, 2022:319; Tett & Meyer, 1993:262). Leaving the organisation is intentional, indicating conscious and deliberate wilfulness (Bothma & Roodt, 2013:2; Tett & Meyer, 1993:261).

Turnover intention is a precursor to employee turnover, which is the proportion of employees departing from an organisation compared to the number of employees who remain with the organisation during the same period (Asfahani, 2022:2). It is also described as the movement of individuals within the labour market (Ali & Anwar, 2021:22). It is suggested that behavioural turnover intention is a reliable predictor of actual turnover (Bothma & Roodt, 2013:2; Mobley *et al.*, 1978:411). According to Cloutier *et al.* (2015:120), 75% of employees actively seek alternative employment at any given time, driven by the desire for higher compensation drives (43%), better career opportunities (32%), and dissatisfaction with current opportunities (22%).

Employee turnover is classified into voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary turnover occurs when the employee initiates and chooses the separation due to the organisation failing the individual, coupled with the potential of better prospects (Lim *et al.*, 2017:28), a toxic current environment, or related factors. Involuntary employee turnover occurs when employees are terminated (Asfahani, 2022:2; Morrell *et al.*, 2001:4). An individual's intention is the most significant predictor of their actual behaviour (Ajzen, 2020); therefore, when employees develop a strong intention to quit, it substantially increases the likelihood that they will engage in actions that lead to voluntary turnover (Crisp, 2021:39).

2.6.3.2 Stages of Employee Turnover Intention

Various authors have developed and tested models to elucidate turnover intentions and related constructs (e.g., Bakker *et al.*, 2004; Morrell *et al.*, 2008; Petriglieri, 2011; Zeffane, 1994). The

Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model of Bakker and Demerouti (2006) suggests that individuals may leave an organisation due to high job demands and a lack of the necessary resources, leading to burnout, thus establishing an indirect relationship between job demands and turnover intention (Bakker *et al.*, 2004). Mobley *et al.* (1978) outlined three pertinent stages in the withdrawal decision process framework. This model suggests that turnover is not an abrupt decision, but a process that evolves through these distinct stages; attitudinal, decisional, and behavioural.

Attitudinal (contemplating resignation): This stage involves an employee's internal reflections about leaving, often triggered by dissatisfaction with various job aspects. Employees begin to think about quitting, but these thoughts are more contemplative than actionable (Mobley *et al.*, 1978). Attitudinal factors such as age, burnout, and organisational commitment affect employees' intention to leave during the contemplating stage. These internal attitudes shape an employee's decision to stay or leave, making this contemplative stage crucial before concrete actions are taken (Lei *et al.*, 2019:452).

Decisional (intention to leave): At this stage, employees' thoughts evolve into a more defined intention. They are mentally committed to leaving and may begin planning their exit, which could involve deciding when to quit and considering the consequences of leaving (Mobley *et al.*, 1978).

Behavioural (actively seeking another job): This is the action phase, where employees begin searching for new opportunities, updating their resume, networking, or attending interviews. It is a shift from passive contemplation to proactive job-seeking behaviours (Mobley *et al.*, 1978). Otache and Inekwe (2022:6) added the stage of making the decision to leave the current position. Recognising these stages allows organisations to address each appropriately to mitigate turnover.

2.6.3.3 Consequences of Employee Turnover Intention

Research has thoroughly documented the consequences of employee turnover intentions, which include: **reduced productivity and work performance** (Krishnan & Singh, 2010:422; Munir *et al.*, 2022:139; Otache & Inekwe, 2022:7; Robinson & Bennett, 1995:556), **reduced quality of work** (Krishnan & Singh, 2010:422), a **negative impact on team morale** (Krishnan & Singh, 2010:422), **deviant behaviour** (Krishnan & Singh, 2010:422), **absenteeism** (Masenya *et al.*, 2020:75; Krishnan & Singh, 2010; Robinson & Bennett, 1995:556; Zimmerman & Darnold, 2009:152), **reduced motivation** (Otache & Inekwe, 2022:7), **diminished effectiveness** (Otache & Inekwe, 2022:7), and **sabotage** (Masenya *et al.*, 2020:75; Serenko & Abubakar, 2022:1419).

2.6.3.4 Predictors of Turnover Intention

By identifying the factors that lead to turnover intentions, organisations can reduce the likelihood of losing valuable employees by adjusting their policies to enhance retention (Asfahani, 2022:3). Literature notes the following predictors of turnover intention: **disengagement** (Hyson, 2016:42), **low job satisfaction** (Al-Suraihi *et al.*, 2021:2; Cloutier *et al.*, 2015:120; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2020:692; Masenya *et al.*, 2020:75; Lim *et al.*, 2017:36; Mobley *et al.*, 1978; Otache & Inekwe, 2022:7; Rodwell *et al.*, 2014:362; Zimmerman & Darnold, 2009:143), **psychological strain** (Rodwell *et al.*, 2014:362), **leadership style** (Akca, 2017; Al-Suraihi *et al.*, 2021:2; Bakkal *et al.*, 2019; Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:1; Crisp, 2021:15; Erdal & Budak, 2021:6; Farghaly Abdelaliem & Abou Zeid, 2023:1; Flynn, 1999; Gandolfi & Stone, 2022; Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018:88; Hattab *et al.*, 2022; Lim *et al.*, 2017:36; Manaa, 2022; Naeem & Khurram, 2020:683; Ofei *et al.*, 2023:8; Ogbonda & Amadi, 2022:1421; Özkan, 2022:1467; Pradhan *et al.*, 2020:1270; Reyhanoglu & Akin, 2022:156; Rodwell *et al.*, 2014:361; Saleem *et al.*, 2021:13), **unsatisfactory compensation and benefits** (Cloutier *et al.*, 2015:120; Crisp, 2021:15), **lack of career growth opportunities** (Al-Suraihi *et al.*, 2021:2; Cloutier *et al.*, 2015:120; Crisp, 2021:15), **job stress** (Cloutier *et al.*, 2015:120), **perceived lack of organisational support** (Fulmore *et al.*, 2023:130), **burnout or being overworked** (Al-Suraihi *et al.*, 2021:2; Asfahani, 2022:5), **environment, culture** (Crisp, 2021:15), and **role conflict** (Asfahani, 2022:5; Calisir *et al.*, 2011:527).

The next section discusses employee performance.

2.6.4 Employee Performance

2.6.4.1 Definition of Employee Performance

Employee performance, defined as the aggregate of an employee's achievements, involves the behaviours and actions of employees that contribute to measurable accomplishments that enhance the organisation's value (Khan *et al.*, 2021:59) and profitability (Jackson & Fransman, 2018:5) and indicate fulfilment of employees' organisational responsibilities (Wolor *et al.*, 2022:3). Employee performance, also referred to as 'job performance', is a crucial variable in organisational psychology, viewed as a dynamic process influenced by the characteristics of the environment, the individual, and the workgroup. Multidimensional models led to a consensus that individual job performance should be defined as the actions individuals take to achieve desired goals or targets within the organisation (Andrade *et al.*, 2020:542).

Employee work performance is the outcome of an individual's overall effort during a specific time frame in completing a task, compared to set benchmarks, targets, or criteria previously

established and agreed upon (Andri *et al.*, 2021:2). Employee performance thus encompasses the productivity, competency, and outcomes employees demonstrate. High employee performance is characterised by efficiency, skill, and objective achievement (Sarwar & Muhammad, 2021:515). Organisational outcomes are significantly impacted by individuals' behaviours, which are moulded by the work environment, with a particular emphasis on leadership influence (Gravina *et al.*, 2021:124).

Motivation directly influences employee behaviour and performance. Financial rewards, as a form of extrinsic motivation, have the potential to increase productivity. However, intrinsic motivation, derived from personal satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment, promotes creativity and invention. Employees with intrinsic motivation are more prone to engagement and devotion, resulting in elevated performance levels (Muñoz-Pascual *et al.*, 2021:3-4).

2.6.4.2 Dimensions of Employee Performance

Individual work performance is often viewed according to three dimensions: **task performance**, **contextual performance**, **counterproductive work behaviour** (Aşkun *et al.*, 2021:31; Borman & Motowidlo, 1997:99; Campbell, 1990:687-732; Koopmans *et al.*, 2012:26; Ramdani *et al.*, 2019:406; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000:218), and **adaptive performance** (Aşkun *et al.*, 2021:31; Koopmans *et al.*, 2012:26).

Task performance refers to actions that directly or indirectly contribute to the organisation's technical functionality and are specific duties that vary according to job role (Koopmans *et al.*, 2012:33; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000:218). Job descriptions typically specify these duties. Task performance is the proficiency with which individuals carry out the fundamental substantive or technical tasks crucial to their job (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997:99; Campbell, 1990:687-732).

Contextual performance overlaps with organisational citizenship behaviour, as it encompasses behaviours that support the organisational, social, and psychological environment necessary for the technical core to function effectively. Unlike task performance, these activities are generally consistent across various job roles (Koopmans *et al.*, 2012:26; Ramdani *et al.*, 2019:406; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000:218). Contextual performance refers to discretionary behaviours that enhance the social and psychological work environment. These actions contribute to organisational effectiveness. Initially considered extra-role behaviours, contextual performance now includes any voluntary action that aids the organisation, regardless of recognition or reward (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000:218).

Counter-productive behaviours are actions that harm the organisation's well-being and include absenteeism, theft, substance abuse, and other activities that detract from productivity. These behaviours are counter to both task- and contextual performance, undermining the organisation's goals and potentially damaging its operational and social structure (Koopmans *et al.*, 2012:26; Ramdani *et al.*, 2019:406; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000:218).

Adaptive performance is the capacity of an individual to effectively adjust to changing work demands, environments, and roles. It involves creative problem-solving, flexibility in unpredictable situations, and learning and applying new skills or technologies. Adaptive performance also includes adjusting behaviours to fit diverse cultural or interpersonal contexts, making it essential for success in dynamic, evolving work settings (Aşkun *et al.*, 2021:31; Koopmans *et al.*, 2012:37).

2.6.4.3 Predictors of Employee Performance

Predictors of employee performance include the **work environment** (Sari *et al.*, 2021:9), **leadership style** (Andri *et al.*, 2021:3; Donkor *et al.*, 2022; Gravina *et al.*, 2021:124; Purnomo *et al.*, 2020; Saleem *et al.*, 2021:12; Sarwar & Muhammad, 2021:513), **organisational support** (Dai *et al.*, 2019:168), **work stress and excessive pressure** (Sari *et al.*, 2021:9), **workplace relational conflict** (Asfahani, 2022), **training and development** (Andri *et al.*, 2021:2; Mehale *et al.*, 2021:2; Sarwar & Muhammad, 2021:513), **goal clarity** (Vuong & Nguyen, 2022:17), **remuneration and rewards** (Vuong & Nguyen, 2022:17), **effective communication** (Vuong & Nguyen, 2022:17), **employee motivation** (Andri *et al.*, 2021:2; Baloyi & Van der Walddt, 2021; Jankelová *et al.*, 2020; Peng *et al.*, 2021:2; Vuong & Nguyen, 2022:17), **organisational commitment** (Peng *et al.*, 2021:2; Sarwar & Muhammad, 2021:513), and **perceived incivility** (Sarwar & Muhammad, 2021:525).

The next section ties together the preceding sections by discussing the relationships between toxic leadership, turnover intentions, and employee performance.

2.6.5 The Relationship Between the Constructs Under Investigation

2.6.5.1 Toxic Leadership and Employee Performance

Studies have demonstrated a significant relationship between toxic leadership and employee performance (Andri *et al.*, 2021:3; Dai *et al.*, 2019; Donkor *et al.*, 2022; Gravina *et al.*, 2021:124; Jackson *et al.*, 2013; Purnomo *et al.*, 2020; Khan *et al.*, 2021:62; Kılıç & Günsel, 2019; Ogbonda & Amadi, 2022:1422; Saleem *et al.*, 2021:12; Sarwar & Muhammad, 2021:513; Theriou *et al.*, 2020; Winn & Dykes, 2019; Zaabi *et al.*, 2018). A study by Abalkhail (2022) demonstrated that,

over time, the adverse effects of dysfunctional leadership permeate various aspects of employees' lives, impacting areas within the organisation, such as team dynamics, organisational culture, loyalty, citizenship behaviour, employee performance, which findings are supported by literature (Kayani & Alasan, 2021:4; Pyc *et al.*, 2017:1; Suryosukmono *et al.*, 2023:888). Research has provided evidence that dysfunctional leaders foster dysfunctional organisations, which undermine the productivity and work performance of individuals, teams, and the organisation as a whole (Abalkhail, 2022:302; Tepper, 2000:186).

Interactional injustice, a characteristic of toxic leadership, leads to perceptions of incivility among employees, and the perception of being dehumanised ultimately results in decreased employee performance (Sarwar & Muhammad, 2021:525). Toxic leaders increase employees' workload through corrupt behaviours, such as blackmail, misuse of resources, and unrealistic expectations. This exploitation and the creation of organisational constraints, like obstructing duties and diverting resources, impose additional burdens on employees. The increased workload and job stress negatively affect employees' emotional well-being, reducing their ability to focus, lowering productivity, and increasing errors (Suryosukmono *et al.*, 2023:898). The negative impact on motivation and engagement further diminishes their work performance, as they become less effective and efficient (Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018:143).

