**Gordon Institute
of Business Science**
University of Pretoria

The impact of toxic leaders on their followers

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A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of
Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business
Administration.

7 November 2018

Abstract

The issue of leadership is a complex one for both business and academia, with research largely focusing on the positive influence that leaders have on those around them. However, the existing research, which has offered typologies of negative leaders, has not adequately investigated the impact that negative leaders have on those around them. This aim of this study is to investigate the observed behaviour of leaders who have been experienced as "toxic", the effect this has on their followers and how they cope under such leaders.

This research adopted qualitative, exploratory methods to investigate the behaviours of toxic leaders and the coping mechanisms of their followers. A total of 14 semi-structured, in-depth interviews were carried out with knowledge workers who had experienced toxic leaders. The interviews were analysed through thematic analysis.

While previous literature shared theoretical categories of behaviours, this research presented and categorised actual behaviours and coping methods as employed by followers of toxic leaders. Further, this research identified that there are perceived causal factors that drive the behaviours of toxic leaders, such as their personality traits, which toxic leaders themselves may be unaware of. The research identified a five-stage process of the experience of having a toxic boss and the elements of each of the stages. The research offers a taxonomy of how attachment style, follower type, coping type, coping mechanism and associated behaviours may be linked to further understand followers responses to toxic leaders.

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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7 November 2018

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Chapter 1. Problem Definition & Purpose

1.1. Introduction and Description of the Problem

Leadership across both academia and business has become an extremely important topic to understand, given the potential impact leaders can have on employees and organisations (Boerner, Eisenbeiss, & Griesser, 2007; Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007). Research has shown that increasingly there is a connection between leadership and organisational dysfunction (Goldman, 2006), further, that negative leadership can not only affect organisational outcomes, but also the morale of followers (Yi Chua & Murray, 2015). As more and more corporate scandals are being exposed, being brought to the forefront is the question of the leadership of such corporates (Applebaum & Roy-Girard, 2007). The Enron scandal, publicised in 2001, with the CEO and CFO being directly implicated as leaders whose deficient attitude was a driving factor behind their failure, is one such example (Applebaum & Roy-Girard, 2007). It is such abuses of authority like this that has speared the renewal of further research into negative leadership (Padilla et al., 2007).

Among the social sciences, existing research on leadership in relation to organisational behaviour generally focuses on the positive side of leadership (Padilla et al., 2007; Reed, 2010; Schyns, 2015). Such research has investigated the positive impact of leadership and the traits and behaviours associated with this. However, there is a lack of research around negative leadership and its traits (Pelletier, 2010; Padilla et al., 2007). Furthermore, limited research has been done on how negative leadership impacts followers and how followers cope with such negative leadership in order to withstand potential impact and susceptibility (Applebaum & Roy-Girard, 2007; Padilla et al., 2007; Yi Chua & Duncan, 2015). The emerging research on negative leadership traits and its impact on followers in organisations is a key marker of the problem facing organisations. Theories such as the Dark Triad (Schyns, 2015) and the Toxic Triangle (Padilla et al., 2007) are offering explanations as to how leaders, followers and organisations are palpably linked, and verify the need for more research into these areas. Furthermore, research has shown that job pressure is rising as a claim behind

mental stressors, allegedly by the leaders under whom followers work (Aasland, Skogstad, Notelaers, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2010). This has further added to the growing body of evidence documenting leader behaviours and the impact on followers, and more specifically the need to understand negative leadership traits and the potential impact such leaders have on followers.

Leadership is considered a crucial part of organisations and at times is even attributed as the success factor for organisations (Goleman, 2004; Applebaum & Roy-Girard, 2007; Yi Chua & Murray, 2015). It is therefore of the utmost importance that the impact that leaders have on followers is understood. In turn, it is necessary to understand how followers cope with negative leadership to ensure that they are still able to perform their duties accordingly (Mohr, 2013; Hinojosa, McCauley, Randolph-Seng, & Gardner, 2014).

Hornstein (1996) identified toxic leaders as leaders who are primarily concerned with gaining and maintaining control over followers through methods of fear and intimidation if necessary. These leaders deliberately aim to enhance themselves at the expense of others (Lipman-Blumen, 2005b). The intent of this research is to identify why followers are susceptible to toxic leaders and if there are coping mechanisms that enable them to withstand such susceptibility.

Further, the relationship of leaders and followers is a crucial aspect to consider. Often leaders serve as an attachment figures for followers, meaning that they provide the follower with a sense of security and support (Hinojosa, McCauley, Randolph-Seng, & Gardner, 2014). This sense of attachment plays a role in how followers react and perform in certain circumstances and can lead the follower to question their purpose of working for a specific organisation (Mohr, 2013).

Given the increase of corporations and the fast evolving world, it is crucial that organisations are able to identify their weaknesses and overcome them quickly so they can remain competitive and relevant (Pelletier, 2010). One such way to do this is to be able to identify negative leaders and learn how to deal with this before they impact negatively on followers, which may result in organisations loosing good or crucial staff (Aasland et al., 2010; Pelletier, 2010).

1.2. Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to identify the behaviours associated with toxic leaders, the effects of these behaviours on their followers and the mechanisms followers adopt in order to cope in such circumstances. In doing so, the aim of this research is to enable followers to identify toxic leaders and empower followers with the skills and mechanisms to cope when dealing with such leaders. Further, through this research the aim is to broaden the understanding of toxic leaders so that they become easier to identify within corporate organisations. Through this identification, this research aims to empower organisations to identify toxic leaders and learn how to manage them so that they do not have negative organisational consequences (Padilla et al., 2007; Schyns, 2015). Additionally, this research will further contribute to the theoretical study of leadership, specifically to the under-developed field of negative leadership. This research aims to develop off existing coping mechanisms to suggest a broader range of options for followers to call upon when needed, while also identifying the different types of followers and understanding the different types of coping in relation to follower types.

1.3. Research Problem

The research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the behaviours that toxic leaders display, the effects of these behaviours and in turn understand the mechanisms that followers can utilise to cope in such circumstances in the hope that the findings may help to mitigate the effect of this type of negative leadership.

The research aims to:
1. Identify the behaviours associated with toxic leaders.
2. Understand the impact that toxic leaders have on followers.
3. Investigate how followers cope under toxic leaders and to identify the coping mechanisms they utilise.

Chapter 2.   Theory & Literature Review

Leadership is a complex issue with no single theory offering being identified. Since 2000, 66 theories have been identified in relation to leadership (Meuser, 2016). This plethora of theories is evidence that leadership is an advancing field of study. Added to this, literature conducted offers abundant research on leadership in its positive manner (Padilla et al., 2007), however, minimal research has been conducted on leadership and its negative manner. While the research has begun investigating negative leadership, the field is still nascent. The growth of this field has largely been driven by the demand from business in attempting to understand how leaders impact organisations through the impact on their followers. Further, the research conducted offers various definitions for negative leadership, unable to establish one specific form (Aasland, Skogstad, Notelaers, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2010; Reed, 2010).

The aim of this study is to identify behaviours associated with toxic leaders as well as to identify how followers cope under such leaders.

In an attempt to explore negative leadership and the impact on followers, an extensive literature review has been conducted, broken into three categories: leadership, followers and coping.

2.1. Leadership

While leaders may exist based on formal hierarchical structure, the accreditation of the title leader often depends on the followers' perspective (Allio, 2012). The choice by the follower to endorse the leader and implement based on their agenda enables the follower and the leader to unite in achieving their goal (Allio, 2012).

Leadership ultimately looks at the interplay of an individual's ability to lead in relation to a subordinates desire for direction (Padilla et al., 2007). Research has shown that good leaders have a high level of emotional intelligence (EQ), which

in turn can relate to a company's success (Goleman, 2004). Goleman (2004) further suggested five components of EQ that make a good leader:

1. **Self-Awareness**: this is the ability of a person to acknowledge and understand their moods and drives, and the effect this has on others.

2. **Self-Regulation**: this is the ability a person has to control their impulses, as well as their propensity to think before acting.

3. **Motivation**: this refers to a person passion or propensity to achieve a goal that goes beyond monetary value.

4. **Empathy**: this is the ability of a person to understand other people's emotional nature and treat them accordingly.

5. **Social Skill**: this is the ability of a person to make relationships and build rapport based off common ground.

Ultimately, Goleman was saying that a leader who can call on the above components at the relevant time will succeed as they will have the support and backing of their followers due to their willingness to incorporate and understand their followers.

The charisma of a leader is another element to consider, the ability for a leader "to ignite a spark" in the follower is crucial (Gebert, Heinitz, & Buengeler, 2016; Meuser, 2016). The ability for charismatic leaders to communicate their goals and vision enables followers to clearly understand what is required of them and what they are working to achieve.

Additionally, the influential strength of a leader is heavily based on the perception of the follower, whether the leaders' charisma is perceived as socialised or personalised (Sosik, Chun, & Zhu, 2014). Socialised charisma is wherein the followers see the goal and view attaining it as a meaningful task for the collective,

whereas personalised is whereby the follower sees the leader as being self-serving (Sosik et al., 2014).

2.2. The Impact of Leaders on Followers

Leadership ultimately looks at the interplay of an individual's ability to lead in relation to a followers perception (Sosik et al., 2014). There is an expectation that leaders lead the way and symbolise the values that followers expect from leaders. It is also expected that leaders care not only about a project, but also about the followers themselves (Gabriel, 2015).

The large majority of the existing research has explored the impact of positive leaders on followers. Research on transformational leaders has shown the positive impact on followers' innovation and performance, and the successive positive impact on organisations (Boerner et al., 2007). In the case of transformational leaders, it is their ability to inspire followers that leads to positive outcomes.

Boerner et al., (2007) suggest three ways in which leaders can impact followers: inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration. Inspiration motivation refers to the way in which the leader inspires the follower through challenges that are meaningful and noteworthy. Intellectual stimulation refers to the way in which leaders stimulate the followers to ask questions and offer them the opportunity to give their opinion and advice without fear of criticism. Finally, individualised consideration refers to the way in which leaders pay attention to the needs of each follower and their specific growth and development needs.

Research on authentic leadership also shows a positive impact on followers. Authentic leaders are seen to act in accordance with their values and beliefs, through which they build trustworthiness in the minds of their followers. This enables them to build a relationship based on respect and collaboration (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004). Added to this, the genuine desire

of authentic leaders to serve their followers further enhances this relationship (George, 2000).

Avolio et al., (2004) identify two processes through which followers are influenced by leaders: personal identification and social identification. Personal identification refers to when the followers' own beliefs are reinforced by those of the leader, and they identify with the leaders' beliefs. Social identification is the process whereby a person identifies him/herself as a member of a society, the follower identifies with a group of people and sees him/herself as belonging to the group (Kim, Han, & Park, 2001). An authentic leader has the ability to influence followers in both of these ways.

While the aforementioned leadership styles offer examples of the impact leaders have on followers, minimal research has been done in attempting to examine how a negative leader impacts a follower, and to what degree they are impacted (Sosik et al., 2014). Through Research Question 2, *what impact do toxic leaders have on their followers*, this study aimed to identify the impact, if any, that toxic leaders have on their followers.

2.3. Types of Negative Leadership

The "dark side" or negative side of leadership is very limited in empirical research, however what the limited research has identified is that negative events relating to the "dark side" of leadership have a stronger effect than positive events (Aasland et al., 2010; Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007; Thoroughgood, Padilla, Hunter, & Tate, 2012). This has led to a call for further research investigating the negative side of leadership.

The "dark side" of leadership deals with poor leaders and their behaviours (Einarsen et al., 2007). Various types of concepts have been associated with poor leaders. The definitions of negative leadership that have been investigated for this research include:

- **Destructive leadership** is the process where leaders systematically act against the legitimate interests of organisations, either by abusing their followers or by working to counteract the intentions of the organisation. At times, destructive behaviour may even be illegal (Aasland et al., 2010).

- **Narcissistic leadership** is an autocratic leadership style, where the leader demands unquestioning obedience based off of their belief that they are entitled to such. Such leaders are often self-absorbed and ignore the welfare of those around them (Allio, 2012; Padilla et al., 2007; Schyns, 2015).

- **Abusive leadership** is where followers are subjected to hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviours from leaders, including public ridicule, coercion and tantrums to list a few (Einarsen et al., 2007; Pelletier, 2010).

- **Machiavellian leadership** describes a manipulative personality where such leaders are motivated by "cold selfishness and pure instrumentality" (Jones & Paulhus, 2009, p.93) and can involve behaviours such as lying and cheating (Schyns, 2015).

- **Tyrannical leadership** is pro-organisational, however tyrannical leaders often manipulate or humiliate their follower to get things done (Aasland et al., 2010; Einarsen et al., 2007).

It is apparent that negative leadership is not a specific type-cast, but rather that there are a variety of behaviours associated with negative leaders (Aasland et al., 2010).