Morris (2019:194) found that poor performance was the most common outcome of toxic leadership, with 48.3% of affected employees showing lower performance levels following a toxic event. Toxic leadership negatively impacts employee behaviour by increasing job stress, which causes employees feelings of tension, anxiety, frustration, worry, emotional exhaustion, and perceived barriers or violence at work. Work-related stress can lead to decreased performance by threatening organisational stability, diminishing the sense of meaningful work, and reducing perceptions of leader integrity (Suryosukmono *et al.*, 2023:889).

Based on the abovementioned, it is hypothesised that (H1) there exists a significant negative relation between toxic leadership dimensions and employee performance.

2.6.5.2 Toxic Leadership and Intention to Quit

Various studies have confirmed the relationship between toxic leadership and intentions to quit (e.g., Akca, 2017; Bakkal *et al.*, 2019; Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:3; Erdal & Budak, 2021:6; Farghaly Abdelaliem & Abou Zeid, 2023:2; Flynn, 1999; Gandolfi & Stone, 2022; Hadadian & Sayadpour, 2018:88; Hattab *et al.*, 2022; Iqbal *et al.*, 2015; Labrague *et al.*, 2020a; Labrague *et al.*, 2020b, 2020; Manaa, 2022; Naeem & Khurram, 2020:683; Nonehkaran *et al.*, 2023; Ofei *et al.*, 2023:2; Ogbonda & Amadi, 2022:1423; Özkan, 2022; Reyhanoglu & Akin, 2022:156; Rodwell *et al.*,

2014:361; Saleem *et al.*, 2021; Suryosukmono *et al.*, 2023; Türkmen Keskin & Özduyan Kiliç, 2024).

Specific dimensions of toxic leadership that led to turnover intentions include self-promotion (Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:7; Durrah *et al.*, 2023; Nonehkaran *et al.*, 2023), abusive supervision (Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:7; Dai *et al.*, 2019; Özkan, 2022; Pradhan *et al.*, 2020:1271; Rodwell *et al.*, 2014:361), unpredictability (Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:7; Durrah *et al.*, 2023), narcissism (Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:7; Nonehkaran *et al.*, 2023), and authoritarian leadership (Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:7).

The study by Pradhan *et al.* (2020:1269) explored the relationship between abusive supervision and the intention to quit and found that the employee's perception of supervisors' violation of their psychological contract or experience of burnout due to emotional exhaustion are significant mediators of employees' decision to quit (Pradhan *et al.*, 2020:1280-1281). Personality and situational factors can mitigate the influence of toxic leadership on employees' responses, but the overall impact remains detrimental to employee well-being and organisational success. Commitment may alleviate these effects, but the inverse relationship between commitment and turnover highlights toxic leadership's significant role in driving employees to leave the organisation (Ogbonda & Amadi, 2022:1424).

Based on the abovementioned, it is hypothesised that (H2) there exists a significant positive relation between toxic leadership dimensions and intentions to quit.

2.6.5.3 Employee Performance and Intentions to Quit

Studies have established that there is a significant relationship between job performance and intention to quit (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2020; Munir *et al.*, 2022; Otache & Inekwe, 2022; Otache & Inekwe, 2022; Özer *et al.*, 2019; Suryosukmono *et al.*, 2023; Zimmerman & Darnold, 2009). Zimmerman and Darnold (2009:156) established that those who demonstrated high-performance levels exhibited a somewhat higher inclination towards intending to leave, due to their increased capacity to secure alternative employment. In contrast, Tuten and Neidermeyer (2004) posited that an inverse correlation exists between employee performance and intention to quit. The inverse correlation between employee performance and intention to quit exists because higher-performing employees tend to find greater satisfaction in their roles, which reduces their intent to leave (Tuten & Neidermeyer, 2004:28-30).

Workplace conditions impacted by various factors, such as leadership style, can cultivate job satisfaction, affecting employee performance, and a decrease in job satisfaction is the main factor

driving the connection between performance and the intention to quit (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2020:694; Zimmerman & Darnold, 2009).

In conclusion, toxic leadership is closely associated with negative outcomes, including poor job performance, diminished job satisfaction, reduced organisational commitment, lower attendance, decreased work motivation, and low morale. It can also lead to deviant and negligent behaviours, such as neglecting duties, frequent absenteeism, and an increased intention to quit (Suryosukmono *et al.*, 2023:887). A study by Özer *et al.* (2019) shows a strong and significant negative relationship between turnover intentions and job performance, indicating that, when employees intend to leave the organisation, their job performance will likely suffer. Employees who plan to quit are likely to be less productive than those who do not have such intentions (Özer *et al.*, 2019:75). Previous studies on expectancy theory have suggested that poor job performance might lead employees to consider quitting due to fear of being fired (Zimmerman & Darnold, 2009:153). This is evidence that turnover intentions strongly predict an employee's job performance.

Based on the abovementioned, it is hypothesised that (H3) a significant negative relation exists between employee performance (task and context) and intentions to quit.

This concludes the discussion of the constructs under study based on the literature. The next section details the methodology followed in conducting the study.

2.7 Research Methodology

The study employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design. This design was deemed most appropriate, as it allowed for the evaluation of the relationships between toxic leadership, intentions to quit and employee performance at a specific moment in time, without any planned interventions. Questionnaires were chosen as the most suitable method for data collection. A final research proposal was submitted to the institution's ethics committee for approval and permission to gather data for the study. The study was classified as minimal risk and a clearance number (NWU-00590-24-A4) was issued.

2.7.1 Research Paradigm

The paradigm is the researchers view of what knowledge is (ontology) and how it could be gained (epistemology). It is the interlinked assumptions that underlie a researcher's thinking, and forms the basis for decisions regarding approach, design, and methods (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006:2). It entails abstract ideas and notions that affect how a researcher sees, understands, and acts. It

is also the analytical view with which the researcher scrutinises the methodological components of the study to identify the methods to be utilised (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:26). Methods include sampling, data collection and analysis. Researchers have proposed numerous paradigms, mainly categorised into four taxonomies: positivist, interpretivist, transformative, and pragmatic (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006:6).

The present study was underpinned by a positivist paradigm, also referred to as a scientific and theoretical research method and a deterministic and rationalistic philosophy aimed at determining consequences or results. It is predicated on the idea that only empirical observation and the use of a scientific process can lead to knowledge. To anticipate and exert control over the forces around us, positivists seek to put a theory to the test or clarify an experience through observation and capacity for empirical validation, relying on measurable and objective data to form conclusions about reality (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006:6).

Positivism strongly emphasises using observable, verifiable, and objective data to comprehend and explain the world. It adheres to impartiality, knowability, and deductive reasoning (Blackstone, 2018:6). Positivism is the philosophical view of a natural scientist who employs observed social reality to develop assumptions that resemble principles. The paradigm emphasises on the use of strictly scientific empirical techniques to generate data and facts free of prejudice and human interpretation. Positivism is categorised within the epistemology of objectivism, which represents a methodological philosophy in quantitative research that employs the methods of the natural sciences in the examination of social science (Crotty, 1998:8). Positivism is strongly related to the quantitative approach, which Saunders et al. (2019:144) term the quantitative 'methodological choice', which entails gathering and analysing numerical data and identifying fundamental principles or patterns that govern the phenomenon under investigation (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:144).

2.7.2 Approach to Theory Development

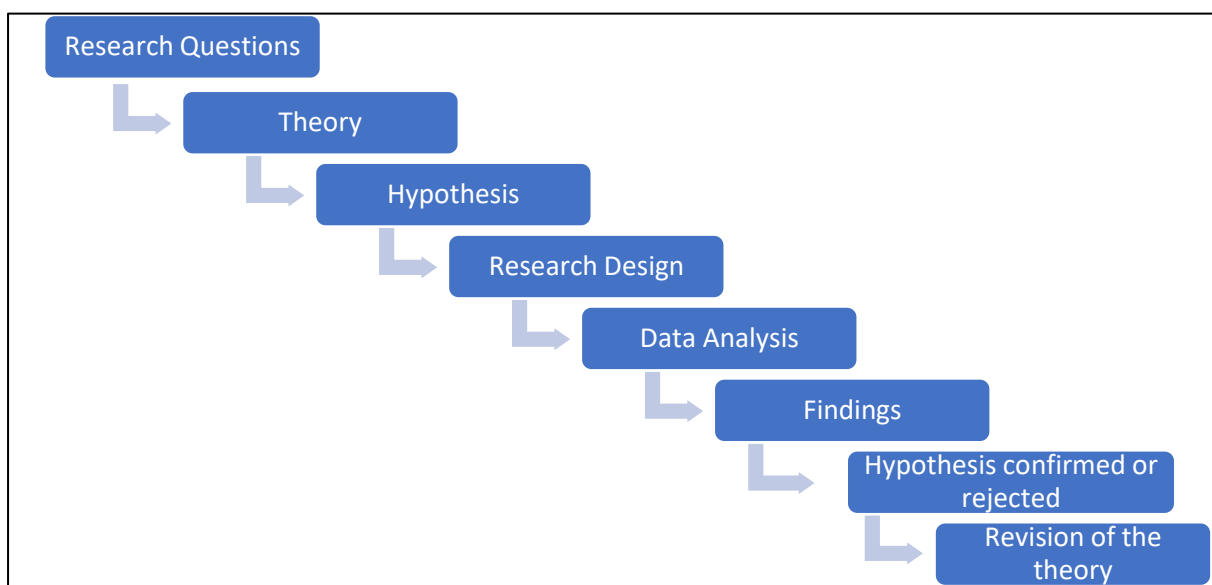
The approach to theory development can be inductive, deductive, or abductive. In deductive reasoning, which was the approach followed in the present study, the conclusion is derived rationally from an accumulation of theory-derived assumptions, and the decision is valid if all the premises are true (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:152). In quantitative research, the deductive approach requires that an assumption be subjected to rigorous testing. It is the predominant strategy in the natural sciences, where laws provide the basis for an explanation, permit the expectation of phenomena, forecast their occurrence, and thus enable their control (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:117).

In short, the deductive method is employed when researchers use existing philosophy or build on it to develop their theory (Bryman *et al.*, 2021:7).

In following the deductive approach, the researcher formulated precise research questions, whereafter hypotheses of the expected relationships between variables of interest were formulated based on existing theories and the results of previous studies (see Bryman *et al.*, 2021:24), which were tested in analysing the data gathered in the study.

The deductive approach to theory development in the present study is illustrated in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: The Deduction Process



Adapted from: Bryman *et al.* (2021:25)

2.7.3 Methodological Choice

This study followed a mono-method quantitative approach through numerical illustration and treatment of observations to interpret the phenomena that the statements reflect. Quantitative research seeks a nomothetic conceptualisation of the phenomenon being investigated (Blackstone, 2018:55). Quantitative analysis can yield empirical evidence supporting the efficiency of the numerous solutions considered and promotes impartiality (Fryer *et al.*, 2018:11). Quantitative data are analysed using statistical analysis (Sukamolson, 2007:3) and are summarised using descriptive statistics. Quantitative research is applied in various domains of life, including fields such as medicine, biology, epidemiology, sociology, and business studies (Adams *et al.*, 2014:6).

The rigour of quantitative research is determined according to the criteria of reliability and validity (Fryer *et al.*, 2018:3). Reliability is measured using Cronbach's alpha to assess the internal consistency of constructs and validity is established through exploratory factor analysis to measure construct validity. Quantitative research requires the measurement procedure because it bridges the distance between empirical observation and the mathematical expression of quantitative relationships. Examples of quantitative data include statistics, percentages, and other numerical data (Van der Merwe, 2023:71).

This methodological choice was considered suited for this study because it enables a comprehensive exploration of relationships between variables, applies extensive samples for pattern recognition, and quantifies incidents and trends with precision and uniformity. Due to the use of a larger, randomly selected sample, this method typically allows findings to be extrapolated to a broader population or a specific subgroup (Mohajan, 2020:24-26). Additionally, quantitative research benefits from faster and simpler data analysis facilitated by statistical software like SPSS (Rahman, 2017:106) and Jamovi (Jamovi, 2022).

2.7.4 Research Strategy

The present study employed an explanatory survey strategy. This strategy uses the survey data to propose possible reasons for specific connections between variables and to build models illustrating these relationships. Explanatory research focuses on understanding the relationships between variables and elucidating the causes of observed patterns or phenomena. It aims to discover the causal relationships, mechanisms, and influencing factors that drive particular outcomes (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:140).

Data collection requires an instrument of measurement. Measurement instruments are tests that guide the researcher in gathering and evaluating information. Tool complexity, interpretation design, and administration can vary. Each device is appropriate for collecting a specific type of information. The researcher must identify an instrument that gathers the data necessary for hypothesis testing (Pandey & Pandey, 2021:57).

A survey study involves a researcher presenting a predefined set of questions to an entire group or a sample of individuals for measurement purposes. Survey research aims to elucidate the features of a sizable or diverse group. This approach can also be employed to swiftly gather basic information about the target population in preparation for a more thorough study using time-intensive methods like in-depth interviews or field research (Blackstone, 2018:90).

In the present study, data were collected using structured, self-administered, internet-mediated questionnaires. This method was chosen due to its cost- and time efficiency. This is generally the fastest method of collecting responses, which was beneficial, considering the time constraints of this study. This survey strategy is not limited to geographical coverage, and respondents can complete questionnaires at their convenience. Social bias, sensitivity and ethical issues are uncommon, as the respondents are neither intentionally exposed nor personally contacted (Bryman *et al.*, 2021:239-240).

2.7.5 Time Horizon

Research can be longitudinal, in which data are gathered intermittently over an extended period, enabling comparisons and developments over time, or they can be cross-sectional, which means the data were gathered at a particular point in time (Wang & Cheng, 2020:65). The present study was cross-sectional. These surveys provide researchers with a snapshot of our respondents' current state (Blackstone, 2018:93). A cross-sectional time horizon was selected primarily due to financial and time constraints.

2.7.6 Study Population

The study population is the collection of all people, objects, events, or other phenomena that are the subject of a study. Blackstone (2018:78) refers to the population as the 'who' or 'what' of interest to a researcher. In the present study, the population was employees of any race, age, educational status, socio-economic status, and residential area employed at a corporate organisation delivering services in the mining sector. The population comprised 2 500 employees. Given the study's reliance on an electronic questionnaire, access to email was a critical criterion for participation. Of the 2,500 employees, only 310 had access to email, and the questionnaires were distributed to this subset of the population.

2.7.7 Sampling Technique

Sampling is the selecting of members or a subdivision of the entire population to determine the characteristics of the population. A robust sampling strategy is essential in a cross-sectional study due to the substantial heterogeneity typically observed in the target population (Wang & Cheng, 2020:68). The sample should thus be representative of the population (Bryman *et al.*, 2021:209).

In the present study, non-probability convenience sampling was used, which is a deliberate sampling method, as some population members are more likely to be selected than others. Convenience sampling entails selecting the easiest-to-obtain cases (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:241).

This sampling technique contrasts with probability sampling, where respondents are randomly selected, and each unit in the population has an established likelihood of being selected (Bryman *et al.*, 2021:211). Convenience sampling was chosen because the researcher does not have access to the sampling frame, making it impractical to employ probability sampling methods.

Convenience sampling offers advantages in terms of its ease and cost-effectiveness. This method entails including readily available individuals, enhancing the efficiency of data collecting. This method is particularly advantageous for researchers with limited financial resources or when more efficient sampling is required (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020:192).

2.7.8 Sample Size

Determining sample size is significant in addressing a study's objectives. The sample size must create statistically substantial, robust, justifiable results representative of the population (Adams *et al.*, 2014:77). The sample size should be optimal, meaning that it should neither be exceedingly vast nor too small. It needs to be sufficiently large to yield the desired width of the confidence interval. Therefore, it is essential to determine the sample size rationally before selecting individuals from the population (Kothari, 2004:174). The larger the sample, the more likely it is to be representative. Sampling errors decrease as the sample size increases (Bryman *et al.*, 2021:229).

Hill (1998:4) stated that sample sizes of less than 30 or greater than 500 are rarely justifiable in behavioural research, recommending a sample of approximately 10% of the size of the population (within the 30–500 range). It is rarely essential to study more than 10% of a population (Hill, 1998:4). In the present study, the population size was 2 500; therefore, the recommended sample size was 250. Given the study's reliance on an electronic questionnaire, access to email was a critical criterion for participation. Of the 2,500 employees, only 310 had access to email, and the questionnaires were distributed to this subset of the population. In previously published work, a 95% confidence level was indicated with a 5% margin for error (Hill, 1998:5). The realised sample comprised 310 respondents, which would sufficiently account for non-responses and sampling errors.

2.7.9 Data Collection Instrument

The study used the following instruments:

Toxic leadership: According to Schmidt (2008:1), toxic leadership consists of five essential behaviours, which the Toxic Leadership Scale measures, namely *Self-promotion*, *Abusive*

supervision, *Unpredictability*, *Narcissism*, and *Authoritarian leadership*. The instrument utilises a five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement. All statements start with the phrase “My current supervisor...”; examples of items are: “My current supervisor changes his/her demeanour when his/her supervisor is present” (*Self-promotion*), “My current supervisor holds subordinates responsible for a thing outside their job descriptions” (*Abusive supervision*), “My supervisor allows his/her current mood to define the climate of the workplace” (*Unpredictability*), “My current supervisor has a sense of personnel entitlement” (*Narcissism*) and “My current supervisor controls how subordinates complete their tasks” (*Authoritarian leadership*). The following reliabilities (Cronbach alphas) of the scale were reported by Schmidt (2008:116): *Self-promotion* ($\alpha = 0.85$), *Abusive supervision* ($\alpha = 0.79$), *Unpredictability* ($\alpha = 0.85$), *Narcissistic* ($\alpha = 0.81$), and *Authoritarian leadership* ($\alpha = 0.84$).

Turnover intention (the intent to quit or stay) was measured using the six-item Turnover Intention Scale (TIS-6) adapted from the 15-item scale by Bothma and Roodt (2013:4). The scale is used in organisational psychology and human resource management to evaluate employees' intent to depart from their current organisation. The one-dimensional scale seeks to determine the likelihood that an employee will voluntarily resign in the near future. The scale comprises a series of statements about employees' attitudes, emotions, and perceptions regarding their employment, workplace, and overall job satisfaction, using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“Never”) to 5 (“Always”). An example of an item is: “How often have you considered leaving your job?” A higher score indicates a higher intention to quit. The TIS-6 achieved a Cronbach’s alpha reliability of 0.80 (Bothma & Roodt, 2013:1).

Job performance was measured using Andrade *et al.*’s (2020:542) Self-assessment Scale of Job Performance, which is a compact instrument used to evaluate an individual's opinion of their job-related performance. It consists of a series of expressions to which individuals assign a level of disagreement or agreement. This scale assists individuals in evaluating their work performance and offers suggestions for self-development (Andrade *et al.*, 2020). This self-assessment scale uses a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“Extremely low”) to 5 (“Extremely high”), measuring two dimensions, namely *Task* and *Context*. Items include “I perform hard tasks properly” (*Task*) “I try to update my technical knowledge to do my job” (*Context*). In addition to focusing on examples, bias in responses and submission is controlled with four inverted items (two each for *Task* and *Context*). Andrade *et al.* (2020:545) reported the following Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients: *Task* ($\alpha = 0.82$) and *Context* ($\alpha = 0.88$) (Andrade *et al.*, 2020:545).

2.7.10 Data Collection Process

The researcher initiated contact with the organisation's management. However, as the researcher was employed in a management capacity in the organisation where the study was conducted, the HR manager was assigned as the gatekeeper, with the permission of the company's chief executive officer. Thus, the researcher had no contact with the respondents.

The survey was created and shared via Microsoft Forms, a web-based tool. The acquired data were automatically downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet. A WhatsApp message containing a link to the study, including the informed consent form, was sent to the respondents. This WhatsApp invitation will describe the purpose and context of the study and the anticipated completion time. Once the respondent had consented to participate in the study, the link automatically proceeded to the survey.

2.7.11 Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis was performed using version Jamovi software (Version 2.3), a Windows statistical software solution for data management, sophisticated analytics, multivariate scrutiny, business intelligence, and criminal studies.

Exploratory factor analysis was performed separately for each factor, utilising principal component analysis as the extraction method to reduce the number of data elements in the data set and to identify fundamental trends or factors that describe the relationships between the observed variables. Eigenvalues were used to determine the number of underlying factors to retain (Field, 2018). Evaluating eigenvalues and scree plots suggested a unidimensional structure for each factor. Factors were selected based on eigenvalues exceeding 1.00, following the Kaiser guidelines provided by Field (2018). Adequate normality was determined at skewness values below 2.00 and kurtosis values below 7.00 (Finch & West, 1997:454). Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficients were applied to determine the measuring instruments' internal consistency (Field, 2018:1045). An acceptable cut-off point for α is 0.7 (Bryman *et al.*, 2021:54).

The commonly applied Kaiser-Meier-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was applied to assess the suitability of the dataset for factor extraction. The KMO is a diagnostic tool used to evaluate how well the indicators of a dimension are related. A low KMO value suggests that the correlations between pairs of variables are not explained by a well-defined latent factor, indicating that factor analysis may not be suitable. Ideally, the overall KMO value should be 0.8 or higher, although a value above 0.6 is still considered acceptable (Nkansah, 2011:52-53).

A factor analysis was performed to reduce the number of data elements in a particular data set. Factor analysis is a statistical approach to identifying fundamental trends or factors that describe the relationships between observed variables. The objective was to create new variables by discovering a linear combination of highly correlated variables (Adams *et al.*, 2014:222).

Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis were computed to determine the data's distribution pattern and assess tendency and normality. Descriptive statistics was also employed to summarise the data and improve comprehension (Adams *et al.*, 2014:171). The internal consistency of the constructs measured using the measuring instruments was determined using Cronbach's α coefficient (Field, 2018:1045).

Pearson's correlation analysis was employed to assess the type and nature of the relationships between the variables *Toxic leadership*, *Employee turnover intention*, and *Employee performance*. Statistical significance was established at the 95% confidence level ($p < .05$). In contrast, practical significance was determined by effect size, using the following guidelines: 0.10 for a small effect, 0.30 for a medium effect, and 0.5 and higher for a large effect (Steyn, 2002:11). According to Bryman *et al.* (2021), correlations can be used to evaluate the relationship between observed variables. However, Hinkle *et al.* (2003) emphasised that correlations can show a connection between two variables but do not imply causation. Thus, the correlation analysis aimed not to assess causality, but to confirm the presence or absence of observable relationships between the proposed variables (Adams *et al.*, 2014:199-201; Hinkle *et al.*, 2003).

A regression analysis was conducted to investigate the relationships between variables and to elucidate how specific phenomena are influenced by predictor variables. Linear regression was performed to describe how certain phenomena change due to influencing variables. It is necessary to estimate the explanatory variable, independent variable, and stimulus coefficients used to predict the dependent variable or response (Adams *et al.*, 2014:202). This analysis quantified the proportion of variance in the dependent variables (*Self-promotion*, *Abusive supervision*, *Unpredictability*, *Narcissism*, and *Authoritarian leadership*) that could be accounted for by the independent variables (*Task performance*, *Contextual performance*, and *Intention to quit*). The R-value was calculated to evaluate the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The R^2 value was utilised to indicate the proportion of variance in the dependent variable accounted for by the independent variable, with cut-off points ranging from -1 to $+1$. Effect sizes were computed using the formula $F^2 = R^2/(1-R^2)$, according to Cohen's (1988:4) guidelines. Cohen's (1988:4) guidelines, which are supported by Selya *et al.* (2012), also state that the benchmarks for the practical significance of F^2 are 0.02 for a small

effect, 0.15 for a medium effect, and 0.35 for a large size effect. The statistical significance threshold was established at 0.05.

The data gathered by the survey was analysed using computer software, Jamovi Version 2.3 (Jamovi, 2022).

2.8 Results

This section reports the demographic characteristics of the sample. It includes an overview of the descriptive statistics showing the outcomes of the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), along with the results related to reliability and validity. It also presents the correlations between factors, the multiple regression results, and the mediation and moderation analysis results.

2.8.1 Demographic

The present study engaged 146 respondents from the corporate business sector to complete the questionnaire. Respondents were selected based on their accessibility and willingness to participate, employing a non-probability sampling method: convenience sampling. This intentional sampling method increases the likelihood that certain population members will be selected over others, based on practical criteria such as ease of access, geographical proximity, availability at a specific time, and willingness to engage in the study (Coolican, 2017:52). The study's inclusion criteria required respondents to be 1) full-time employed within the specific organisation and 2) have access to the electronic questionnaire. This inclusion criterion ensured that respondents were directly involved in the organisational context under study and had the necessary resources to complete the survey. The demographic attributes of the respondents, encompassing gender, age, level of education, ethnicity, level of employment and years of service are reported in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Demographic	Count (n)	% of Total
Gender	Male	83	57%
	Female	59	40%
	Prefer not to say	4	3%
Age	18-25 yrs.	2	1%
	26-31 yrs.	15	10%
	32-37 yrs.	26	18%
	38-43 yrs.	27	18%
	44 yrs and older	76	52%
Highest Qualification	Matric / Grade 12	73	50%
	Post-matriculation qualification (Diploma or similar)	33	23%
	University Degree (BA, BCom, Bsc etc)	17	12%
	Postgraduate Degree (Honours, Masters, Doctorate)	9	6%
	Other	14	10%
Ethnic Group	White	67	46%
	Black	73	50%
	Coloured	3	2%
	Other	3	2%
Level / Occupation	Senior Management / Executive	16	11%
	Middle / Line Management	63	43%
	Other	67	46%
Years of Service	0-5 yrs.	83	57%
	6-10 yrs.	27	18%
	11-15 yrs.	24	16%
	>15 yrs.	12	8%

Table 2. illustrates that the gender distribution revealed that most respondents self-identified as male (57%), with self-identified females comprising 40%, and 3% unindicated. Most respondents (52%) were aged 44 years and older, while 36% were evenly distributed between the ages of 26 and 37. Concerning educational attainment, the majority held a Grade 12 certificate (50%), while the remainder held a diploma or similar (23%), a degree (12%), a post-graduate qualification (6%), or other educational levels (10%). In terms of ethnicity, most respondents identified as black African (50%), followed by white (46%), Coloured (2%), and 'Other' (2%). Occupationally, 11% comprised senior management, 43% middle- and line management, and 46% 'Other'. A total of 57% of the respondents had been employed for less than five years, 18% for six to 10 years, 16% between 11 and 15 years, and 8% for more than 15 years.