Regardless of the concept associated with poor leaders, the research identifies the impact these leaders have on both the organisational member and the organisation itself (Sosik et al., 2014). Added to this the research states that while leaders may be poor in their leadership, they can at the same time be constructive in achieving their goals (Einarsen et al., 2007). While leaders may be negatively

impacting followers, they can still be contributing to and achieving organisational goals. Einarsen et al., (2007) propose the model below of destructive and constructive leadership behaviour. Their model uses two dimensions through which to assess if the actions of the leader are aimed at the subordinate or the organisation. The subordinate dimension looks at how the leaders' behaviours impact on the subordinate, and the organisation dimension looks as how the behaviours of the leader impact on the organisation.

Figure 1: Model of destructive & constructive leadership behaviour (Einarsen et al., 2007)
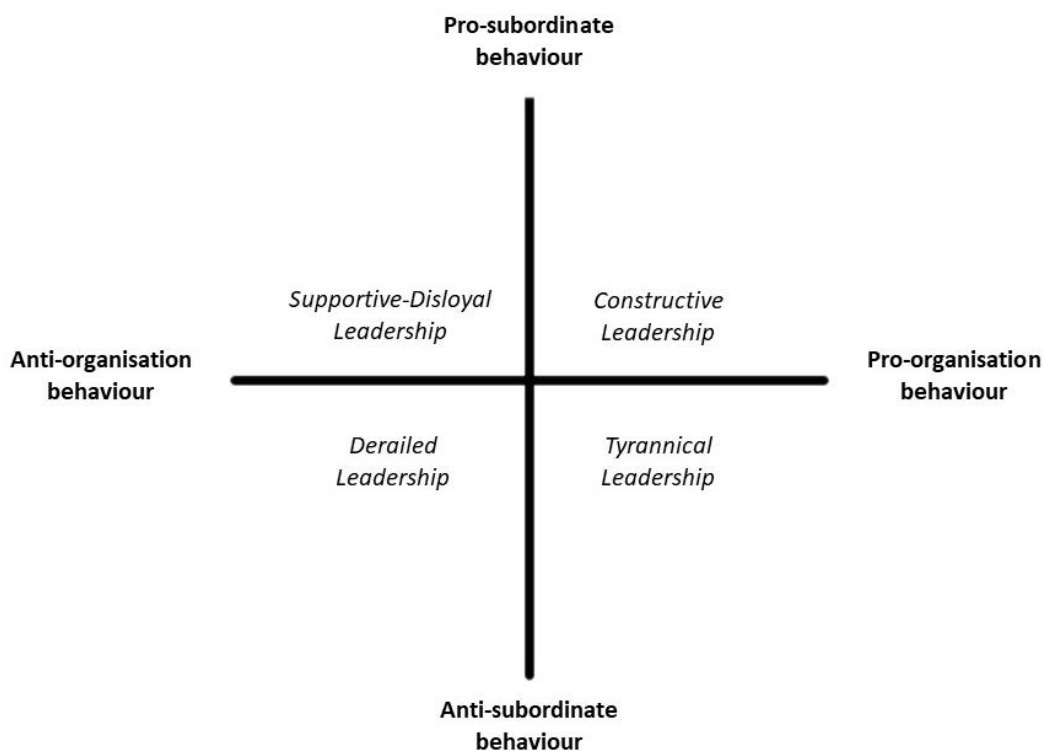
Poor leadership is further displayed by systematic and repeated behaviour. Rather than these behaviours being displayed on a "bad day", they become the norm for such leaders. Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper (2003), state that for these behaviours to be systematic they must be occurring regularly, repeated either weekly or over a period of time. However, while these behaviours may become systematic, the research unequivocally states that these leaders do not intend to be poor. While the behaviour of the leader was not intended, it is rather the result

of their thoughtlessness, insensitivity and lack of competence that lead to them being perceived as poor leaders. Oppositely to this, is the concept of toxic leaders. The main differentiator here is the intent of the leader.

For the purposes of this paper, the defined term "toxic leader" will be investigated. Given the variety of negative leadership concepts, this research focused specifically on *toxic leaders,* defined by Lipman-Blumen (2005), *as the deliberate attempt by leaders to further themselves whilst deliberately harming others in the process.* Given Lipman-Blumen's (2005), aggregation of the above listed concepts into this term, the researcher determined this the most appropriate term to be used for this research.

2.4. Toxic Leaders

There is minimal academic research in the area of toxicity and leadership (Pelletier, 2010). Jean Lipman-Blumen, a leader in the field of toxic leadership, further identifies leaders as toxic when they "inflict some reasonably serious and enduring harm on their followers and their organisations" (Jean Lipman-Blumen, 2005a, p. 18). Hornstein (1996) additionally says that toxic leaders are primarily concerned with "gaining and maintaining control", and invoking methods that create fear and intimidation if necessary to do so. (Hornstein, 1996; Pelletier, 2010). Deliberately, toxic leaders aim to enhance themselves at the expense of others (Lipman-Blumen, 2005b).

Toxic leaders constantly portray negative behaviours that are abusive or destructive and can cause psychological harm to followers (Webster, Brough, & Daly, 2016). Some of the behaviours associated with toxic leaders include: incompetence, corruption, callousness and evilness (Reed, 2010). Furthermore, toxic leaders are characterised as having a predisposition toward hate, high levels of narcissism and their personal need for power (Yi Chua & Murray, 2015). Lipman-Blumen, (2005a) goes on to emphasise that a truly toxic leader is one who consistently exhibits such behaviours and traits.

It must be noted that toxic leaders and toxic leadership are two separate elements. Toxic leaders are associated with negative personality traits and behaviours. For toxic leadership to be present an additional element needs to be brought into the framework, this is the organisation (Schyns, 2015). Toxic leadership is best summarised through Padilla et al., (2007) and their framework of the toxic triangle, which investigates leaders, followers and the organisational context concurrently. This research will focus solely on toxic leaders, not toxic leadership.

2.5. Toxic Leaders' Behaviours

To understand the impact of a toxic leader's behaviours, it is first necessary to understand the dimensions through which behaviours can be displayed. In his 1961 works, Buss (Einarsen et al., 2007) classified three dimensions of aggressive behaviours:

1. Physical versus verbal aggressions
2. Active versus passive aggression
3. Direct versus indirect aggression

Buss' work discussed how behaviours of leaders do not necessarily have to be active in order to be impactful. This then leads to the question of perception. Harvey, Harris, Gillis, & Martinko, (2014) state that it is possible that employees may have different opinions of a leader and their actions. Followers' perceptions of a leader may be distorted due to other factors, which may influence followers to perceive a leaders behaviour as negative (Harvey et al., 2014). This perception is rooted in the followers existing notion of what they believe to be right and what is wrong (Martinko, Harvey, Sikora, & Douglas, 2011). While the notion of perception being subjective is well established in research, the literature that follows disregards perception and will focus on behaviours of toxic leaders that have been established through formal research.

Lipman-Blumen, (2005a) offers a variety of behaviours through which leaders can be associated as toxic, these being: narcissism, paranoia, malevolence and evil

intent. Toxic leaders are associated with three elements, lack of concern for subordinates or peers; negative effect on surroundings based on their actions, and finally, they are self-serving (Thomas, Gentzler, & Salvatorelli, 2017; Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

Lipman-Blumen (2005a), lists dysfunctional personality characteristics that may be associated with toxic leaders:

- Lack of integrity, which signals the leader as untrustworthy or corrupt
- Insatiable ambition that pushes leaders to focus on their own glory above that of their followers
- Egotistical, whereby leaders are blind to their own shortcomings
- Arrogance that leads them to blaming other and prevents them from acknowledging their own mistakes
- Amorality, whereby they cannot discern right from wrong
- Greed that drives them to focus on money as a priority
- Disregard for the impact of their actions on others
- Cowardice that limits them from making difficult decisions
- Failure of understanding and ability to act effectively in leadership situations

While the above describes toxic leader's behaviours, the literature lacks the input on what followers observed as behaviours of toxic leaders. In attempting to answer Research Question 1, *what are the behaviours that followers observe in toxic leaders*, the above offered a theoretical response to the question. Through the interview process, this study aimed to merge the theoretical responses with actual responses from followers who had experienced toxic leaders and their behaviours.

2.6. Followers

When considered a leader, there is an assumption that in turn there are followers. The theory of followership refers to the role that individuals hold in a rank or position subordinate to another individual (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten,

2014). Previous leadership literature focused mainly on leaders, with followers often portrayed as negligible with little drive until coaxed to become more by a leader (Ford & Harding, 2018).

Fairhurst & Grant (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014) further expanded the definition of followership by interpreting it as "a relational interaction through which leadership is co-created in combined acts of leading and following". However, this approach, a constructionist approach assumes that leadership only occurs once followers identify behaviours or claims with a leader (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Aligned with this, recent research has identified a follower-centric approach to leadership studies, noting that leadership emerges based on a followers response to a leader (Ford & Harding, 2018). Aligned with this new approach, this research aimed to delve deeper into the relationship between leaders and followers. This research specifically investigated the impact that toxic leaders had on followers, and the coping mechanisms followers utilised to help them in such situations.

Whilst the term followers has mixed reactions due to its possible negative connotation, other terms that have been used include constituents or collaborators. For the purpose of this study, the term follower will be used without inferring negative connotations (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Followership theory defines two profiles of followers: rank and social process. Rank refers to the formal hierarchical role wherein the followers is seen as a subordinate in a hierarchical structure. Social process refers to a constructionist approach wherein followers play a role in co-constructing leadership (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

Leadership research has often forgone investigation of followers, but it is a crucial aspect to understand in relation to leadership. Followership theory investigates the nature and impact of followers and following in the leadership process (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). The impact that toxic leaders can have on followers is injurious, at times leaving the follower worse off than before – physically or mentally (Lipman-Blumen, 2005a, p. 19, Padilla et al., 2007).

2.7. Follower Types

Toxic leaders can impact followers psychological, emotionally as well as physically through the emergence of health problems (Thoroughgood et al., 2012; Webster et al., 2016). Whilst the above list is non-exhaustive, it gives a broad range of characteristics through which this research aimed to identify the impact on followers and their coping mechanisms.

"Toxic leaders seduce both followers and outsides by the illusionary gift of safety…" (Lipman-Blumen, 2005a, p. 55), they create tempting illusions that followers latch onto. These illusions lull followers' anxieties and they see the leader as an omnipotent saviour who can help them attain their visions. Lipman-Blumen, (2005b) lists six human conditions that make followers susceptible to toxic leaders:

1. **Existential anxieties**: this is the uncertainty of situations, in such cases followers look to leaders to shape the way for them.

2. **Psychological needs**: this refers to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and individuals' basic need to feel special or chosen.

3. **Crises and rapid change**: living in a turbulent world, followers look to leaders to supply certainty and safety.

4. **Historic moments and terrors**: in a world filled with uncertainty, followers look to leaders to guide them through such times.

5. **Longing for leadership**: individuals long to have leaders who will make them aware of the possibilities ahead and pave the way for them.

6. **Age of new discoveries**: the new discoveries coming to light present individuals with challenges and having a leader to help guide one through these challenges makes followers feel safe.

Added to the above conditions, (Uhl-Bien & Carsten, 2007) also argued that through early socialisation processes, followers are trained to conform to hierarchical structures which reinforce obedience to a superior.

From the six conditions listed above one is then able to identify the types of followers. Thomas et al., (2017) identify a toxic followership typology, based on Kelly's 1988 study, and list five types of followers:

1. **Effective**: these are self-managed individuals who are not prone to toxic leaders because they can succeed without strong leaders.

2. **Survivors**: these individuals can survive change well; however, they can be toxic themselves by influencing their leader to do evil.

3. **Sheep**: these individuals are unmotivated and will do what they are told to do, playing into the hands of toxic leaders.

4. **Alienated**: these individuals have lost faith in their organisation and often go along with a toxic leader, bringing negativity to their environment.

5. **Yes-People**: similar to sheep, these individuals imitate the behaviour of their toxic leader and often follow blindly, becoming toxic themselves.

Barbuto's theory (2000) (Thoroughgood et al., 2012) furthered this by maintaining that the influence leaders have on followers is based on perception. These perceptions are triggered by an action from the leader, to which the follower is then either compliant or not based on their vulnerability (Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

Delving deeper one needs to understand what drives followers to adopt one of these follower-types. Attachment theory and the seminal theory of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs offer robust frameworks through which to base this adoption.

2.8. Attachment Theory

Attachment theory (AT) was founded by John Bowlby, recognising that people are fulfilled when they trust others and have the support of others (Hinojosa et al., 2014). AT looks at early developmental experiences and links this to relationships that people have later on in their lives, and can be used to explain and often predict the long-term relationship of individuals (Hinojosa et al., 2014; Maslyn, Schyns, & Farmer, 2017; Wu, Chen, Chien, & Wu, 2016). The theory states that individuals are born with the desire to form close relationships with their relevant attachment figure, and as they grow older the responsiveness they receive from this figure then dictates their perception of self-worth (Byrne, Albert, Manning, & Desir, 2017).

AT helps understand the interpersonal and intrapersonal processes that determine an individual's behaviours and as such can be useful in explaining work-related behaviours (Byrne et al., 2017). AT further proposes that an individual's attachment style will impact the effort they put into developing relationships (Maslyn et al., 2017). Personal histories of individuals will influence their self-awareness, their social relationships and interactions will be based off of this (Hinojosa et al., 2014; Keller & Cacioppe, 2001; Wu et al., 2016).

There are three types of attachment styles (Keller & Cacioppe, 2001; Maslyn et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2016):

1. **Secure**: these individuals are secure in their internal credence and can build relationships relatively easily. These individuals have positive expectations from their leaders and convey such, leaders then reciprocate and act accordingly.

2. **Insecure Anxious**: these individuals are concerned about being rejected or disappointed and therefore often feel disappointed. Due to their fear of rejection, these individuals often cling to their leaders and in doing so push the leader away.

3. **Insecure Avoidant**: this is a self-protection mechanism; these individuals don't expect their needs to be met and as such they distance themselves from others. However, this distancing may be seen as disrespectful and unsupportive by leaders, alienating the individual even more from the leader.

Insecure followers are more likely to evaluate their leadership negatively because of their own distrust arising from their personal histories (Maslyn et al., 2017). Often such followers issues' around abandonment and approval seeking drives them to seek attention from their leader in a way that is not always positive (Wu et al., 2016). The follower's attachment style plays a crucial role in the development of their relationship with their leader, largely it is insecure followers who fall prey to toxic leader and become sheep, alienated or yes-men type followers (Thomas et al., 2017).

2.9. The Impact

To further understand why followers are susceptible to toxic leaders, Lipman-Blumen, (2005a, p.130 - 131), uses Maslow's seminal theory titled the *Hierarchy of Needs* as a framework. Lipman-Blumen, (2005a, p.130 - 131) states that followers rationalise their behaviour to toxic leaders through this framework. Her perspective is as follows:

1. **Physiological needs**: Followers justify submitting to a toxic leader by focusing on their basic need for money in order to get food, water, pay bills etc.

2. **Safety and security**: The fear of opposing the leader and suffering the consequences such as losing their job.

3. **Love and belonging**: The need to be accepted by others and feel as part of a group is often a reason that followers fall back on. They do not want to be ostracised or isolated for speaking out.

4. **Self-esteem:** Followers feel they cannot unseat the toxic leader alone, they need the support of others.

5. **Self-actualisation**: The fear that if the follower unseats the toxic leader they will have to forgo their own interest and potentially assume onerous responsibilities.

Added to Maslow's Hierarchy, Lipman-Blumen, (2005a, p. 131) adds *aesthetic need* as another rationalisation followers use. Aesthetic need refers to the chaos and ambiguity followers live in. The overwhelming fear that they cannot deal with the situation and that the leader, while toxic, is best to deal with the chaos and create calm.

Rationalisation becomes a crucial tool in the mind of the follower, it is what helps them justify their daily experiences under a toxic leader. This can be further explained as moral identity crisis. When followers see leadership behaviours that portray traits they disagree with, they are driven to question their loyalty to the leader and are likely to lose confidence and trust in the leader (Sosik et al., 2014).

The issue left unanswered is, how do followers cope when faced with a toxic leader? The next section delves into coping theory in an effort to answer this question.

2.10. Coping Types

Lazarus & Folkman (Kuo, 2013) define coping as the "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person". As such, it is logical to assume that coping strategies or mechanisms play an important role in determining how individuals respond to a stressor.

Ones' coping effectiveness is influence by the choice of coping strategy and mechanism. Often ones' personality will influence the coping strategy employed (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005). Added to this, one's social relationships also

influence the coping strategy chosen; given that people often turn to others to interpret an appropriate social response to a situation (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005).

Existing research has divided coping into two categories: direction action and palliative (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005; Fortes-Ferreira, Peiró, Gloria González-Morales, & Martín, 2006; Kuo, 2013; Steed, 1998; Wright, Mohr, Sinclair, & Yang, 2015).

This section aimed to offer a theoretical response to research question 3, *what coping mechanisms do followers use to cope with toxic leaders?*

2.11.   Direct Action

Direct action coping has been referred to as the way in which an individual attempts to respond to a situation, with the intention of removing the threat of the situation (Fortes-Ferreira et al., 2006). Other researchers have referred to this term as problem-focused, active or control method.

Coping through direct action coping has been linked to an increase in job satisfaction and a decrease in psychological distress and anxiety (Fortes-Ferreira et al., 2006; Kuo, 2013). Direct action coping has been proven to have a greater impact on ones well-being (Fortes-Ferreira et al., 2006).

2.12.   Palliative

Oppositely, palliative coping refers to helping to reduce ones emotional discomfort in a situation (Fortes-Ferreira et al., 2006; Wright et al., 2015). Other terminology used to describe the coping strategy include emotion-focused, passive and avoidance. Among the existing research there is contradictory findings with palliative coping. Some researchers have found that palliative coping reduces psychological distress, while others found it increased psychological distress (Fortes-Ferreira et al., 2006).

While two coping strategies exist, consistently across research the consensus is that direct action coping is more effective and more likely to produce a better conclusion. Added to the coping strategies, understanding the factors that influence ones' choice of coping is important. Research done suggests that there are two factors that shape how people cope; sense of control and social support (Skinner & Edge, 2002). People who are firm in their belief of themselves and at overcoming obstacle have a greater sense of control and are more likely to cope by using problem-solving techniques and strategies, remaining positive when faced with obstacles (Kuo, 2013; Skinner & Edge, 2002). Contrariwise, people who feel less in control and doubt themselves tend to panic when faced with obstacles, it is in this instance when people look for social support (Skinner & Edge, 2002).

Skinner & Edge, (2002) expand this further emphasising that people who have loving relationships tend to fare better under stressful situations because of the social support, which acts as a psychological buffer. Added to this, Kuo (2013) concludes that individuals who are from cultures that ingrain collectivism are more likely to cope better in stressful situations because of the support of their community.

Wright et al., (2015), stressed the point that followers who employed direct coping mechanisms were generally able to cope more effectively, whilst followers who employed palliative coping methods generally became depleted in terms of their personal resources, effort and energy.

2.13.   Coping Methodologies

To understand how followers cope under toxic leaders, this research attempted to find existing frameworks and methodologies through which to align the research. Post in-depth research, this research opted to focus on two coping methods: coping structure and coping scale (Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood, 2003; Yagil, Ben-Zur, & Tamir, 2011). Given the analysis that these researchers did across existing coping research, their summarised classification

of coping levels offered similar frameworks of coping families for followers, which suited this purposed of this research paper.

2.14.   Coping Structure

Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood, (2003) performed an analysis across a multitude of coping research. From this they classified coping into two categories: low-level and high-level. Low level refers to the real-time action that individuals take when dealing with a stressful situation (Skinner et al., 2003; Webster et al., 2016). High-level is an adaptive and often unconscious process that takes place to intervene between the stress trigger and its potential psychological, emotional or physiological outcomes (Skinner et al., 2003; Webster et al., 2016).

Skinner et al., (2003) identified a coping structure as a four-level hierarchical structure consisting of: adaptive processes, families of coping, ways of coping and instances of coping. This structure framed lower-order categorises within higher-order ones, enabling an organising structure for analysing coping responses of followers (Skinner et al., 2003; Webster et al., 2016).

2.15.   Coping Scale

Yagil, Ben-Zur, & Tamir, (2011) also created a coping scale consisting of five coping strategies, see Table 1 below. The first two are problem-focused: Ingratiation, which is flattery or doing favours for others and direct communication, which is about openly communicating relational expectations, questioning relational injustices and discussing relationship problems with supervisors. These two methods are focused on trying to solve the problem, reduce the abuse or change the leaders behaviour (Yagil et al., 2011).

The remaining three areas are emotion-focused: Avoiding contact, in this instance the followers avoids the leader; support seeking, where in the follower looks for support from others regarding the abusive situation, and reframing, which involves followers engaging in positive thinking and reassuring thoughts to attempt to self-assure themselves in negative situations (Yagil et al., 2011). These three methods aim to reduce the psychological distress of the followers.

Table 1: Yagil, Ben-Zur, & Tamir coping strategies description

Coping Strategies	Description
Problem-focused	
1. Ingratiation	Stimulating positive emotions toward the employee in the supervisor
2. Direct communication	Open discussion with the supervisor
Emotion-focused	
3. Avoiding contact	Avoiding the supervisor
4. Support-seeking	Talking with others about abusive occurrences and consequent emotions
5. Reframing	Engaging in reassuring thoughts

In their model, Yagil et al., (2011) suggested that as followers experienced higher levels of abuse they tended to disengage more from their leaders. They also found that whilst problem-solving was an option for resolve, few people tended to employ this method.

Across both models it was found that followers did not have adequate solutions through which to cope with abusive leaders. The two do however offer similar frameworks of coping families as solution to followers (Webster et al., 2016), listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Similarities of coping structure & coping strategies description

Skinner et al., Coping Structure	Yagil et al., Coping Scale
Problem solving	Direct communication
Support seeking	Support seeking
Escape	Avoidance of contact
Accommodation	Reframing

The above frameworks each offer a range of behaviours within them that categorise ways in which followers respond to toxic leaders. This research attempted to use these two frameworks as a starting point to see if responses from interviewees fit within these frameworks, or if added categories need to be

added to the frameworks to adequately assess how followers cope under toxic leaders.

2.16.   Liberation

Resultant from the literature above it is clear that toxic leaders have substantial ability to impact on followers. The remaining element left to address is how followers liberate themselves from toxic leaders. Lipman-Blumen (2005a) suggests that there are five potential resolution mechanisms:

1. Counsel the toxic leader
2. Unobtrusively work to undermine the leader
3. Join forces with other followers and confront the leader
4. Join forces with other followers to overthrow the leader
5. Leave

While these five mechanisms may seem clear-cut, the reality is that engaging in any of these initiatives is not easy and may result in negative outcomes. Counselling the toxic leader is only possible if the leader is willing to acknowledge that they have faults that must be addressed. Given the state of mind of the leader, this approach can potentially result in the follower being worse off than originally. Mechanisms three, four and five, can have similar outcomes. Should the follower or followers not be successfully in their attempts to confront, overthrow or undermine the leader, they risk being ostracized and snubbed even more than before, with the toxic leader holding these actions against them going forward.

Finally, mechanisms five – leave. While this may sound easy enough to do, the reality is that often individuals are not in a position to leave their job without having another one to go to (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, 2001).

2.17.   Post Liberation

Often followers struggled to see the toxic behaviours employed by leaders. Added to this, there are often oblivious to the coping mechanism utilised. It is only once removed from the situation that followers are able to re-live the experience and acknowledge the coping mechanisms they employed (Lipman-Blumen, 2005a; Wright et al., 2015). Research has also shown that individual's previous experiences and knowledge impact the coping mechanisms chosen (Wright et al., 2015).

2.18.   Conclusion

Across the research, the resounding conclusion is that leaders do influence followers and in turn, followers are influenced by leaders (Avolio et al., 2004; Gabriel, 2015; Sosik et al., 2014). However, the majority of this research focuses on the impact of positive leaders, with potential impact of negative leaders being a nascent field of exploration. Specifically, the behaviours of toxic leaders are lacking in relation to their impact on followers (Aasland et al., 2010; Einarsen et al., 2007; Sosik et al., 2014). Added to this, the impact of such leaders on followers has not yet been investigated in-depth.

In attempting to understand the impact toxic leaders have on followers Lipman-Blumen, (2005a) investigated the behaviours of toxic leaders and follower typologies that are susceptible to such leadership. Through the identification of six follower types, Lipman-Blumen, (2005a) attempts to understand why certain individuals are more susceptible to toxic leaders, as well as how they can potentially work towards freeing themselves from such leadership. While Lipman-Blumen offers follower types, her research does not offer detailed solutions for coping under toxic leadership. The works of Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood, (2003) and Yagil, Ben-Zur, & Tamir, (2011) offer two models in relation to possible coping methods. These researchers offer a variety of overlapping strategies that they suggest followers can implement to cope, as can be seen in Table 2.

From existing literature there are few coping mechanisms that have been studied in relation to toxic leaders. Core to this research however is understanding what

the behaviours of toxic leaders are and how followers cope. This is the central axis for this research. The aim of this research is to identify the behaviours of toxic leaders, as directly evident from followers. Following this, the research aims to understand how followers cope and can cope in such circumstances. The nascent hope of this research is to investigate if the identified coping mechanisms are the dominant mechanisms being employed by followers, and if not, to add to these mechanisms to create a broader set of coping mechanisms for followers.

Chapter 3.   Research Questions

This research aims to answer three questions, derived from the literature review.

Research Question 1: What are the behaviours that followers observe in toxic leaders?

Research question 1 aims to identify what behaviours followers identify as associated with the leader they label as toxic.

Research Question 2: What impact do toxic leaders have on their followers?

Research question 2 aims to identify the impact, if any, that toxic leaders have on their followers. This question aims to examine how toxic leaders use their positions to impact on followers, and their associated behaviours.