2.8.2 Exploratory Factor Analysis and Descriptive Statistics of Constructs

EFA was conducted using basic principal component analysis to assess the items within each scale. The evaluation of eigenvalues, the notable decline in the second factor's eigenvalue, and

the scree plot results confirmed that all the scales were unifactorial. Additional information regarding the factor analysis, including internal consistency checks through Cronbach's α , is provided in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Factor Analysis and Descriptive Statistics of all Variables

Variables	Eigen Value	Variance explained	KMO	Cronbach Alpha	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Toxic (G)	9.68	.65	.92	.96	2.21	1.09	.77	-.27
Toxic (SP)	2.04	.68	.71	.86	2.08	1.13	1.01	.32
Toxic (AS)	2.24	.75	.75	.90	2.12	1.17	.93	-.08
Toxic (UN)	2.25	.75	.73	.89	2.24	1.20	.75	-.46
Toxic (NA)	2.51	.84	.74	.94	2.26	1.29	.81	-.56
Toxic (AU)	2.09	.70	.72	.87	2.37	1.24	.63	-.61
Performance (Task)	2.76	.55	.80	.85	4.75	.48	-4.40	27.59
Performance (Context)	3.16	.63	.87	.89	4.77	.49	-4.38	27.22
Intentions to Quit	2.82	.47	.78	.82	2.61	1.00	.19	-1.07

Variable Table Key: Global (G), Self-promotion (SP), Abusive supervision (AS), Unpredictability (UN), Narcissism (NA), Authoritarian leadership (AU).

As shown in Table 2., the scales exhibited a factorial structure. All the variables showed high Cronbach's α values, meeting the acceptable threshold of 0.70 or higher, as recommended by Bryman *et al.* (2021:54), indicating high reliability and internal consistency for these variables. The data demonstrated that the scales utilised in the analysis exhibited a normal distribution, as the skewness was within the permissible range of less than 2. Kurtosis for seven variables fell within the acceptable range of less than 7. *Task performance* (27.59) and *Contextual performance* (27.22) exceed the acceptable range of 7, indicating that the distribution had excessive outliers or extreme values that could compromise the assumptions of normality in many statistical analyses, potentially leading to unreliable or misleading results.

Table 2. further demonstrates that, on average, the respondents perceived a moderate level of toxic leadership behaviours in the organisation, with mean scores for *Toxic leadership* dimensions ranging between 2.08 and 2.37. This indicated that, on average, respondents perceived toxic leadership behaviours below average mean in the organisation. *Task performance* (4.75) and *Contextual performance* (4.77) showed high means scores, suggesting respondents rated their performance levels very high. *Intentions to quit* had a mean score of 2.61, suggesting a moderate inclination among respondents to consider leaving the organisation.

The standard deviations for the *Toxic leadership* variables ranged from 1.13 to 1.29, indicating a moderate dispersion of responses around the mean. This variability suggests that respondents' perceptions of toxic leadership behaviours differed to some extent, with some individuals

reporting a higher incidence and others a lower incidence of such behaviours. The performance variables exhibited low standard deviations of 0.48 for *Task performance* and 0.49 for *Contextual performance*, signifying that responses were tightly clustered around the high mean scores. *Intention to quit* reflected a standard deviation of 1.00, denoting a moderate level of variability among respondents, suggesting that employees had differing levels of turnover intention.

The KMO values ranged from 0.71 to 0.89, indicating that the dataset demonstrated good sampling adequacy for conducting factor analysis. *Task performance* (.80) and *Contextual performance* (.87) had KMO values exceeding 0.8, indicating meritorious levels of adequacy (Nkansah, 2011:53). The *Toxic leadership* variables ranged between .71 and .78, indicating that the variables related to this dimension were sufficiently interrelated for factor extraction. These values confirmed that the relationships between the variables were strong enough to justify extracting meaningful factors across all variables included in the analysis.

2.8.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 2.3 presents the results of the correlation analysis, with statistical significance shown in parentheses.

Table 2.3: Correlation Analysis

Variable	Toxic (G)	Toxic (SP)	Toxic (AS)	Toxic (UN)	Toxic (NA)	Toxic (AU)	Task	Context	Intentions to Quit
Toxic (G)	-								
Toxic (SP)	.87 ***	-							
Toxic (AS)	.92 ***	.84 ***	-						
Toxic (UN)	.88 ***	.65 ***	.73 ***	-					
Toxic (NA)	.92 ***	.69 ***	.78 ***	.84 ***	-				
Toxic (AU)	.91 ***	.78 ***	.82 ***	.71 ***	.79 ***	-			
Performance (Task)	-.23 **	-.25 **	-.28 ***	-.10	-.17 *	-.25 **	-		
Performance (Context)	-.20 *	-.26 **	-.23 **	-.06	-.14	-.22 **	.83 ***	-	
Intentions to Quit	.41 ***	.39 ***	.34 ***	.40 ***	.37 ***	.36 ***	-.03	-.06	-

Note: Correlation: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. .1 = small effect; .3 = medium effect; .5 = large effect

Variable Table Key: Global (G), Self-promotion (SP), Abusive supervision (AS), Unpredictability (UN), Narcissism (NA), Authoritarian leadership (AU).

As shown in Table 2., all the dimensions of *Toxic leadership* were positively and statistically significantly related, reflecting a large practical effect size. This suggests that when one type of toxic behaviour is present in the workplace, others are likely to coexist. The highest correlations were found between *Self-promotion* and *Abusive supervision* ($r = .84$; $p < .001$) and between *Narcissism* and *Unpredictability* ($r = .84$; $p < .001$).

All the *Toxic leadership* variables showed a statistically significantly inverse relationship with *Task performance* and *Contextual performance*, with a small effect size, indicating that when toxic leadership increases, task performance decreases. There was a negative and statistically significantly correlation between *Task performance* and *Self-promotion* ($r = -.25; p < .01$), *Abusive supervision* ($r = -.28; p < .001$), *Narcissism* ($r = -.17; p < .05$), and *Authoritarian leadership* ($r = -.25; p < .01$). All these relationships exhibited a small effect size, where the strongest negative correlation existed between *Task performance* and *Abusive supervision*. There was no significant relationship between *Task performance* and *Unpredictability* ($r = -.10$).

Contextual performance had a negative, statistically significantly correlation with *Self-promotion* ($r = -.26; p < .01$), *Abusive supervision* ($r = -.23; p < .01$), and *Authoritarian leadership* ($r = -.22; p < .01$). These relationships were considered to have a small practical effect size. The strongest negative correlation existed with *Self-promotion*. There was no significant relationship between *Contextual performance* and *Unpredictability* ($r = -.06$) or *Narcissism* ($r = -.14$). *Task performance* and *Contextual performance* were positively and statistically significantly related ($r = .83; p < .001$), with a large effect size. This suggests that excelling in one area will likely result in high performance in the other.

Additionally, *Toxic leadership* variables exhibited a positive, statistically significant relationship with *Intention to quit*, exhibiting a medium practical effect size: *Self-promotion* ($r = .39; p < .001$), *Abusive supervision* ($r = .34; p < .001$), *Unpredictability* ($r = .40; p < .001$), *Narcissism* ($r = .37; p < .001$), and *Authoritarian leadership* ($r = .36; p < .001$). This indicates that exposure to toxic leadership increases the probability of employees considering leaving an organisation.

Although *Intention to quit* was negatively related to the *Performance* variables, there was no notable correlation between *Intention to quit* and *Task performance* ($r = -.03$) or *Contextual performance* ($r = -.06$). This suggests that low performance may not directly cause intention to leave, unless negative behaviours are present.

2.8.4 Regression Analysis

This section reports the regression analysis results aimed at determining the intention of employees to resign and investigating the impact of toxic leadership traits on employee performance. The results of a multiple regression analysis are presented in Table 2.4, which concentrated on the relationship between three dependent variables: *Intention to quit*, *Task performance*, *Contextual performance*, and five dimensions of toxic leadership (predictors). The effect sizes, R-values, R²-values, F²-values, and standardised beta coefficients (Stand β) are provided for each relationship.

Table 2.4: Regression Analysis with Toxic Leadership as the Independent Variable (Predictor) of Performance and Intention to Quit as Dependent Variable

Predictors	Performance (Task)	Performance (Context)	Intentions to Quit
	Stand β	Stand β	Stand β
Self promotion (SP)	-.02	-.09	.26 *
Abusive supervision (AS)	-.14	-.06	-.14
Unpredictability (UN)	.11	.13 *	.22
Narcissism (NA)	-.01	-.03	.39
Authoritarian (AU)	-.05	-.04	.03
R	.34	.32	.44
R²	.11	.10	.19
F²	.13	.12	.24
Effect Size	Small Effect	Small Effect	Medium Effect

Note 2: F2 parameters set for practical significance: if $F2 \geq 0.02$ small effect; if $F2 \geq 0.15$ medium and ≥ 0.35 large effect. $*p \leq 0.05$ = statistically significant

As shown in Table 2.4, *Toxic leadership* variables accounted for 13% (small effect size) of the variation in *Task performance*, although none of the predictors were statistically significant. For *Contextual performance*, *Toxic leadership* had a small effect size (12%) of the variation, with *Unpredictability* ($t = 2.117$; $p = 0.036$) being the only statistically significant predictor. *Toxic leadership* accounted for 24% (medium effect size) of the variation in *Intention to quit*, with *Self-promotion* showing a significant effect ($t = 1.979$; $p = 0.050$).

2.8.5 Mediation Analysis

This study also explored the mediating effect of toxic leadership traits on employee performance. Bootstrap confidence intervals were employed to evaluate the mediation's effects. If the confidence intervals for the indirect effects included zero, it indicated no significant indirect effects, making it difficult to confirm the mediating role. The following section delves into this mediation analysis. The results regarding the mediating role of toxic leadership in task- and context performance are presented in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5: The Indirect Effect of Performance via Toxic Leadership on Intention to Quit

Mediators	Estimate	SE	Bootstrapping CI	
			Lower	Upper
Indirect effect of Performance via Toxic leadership (G)				
Performance (Task)	-.01	.02	-.048	.012
Performance (Context)	.00	.01	-.031	.025
Indirect effect of Performance via Self promotion (SP)				
Performance (Task)	-.02	.02	-.052	.021
Performance (Context)	-.01	.02	-.045	.027
Indirect effect of Performance via Abusive supervision (AS)				
Performance (Task)	-.02	.02	-.056	.023
Performance (Context)	.00	.02	-.034	.028
Indirect effect of Performance via Unpredictability (UN)				
Performance (Task)	.00	.01	-.012	-.012
Performance (Context)	.00	.00	-.007	.011
Indirect effect of Performance via Narcissism (NA)				
Performance (Task)	.00	.01	-.025	-.016
Performance (Context)	.00	.01	-.016	.018
Indirect effect of Performance via Authoritarian (AU)				
Performance (Task)	.01	.01	-.015	.032
Performance (Context)	.00	.01	-.030	.025

Note: LLCI (lower-level confidence interval), ULCI (upper-level confidence interval)

The indirect effect of *Task performance* on *Intention to quit* via *Self-promotion* (LLCI -0.05; ULCI 0.01), *Abusive supervision* (LLCI -0.06; ULCI 0.02), and *Authoritarian leadership* (LLCI -0.01; ULCI 0.03) was not statistically significant, due to the presence of zero within the confidence intervals (Zhao *et al.*, 2010:202). The indirect effect of *Contextual performance* on *Intention to quit* via *Self-promotion* (LLCI -0.04; ULCI 0.03), *Abusive supervision* (LLCI -0.03; ULCI 0.03), *Unpredictability* (LLCI -0.01; ULCI 0.0), *Narcissism* (LLCI -0.02; ULCI 0.02), and *Authoritarian leadership* (LLCI -0.03; ULCI 0.03) was not statistically significant, due to the presence of zero within the confidence intervals (Zhao *et al.*, 2010:202). The indirect effect of *Task performance* (LLCI -0.05; ULCI 0.01) and *Contextual performance* (LLCI -0.03; ULCI 0.02) via the aggregate *Toxic leadership* traits was also statistically insignificant. The absence of a significant indirect effect related to *Intention to quit* suggested that the mediating role of *Task performance* and *Contextual performance* could not be confirmed in the model where *Intention to quit* was the independent variable and *Toxic leadership* the dependent variable. The inclusion of zero indicated that the indirect effect could have been due to random chance; thus, there is no strong evidence to support the mediation hypothesis. The absence of a significant indirect effect meant the

mediator played a minor role in the relationship, making it difficult to confirm a clear mediation pathway.

The bootstrap analysis revealed a statistically significant indirect effect between *Task performance* and *Intention to quit* via *Unpredictability* (LLCI -0.01; ULCI -0.01) and a statistically significant indirect effect between *Task performance* and *Intention to quit* via *Narcissism* (LLCI -0.02; ULCI -0.02) with a 95% confidence interval that did not include zero. These significant indirect effects meant the mediators played a significant role in the relationship.