Research Question 3: What coping mechanisms do followers use to cope with toxic leaders?

This final research question will investigate how followers cope under toxic leaders through the use of various coping mechanisms and tools.

Through these questions the research aims to create a flowchart that depicts the behaviours of toxic leaders, the impact on followers and coping mechanisms of followers, as per below:

Figure 2: Flowchart of research

Chapter 4.   Research Methodology & Design

This chapter discusses the research methodology chosen to perform this study. The study took the form of an explorative qualitative study, using one-on-one in-depth interviews as the basis for the research findings. The research methodology and data sampling reinforced this choice of approach.

4.1. Choice of Methodology

The use of qualitative research within the social sciences has steadily grown as a methodology given its ability to provide a "deeper understanding of social phenomena and dynamics" (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p 385). Qualitative research enables researchers to uncover the magnitude of the topic and its meaning aligned with the experiences of subjects in different contexts and situations (Bengtsson, 2016). A subjective ontological lens was placed on this exploratory phenomenological study to assist with the identification of toxic leaders behaviours and the resultant effect on followers and their coping mechanism (Leedy & Ormond, 2013; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012).

The use of a phenomenological study enabled the research to study the experiences of people and the details of a situation in order to fully understand the reality behind the situation (Saunders et al., 2012). Furthermore, this paper made use of an interpretive research paradigm, which aimed to understand the coping strategies followers used under toxic leaders (Kelemen & Rumens, 2008). A key reason behind this choice of methodology was the openness it offered for subtle but meaningful cues to emerge from participants during interviews (Leedy & Ormond, 2013).

It must be noted, that qualitative analysis is a subjective process based on the researcher and their appreciation of the importance of the subject matter (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The qualitative methodology further suited this form of research as it enabled the researcher to engage with and understand the emotions, sentiments and reactions of followers when they were faced with toxic leaders.

Given that this study aimed to uncover new insights in the area of study, qualitative and exploratory research methods were best suited (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Additionally, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were selected due to its face-to-face interaction and the ability to gather rich insights and understanding in this manner (Leedy & Ormond, 2013; Saunders & Lewis, 2012). To ensure that the proposed methodology and interview process were in line with research standards, the researcher partook in the Gordon Institute of Business Science's ethical process to ensure that the study met all relevant standards and procedures. The ethics approval document can be found in Appendix 1.

4.2. Population

The population identified for this research was knowledge workers within corporate environments, who had experienced toxic leadership directly from a superior.

4.3. Sampling Method and Size

The sampling technique was non-probability judgmental sampling, which evolved to include snowball sampling (Luo, 2016). Whilst initially identifying respondents, recommendations were made by informants on additional individuals who could be interviewed. As the study was qualitative, the sample size consisted of 14 knowledge workers, who had experienced toxic leadership directly from a superior. The sample included respondents representing all levels of the business hierarchy, including interns, middle managers and heads of divisions. The sample crossed various industries, including: Consulting, Security, Medical and Accounting. Due to the sample being judgmental, there was not equal representation of sectors, rather the factor of having experienced toxic superiors was the identifying factor. Further, the sample was purposefully split to gain equal representation of gender, with 7 males and 7 female participants interviewed. Due to saturation being reached, no further interviews were conducted after interview 14. Table 3 depicts the number of respondents per industry and their gender.

Table 3: Industry and gender of respondents

Industry	Gender	Number of Respondents
Accounting	Female	1
Accounting	Male	1
Consulting	Female	1
Consulting	Male	1
Financial Services	Female	1
Financial Services	Male	2
Information Technology	Male	1
Gaming & Hospitality	Male	1
Media & Communication	Male	1
Medical	Female	1
Professional Services	Female	1
Non-Profit	Female	2
Total		**14**

4.1. Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis was the individual opinions of the interviewees who had experienced toxic leadership.

4.2. Data Collection Tool

Saunders & Lewis, (2012), state that a combination of academic literature and in-depth interviews is the most useful way in which to conduct exploratory research. As such, primary data was gathered through 14 semi-structured in-depth face-to-face interviews. This process was selected as it offered the opportunity to gather deep understanding and insights directly from the individuals impacted (Saunders et al., 2012). Additionally, the interview questions were designed to be simple and open in order to ensure a dialogue with respondents with regards to the topic at hand. The interview questions were derived based on the pre-determined themes of behaviours, coping and feeling in relation to toxic leaders. Through alignment

and consideration of the Research Questions, as listed in Chapter 3, the interview guideline was formed. This can be found in Appendix 2.

A total of 11 set, open-ended questions were asked to each respondent, with additional questions being asked to probe based on verbal or non-verbal cues that respondents displayed (Bengtsson, 2016; Turner, 2010). The questions were used as a guideline and not necessarily asked in the order that appear in the interview guideline. Each interview was voice recorded, having obtained permission from the respondents to do so.

4.3. Pilot Interviews

Prior to data collection, two pilot interviews were undertaken wherein the interview guideline was tested as well as the interviewer's technique (Chenail, 2011; Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The interviews were conducted in the same manner in which the actual interviews would take place. Both interviews were recorded. In this process no issues were identified, and the actual interviews then began.

Post finding no issues with the pilot interviews, data from pilot interview number 2 was submitted as actual data and is referenced as Respondent 1. Recordings from the interviews were transcribed and stored along with the hand-written notes and form the data that was analysed for this research (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

4.4. Data Collection

Data was collected through open-ended, semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews with 14 knowledge workers who had experienced toxic leaders (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The design of the research was purposefully kept to open-ended questions so that respondents felt comfortable to engage in open discussion while still able to address the topic at hand. From the literature review the four research questions, Table 4, were derived. To answer these questions a variety of interview questions were created aligned with each research question (Bengtsson, 2016; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

As the interviewer has the potential to influence a respondents answers, the interviewer prepared prior to engaging with respondents to ensure the necessary level of interview skill was acquired (Agee, 2009).

The interviews were conducted with knowledge workers across a range of industries and respondents were invited via email to partake in the survey. In this email the purpose of the research as well as the definition of a toxic leader was shared with respondents, so they could adequately determine if they were the correct to respond to the survey, this email can be seen in Appendix 3. Once respondents confirmed that they would like to partake in the research, another email confirming an interview date, time and location, along with the consent form was sent. Preceding the interview, respondents completed and signed the consent form to ensure that data was gathered in line with ethical standards (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The consent form is presented in Appendix 4. The respondent was given the choice of location as to where the interview should take place. The majority of respondents opted for their workplace in a meeting room, with other interviews taking place at individual's homes as well as the Gordon institute of Business Science.

At the beginning of each interview session permission was requested, and granted, for the session to be recorded via voice-recording and written notes. To ensure that respondents were aware of the terminology referring to toxic leaders, there were given the definition at the commencement of the interview. The 11 questions were then asked, not necessarily in the order listed in Appendix 2, but rather these were asked in the order most relevant in the interview based on the respondent's cues.

Table 4: Research questions and interview question mapping

Research Questions	Interview Questions
1: What are the behaviours that followers observe in toxic leaders?	• What behaviours did your leader exhibit that you believe were toxic?
2: What impact do toxic leaders have on their followers?	• How did these behaviours make you feel? • At the time were any of your colleagues experiencing the same feelings?
3: What coping mechanisms do followers use to cope with toxic leaders?	• How did you respond to this leadership? • Why did you react in this way? • How did you cope? • Why did you choose this coping mechanism? • Why did you choose that style of coping? • Do you think your perception of the toxic leaders' behaviour is influenced by your own behaviours, beliefs, values?

Interviews began with formal introductions followed by a brief description of the title of the research and the definition of a toxic leader. Within the context of the research, toxic leader was defined as: *leaders who are primarily concerned with gaining and maintaining control over followers through methods of fear and intimidation if necessary. These leaders deliberately aim to enhance themselves at the expense of others and constantly portray negative behaviours that are abusive or destructive.* Following this definition, 6 demographic questions were asked, and 11 open-ended questions were asked to respondents in line with the theme of toxic leaders. Respondents answered based on their personal experience, perceptions and opinions.

While the interviews took place, the researcher took hand-written notes, detailing crucial aspects that emerged as well as noting quotes from respondents that portrayed key emotional or intellectual responses they had to their toxic leader. As a thematic analysis approach was to be performed, it was necessary that the integrity of the respondents narrative be maintained, which was done through the

collection of quotes and excerpts displaying the richness of the original data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Interview notes and voice recordings were then analysed and a set of key themes and insights derived (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

4.5. Data Analysis

The data analysis related to the identification of common themes and insights that respondents noted. During the actual data collection, the appearance of similar themes and insights was noted. The main analysis occurred post interviews and was done through a thematic analysis in relation to each research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Thematic analysis is used to identify and analyse themes or patterns in qualitative data (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Leedy & Ormond, 2013). Attride-Stirling (2001) list 6 steps through which to process a thematic analysis:

1. Dissect the text into meaningful segments. This can be done using pre-determined keywords to topics related to the subject matter.

2. From the coded text, identify themes that match and refine them so that the themes can encapsulate a set of ideas and are non-repetitive.

3. Construct the networks by arranging the themes into similar groupings. Take the basic themes and cluster them into larger groups of shared issues (the organisational themes). From here deduce the global themes, which is the overarching metaphor or principal that encapsulates the points. Create the thematic network in a web-like structure that is non-hierarchical, generally this is done in a clockwise order for ease of reading.

4. Describe the contents within the text segments and then explore the networks, taking note of underlying patterns that emerge.

5. Summarise the thematic networks created and present the main themes and patterns that are characterised.

6. Interpret the patters through deductions made and further explore these through relevant theory and concepts.

As part of this process, the data recordings and notes were listened to and read multiple times in order to allocate data into specific categories (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Saunders et al., 2012). The categorisation process took place as follows:

1. The data was listed in its raw form on a spreadsheet.

2. This was then transferred onto a new spreadsheet and filtered to see which data was ranked the highest, based on the number of times respondents commented.

3. Alike data was then group into organising themes based on similarities and relationships of elements.

4. This lead to the creation of groups of themes as presented in the proceeding tables.

To get this set of themes, data was coded into categories to identify the recurring themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The themes identified common elements that respondents experienced (Leedy & Ormond, 2013). Interviews continued until data saturation was reached, interview 14, and no new insights were shared. In closing the respondents were given the opportunity to share any last thoughts (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). To ensure that the final themes presented were representative, the analysis was performed twice prior to creating the final themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data analysis took place in Microsoft Excel, and analysis of each question took place individually, taking approximately 60 minutes per question. Further to the thematic analysis, the similarity of insights or themes was used to create and ranking the ideas and themes that emerged most often. The themes and insights were aligned to the four research questions (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

4.6. Data Validity and Reliability

Qualitative research is subjective in nature and as such is affected by numerous biases (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). In this instance both interviewer and respondent bias must be considered as they might have taken effect when conducting interviews and analysing the data (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). In an attempt to limit this bias, the 11 semi-structured interview questions remained the same for all respondents.

Further, respondent bias is a limitation to this study. Due to the investigative nature of this research, there is a possibility that interviewees may distort their answers or not answer truthfully for fear of repercussion (Villar, 2014). It is also necessary to note that due to the research being subjective this may impact the results and interviewees willingness to respond truthfully (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Being aware of these biases, the research attempted to mitigate them by making a concerted effort to focus on opinions and perception of the respondents, as well as by offering them a safe environment of their choice in which interviews were held.

4.7. Research Limitations

Qualitative research is subjective in nature and as such is affected by numerous biases (Saunders & Lewis, 2012; Turner, 2010; Villar, 2014). Limitations identified include: the interviewer being inexperienced to conduct in-depth interviews and the potential impact this may have had on the data collection (Agee, 2009; Chenail, 2011), geographical bias with all respondents being from Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa and generalisability given that the sample size was only 14 individuals (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Further, through the interview process and data analysis, unconscious bias may have occurred.

Chapter 5.   Results

This chapter presents the results to the research questions listed in Chapter 3. The data and findings collected from the in-depth one-on-one interviews are shared in this chapter. Through the use of a consistency matrix, the interview questions were derived in order to gain responses that would support the research questions. This process ensured a consistent link between the literature reviewed, the data collected and the research questions.

5.1. Description of the Sample

Judgmental sampling was used to select the 14 knowledge workers, each of whom had experienced toxic leadership directly from a superior, as interview respondents. The sample included respondents representing all levels of the business hierarchy, including interns, middle managers and heads of divisions. The sample crossed various industries, including: Consulting, Security, Medical and Accounting. The sample was purposefully split to gain equal representation of gender, with 7 males and 7 female participants being interviewed. Table 3, in Chapter 4, list the interviewees, their gender and the industry in which they work.

The results that follow are presented in alignment with the research questions listed in Chapter 3.

5.2. Results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1: What are the behaviours that followers observe in toxic leaders?

The aim of Research Question 1 was to identify the behaviours of toxic leaders as described by followers. In the in-depth interview one specific question was asked wherein interviewees were asked to specify the behaviours that their toxic leader displayed. This question was the opening question to the interview and set the scene for the remainder of the interview.

This opening question offered the interviewee the opportunity to list all the behaviours that their toxic leader displayed, these behaviours were both negative and positive. Across the 14 respondents, over 160 behaviours were mentioned, with multiple behaviours being mentioned more than once by a respondent. Table 5 lists all these behaviours.

Table 5: Total behaviours mentioned

Total behaviours mentioned			
Absent	Abusive behaviour	Accusatory	Aggressive
Alienating others	Always correct	Ambitious	Angry
Backlash	Bad attitude	Bad treatment of people	Belittling
Bulldoze you	Bully	Cause emotional distress	Caustic
Change her mind	Cold shoulder	Condescending	Contrary
Control	Could hammer people	Covers mistakes	Create hurdles
Cross-cutting	Cut people out	Delegator	Demands compliance
Demeaning	Denial	Derogatory	Destructive manner
Detached	Didn't listen to others	Discriminatory	Disengaged
Disgraceful in treatment	Dishonest	Dislike pushback	Dismissive
Disorganised	Dispassionate	Disregard	Disregard for lower level
Disregard for menial	Disregard for people's ambition	Disregard for people's aspiration	Disregard for people's opinions
Disregard for people's thoughts	Disrespectful behaviour	Disrespectful to females	Divide and conquer
Doesn't know how to deal with her team	Dominance	Drop things on you at the last minute	Emotional blackmail
Ensure her interests	Exacerbate situations	Explode	Express his position/power
Flexibility	Gas lighting	Have favourites	Held things back
Hide the full picture	Hierarchical	Inability to see team dynamics	Inability to understand team dynamics
Inappropriate comments and jokes	Inconsistency	Insecure	Insulting

Intimidating	Lack of direction	Lack of listening	Lack of respect
Lack of sympathy	Lack on integrity	Lack self-control	Lacked common decency
Lacked empathy	Make it hard on purpose	Manipulative	Mean spirited
Message through other tools	Micromanage	Misleading	Moody
Nastiness	Navigate politics	Negative body language	Negative terminology
Negative treatment	No concreteness	No idea how to manage people or teams	No kindness
No saying "thank you"	No socials skills	Non-verbally aggressive	Not a team player
Not asking others for their opinions	Not collaborative	Not emotionally engaged	Not good at expressing emotion
Not interested in your opinion	Not present literally	Not present physically	Not self-reflective
Notion of authority	Over-work people	Paints the perfect picture	Passive aggressive
Physically intimidating	Play people against each other	Play the game	Playing you
Please the end user	Power	Present others information as their own	Protect her world
Protect senior relationships	Psychopath	Public shaming	Punitive
Purposefully challenge people to sink or swim	Racial undertones	Rant	Reward for narking on others
Rude	Rule by fear	Sadistic	Sarcastic
Scary	Scream	Seduction	Self-interest
Self-protection	Set you up for failure	Setting you up for failure	Sexist terminology
Shout	Sign off everything	Silent treatment	Speaks badly
Stare you down	Stress	Strong	Sycophant
Took on jobs peers weren't willing to do	Treat badly	Underhandedness	Undermine you
Understand politics	Unfair individuals	Uninvolved	Untoward
Unwilling to take responsibility	Very abrasive	Victimisation	Vindictive
Withhold information	Work harder than necessary		

The frequencies of mentions of each of these behaviours were established. Table 6 lists the 10 most frequently recounted behaviours. Frequency refers to the number of respondents who mentioned the term.

Table 6: Top 10 behaviours of toxic leaders

Behaviour	Frequency
Screaming	6
Aggression	5
Controlling	5
Belittling	4
Manipulation	4
Playing people against each other	3
Bullying	2
Condescending	2
Contrary	2
Covering mistakes	2

Amongst some of the interviews, respondents did acknowledge that there are some positive behaviours associated with their toxic leader. However, from Table 6 it is clear that the majority of associated behaviours of toxic leaders are negative, therefore concluding that the negative behaviours of toxic leaders outweigh the positive behaviours.

Post collating the list of top 10 behaviours, all the behaviours were then analysed for groupings. Six overriding categories were established. The six categories are: alienation, bullying, political behaviour, EQ, leadership skills and personality traits. The six categories were arrived at through analysis of the literature review and the responses of interviewees. The Skinner et al., (2003) model was used as the structure through which to identify the categories of behaviours. First the six category structures were identified, then the behaviours were grouped into categories. To plot all the described behaviours into the six categories, all the behaviours were plotted and then connections or likeliness amongst them was determined. Once connections were associated, the behaviours were put into the

same category. If a behaviour overlapped two categories, the researcher used the supporting behaviours of the categories in questions to see which category was the best suited to house the behaviour. To arrive at the category names, the behaviour in the grouping that was most often associated or mentioned by respondents became the name of the category.

In the process of coding and categorising the behaviours, it became clear to the researcher that followers spoke about both the actual behaviours that they saw and experienced, these fell under the headings alienation, bullying and political behaviour, and that they also spoke about factors that they then attributed as the cause of the observed toxic behaviours these fell under the headings of emotional intelligence (EQ), leadership skills and the leaders' personality traits. As a consequence, the six categories are split into two divisions. Table 7 shows the category groupings of the behaviours followers listed, and Table 8 lists the attributed causes of the behaviours that followers listed.

The overall response from respondents was that toxic leaders were largely bullies and used bullying tactics to get their way. However, they did acknowledge that these leaders were very good at playing the political game and forming relationships that often protected them. Respondent 14 pointed to this saying, "They did have a good relationship, so it wasn't really seen as big of an issue as it was". "She had a very good relationship with the head of that area...they thought she was the bee's knees, couldn't do anything wrong", Respondent 7 further supported this argument emphasising how the leader's ability to maintain relationships with senior players was impeccable. Added to their ability to manage relationships, Respondent 5 reported that due to the toxic leader bring in money often companies were hesitant to do anything, "he's at such a high level and he's bringing in the money".

Table 7: Category grouping of behaviours of toxic leaders

Alienation	Bullying	Political Player
• Alienating • Cold shoulder • Cut people out • Detached • Disengaged • Physically absent • Uninvolved	• Abusive • Accusatory • Aggressive • Bully • Belittle • Condescending • Discriminatory • Dismissive • Dishonest • Derogatory • Dominance • Intimidating • Intimidating body language • Lack of respect • Controlling • Micromanage • Manipulative • Misleading • Psychopath • Punitive • Public shaming • Scary • Sadistic • Underhanded • Uncollaborated • Undermining • Victimization	• Ambitious • Hierarchical • Notion of authority • Protect her world • Protect relationship • Take on jobs peers weren't willing to do • Understand politics

Table 8: Attributed causes of behaviours of toxic leaders

EQ	Leadership Skills	Personality Traits
• Dispassionate • Lacked empathy • Lacked common decency • Lacked integrity • Lacked sympathy • Not emotionally engaged • Not good at expressing emotion • Not self-reflective	• Destructive manner • Doesn't know how to deal with a team • Inability to understand team dynamics • Inability to see team dynamics • Inconsistency • Insulting • Lack of listening • Lack of direction • Unfair to individuals • Unwilling to take responsibility	• Abrasive • Bad attitude • Bad communicator • Doesn't deal well with stress • Disorganized • Insecure • Mean spirited • Moody • Nasty • Negative treatment • No gratitude • No kindness • No socials skills • Sarcastic • Silent treatment • Speaks badly • Treat badly • Untoward

5.3. Results for Research Question 2

Research Question 2: What impact do toxic leaders have on their followers?

Research question 2 aimed to identify the impact that toxic leaders had on their followers. To answer this question, the interview session specifically asked respondents how the behaviours of toxic leaders made them feel.

Post the 14 interviews, a list of 53 feelings was produced, Table 9. This was then coded into categories, resulting in four categories, depicted below in Table 10. Similarly, to above, the categories were derived by analysing the feelings and then grouping them into related categories. All the feelings mentioned by the respondents were listed and then connections amongst them identified. Once grouped together, each category was looked at in isolation and a category name derived based on the term that the researcher believed to be most reflective of the feelings within the category. Following this, then all the categories were

looked at together to identify if the category names adequately reflected the array of feelings listed by the respondents. The four category names were then identified as being the most representative of the feelings within each category, and as such are listed as per below.

Table 9: Total feelings experienced by followers

Feelings experienced by followers		
Anger	Anxiety	Anxious
Bitter	Breaking point	Careful in interactions
Disempowered	Disillusioned	Dissatisfaction
Doubt abilities	Emotional	Emotionally abused
Emotionally drained	Failure	Fear
Fearful	Feel small	Figure out who you are and what you are willing to put up with
Frustration	Gatvol	Go back to that black hole
Hate going to work	Humiliated	Impacted
Inadequate	Incompetent	Intimidated
Irritated	Kills your passion/drive	Knocked my confidence
Lose self-worth	Nervous	No loyalty
Not functioning	Numb	Pissed off
Pressure	Questioning self	Saps your energy
Scared	Slamming your head against a rock	Sour taste
Stop caring	Stressed	Struggle
Tired	Took a toll	Uneasy
Unhappy	Unvalued	Useless
Walking on eggshells	Worried	

Table 10: Grouped feelings experienced by followers under toxic leaders

Anxiety	Anger	Emotional Fatigue	Frustration
• Anxious • Stressed • Cautious • Disempowered • Fearful • Walking on eggshells • Intimidated • Doubt abilities • Not functioning • Numb • Failure	• Angry • Bitter • Hate going to work • Kills your passion • Sour taste • Stop caring • No loyalty • Dissatisfaction • Disillusioned	• Drained • Unhappy • Breaking point • Emotionally abused • Humiliated • Incompetent • Feel small • Knocked confidence • Lose self-worth • Questioning self • Unvalued • Useless	• Frustration • Slamming your head against a rock • Irritated • Struggle

The respondents ranged in emotion, from feeling fed up with the toxic leader's behaviour to feeling incompetent and drained. Multiple respondents admitted that they began questioning themselves to the point where they would record conversations with the leader so that in the event of a backlash, they could assure themselves that they had done as originally requested. Respondent 7 detailed how "documenting everything" was essential in case something went wrong, and the leader wanted proof. Respondent 1 spoke of how she would "record him, unbeknown to him, just so that I could try my best to follow his instructions…. I recorded him but to console myself". However, even knowing that they were right, both respondents admitted that they simply kept their heads down and tried not to push the leader's buttons. When pushed further to explain this, the respondents cited the behaviour of victimisation and bullying as to the reason why they did not take the matter further.

Across all 14 respondents, anxiety was a common factor. Respondent 7 stated how the anxiety got to him on a constant basis because "you never knew if you're actually doing a good job or not". Added to this, he stated the anxiety of not

knowing where you stand on a daily basis was distressing. Even the respondents with longer working experience stated that they were anxious when faced with direct interaction with the toxic leader as they never knew what the leader might do. Respondent 6 shared how the level of anxiety led her to understand herself better, "you really have to figure out who you are and what you are willing to put up with". Her experience was filled with anxiety and was also emotionally draining, "it saps your energy". Respondent 11 shared how her experience emotionally drained her and, given her medical history of depression, she found herself "so close to going back to that hole".

A common feeling that arose amongst all respondents was them doubting themselves and their abilities. Respondent 3 stated how "you would question are you actually performing" and he was "constantly deferring back", to ensure himself that he was actually doing what was required and doing it correctly. Respondent 4 also stated how she started doubting her own abilities and questioning herself, "did you hear correctly, did that just happen, maybe it's just you". Another common response was the lack of loyalty that the respondents had to their leader. With the exception of Respondent 1, all the respondents cited that due to the toxic leader's behaviour and attitude they had no loyalty toward them. Respondent 2 went as far as to say that given the opportunity he would take vengeance, "I do hope that someday it comes down to a level playing field and that I can return the favour".

5.4. Results for Research Question 3

Research Question 3: What coping mechanisms do followers use to cope with toxic leaders?

Research Question 3 aimed to investigate how followers cope under toxic leaders. Through three interview questions, the researcher aimed to draw out a list of coping mechanisms and tools that followers evoke in situ.

Across all 14 interviews, 72 coping mechanisms were listed by respondents, Table 11. These were then coded and grouped into 5 categories, as reflected

below in Table 12. Again, through the use of thematic categorisation, the five groups were identified as the dominant coping mechanisms, and then the individual coping mechanisms were placed within the category most suited.