2.8.6 Moderation Analysis

Moderation analysis is a statistical technique used to identify and explore the conditions under which a relationship between two variables is stronger, weaker, or even reversed. It helps researchers understand the boundary conditions or circumstances that influence the strength or direction of an effect. Moderation analysis examines how a moderator variable interacts with an independent variable to affect a dependent variable, revealing how different contexts or conditions influence the studied core relationship (Hayes, 2017:3). Table 2.7 presents the mediation analysis results.

Table 2.2: Moderation Analysis

Moderator	Estimate	SE	Bootstrapping CI	
			Lower	Upper
Indirect effect of Performance via Toxic leadership (G)				
Performance (Task)	.13	.12	-.110	.363
Performance (Context)	.10	.12	-.131	.333
Indirect effect of Performance via Self promotion (SP)				
Performance (Task)	.13	.08	-.018	.278
Performance (Context)	.17	.07	.026	.318
Indirect effect of Performance via Abusive supervision (AS)				
Performance (Task)	.14	.08	-.009	.297
Performance (Context)	.14	.08	-.012	.293
Indirect effect of Performance via Unpredictability (UN)				
Performance (Task)	.04	.13	-.209	.283
Performance (Context)	-.04	.12	-.280	.199
Indirect effect of Performance via Narcissism (NA)				
Performance (Task)	.16	.15	-.138	.456
Performance (Context)	-.03	.15	-.206	.837
Indirect effect of Performance via Authoritarian (AU)				
Performance (Task)	.13	.08	-.029	.298
Performance (Context)	.13	.08	-.031	.296

Note: LLCI (lower-level confidence interval), ULCI (upper-level confidence interval)

The results indicated a significant interaction in the moderation analysis, where the effect of *Self-promotion* (independent variable) on *Intention to quit* (dependent variable) was influenced by *Contextual performance* (moderator) (LLCI 0.03; ULCI 0.02), proved by the absence of zero in the confidence levels. This relationship between *Toxic leadership* and *Intention to quit* varied depending on the level of *Contextual performance*, suggesting that performance moderates the strength or direction of the impact of toxic leadership on employees' intentions to leave. In contrast, *Abusive supervision*, *Unpredictability*, *Narcissism*, and *Authoritarian leadership* had little to no significant effect on either *Task performance* or *Contextual performance*, as evidenced by the wide confidence intervals crossing zero. Overall, the results indicated that toxic leadership does not significantly affect employee performance within the analysed conditions.

2.9 Discussion

The primary objective of this research study was to investigate toxic leadership's impact on employee turnover and performance within a corporate business environment in South Africa. Additionally, the study assessed the mediating role of performance in the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit. Data collected from 146 respondents were analysed to uncover direct and indirect connections among these variables, providing a comprehensive understanding of how toxic leadership influences employee behaviour and performance outcomes.

The results revealed that all dimensions of toxic leadership are positively and significantly related, indicating a strong practical association between different toxic behaviours (Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:109). This suggests that one toxic leadership behaviour in the workplace often coincides with the presence of others. For example, self-promotion and abusive supervision, as well as narcissism and unpredictability, were found to be the most strongly correlated, highlighting that these behaviours are likely to occur together in toxic leadership environments.

SRO1 was to ascertain the prevalence of toxic leadership and levels of performance and inclination to resign. The results indicated the existence of toxic leadership behaviours, together with employees' performance and aspirations to resign. Scores for *Toxic leadership* suggested a perceived moderate occurrence of toxic leadership behaviours in their workplace. The standard deviations for these variables reflected moderate dispersion around the mean, indicating variability in perceptions and suggesting that some respondents experienced higher incidences of toxic leadership than others. Strong perceptions of high task- and contextual performance were reflected in the results, indicating that employees generally rate their performance levels as very high. The low standard deviations for *Task performance* and *Contextual performance* signified

that responses were tightly clustered around these high means. This suggests that self-reported high performance is not isolated but is shared in the organisation.

Furthermore, the mean score for *Intention to quit* implies a moderate inclination among employees to consider leaving the organisation. The standard deviation denoted a moderate variability in turnover intentions, suggesting that, while some employees strongly desire to leave, others are less so inclined. This highlights the prevalence of varying levels of intentions to quit within the organisation's workforce.

SRO2 was to determine the relationship between toxic leadership and performance. The *Toxic leadership* dimensions showed an inverse relationship with *Task performance* and *Contextual performance*, meaning that employee performance decreases as toxic leadership increases, which is aligned with literature (Khan *et al.*, 2021:7; Nonehkaran *et al.*, 2023:5; Türkmen Keskin & Özduyan Kiliç, 2024:54). This was reflected in the negative correlations between the aggregate of *Toxic leadership* behaviours and both performance measures. Although these correlations reflected a smaller effect size, the consistent negative association emphasises the detrimental impact of toxic leadership on performance.

Breaking down the relationships with *Task performance*, the results showed statistically significant negative correlations with *Self-promotion* (Ofei *et al.*, 2023:5), *Abusive supervision*, *Narcissism* (Ofei *et al.*, 2023:5), and *Authoritarian leadership*, with the strongest effect between *Task performance* and *Abusive supervision*. Interestingly, *Unpredictability* did not show a significant relationship with *Task performance*, suggesting that some toxic behaviours may have a less direct impact on task-specific outcomes.

Similarly, *Contextual performance* correlated negatively with *Self-promotion*, *Abusive supervision* (see Rodwell *et al.*, 2014:361), and *Authoritarian leadership*, with *Self-promotion* showing the most substantial effect. Again, *Unpredictability* and *Narcissism* did not exhibit statistically significant relationships with *Contextual performance*, indicating that certain aspects of toxic leadership may not influence broader organisational citizenship behaviours as strongly.

An important finding is the strong positive and statistically significant relationship between *Task performance* and *Contextual performance*, suggesting that high performance in one area will likely translate into high performance in the other, as noted in literature (Díaz-Vilela *et al.*, 2015:7; Kalia & Bhardwaj, 2019:35; Yozgat, 2019:362). This relationship underscores the interconnectedness of different performance dimensions and their collective impact on employee effectiveness.

The *Toxic leadership* variables accounted for a small portion of the variance in *Task performance*, although none of the individual *Toxic leadership* dimensions emerged as a statistically significant predictor, which is aligned with literature (Khan *et al.*, 2021:61; Wolor *et al.*, 2022:1). This suggests that, while toxic leadership behaviours may influence task performance, they may not have a substantial impact when considered individually.

For *Contextual performance*, the *Toxic leadership* variables explained a small portion of the variance, with *Unpredictability* being the only significant predictor. This indicates that when leaders exhibit unpredictable behaviour, it negatively impacts employees' contextual performance, such as organisational citizenship behaviours. This finding led to the acceptance of H1: Toxic leadership dimensions are significantly adversely related to employee performance.

SRO3 was to determine the correlation between toxic leadership and the intention to quit. The results showed that *Toxic leadership* was positively correlated with *Intention to quit*, as posited in literature (Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:109; Labrague *et al.*, 2020b:1108; Türkmen Keskin & Özduyan Kiliç, 2024:1862), with all dimensions of *Toxic leadership* showing positive, statistically significant relationships. This finding led to the acceptance of H2: Toxic leadership dimensions are significantly positively related to employees' intentions to quit. This indicates that employees exposed to toxic leadership are more likely to consider leaving the organisation, highlighting the severe retention risks associated with such environments.

The most significant finding relates to turnover intentions, where *Toxic leadership* variables explained a medium portion of the variance. Literature noted that toxic leadership behaviours increase quitting intentions (Labrague *et al.*, 2020b:1108; Türkmen Keskin & Özduyan Kiliç, 2024:1864). Self-promotion, a behaviour where leaders focus on advancing their status at the expense of others, was found to have a significant influence employees' intentions to leave the organisation. This supports previous research that links toxic leadership behaviours, particularly those perceived as self-serving, to higher turnover intentions (Ofei *et al.*, 2023:5). Employees exposed to such behaviours are more likely to feel disengaged and seek employment elsewhere.

SRO4 was to determine the relationship between performance and quitting intentions. The results indicated that *Intention to quit* did not show a significant relationship with either *Task performance* or *Contextual performance*, suggesting that poor performance may not drive turnover intentions unless combined with toxic leadership behaviours. This underscores the critical role of leadership behaviour in influencing employees' decisions to stay or leave. This finding led to the acceptance of H3: A negative correlation exists between employee performance levels and intentions to quit.

Table 2.4 reports the results with regard to SRO5, which focused on the role of toxic leadership in performance dimensions and intentions to quit. *Toxic leadership* variables explained 13% of the variation in *Task performance*, though none of the individual predictors were statistically significant. In the case of *Contextual performance*, *Toxic leadership* accounted for 12% of the variation, with *Unpredictability* emerging as the sole statistically significant predictor. This implies that unpredictability plays an important role in contextual performance. Furthermore, *Toxic leadership* contributed 24% of the variation in *Intention to quit* (medium effect size), with *Self-promotion* being a significant influencing factor, implying that self-promotion plays an important role in employees' intentions to quit, as posited in literature (Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:7; Durrah et al., 2023; Nonehkaran et al., 2023). This finding led to the partial acceptance of H4: Toxic leadership dimensions are statistically significant predictors of task and contextual performance and intentions to quit.

SRO6 was to determine the mediating role of performance in the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit. The analysis revealed that the indirect effect of *Task performance* on *Intention to quit* through various toxic leadership behaviours, such as *Self-promotion*, *Abusive supervision*, and *Authoritarian leadership*, were not statistically significant. This lack of significance was due to zero within the confidence intervals, suggesting that the indirect effects could be due to random chance. Therefore, no strong evidence supports the mediation hypothesis for these behaviours. Similarly, *Contextual performance* did not show a significant indirect effect on *Intention to quit* when mediated by *Toxic leadership* traits like *Unpredictability*, *Narcissism*, or *Self-promotion*. Zero within these confidence intervals indicated that task- and contextual performance do not mediate in this context.

Exceptions were recorded in the analysis, where the bootstrap analysis identified statistically significant indirect effects between *Task performance* and *Intention to quit*, specifically mediated by *Unpredictability* and *Narcissism*. In these cases, the absence of zero in the confidence intervals confirmed that these toxic leadership traits significantly influence employees' intentions to quit. These findings suggest that, while performance does not generally mediate the relationship between toxic leadership and turnover intentions, certain toxic leadership behaviours like unpredictability and narcissism do have a more substantial impact when task performance is considered a mediator. This finding led to the partial acceptance of H5: Performance (task and context) mediates the relationship between toxic leadership and intentions to quit.

Lastly, SRO7 assessed whether employee performance moderates the relationship between toxic leadership and intentions to quit. The findings revealed a significant moderation effect, where the influence of *Self-promotion* (independent variable) on *Intention to quit* (dependent variable) was

moderated by Contextual performance, as demonstrated by the absence of zero in the confidence intervals. This suggests that the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit varies based on the level of Contextual performance, indicating that performance plays a role in shaping the impact of toxic leadership on employees' decisions to leave. However, other toxic leadership traits, such as Abusive supervision, Unpredictability, Narcissism, and Authoritarian leadership, showed little to no significant effect on either Task performance or Contextual performance, as evidenced by broad confidence intervals crossing zero. This finding led to the partial acceptance of H6: Performance (task and context) moderates the relationship between toxic leadership and intentions to quit. Overall, the results suggest that toxic leadership does not significantly impact employee performance under the conditions analysed.

The next section discusses the managerial implications of the results, followed by recommendations.

2.10 Managerial Implications

Toxic leadership is a complex issue, and this study's findings have significant practical implications. Leaders often do not perceive themselves as toxic and may believe their actions are honourable. Subordinates experience toxic leadership differently based on their interactions with the leader. Since toxic leadership is linked to reduced employee performance and intention to quit, organisations should prioritise efforts to mitigate such destructive behaviours (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014). Many organisations, however, lack the experience and skills to counter the impact of toxic leadership, often resulting in hidden costs as a result of the leader's dysfunctional behaviours (Hyson, 2016:41; Suryosukmono *et al.*, 2023:890), leading to potentially irreversible damage to an organisation (Saleem *et al.*, 2021:12).

Folger and Cropanzano's (2001) fairness theory suggests that employees often hold the organisation accountable for enabling a culture that tolerates toxic leadership, leading to a negative perception of the organisation. A study by Webster *et al.* (2016:353) found that many employees feel unsupported by their organisations when dealing with toxic leadership, often resorting to external networks for help instead of the organisation's HR practitioners. The lack of formal support channels leads to learned helplessness, chronic health issues, and long-term harm among those who remain in such environments, increasing the organisation's liability for failing to ensure a safe workplace (Webster *et al.*, 2016:353).

2.11 Recommendation for Organisations

Considering the adverse effects of toxic leadership on individuals and organisations, policymakers must implement proactive measures against toxic leadership. Understanding the negative effects of toxic leadership on job satisfaction, turnover, and commitment enables companies to proactively develop strategies to manage and reduce these issues, thereby enhancing workforce stability and organisational success. Hanges and Schmidt (2014) emphasise recognising toxic leadership behaviours and creating tools to measure and address them. For organisations focused on success and retaining talent, it is crucial to identify and track leaders who might adversely affect the business (Hanges & Schmidt, 2014).