Table 11: All coping mechanisms listed by followers

All coping mechanisms listed by followers			
Anti-depressants	Anxious	Anxiety medication	Avoidance
Bitched and moaned	Breakdown	Bypass leader	Camaraderie
Communication	Constant deferring back	Consult mentors and parents	Conversations with others
Cry	Detach yourself	Develop a skin	Direct engagement
Disagree	Disengaged	Distance	Do as little as quickly as can
Do bare minimum	Do the best I could	Document everything	Empathising with others
Family network	Flight response	Fly under the radar	Focus outside of work
Get out	Go until you collapse	Gossip	Interact
Just get it done	Keep head down	Lack on interaction	Lean on personal network
Limited engagements	Make fun of boss	Make no mistakes	Manage upwards
Manipulate the situation	Medication	No diet	No sleep
No talking	Phone mother	Pick fights	Pick your battles
Plod along	Put foot down	Quit	Record meetings
Record to console	Shared support system	Sharing among co-workers	Smoked
Stand up for yourself	Stay in line	Struggle to sleep	Survival mode
Talk to others	Team lunch without her	Tears	Tears
Therapy	Tip toe around	Try be on the good side	Try follow instructions
Try not to push buttons	Vented	Venting	Withdraw

Table 12: Coping mechanisms of followers

Avoidance	Survival Mode	Support Systems: Internal & External	Health: Emotional & Physical	Engagement
- Physical Avoidance - Bypass the leader - Focus outside of work - Disengage	- Document everything - Fly under the radar - Do the bare minimum - Keep your head down - Pick your fights - Stay in line - Try not to push buttons - Deference back	- Camaraderie - Moaning and venting - Interactions without the leader - Make fun of the leader	- Medication - Anti-depressants, - Therapy - Cry - Smoke	- Direct engagement - Stand up for yourself - Interact - Put foot down - Manipulate the situation - Manage upwards

Across respondents, the use of support systems ranked as the top coping mechanism, with avoidance tactics and survival mode tied as the next most used coping mechanisms. Health came next, followed lastly by engagement. Only four respondents mentioned attempting to engage with the toxic leader.

Support systems came in as the top-rated coping mechanism. Respondents split this into two areas, internal and external support systems. Internal support referred to empathising with and amongst colleagues who were experiencing the same toxic leader. This involved the followers getting together to vent and moan about the toxic leader, "Us as a team, wow we were negative, I think that's how we dealt with it". In some instances, the staff even arranged events to take place without the leader, wherein they would use the time to mock the leader and complain about the leader to one another, "A little moment of laughing would help when we'd tease her". Respondent 11 added that often the team would take smoke breaks together and use that time to vent away from the leader, who was

not a smoker. Respondent 12 noted how there was a camaraderie amongst colleagues as they all acknowledged that they had to support and protect one another.

External support system referred to one's personal network of family and friends who were used on an ongoing basis for support, Respondent 11 stated "having conversations with other people, my mom, I started standing up for myself". Respondent 12 noted that frequently during the day she would make phone calls to her mother for support and motivation in order to continue with her work, she felt deflated and it was only with her mothers' support that she was able to make it through the day, "I would actually phone my mom every five minutes". Other respondents noted that they often relied on their partners to keep their motivation up, using them as a sounding board for what they were feeling and being reassured that they were capable of doing their jobs.

Avoidance referred to when the followers both physically and literally avoided interactions with the toxic leader. This ranged from physically removing themselves from being around the leader to also removing themselves from having to interact with the leader by bypassing them and going to someone else for assistance, Respondent 12 noted how she went to another department head for assistance, "I've had to go to him to help me". Added to this, Respondent 13 noted how he became disengaged with his work and focused his energies outside of work.

Survival mode referred to how individuals would do whatever they had to in order to get the least negative feedback from their leader. This ranged from doing the work but to the bare minimum required to get it done, flying under the radar and doing what they had to without asking questions, and staying out of the line of fire in doing so. Added to this, Respondents 1 and 7 mentioned that they took to documenting all interactions with the leader to ensure that they did the job as requested, and when the leader claimed differently, they could console themselves with the documentation that they had not been incorrect, Respondent 7 stated, "I actually was recording meetings by the end". However, both stated that they dare not make the leader aware that they had documented these

encounters for fear of retaliation, Respondent 1 stated "I could never tell him that I recorded him".

Health related matters were raised as the next coping mechanism. This related to both physical and emotional tools. From a physical perceptive, respondents noted that they increased their smoking and others often cried throughout the day, however always in private so the toxic leader would not see, Respondent 1 stated "I went to my car and I cried so that I wasn't crying in front of her". In terms of emotional impact, four respondents admitted that they reverted to seeking therapy as they were unable to cope with the toxic leader. These respondents also admitted that they were then put onto medication by their therapists, anti-depressants and anti-anxiety medication, to assist them in dealing with the pressure they were feeling.

The last group of coping mechanisms is termed engagement. This referred to followers who attempted to deal with the toxic leader through interaction. This ranged from directly engaging with them and attempting to get them to see their behaviour, to standing up for themselves and reporting the leader – regardless of the potential push back they may receive post this. Respondent 9 stated how he first went to his leader's manager and then also involved HR, "I approached our Human Resources person and went and had a conversation". Respondent 5 stated "I voiced my opinion", she acknowledged that the impact on some people was severed, driving them into depression and one individual was hospitalised. Respondent 2 stated that it was only after an incident where the leader spoke badly to him that he stood up to him, "I felt like he stooped below a level of common decent in the way he addressed me. I dealt with it very simply and I said, look, no-one speaks to me that that". While these respondents tried to engage the toxic leader directly, Respondent 13 noted how he attempted to manipulate the situation to his advantage and attempted to manage upward and drive the toxic leader to behave differently, "I tried to almost manage her instead of her managing me in terms of the kind of stuff I wanted to be involved in". What was apparent from the research was that not all followers wanted to engage with the toxic leader, often this was out of fear for potential repercussions but also because they saw this as an uneventful avenue.

5.5. Additional Results

In the interview, respondents were asked to identify the gender of the toxic leader. This came from the researcher believing there would be a skew towards the follower identifying the leader of an opposite gender as toxic. Table 13 below lists the gender of the follower and the leader. As can be seen from this table, the researcher's belief that a gender bias would be dominant is not true, only four of the 14 respondents had toxic leaders of a different gender. This figure represents less than a third of the respondents. So, typically the toxic leader and their follower were of the same gender.

Table 13: Follower and toxic leader gender

Toxic Leader

	Male	Female
Interview Respondent — Male	5	2
Interview Respondent — Female	2	5

Another result that emerged was that followers largely believed that the channels in place through which to report a toxic leader were not feasible, and often were simply a farce. Respondent 9 stated "The HR department was silent, quiet". Respondent 8 further cemented this by stating "The HR department were, I felt, a rubber-stamping body, what he said goes". From this inability for companies to offer feasible channels to address this issue, the majority of the respondents confirmed that they lost faith in the company and stated that the toxic leader tarred the reputation and experience of the company for them. Respondent 11 stated "I left the company because they didn't do anything about it, I left her because there's no way I could be okay with myself working for a person like that". Respondent 14 also acknowledge that the "toxic environment" had filtered through the company.

5.6. Conclusion

Chapter 5 has presented the results from the 14 in-depth interviews that took place. This chapter linked concepts and notions that emerged in the interviews with those that can be found within the existing literature, reviewed in Chapter 2. The results enhanced the existing study of toxic leaders, adding new findings and insights into the behaviours of toxic leaders, the impact that such leaders have on followers, and how followers cope under such leaders. Additionally, this research has found that there are causal factors that drive the behaviours of toxic leaders, a factor that existing research does not discuss.

The following chapter further discusses these results in relation to the literature reviewed in order to answer the Research Questions listed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 6.   Discussion of Results

Chapter 6 discusses the research findings in relation to the context of the study and the literature presented in Chapter 2. The insights obtained in Chapter 5, are presented below, and are compared and evaluated against the reviewed literature's concepts in order to answer the Research Questions listed in Chapter 3. The overall objective of the research is to create a flowchart that depicts the behaviours of toxic leaders, the impact on followers and coping mechanisms of followers. For ease of reading, the discussion of the results will follow the same layout as Chapter 5.

6.1. Discussion of Results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1: What are the behaviours that followers observe in toxic leaders?

Research Question 1 aimed to identify what behaviours followers identified as associated with the leader they labelled as toxic. The literature presented in Chapter 2 described the traits of good leaders - good leaders have high EQ, are self-aware, can self-regulate, can motivate others, are empathetic and have good social skills (Goleman, 2004). Similarly, the existing literature lists types of concepts that have been associated with poor leaders, such as narcissism and tyrannical leadership. However, in both instance the literature lacks detailed investigation into the actual behaviours of these leaders. Whereas the literature offers theoretical frameworks, through the in-depth interviews, this research has been able to gain insights into the actual behaviours associated with toxic leaders.

Lipman-Blumen (2005a) and Reed (2010), findings on the behaviours of toxic leaders is further supported by the respondent's answers, where in they mention behaviours such as callousness, evilness (Reed, 2010). Table 6 presented the ten most mentioned behaviours as listed by the interviewees. The ten behaviours mentioned are: screaming, aggression, controlling, belittling, manipulation, playing people against each other, bullying, condescending, contrary and

covering mistakes. These behaviours correspond with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Buss (Einarsen et al., 2007) mentioned three dimensions of aggression behaviours: physical and verbal, active and passive, and direct and indirect. Similarly, the ten behaviours mentioned fit within these dimensions. Screaming is representative of verbal aggression; aggression and bullying are physical behaviours; controlling, manipulation, belittling and condescending are active behaviours; playing people against each other is a passive behaviour; being contrary is a direct behaviour and covering mistakes is an active and direct behaviour. Added to Buss' work, Lipman-Blumen, (2005a) further lists leader arrogance, egotism, greed and disregard for others as behaviours of toxic leaders, which can be related back to some of the ten behaviours listed, specifically, belittling, condescending and controlling behaviours.

Lacking in the literature on toxic leaders is the understanding as to why they behave in the way they do. Interestingly, when interviewees were asked to list the behaviours of their toxic leaders, they listed both behaviours as well as factors that they believe drove their toxic leaders' behaviour. This led to the research identifying that there are actual behaviours of toxic leader as well as causal factors that drive the behaviours. This research has identified that there are perceived casual factors that drive the behaviours of toxic leaders. Specifically, a toxic leaders EQ and personality traits are what interviewees believed drove the behaviours of toxic leaders. Table 8 further expands on this and shares the three categories of causal factors that the interviewees listed.

Tables 7 and 8, the responses from interviewees for Research Question 1 were collated and coded into behaviours of leaders as well as attributed causes of the behaviours of leaders. Table 7 listed specific behaviours that followers spoke about while Table 8 spoke to the factors that followers believed caused behavioural actions. These two tables are different in that they offer to the existing literature a deeper understanding on how there are specific drivers behind the behaviours of toxic leaders. While the existing research offers types of behaviours, such as narcissism and paranoia (Thomas, Gentzler, & Salvatorelli, 2017; Thoroughgood et al., 2012), the literature lacks insight into what drives these behaviours. Table 8 offers a starting point for further research into the

drivers of toxic leaders' behaviours. The following section delves deeper into the six categories listed in Table 7 and Table 8 in relation to existing literature.

Alienation

In this category behaviours such as cutting people out, being cold and uninvolved as well as being physically absent appear. Respondents spoke of how when they stood up to their toxic leader the leader immediately cut them out of meetings and communication. Respondent 4 stated "she cut me out completely, literally cold shoulder, not being invited to management meetings, not included in certain communications", Respondent 9 also shared how he "was not invited to meetings, I was not copied on mails". Respondent 7 shared how her toxic leader used her position to her advantage, often not being present at the office and when she was present she often left early. The literature reviewed does not include the behaviours listed in this category, and therefore this offers an expansion to the literature.

Bullying

This category includes behaviours such as aggression, discrimination, manipulation, micromanaging, being punitive and sadistic. Lipman-Blumen, (2005a) lists narcissism and associated behaviours such as sadism and manipulation as being actions that toxic leaders display. The behaviours in this category are similar to those of Lipman-Blumen, and as such these are an addition to the existing literature. Respondent 8 noted how his toxic leader belittled people in person as well as via messaging services. Added to this, the respondents also noted that a prominent behaviour of their toxic leaders was discrimination, either towards the opposite gender or followers from a different culture. These behaviours further those already found in the literature.

Political Player

In the reviewed literature, a common theme is that toxic leaders look out for themselves. In this formed category, behaviours such as protecting their world and hierarchical relationship are placed. This links to the literature of Hornstein (1996) and Pelletier (2010), which emphasises how toxic leaders aim to gain and maintain their control. By protecting their relationships this is one such way that

they maintain their control. However, the literature reviewed does not offer a deeper understanding on how toxic leaders protect these relationships. This finding from the research adds to the literature on toxic leaders and can be further investigated.

The last three actions speak rather to factors that followers believed caused behavioural actions. These are not as widely discussed in the existing literature. While Yi Chua & Murray (2015) note that toxic leaders are characterised as having a predisposition toward hate, high levels of narcissism and their personal need for power, the reviewed literature does not investigate what these behaviours can be attributed to.

EQ

This category listed factors such as lacking empathy, lacking integrity and not being self-reflective. These traits are not discussed in the literature relating to toxic leaders, and from this study offer a new perspective for future investigation.