The selection of leaders for essential positions can reduce toxicity, protect employee well-being, and improve organisational performance (Webster *et al.*, 2016:353). Early identification and correction of toxic behaviours in leaders can prevent escalation and inform future selection processes to limit toxic leadership within the organisation. External experts can support victims and help retrain leaders when internal measures fall short. If these efforts fail, implementing an exit strategy for toxic leaders may be essential to maintaining organisational health (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014).

Mehta and Maheshwari (2014) suggest that monitoring and evaluating leaders' behaviours and interactions are essential to creating a healthy work environment. Executive mentors can play a crucial role by assessing leaders' relationships with their teams, providing constructive feedback, and educating leaders on avoiding harmful behaviours. Organisations should also establish early detection mechanisms to identify toxic leadership traits, allowing for timely intervention and re-education, which helps prevent these behaviours from becoming deeply ingrained (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014).

Organisational toxicity can be reduced, if not eliminated, by implementing mechanisms that empower employees to report misconduct without fear of retaliation. One effective approach is implementing a whistle-blowing system, which enables anonymous reporting of unethical behaviour, toxic leadership behaviours, and other forms of misconduct. Whistle-blowing mechanisms can take various forms, including confidential hotlines, secure online reporting platforms, or suggestion boxes that allow employees to submit concerns anonymously (Saleem *et al.*, 2021:12).

Organisations should take immediate, decisive action, such as disciplinary measures or removal, upon substantiated evidence of toxic leadership behaviours, although Kusy and Holloway (2009) suggest that simply removing a toxic leader is insufficient; the systems that enabled and

reinforced such behaviours must also be identified and reformed (Kusy & Holloway, 2009:64). Kusy and Holloway (2009:64) recommend leadership programmes as a means to mitigate and prevent toxic behaviours. Development programmes are highlighted as effective tools for educating leaders on strategies that promote respectful engagement and reduce toxicity. Leaders can learn to reinforce organisational values at individual and team levels through training programmes that directly address toxicity, offering an opportunity to identify and extinguish toxic behaviours before they escalate (Kusy & Holloway, 2009:195-196).

This study emphasises intention to leave as the most reliable indicator of employee turnover rates. Rather than solely focusing on actual turnover, organisations should understand employees' intentions to leave. Identifying the underlying causes of turnover intentions and addressing them proactively can prevent actual turnover. Organisations can foster a healthier workplace and enhance employee retention by implementing effective strategies and feedback systems that gather employees' insights on their leaders and work environment (Naeem & Khurram, 2020:701).

Performance management systems should also evaluate feedback results, to ensure that managers foster a healthy work environment. Implementing a 360-degree feedback system allows toxic leaders to receive regular input from peers, subordinates, and supervisors, providing a comprehensive view of their reputation and the impact of their behaviours across the organisation. This continual feedback process highlights areas for improvement and reinforces the need for sustained behavioural change, fostering a greater sense of accountability and self-awareness (Kusy & Holloway, 2009).

In addition to standard policies, procedures, and employee assistance programmes, organisations should implement proactive training focused on helping employees develop effective coping strategies to manage toxic behaviours. Webster *et al.* (2016) suggest that such training empowers employees to confront toxic behaviours actively, rather than enduring them passively. These programmes should inform employees of available social and professional support resources and highlight the importance of maintaining personal health and well-being. This approach equips employees with the skills to prevent or minimise harm, contributing to a healthier and more supportive work environment (Webster *et al.*, 2016:353).

The next section reviews the limitations of the present study, followed by recommendations for future research.

2.12 Limitations

Considering the nature and scope of this research study, numerous limitations must be considered in interpreting the results. A key limitation of this study is the potential for common method biases. These biases may originate from various sources, such as using a common evaluator, a shared measurement environment, a uniform item context, or the inherent qualities of the objects themselves (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003:885). These limitations are prevalent in behavioural research.

All data for this study were collected through questionnaires. Self-reported assessments may introduce common method bias (McCallaghan *et al.*, 2019:81), which could affect the accuracy of the results. Measurement error, including random and systematic factors, can undermine the validity of conclusions about the relationships between variables. This occurs because using the same method to measure different constructs may create artificial correlations unrelated to the constructs' true nature.

Respondents were required to provide information on the predictor and criterion variables, which may have influenced their responses, due to factors such as mood, personal perceptions, or a desire for consistency. This can result in an overestimation of the relationship between the variables, creating the false appearance of a stronger correlation than exists. Such inflated correlations may be attributed to respondent biases or tendencies, rather than reflecting a genuine relationship between the variables (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003:882).

Quantitative cross-sectional research limited the ability to draw cause-and-effect conclusions, because toxic leadership, employee performance, and intention to quit are measured simultaneously (McCallaghan *et al.*, 2019:81; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003:882). Likert scales, a widely used scale format, are prone to biases like central tendency bias, where respondents shy away from extreme answers, and acquiescence bias, where respondents agree with statements irrespective of their content (Zhang & Savalei, 2016:358). The researcher attempted to minimise the effect of these biases by incorporating reverse-worded and reversed-phrased questions into the surveys.

This study applied non-probability convenience sampling. The researcher's judgement may have influenced the selection and composition of the sample, potentially introducing bias and subjectivity (Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:79). However, this subjectivity was mitigated as participation in the study was voluntary, allowing respondents to choose whether to take part. Convenience sampling limits the ability to generalise the findings, and the results should be understood as representative of the specific sample group (see McCallaghan *et al.*, 2019:140).

This study was conducted in a single organisation in South Africa, which limits the ability to draw broader conclusions about other organisational settings, despite the diversity in respondents' age, gender, education, work experience and position. Lastly, toxic leadership was assessed solely based on the subordinates' perceptions, with no input or self-reporting from the leader. Consequently, conclusions regarding toxic leadership were derived exclusively from the viewpoints of the subordinates.

2.13 Recommendations for Future Studies

Despite the study's limitations, the results present several avenues for future studies and applications.

Common method bias can be mitigated by employing procedural and statistical techniques, such as using different sources for predictor- and criterion variables or incorporating varied data collection methods like questionnaires, qualitative interviews, and observational data, as suggested by Abalkhail (2022:320) and Schmidt (2008:65). Including open-ended questions or mixed-method approaches could provide additional and more nuanced results.

Longitudinal studies could yield more conclusive results regarding the causal relationships between toxic leadership, employee performance, and intentions to quit (Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:9; Jackson & Fransman, 2018:11). This would allow for assessing changes and relationships over time, providing a more accurate understanding of how toxic leadership influences employee outcomes.

Reverse-worded items, phrases, and alternative formats could reduce biases associated with common scale formats, such as central tendency and acquiescence biases in Likert scales (Pradhan *et al.*, 2020:1274).

To overcome the limitations of convenience sampling, future research should adopt more representative sampling methods, such as probability sampling and randomly selecting respondents. This would allow for broader applicability of the findings across various work environments. Larger sample sizes and the inclusion of staff from other organisations could improve the generalisability of the findings (Jackson & Fransman, 2018:11).

Given that employees' experiences with toxic leadership can vary between environments, future research should expand to include other organisations and industries in different areas and regions. This research should empirically evaluate the organisational conditions and the impacts of toxic leadership behaviours, not only on individuals and organisations, but also at the societal

level, as noted in the literature (Abalkhail, 2022:320; Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:9; Schmidt, 2008:66).

Studies on toxic leadership should consider diverse views, such as leaders' self-reports, peer evaluations, and third-party observations. This multi-source approach will provide a more balanced and thorough knowledge of toxic leadership behaviours, thereby lowering the reliance on subordinates' perceptions and mitigating potential bias in conclusions.

2.14 Overview

This chapter shed light on the complex relationships between toxic leadership, employee performance, and intention to quit within the South African corporate context. Through a comprehensive analytical approach and an in-depth exploration of these interactions, the study offers valuable insights into how toxic leadership affects employee performance and their intention to leave the organisation. The findings presented in this chapter hold significant implications for organisational management and future research endeavours, laying the foundation for a detailed examination and discussion of the research outcomes.

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CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the conclusions and recommendations based on the results of the thorough analysis performed in this study. The study examined the prevalence of toxic leadership behaviours and its effect on employee performance and turnover intentions within an organisation, seeking to offer practical recommendations for practice. The study elucidates the complex interactions between toxic leadership, performance results, and turnover intentions, highlighting relationships that affect organisational success and employee well-being.

3.2 Discussion of the Results

The primary objective of this research study was to investigate toxic leadership's impact on employee turnover and performance within a corporate business environment in South Africa. Additionally, the study assessed the mediating role of performance in the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit. Data collected from 146 respondents were analysed to uncover direct and indirect connections among these variables, providing a comprehensive understanding of how toxic leadership influences employee behaviour and performance outcomes.

The results revealed that all dimensions of toxic leadership are positively and significantly related, indicating a robust, practical association between different toxic behaviours, as posited in literature (Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:109). This suggests that one toxic leadership behaviour in the workplace often coincides with the presence of others. For example, the strongest correlations were found between self-promotion and abusive supervision and between narcissism and unpredictability, highlighting that these behaviours are likely to occur together in toxic leadership environments.

The study's primary objective was to ascertain the prevalence of toxic leadership, levels of employee performance, and their inclination to resign. The results indicated the existence of toxic leadership behaviours, high self-reported employee performance, and intentions to resign. The mean scores for *Toxic leadership* suggested a perceived moderate level of toxic leadership behaviours in the workplace. The standard deviations for the toxic leadership variables reflected a moderate dispersion around the mean, suggesting variability in perceptions, indicating that some respondents experienced higher incidences of toxic leadership than others. Strong perceptions of high task- and contextual performance are reflected in the results, indicating that

employees generally rate their performance levels as very high. The low standard deviations for *Task performance* and *Contextual performance* signified that responses were tightly clustered around these high means. This suggests that self-reporting on high performance is not isolated, but is shared within the organisation.

Furthermore, the mean score for *Intention to quit* indicated a moderate inclination among employees to consider leaving the organisation. The standard deviation denoted a moderate variability in turnover intentions, suggesting that, while some employees strongly desire to leave, others are less so inclined. This highlights the prevalence of varying levels of intentions to quit within the organisation's workforce.

SRO2 was to determine the relationship between toxic leadership and performance. The *Toxic leadership* dimensions showed an inverse relationship with *Task performance* and *Contextual performance*, meaning that employee performance decreases as toxic leadership increases, as asserted in literature (Khan *et al.*, 2021:7; Nonehkaran *et al.*, 2023:5; Türkmen Keskin & Özduyan Kiliç, 2024:54). This was reflected in the negative correlations between the aggregate of *Toxic leadership* behaviours and both performance measures. Although these correlations reflected a smaller effect size, the consistent negative association emphasises the detrimental impact of toxic leadership on performance.

Breaking down the relationships with *Task performance*, there was a statistically significant negative correlation with *Self-promotion* (see Ofei *et al.*, 2023:5), *Abusive supervision*, *Narcissism* (see Ofei *et al.*, 2023:5), and *Authoritarian leadership*, with the strongest effect between *Task performance* and *Abusive supervision*. Interestingly, *Unpredictability* did not show a significant relationship with *Task performance*, suggesting that some toxic behaviours may have a less direct impact on task-specific outcomes.

Similarly, *Contextual performance* negatively correlated with *Self-promotion*, *abusive supervision* (see Rodwell *et al.*, 2014:361), and *Authoritarian leadership*, with *Self-promotion* showing the most substantial effect. Again, *Unpredictability* and *Narcissism* did not exhibit statistically significant relationships with *Contextual performance*, indicating that certain aspects of toxic leadership may not influence broader organisational citizenship behaviours as strongly.

An important finding is the strong positive and statistically significant relationship between *Task Performance* and *Contextual performance*, suggesting that high performance in one area will likely translate into high performance in the other (Díaz-Vilela *et al.*, 2015:7; Kalia & Bhardwaj, 2019:35; Yozgat, 2019:362). This relationship underscores the interconnectedness of different performance dimensions and their collective impact on employee effectiveness.

The *Toxic leadership* variables accounted for a small portion of the variance in *Task performance*, although none of the individual *Toxic leadership* dimensions emerged as a statistically significant predictor (Khan *et al.*, 2021:61; Wolor *et al.*, 2022:1). This suggests that, while toxic leadership behaviours may influence task performance, they may not have a substantial impact when considered individually.

For *Contextual performance*, the *Toxic leadership* variables explained a small portion of the variance, with *Unpredictability* being the only significant predictor. This indicates that, when leaders exhibit unpredictable behaviour, it negatively impacts employees' contextual performance, such as organisational citizenship behaviours.

SRO3 was to determine the correlation between toxic leadership and the intention to quit. The results showed that *Toxic leadership* was positively correlated with *Intention to quit*, in alignment with the findings in literature (Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:109; Labrague *et al.*, 2020b:1108; Türkmen Keskin & Özduyan Kiliç, 2024:1862), with all dimensions of *Toxic leadership* showing positive, statistically significant relationships. This indicates that employees who are exposed to toxic leadership are more likely to consider leaving the organisation, highlighting the severe retention risks associated with such environments.

The most significant finding relates to turnover intentions, where *Toxic leadership* variables explained a medium portion of the variance. Toxic leadership behaviour increases quitting intentions (Labrague *et al.*, 2020b:1108; Türkmen Keskin & Özduyan Kiliç, 2024:1864). Self-promotion, a behaviour where leaders focus on advancing their status at the expense of others, was found to have a significant influence employees' intentions to leave the organisation. This supports previous research that links toxic leadership behaviours, particularly those perceived as self-serving, to higher turnover intentions (Ofei *et al.*, 2023:5). Employees exposed to such behaviours are more likely to feel disengaged and seek employment elsewhere.

SRO4 was to determine the relationship between performance and quitting intentions. The results indicated that *Intention to quit* did not show significant relationships with either *Task performance* or *Contextual performance*, suggesting that poor performance alone may not drive turnover intentions if not combined with toxic leadership behaviours. This underscores the critical role of leadership behaviour in influencing employees' decisions to stay or leave.

SRO5 focused on the role of toxic leadership in performance dimensions and intention to quit. *Toxic leadership* variables explained 13% of the variation in *Task performance*, although no individual predictor was statistically significant. In the case of contextual performance, *Toxic leadership* accounted for 12% of the variation, with *Unpredictability* emerging as the sole

statistically significant predictor. This indicates that unpredictability plays a vital role in contextual performance. Furthermore, *Toxic leadership* contributed to 24% of the variation in *Intention to quit* (medium effect size), with *Self-promotion* shown to be a significant influencing factor, implying that self-promotion plays an important role in intention to quit, as asserted in literature (Brouwers & Paltu, 2020; Durrah *et al.*, 2023; Nonehkaran *et al.*, 2023).

SRO6 was to determine the mediating role of performance in the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit, and the analysis revealed that the indirect effect of *Task performance* on *Intention to quit* through various *Toxic leadership* behaviours, such as *Self-promotion*, *Abusive supervision*, and *Authoritarian leadership*, were not statistically significant. This lack of significance is due to zero within the confidence intervals, suggesting that the indirect effects could have been due to random chance. Therefore, no substantial evidence supports the mediation hypothesis for these behaviours. Similarly, *Contextual performance* did not show a significant indirect effect on *Intention to quit* when mediated by the *Toxic leadership* traits *Unpredictability*, *Narcissism*, or *Self-promotion*. Zero within these confidence intervals indicated that *Task performance* and *Contextual performance* did not mediate in this context.

Exceptions were recorded in the analysis, where the bootstrap analysis identified statistically significant indirect effects between *Task performance* and *Intention to quit*, specifically mediated by *Unpredictability* and *Narcissism*. In these cases, the absence of zero in the confidence intervals confirmed that these toxic leadership traits significantly influence employees' intentions to quit. These findings suggest that, while performance does not generally mediate the relationship between toxic leadership and turnover intentions, certain toxic leadership behaviours, like unpredictability and narcissism, do have a more substantial impact when task performance is considered a mediator.

Lastly, SRO7 assessed whether employee performance moderates the relationship between toxic leadership and intentions to quit. The findings revealed a significant moderation effect, where the influence of *Self-promotion* (independent variable) on *Intention to quit* (dependent variable) was moderated by *Contextual performance*, as demonstrated by the absence of zero in the confidence intervals. This suggests that the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit varies based on the level of *Contextual performance*, indicating that performance plays a role in shaping the impact of toxic leadership on employees' decisions to leave. However, other toxic leadership traits, such as *Abusive supervision*, *Unpredictability*, *Narcissism*, and *Authoritarian leadership*, showed little to no significant effect on either *Task performance* or *Contextual performance*, as evidenced by broad confidence intervals crossing zero. Overall, the results suggest that toxic leadership does not significantly impact employee performance under the conditions analysed.

3.3 Managerial Implications

Toxic leadership is a complex issue, and this study's findings have significant practical implications. Leaders often do not perceive themselves as toxic and may believe their actions are honourable. Subordinates experience toxic leadership differently based on their interactions with the leader. Since toxic leadership is linked to reduced employee performance and intention to quit, organisations should prioritise efforts to mitigate such destructive behaviours (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014). Many organisations, however, lack the experience and skills to counter the impact of toxic leadership, often resulting in hidden costs as a result of the leader's dysfunctional behaviours (Hyson, 2016:41; Suryosukmono *et al.*, 2023:890), leading to potentially irreversible damage to an organisation (Saleem *et al.*, 2021:12).

Folger and Cropanzano's (2001) fairness theory suggests that employees often hold the organisation accountable for enabling a culture that tolerates toxic leadership, leading to a negative perception of the organisation. A study by Webster *et al.* (2016) found that many employees feel unsupported by their organisations when dealing with toxic leadership, often resorting to external networks for help instead of the organisation's HR practitioners. The lack of formal support channels leads to learned helplessness, chronic health issues, and long-term harm among those who remain in such environments, increasing the organisation's liability for failing to ensure a safe workplace (Webster *et al.*, 2016:353).

3.4 Recommendation for Organisations

Considering the adverse effects of toxic leadership on individuals and organisations, policymakers must implement proactive measures against toxic leadership. Understanding the negative effects of toxic leadership on job satisfaction, turnover, and commitment enables companies to proactively develop strategies to manage and reduce these issues, thereby enhancing workforce stability and organisational success. Hanges and Schmidt (2014) emphasise recognising toxic leadership behaviours and creating tools to measure and address them. For organisations focused on success and retaining talent, it is crucial to identify and track leaders who might adversely affect the business (Hanges & Schmidt, 2014).

Reducing toxicity, protecting employee well-being, and improving organisational performance can be achieved through the selection of leaders for essential positions (Webster *et al.*, 2016:353). Early identification and correction of toxic behaviours in leaders can prevent escalation and inform future selection processes to limit toxic leadership within the organisation. External experts can support victims and help retrain leaders when internal measures fall short. If these efforts fail,

implementing an exit strategy for toxic leaders may be essential to maintaining organisational health (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014).

Mehta and Maheshwari (2014) suggest that monitoring and evaluating leaders' behaviours and interactions are essential to creating a healthy work environment. Executive mentors can play a crucial role by assessing leaders' relationships with their teams, providing constructive feedback, and educating leaders on avoiding harmful behaviours. Organisations should also establish early detection mechanisms to identify toxic leadership traits, allowing for timely intervention and re-education, which helps prevent these behaviours from becoming deeply ingrained (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014).

Organisational toxicity can be reduced, if not eliminated, by implementing mechanisms that empower employees to report misconduct without fear of retaliation. One effective approach is implementing a whistle-blowing system, which enables anonymous reporting of unethical behaviour, toxic leadership behaviours, and other forms of misconduct. Whistle-blowing mechanisms can take various forms, including confidential hotlines, secure online reporting platforms, or suggestion boxes that allow employees to submit concerns anonymously (Saleem *et al.*, 2021:12).

Organisations should take immediate, decisive action, such as disciplinary measures or removal, upon substantiated evidence of toxic leadership behaviours, although Kusy and Holloway (2009) suggest that simply removing a toxic leader is insufficient; the systems that enabled and reinforced such behaviours must also be identified and reformed (Kusy & Holloway, 2009:64). Kusy and Holloway (2009:64) recommend leadership programmes as a means to mitigate and prevent toxic behaviours. Development programmes are highlighted as effective tools for educating leaders on strategies that promote respectful engagement and reduce toxicity. Leaders can learn to reinforce organisational values at individual and team levels through training programmes that directly address toxicity, offering an opportunity to identify and extinguish toxic behaviours before they escalate (Kusy & Holloway, 2009:195-196).

This study emphasises intention to leave as the most reliable indicator of employee turnover rates. Rather than solely focusing on actual turnover, organisations should understand employees' intentions to leave. Identifying the underlying causes of turnover intentions and addressing them proactively can prevent actual turnover. Organisations can foster a healthier workplace and enhance employee retention by implementing effective strategies and feedback systems that gather employees' insights on their leaders and work environment (Naeem & Khurram, 2020:701).

Performance management systems should also evaluate feedback results, to ensure that managers foster a healthy work environment. Implementing a 360-degree feedback system allows toxic leaders to receive regular input from peers, subordinates, and supervisors, providing a comprehensive view of their reputation and the impact of their behaviours across the organisation. This continual feedback process highlights areas for improvement and reinforces the need for sustained behavioural change, fostering a greater sense of accountability and self-awareness (Kusy & Holloway, 2009).

In addition to standard policies, procedures, and employee assistance programmes, organisations should implement proactive training focused on helping employees develop effective coping strategies to manage toxic behaviours. Webster *et al.* (2016) suggest that such training empowers employees to confront toxic behaviours actively, rather than enduring them passively. These programmes should inform employees of available social and professional support resources and highlight the importance of maintaining personal health and well-being. This approach equips employees with the skills to prevent or minimise harm, contributing to a healthier and more supportive work environment (Webster *et al.*, 2016:353).

3.5 Limitations

Considering the nature and scope of this research study, numerous limitations must be considered in interpreting the results. A key limitation of this study is the potential for common method biases. These biases may originate from various sources, such as using a common evaluator, a shared measurement environment, a uniform item context, or the inherent qualities of the objects themselves (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003:885). These limitations are prevalent in behavioural research.

All data for this study were collected through questionnaires. Self-reported assessments may introduce common method bias (McCallaghan *et al.*, 2019:81), which could affect the accuracy of the results. Measurement error, including random and systematic factors, can undermine the validity of conclusions about the relationships between variables. This occurs because using the same method to measure different constructs may create artificial correlations unrelated to the constructs' true nature.

Respondents were required to provide information on the predictor and criterion variables, which may have influenced their responses, due to factors such as mood, personal perceptions, or a desire for consistency. This can result in an overestimation of the relationship between the variables, creating the false appearance of a stronger correlation than exists. Such inflated

correlations may be attributed to respondent biases or tendencies, rather than reflecting a genuine relationship between the variables (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003:882).

Quantitative cross-sectional research limited the ability to draw cause-and-effect conclusions, because toxic leadership, employee performance, and intention to quit are measured simultaneously (McCallaghan *et al.*, 2019:81; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003:882). Likert scales, a widely used scale format, are prone to biases like central tendency bias, where respondents shy away from extreme answers, and acquiescence bias, where respondents agree with statements irrespective of their content (Zhang & Savalei, 2016:358). The researcher attempted to minimise the effect of these biases by incorporating reverse-worded and reversed-phrased questions into the surveys.

This study applied non-probability convenience sampling. The researcher's judgement may have influenced the selection and composition of the sample, potentially introducing bias and subjectivity (Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:79). However, this subjectivity was mitigated as participation in the study was voluntary, allowing respondents to choose whether to take part. Convenience sampling limits the ability to generalise the findings, and the results should be understood as representative of the specific sample group (see McCallaghan *et al.*, 2019:140).

This study was conducted in a single organisation in South Africa, which limits the ability to draw broader conclusions about other organisational settings despite the diversity in respondents' age, gender, education, work experience, position, and nationality. Lastly, toxic leadership was assessed solely based on the subordinates' perceptions, with no input or self-reporting from the leader. Consequently, conclusions regarding toxic leadership were derived exclusively from the viewpoints of the subordinates.

3.6 Recommendations for Future Studies

Despite the study's limitations, the results present several avenues for future studies and applications.

Common method bias can be mitigated by employing procedural and statistical techniques, such as using different sources for predictor- and criterion variables or incorporating varied data collection methods like questionnaires, qualitative interviews, and observational data, as suggested by Abalkhail (2022:320) and Schmidt (2008:65). Including open-ended questions or mixed-method approaches could provide additional and more nuanced results.

Longitudinal studies could yield more conclusive results regarding the causal relationships between toxic leadership, employee performance, and intentions to quit (Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:9; Jackson & Fransman, 2018:11). This would allow for assessing changes and relationships over time, providing a more accurate understanding of how toxic leadership influences employee outcomes.

Reverse-worded items, phrases, and alternative formats could reduce biases associated with common scale formats, such as central tendency and acquiescence biases in Likert scales (Pradhan *et al.*, 2020:1274).

To overcome the limitations of convenience sampling, future research should adopt more representative sampling methods, such as probability sampling and randomly selecting respondents. This would allow for broader applicability of the findings across various work environments. Larger sample sizes and the inclusion of staff from other organisations could improve the generalisability of the findings (Jackson & Fransman, 2018:11).

Given that employees' experiences with toxic leadership can vary between environments, future research should expand to include other organisations and industries in different areas and regions. This research should empirically evaluate the organisational conditions and the impacts of toxic leadership behaviours, not only on individuals and organisations, but also at the societal level, as noted in the literature (Abalkhail, 2022:320; Brouwers & Paltu, 2020:9; Schmidt, 2008:66).

Studies on toxic leadership should consider diverse views, such as leaders' self-reports, peer evaluations, and third-party observations. This multi-source approach will provide a more balanced and thorough knowledge of toxic leadership behaviours, thereby lowering the reliance on subordinates' perceptions and mitigating potential bias in conclusions.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter elucidates the interconnections between toxic leadership, employee performance, and turnover intentions within the organisation where the study was conducted. The study provides valuable insights into how toxic leadership behaviours negatively impact employee performance and subsequently affect employees' intention to leave the organisation through a thorough analysis and detailed examination of the interactions amongst these variables. The findings highlight the need to confront and reduce toxic leadership practices while encouraging good leadership behaviours to improve organisational performance and enhance employee well-

being. This chapter outlines important implications for organisational management and identifies potential directions for future research.