Leadership Skill

Leadership skill is an area that followers stated as a driving factor behind a toxic leader's behaviour. The leader's inability to understand team dynamics, their inability to manage a team and their unwillingness to take responsibility are some of the factors that are in this category. Some of these issues are addresses in existing literature, with Lipman-Blumen (2005a), stating how toxic leaders allow their arrogance to raise to such a point that they blame others for their mistakes and are unable to acknowledge their mistakes.

Personality Trait

In this category factors regarding the toxic leader's personality were listed, including: being insecure, being nasty, negative treatment of others and treating other badly. This category lists some of the most known behaviours of toxic leaders, as Reed (2010) states, some of the behaviours associated with toxic leader are incompetence, corruption, callousness and evilness. This is seconded by Hornstein (1996) and Pelletier (2010), who state that toxic leader are

concerned with "gaining and maintaining control" and will invoke methods that create fear and intimidation if necessary to do so.

Overall, what this research has offered to the field is further understanding on the casual factors behind the behaviours attributed to toxic leaders. Further investigation into these factors is needed to further understand the mindset and factors that drive toxic leaders, and if it is possible to change the causal factors and in turn change the behaviour of toxic leaders.

Disparate to the literature on good leadership, these behaviours are clearly opposing to those of good leaders. From the responses gained it is clear that the behaviours respondents associated with toxic leaders supported the "dark leadership" concepts such as narcissistic leadership, abusive leadership and machiavellian leadership (Allio, 2012; Padilla et al., 2007; Schyns, 2015, Einarsen et al., 2007; Pelletier, 2010). Further, aligned with the literature reviewed, it is clear that toxic leaders lack the basic skills needed to be a good leader.

Further, through this research it has become apparent that followers acknowledge that there are some behaviours that leaders are aware of, but there are also behaviours which they may subconsciously portray due to their EQ, leadership ability and personality traits. This adds a new aspect to the research; it shows that toxic leaders may not actually be aware that they portray toxic behaviours, and in turn are unaware that they are perceived as toxic by their followers. Whereas positive leadership theory reinforces how good leaders are aware of their EQ (Goleman, 2004), it is clear that the literature on negative leadership lacks focus on how negative leaders need to be aware of their EQ. Added to this, it then becomes critical that companies focus on leaders EQ and personality when appointing them into positions. Rather than just their skill capability this then becomes a necessary aspect to consider when appointing individuals to leadership positions.

Conclusion

Through the findings presented, what became apparent was the relationship that toxic leader have with their seniors, and their ability to play the political game. The existing literature on toxic leaders lacks this insight, adding a new angle to toxic leaders and their ability to use their relationships to their advantage and to cover up for themselves and through these formed and manage relationships. From this research it is apparent that the behaviours of toxic leaders are multifaceted and complex. Added to this, there are the actual behaviours that toxic leaders portray as well as the causal factors that drive certain behaviours.

Figure 3 presents the major findings for Research Question 1 and shows a proposed connection between the observed behaviours and causal factors.

Figure 3: Connection between observed behaviours and causal factors
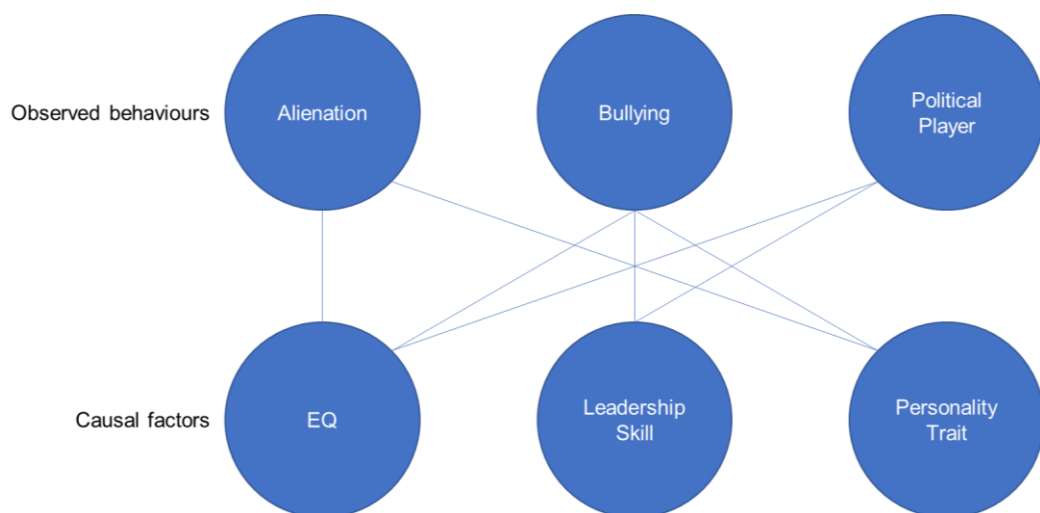
This research has added to literature by creating a list of actual behaviours of toxic leaders as well as creating a list of causal factors that can be used to explain the behaviours of toxic leaders.

Research Question 2: What impact do toxic leaders have on their followers?

Research Question 2 aimed to identify the impact that toxic leaders had on followers. The literature reviewed listed six areas of impact (Lipman-Blumen, 2005a):

1. Physiological needs
2. Safety and security
3. Love and belonging
4. Self-esteem
5. Self-actualisation
6. Aesthetic need

Corroborating the literature, respondents listed a range of feelings that expressed how their toxic leader impacted them. Table 10 presented the four categories of feelings that the researcher created through the coding of the interview data. Within these categories, the feelings listed link back to the six categories including responses such as losing self-worth, knocked confidence and questioning one's self. Table 9 offers the existing literature an in-depth list of feelings that can be associated with the six categories it lists. While the existing literature offered areas of impact, this research offers a new classification to the areas in which a follower is impacted. This classification offers an alternate view to the existing literature, at some level offering a simpler classification for followers to understand and engage with.

Figure 4 below depicts the connection between the known areas of impact as found in the literature, and the identified categories of impact that were identified from the in-depth interviews. To identify these connections, the research findings were examined in relation to the existing literature. The researcher then attempted to identify where the *identified categories of impact* matched a *known area of impact*. Through this method Figure 4 was created. From this figure, it is apparent that the six known areas of impact from the literature overlap with the

four categories of impact from this study, with some categories connecting with more than 1 of the known areas of impact.

Figure 4: Connection between known areas of impact and identified categories of impact

Known areas of impact
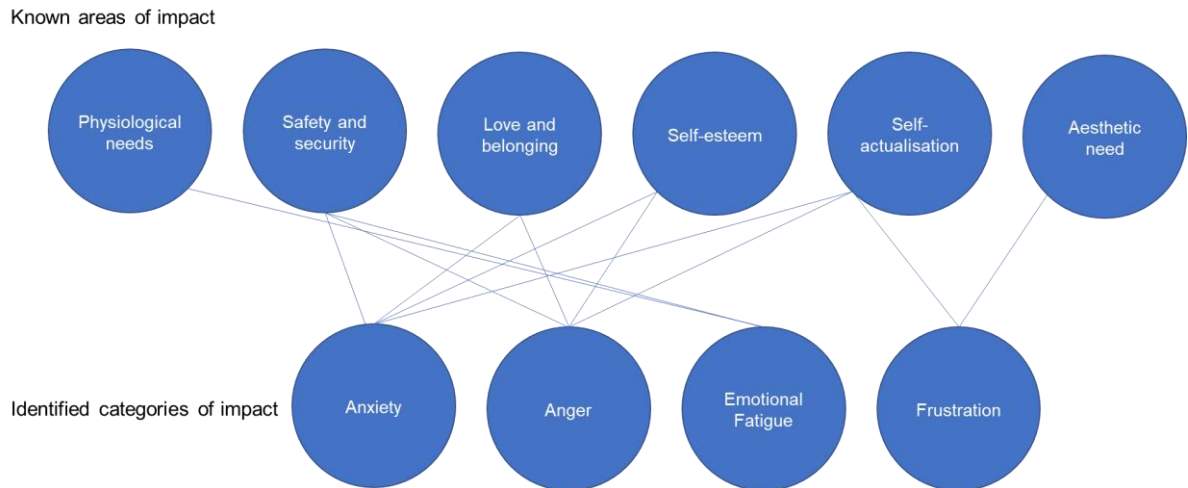
The feelings experienced by the respondents relate back to those found in the literature review and further expand the research by adding to this list. These findings support the literature in saying that toxic leaders impacted followers of various scales, in some instances making followers anxious on a daily basis. Numerous respondents cited how their toxic leader's behaviour left them feeling incompetent and drained. Some even mentioned that they began questioning themselves and their abilities, even with multiple years of experience. Across all 14 respondents, anxiety was a common factor, the feeling of not knowing where you stand on a daily basis was distressing to all respondents. These findings are not listed in the existing literature, yet across the majority of respondents came out.

Existing literature does stress that toxic leaders risk losing the followers loyalty towards them (Sosik et al., 2014). Respondents supported this, with 13 of the 14 respondents citing that due to the toxic leader's behaviour and attitude they had no loyalty toward them. Further to this, most respondents agreed that due to their toxic leaders' attitude they left their company. The lack of loyalty they felt towards the leader permeated through to the company level. Within existing literature, this

issue is discussed through the concept of the "toxic triangle" (Padilla et al., 2007; Schyns, 2015), Figure 5, which looks at the relationship between the follower, the leader and the environment. While the environment was not part of this study, it is clear from the respondents that this plays a role in followers' responses to toxic leaders and should be further investigated.

Figure 5: The toxic triangle (Padilla et al., 2007)
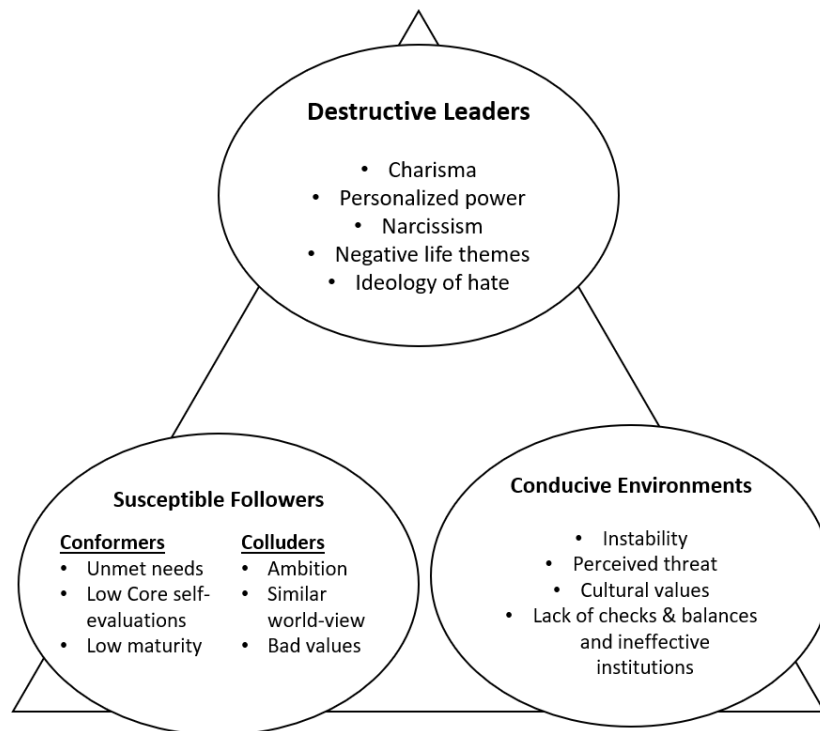
Based on a comment from Respondent 2, an area for future investigation is the concept of follower vengeance. Vengeance was raised by respondent 2 as something that, given the chance, he would do against his previous toxic leader. This could also be investigated in relation to the concept of the "toxic triangle" and the potential impact vengeance may have on a company.

Conclusion

Through the findings presented, it became apparent that toxic leaders do impact followers. This research found that toxic leaders impact followers in four ways: anxiety, anger, emotional fatigue and frustration. Followers acknowledged that toxic leaders impacted them in a variety of ways, often impacting their ability to perform their day-to-day duties. Additionally, followers shared how the impact of

their toxic leader often led to them being disillusioned with the company overall, to the point where they were driven to leave the company.

6.3. Discussion of Results for Research Question 3

Research Question 3: What coping mechanisms do followers use to cope with toxic leaders?

Chapter 2 delved deeply into coping mechanisms and strategies, including direction action and palliative coping categories (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005; Fortes-Ferreira et al., 2006; Kuo, 2013; Steed, 1998; Wright et al., 2015). From the literature reviewed it became clear that there are various coping styles and mechanisms which followers can turn to. The responses from interviewees aligned with and added to the literature and stated mechanisms employed in order to cope with a toxic leader. Table 11 presents a consolidation of the coping mechanisms employed, as well as a grouping of these into categories. The five categories listed in Table 12 align with the literature reviewed, offering both direction action and palliative coping categories. Figure 6 shows the connection between these areas.

While existing literature offered the two categories of coping types, this research has contributed deeper levels of these categories. These deeper categories address the deeper level actual coping categories that followers can employ. Additionally, these five categories are easier for followers to understand and engage with. The naming conventions of the categories also enable to followers to easily identify the coping category they fit in and in turn understand how their coping mechanism fits within the category.