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ANNEXURE A: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Fax: 018 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Senate Committee for Research Ethics
Tel: 018 299-484
Feziwe.Mseleni@nwu.ac.za

15 April 2024

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) on, 15/04/2024 the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-REC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Exploring the impact of toxic leadership on employee turnover intention and performance in the South African corporate business environment.kkkkkkkkkkkkkk

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof. LTB Jackson
Student: Stieger L (44304315)

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Institution Study Number Year Status
Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type:

Commencement date: 15/04/2024

Expiry date: 15/04/2025

Risk:

Minimal

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

- None.

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the EMS-REC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.
- The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the EMS-REC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.
n the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and EMS-REC reserves the right to:

- request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
- to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;
- withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;
 - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the EMS-REC or that information has been false or misrepresented;
 - submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or
 - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.

The EMS-REC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the EMS-REC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Diana Viljoen-Bezuidenhout
Chairperson: NWU Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee

ANNEXURE B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant,

INFORMED CONSENT TO COMPLETE SURVEY

You are invited to participate in a research study as part of a Master of Business Administration (MBA) program. Please take a moment to review the information provided here, outlining the study's specifics. Feel free to ask the researcher or person explaining the research to you for clarification if any aspects you find unclear. You must fully comprehend the nature of this research and your potential involvement. Importantly, your participation is entirely voluntary, and declining participation will not have any negative consequences. Additionally, you can withdraw from the study anytime, even if you initially agree to participate.

This study has been approved by the NWU Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC). It will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the North-West University and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study.

Title of the project:

Exploring the impact of toxic leadership on employee turnover and performance in the South African corporate business environment.

Institution: NWU Business School.

Ethics Reference Number: NWU-00590-24-A4.

Names and contact details of project staff

	Supervisor	Researcher
Title, name & surname	Professor L. Jackson	L Stieger
Full Names	Leon	Lizel
Function in Project	Principle Investigator	Researcher
Telephone	018 299 1521	082 897 5096
Email:	leon.jackson@nwu.ac.za	Lizel.Stieger@provestgroup.co.za

What is this research study all about?

Research on workplace dynamics is crucial for enhancing organisational effectiveness and employee well-being. This study focuses on gaining insights into the impact of toxic leadership

behaviours on our employees' overall performance and job satisfaction, as well as their intentions to continue employment within the organisation.

The objectives of the study include:

The primary objective of this research study is to investigate the extent of the impact of a toxic leadership style on employee turnover and performance in a corporate business environment in South Africa.

The subsequent secondary objectives are set to support the primary goal:

- To determine the prevalence of toxic leadership, performance and intentions to quit;
- To investigate the relationship between toxic leadership and employee performance;
- To investigate the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit;
- To establish the relationship between employee performance and intention to quit;
- To determine the role of toxic leadership in performance dimensions and intention to quit and
- To determine whether employee performance mediates the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit.

The study aims to make valuable contributions to both the academic community and professionals in the Human Resources Management (HRM) field. In terms of theory, it seeks to enhance understanding of toxic leadership's impact on specific job outcomes, providing insights for HR professionals and organisational leaders to mitigate its occurrence. On a practical level, the research aims to positively impact organisations by offering considerations for leadership appointments and increasing employee awareness of the detrimental effects of toxic leadership on job satisfaction and commitment. The study underscores the industry's importance of implementing processes to prevent and rectify destructive behaviour, emphasising the need for businesses to proactively address toxic leadership within their structures.

What will be expected of you?

You will be expected to:

- Complete the survey, which should take approximately 20 minutes.
- Respond to the questions openly and honestly.

What will you gain from taking part in this research?

While there will be no financial or material rewards, your involvement will advance our comprehension and expand the literature on the consequences of toxic leadership on employee performance and the inclination to resign.

Confidentiality and Anonymity?

Please note that your answers are entirely confidential, and no personally identifiable information will be gathered; therefore, your participation holds no risk.

Protection and confidentiality of data collected.

The researcher assures that the gathered data and its resulting transcripts will be confidential and not shared with external parties. The exclusive purpose of these records is for data analysis. To mitigate the risk of data loss, duplicate copies of the records will be generated and stored on the researcher's personal computer and an external hard drive. Furthermore, these records will not be retained beyond the required duration and will be destroyed upon the submission of the dissertation.

DECLARATION

Declaration by participant

By selecting option 1 below, I agree to participate in the research study: Exploring the Impact of Toxic Leadership on Employee Turnover and Performance in the South African Corporate Business Environment.

- I confirm that I have read the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have these answered satisfactorily.
- I understand that as I have completed the study anonymously, it will not be possible to remove any information I have provided, as you will not be able to identify me in any way.
- I understand that individuals from the University may look at anonymous research data collected during the study to ensure that the survey is conducted appropriately.
- I agree that my anonymous information can be shared with individuals from the abovementioned project team.

Please select an option:

1	Yes, I would like to participate	You will be directed to the survey questions.
2	No, I do not want to participate	You will conclude your participation in this survey.

ANNEXURE C: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

SECTION 1: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1.	Year of birth: _____		
2.	Gender:		
	Male	Female	Prefer not to say
3.	Educational qualifications (Please only indicate your highest qualification)		
		Matric / Grade 12	
		Post matric qualification (Diploma or similar)	
		University degree (BA, BCom, BSC etc.)	
		Postgraduate Degree (Honours, Masters, Doctorate)	
		Other	
4.	Please select your demographic group:		
		Black	
		Coloured	
		White	
		Indian	
		Other	
		I prefer not to say	
5.	Level of employment:		
		Senior Management / Executive	
		Middle / Line Management	
		Other	
6.	How many years has your current employer employed you? _____		

SECTION 2: TOXIC LEADERSHIP (Shortened Version)

NR	For each statement, indicate with (X) how frequently your manager/supervisor displays the behaviour.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	My supervisor drastically changes his/her demeanour when his/her supervisor is present.	1	2	3	4	5
2	My supervisor will only offer assistance to people who can help him/her get ahead.	1	2	3	4	5
3	My supervisor accepts credit for successes that do not belong to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
4	My supervisor holds subordinates responsible for things outside their job descriptions.	1	2	3	4	5
5	My supervisor publicly belittles subordinates.	1	2	3	4	5
6	My supervisor reminds subordinates of their past mistakes and failures.	1	2	3	4	5
7	My supervisor allows his/her current mood to define the climate of the workplace.	1	2	3	4	5
8	My supervisor expresses anger at subordinates for unknown reasons.	1	2	3	4	5
9	My supervisor varies in his/her degree of approachability.	1	2	3	4	5
10	My supervisor has a sense of personal entitlement.	1	2	3	4	5
11	My supervisor thinks that he/she is more capable than others.	1	2	3	4	5
12	My supervisor believes that he/she is an extraordinary person.	1	2	3	4	5
13	My supervisor controls how subordinates complete their tasks.	1	2	3	4	5

14	My supervisor does not permit subordinates to approach goals in new ways.	1	2	3	4	5
15	My supervisor determines all decisions in the unit whether they are important or not.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 3: TURNOVER INTENTION (TIS-6)

NR	For each statement, indicate with (X) how frequently you experience the following:	Always	Often	Occasionally	Seldom	Never
1	How often have you considered leaving your job?	1	2	3	4	5
2R	How satisfying is your job in fulfilling your personal needs?	1	2	3	4	5
3	How often are you frustrated when not given the opportunity at work to achieve your personal work-related goals?	1	2	3	4	5
4	How often do you dream about getting another job that will better suit your personal needs?	1	2	3	4	5
5	How likely are you to accept another job at the same compensation level should it be offered to you?	1	2	3	4	5
6	How often do you look forward to another day at work?	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 4: JOB PERFORMANCE

NR	For each statement, indicate the most appropriate statement with (X).	Always	Often	Occasionally	Seldom	Never
1	I perform hard tasks properly.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I try to update my technical knowledge to do my job.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I do my job according to what the organisation expects of me.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I plan the execution of my job by defining actions, deadlines and priorities.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I plan actions according to my tasks and organisational routines.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I take the initiative to improve my results at work.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I seek new solutions for problems that may come up in my job.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I work hard to do the tasks designated to me.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I execute my tasks, foreseeing their results.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I seize opportunities that can improve my results at work.	1	2	3	4	5

ANNEXURE D: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



NWU Business School
North-West University
Private Bag x6001
Potchefstroom, 2520
<http://commerce.nwu.ac.za/business-school>

Dear Mr Funani Mojono,
CEO: Provest Group of Companies

30 January 2024

GOODWILL PERMISSION: A STUDY CONDUCTED AT PROVEST

I am seeking your permission to conduct a research study within our organisation to investigate the effects of toxic leadership on employee performance and their intention to quit. To ensure the successful execution of the research, I am seeking your formal approval to access the resources and information required for the study. Additionally, I would appreciate the opportunity to conduct surveys with willing and consenting participants within the organisation.

Title of the project:

Exploring the impact of toxic leadership on employee turnover and performance in the South African corporate business environment.

Background of the study:

Research on workplace dynamics is crucial for enhancing organisational effectiveness and employee well-being. The focus of this study is to gain insights into the impact of toxic leadership behaviours on our employees' overall performance and job satisfaction, as well as their intentions to continue employment within the organisation.

The objectives of the study

The primary objective of this research study is to investigate the extent of the impact of a toxic leadership style on employee turnover and performance in a corporate business environment in South Africa.

The subsequent secondary objectives are set to support the primary goal:

- To determine the prevalence levels of toxic leadership, performance and intentions to quit.
- To investigate the relationship between toxic leadership and performance.
- To explore the relationship between toxic leadership and intention to quit.
- To establish the relationship between performance and intention to quit.
- To determine the mediating role of performance in the relationship between toxic leadership and intentions to quit.

Contribution of the study

The study aims to make valuable contributions to both the academic community and professionals in the Human Resources Management (HRM) field. In terms of theory, it seeks to enhance understanding of toxic leadership's impact on specific job outcomes, providing insights for HR professionals and organisational leaders to mitigate its occurrence. On a practical level, the research aims to positively impact organisations by offering considerations for leadership appointments and increasing employee awareness of the detrimental effects of



toxic leadership on job satisfaction and commitment. The study underscores the industry's importance of implementing processes to prevent and rectify destructive behaviour, emphasising the need for businesses to address toxic leadership within their structures proactively.

Participants

The participants under consideration will include all Category A employees in the Provost Group.

Expectations of the participants

- Complete an online survey of 31 questions, requiring approximately 20-30 minutes of their time.
- Answer the questions openly and honestly.

Benefits to the participants

While there will be no financial or material rewards, their involvement will serve as a valuable contribution to advancing our comprehension and expanding the literature on the consequences of toxic leadership on employee performance and the inclination to resign.

Confidentiality, data protection and risks involved for participants

The data collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, and the results will be aggregated and anonymous. All responses are entirely confidential, and no personally identifiable information will be gathered; therefore, their participation holds no risk.

The researcher assures that the gathered data and resulting transcripts will be confidential and not shared with external parties. The exclusive purpose of these records is for data analysis. To mitigate the risk of data loss, duplicate copies of the records will be generated and stored on the researcher's personal computer and an external hard drive. Furthermore, these records will not be retained beyond the required duration and will be destroyed upon the submission of the dissertation.

Dissemination of findings

The outcomes derived from this study will serve academic purposes exclusively, contributing to the existing body of knowledge.

I am committed to ensuring minimal disruption to daily operations, and the research process will be conducted with the utmost professionalism and sensitivity. The findings from this study aim to contribute valuable insights that can be used to improve leadership practices, enhance employee engagement, and foster a healthier work environment.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to your positive response.

Sincerely,

Lizel Stieger
NWU MBA Candidate
Student Number: 44304315

DECLARATION BY THE RELEVANT RESPONSIBLE PERSON:

By signing below, I, **Funani Mojono**, agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

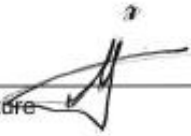
Exploring the impact of toxic leadership on employee turnover and performance in the South African corporate business environment.

I declare that:

- I have read this request for permission and understand what is expected of the company in the research.
- I have read the informed consent form and understand the expectations for the participants in this research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher, and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- Participants can withdraw from the study at any point, facing no penalties or biases.
- The researcher may request participants to discontinue their involvement in the research process if it is deemed in their best interests or if they fail to adhere to the agreed-upon research procedures.

Signed at **Rustenburg** on (date) 30th / 01 /2024.

Signature of Relevant responsible person:

 _____, Chief Executive Officer; Provest
Signature

ANNEXURE E:

LANGUAGE EDITOR CERTIFICATION

TERESA KAPP

Phone:
+27 82 789 7878
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This serves to certify that I duly edited:

Exploring the impact of toxic leadership on employee turnover intention and performance in the South African corporate business environment

by

L Stieger



orcid.org/0009-0008-6375-000X

I am an approved editor of the University of Johannesburg, University of Stellenbosch Business School, NWU, UP, UCT, and GIBS, and my clients include the United Nations Global Compact, Absa, FNB, Takealot, and various other universities and organisations in South Africa and Namibia.

Please note that all editing is done in *Track Changes*, and I therefore have no control over what is accepted or rejected by the author. Furthermore, I have no control over text added at a later stage.

Should there be any queries, please contact me on the number provided above.

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Kapp' with a stylized flourish.

Teresa Kapp