Figure 6: Connection between direct action, palliative coping and coping categories
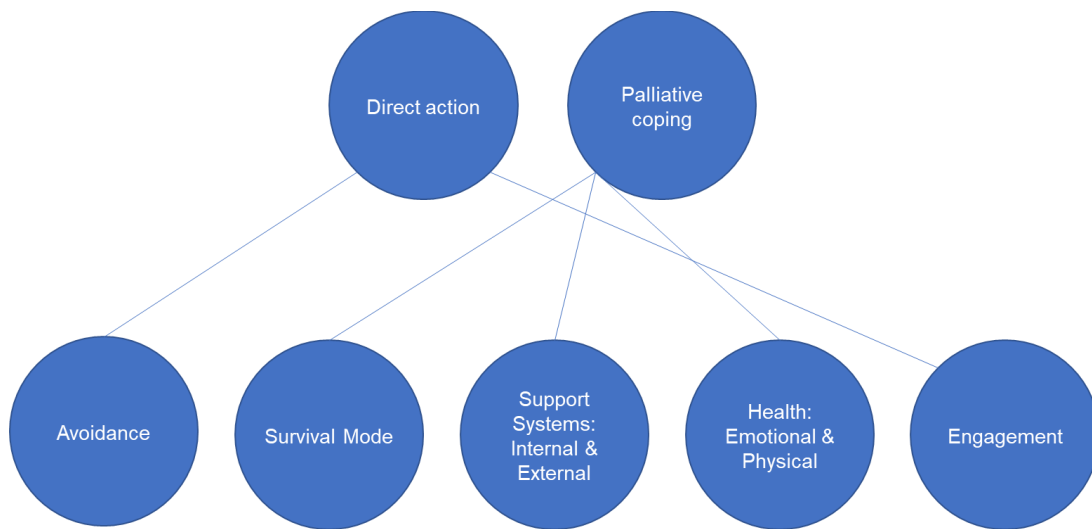
The review literature expresses how individuals rely heavily on their support systems in order to cope under a toxic leader (Kuo, 2013; Skinner et al., 2003). This was supported by the interviewees who shared how it was their personal support systems that they relied on in order to cope with their toxic leader.

In reviewing the literature alongside the interviewees' responses, what became apparent to the researcher was that followers will adopt a coping mechanism most aligned with their attachment type, i.e. they are likely to adopt the coping mechanisms that most closely aligns with their personality traits and type. This relates back to the literature, where in the theory states that understanding the interpersonal and intrapersonal processes that determine an individual's behaviours can be useful in explaining work-related behaviours (Byrne et al., 2017). Added to this, social relationships and interactions are also based off of this (Hinojosa et al., 2014; Keller & Cacioppe, 2001; Wu et al., 2016).

While the literature reviewed does examine all these areas, it does not integrate them into one supporting framework. Through this research and the literature, this research aimed to understand if all these elements could be integrated together to explain and support the coping mechanisms employed by followers.

Through an investigation of attachment theory, follower type and an assessment of the Skinner et al., (2003) and Yagil et al., (2011) coping models, the researcher was able to identify that an individual is more likely to employ a specific coping mechanism based on their identified follower type, which correlates back to attachment theory. By understanding an individual's attachment style, one can easily associate a follower type. For example, a *secure* individual is more able to stand up for themselves and as such more easily adopt to being a survivor. An individual with whose attachment type is *insecure anxious* is concerned with being rejected and as such this may lead to their 'sheep' mentality follower types. Similarly, individuals whose attachment style is insecure avoidant tend to alienate and isolate themselves as a protection method (Keller & Cacioppe, 2001; Maslyn et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2016). This will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

Conclusion

From this analysis, it is apparent that there are a variety of coping mechanisms that follower can engage with. Ultimately the mechanism that a follower engages is based on their attachment style and the related coping mechanism.

6.4. Discussion of Liberation and Leaving

While the reviewed literature offered leaving as a liberation tool (Lipman-Blumen, 2005a), the reality for followers was that often this was not possible due to financial constraints. While all the followers interviewed had left their toxic leader, not all had left their company. Some followers felt that the toxic leader's behaviour was permeating through the company, creating a toxic environment that was support and enabled by senior leadership allowing the toxic behaviour to continue, from this they lost faith in their organisation. This pushed them to leave the organisation when a chance arose. However, two respondents stated that they were still working at the same organisations just under a different leader. They did not see the toxic leader's behaviour filtering to the rest of the organisation.

In Chapter 2, the literature reviewed lightly touched on toxic leader versus toxic leadership (Padilla et al., 2007; Schyns, 2015). Toxic leadership includes looking

at three aspects, leaders, followers and organisational context, referred to as the toxic triangle. From the findings above, it is clear that the organisational context does indeed play a role in how followers cope under toxic leaders. The toxic triangle is an area that need further investigation, given that in this instance, 12 organisations lost employees because of an individual's toxic behaviour. This loss to the organisation can have impact across a variety of areas, including the loss of IP, costs to re-hire and re-skill and reputational risk. From this finding, it is clear that the toxic triangle is a crucial concept for organisations to understand and acknowledge.

6.5. Discussion of Additional Results

In beginning the research, the researcher believed that a gender bias would occur when followers identified a toxic leader. It was assumed that there would be a skew toward the opposite gender being identified as a toxic leader. However, as can be seen from Table 11, there is no dominant gender bias, less than a third of responders cited a leader of an opposite gender as their toxic leader. This issue of gender is not covered in existing literature and could potentially be investigated further with a large sample to ensure validity of this finding.

The reviewed literature does speak of having channels through which to turn to in times of need, i.e. direct communication, the reality the respondents spoke of was that the channels in place through which to report a toxic leader are not feasible options. While the literature offers the theory of this, what became apparent from the interviews was that the reality of the situation is very different. Often these channels are simply there as a tick box and the senior relationships that the toxic leader has maintained make these channels null and void. Added to this, fear of retaliation and recrimination steered followers away from using these channels.

Chapter 7.   Conclusion

The initial objective of this research was to understand the impact that toxic leaders have on their followers and investigate the coping mechanism that followers use to respond or safeguard themselves from such leaders. Through the literature reviewed and the in-depth interviews this research was able to achieve its objective, and in the process offer additional findings to the existing literature.

The findings from Research Questions 1, 2 and 3 are summarised and integrated in Figure 7 below.

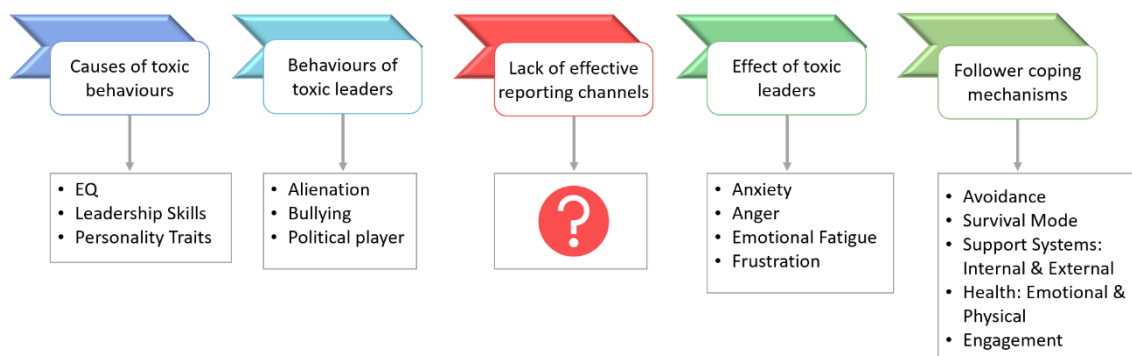*Figure 7: Process flow of how toxic leader's behaviour impacts followers*

Figure 7 presents the process flow of how a toxic leader's behaviour impacts a follower and the choice of their coping mechanism. The top row represents the process flow, while the bottom row details the findings of this study.

Through this research, the empirical results have shown that there are attributed causal factors that lead to a toxic leader's behaviour. These factors range across EQ, leadership skill and personality traits. These causal factors then lead to an actual behaviour being exhibited by the toxic leader. As derived from this research, the lack of effective reporting channels means that followers are directly impacted by toxic leaders without support from organisations in opposition to the toxic leader. This then leads to followers being affected by the toxic leader's behaviours. This research identified four categories of how followers felt under toxic leaders: anxiety; anger; emotional fatigue; and frustration. From these

feelings, followers then demonstration coping mechanisms, either direct or palliative. In this research five categories of coping mechanisms were identified: avoidance; survival mode; support systems: internal & external; health: emotional & physical; and engagement. These five categories were then connected to the literature and its presentation of followers employing direct action and palliative coping mechanisms, as can be seen in Figure 6. The supporting detail for each of the stages and how they connect can be referenced back in Chapters 5 and 6.

In this process flow, it is necessary to note the identification of step 3, lack of effective reporting channels. Through this research it became apparent that none of the respondents felt that their company offered them adequate channels through which to report the behaviour of their toxic leader, rather the channels were simply farces. However, this research has identified that this step is in fact a crucial step in the process flow – the lack of effective reporting channels means that followers are then affected by toxic leaders and in turn need to employ coping mechanisms. Recommendations on how companies can deal with effective reporting channels will be further discussed in section 7.2.

7.1. Connection between attachment style, follower type, coping strategy & coping behaviour

From the research it is apparent that toxic leaders do indeed have an impact on followers, and the extent of the impact is heavily related to the attachment style and follower type. Additionally, by followers understanding their attachment style, they can more easily employ the necessary coping mechanisms when under a toxic leader.

From the research it was gathered that the follower type closely correlated to the actions that they are willing to take. Using the reviewed literature as well as the interview data, a taxonomy of attachment style, follower type, coping type, coping strategy and coping behaviours was drafted. Figure 8 represents that different types of follower will respond differently to the same situation, and as such there is no standard coping mechanism which followers can implement to cope under

toxic leaders. Rather, followers need to identify which mechanism works best for them based on their personality type and attachment style.

The below taxonomy displays of how these elements all come together to support this finding. Through identifying their attachment style, followers will then, by default, revert to a follower type as identified by Thomas et al., (2017). Once the follower type is identified, this will lead to the type of coping method being employed. Following this, the coping strategy and coping behaviours will then be absorbed.

Figure 8: Taxonomy of attachment style, follower type, coping strategy & coping behaviours

Attachment Style	Secure	Insecure	Insecure Avoidant
Follower Type	Effective Survivor	Sheep Yes-People	Alienated
Coping Type	Direct	Palliative	Mixed
Coping Strategy/ Method	• Problem Focused • Emotion Focused	• Emotion Focused	• Problem Focused • Emotion Focused
Coping Behaviour	• Direct communication • Avoidance • Support seeking • Reframing	• Support seeking • Reframing	• Ingratiation • Avoidance

Figure 8 was derived by merging the literature review in Chapter 2 in order to create a consolidated view across the research that had already been done with regards to followers and coping. The taxonomy was created in an attempt to link how an attachment style would appeal to a specific follower type, and in turn the coping strategy and behaviours of a follower would be related to the type of follower and attachment style that they relate to. Given that attachment theory helps understand the interpersonal and intrapersonal processes which determine

an individual's behaviours (Byrne et al., 2017), attachment styles was identified as the anchor point for the taxonomy. Following this, follower type was plotted aligned to attachment style. These types were derived from the literature presented in Chapter 2 (Thomas et al., 2017). From here, the identified coping types, strategies and methodologies, from Chapter 2, were then plotted to match the follower type and corresponding attachment style. This research looked to identify the connected items across all these groups and see which were like and could be associated together to help form an understanding of how an individual's attachment style will influence their behaviour and reaction to a toxic leader.

The creation of the taxonomy provided a basis through which to identify the theoretical researched behaviours of followers, enabling this research to further expand on these by linking actual behaviours that respondents recounted. The taxonomy aims to assist further researchers in understanding how an individual's attachment style and follower type can influence their relationship and actions in specific circumstances.

The findings from this study, combined with the works of Byrne et al., (2017), Lipman-Blumen (2005a), Skinner et al., (2003), Thomas et al., (2017) and Yagil et al., (2011) support this taxonomy, and offers a new finding to this area of research. Through this taxonomy, the research hopes to empower followers to identify their attachment style, follower type and subsequent coping strategies, and in doing so assist them in coping under toxic leaders.

In summation, the aim of this research, to create a flowchart depicting the behaviours of toxic leaders, the impact on followers and coping mechanisms of followers, as shown in Figure 2, has been achieved. Further, a supporting taxonomy attachment style, follower type, coping strategy and coping behaviours, Figure 8, has been established.

Based on this research, there are two main target areas for recommendations: followers and companies. These two areas are recommended as from the research it has become apparent that if followers are able to understand their predisposition to coping mechanisms they will quicker be able to adjust their coping mechanisms. Additionally, the potential impact a toxic leader can have on a company's reputation is a crucial aspect for companies to be aware of.

Followers

For followers there are three areas they should be aware of in order to better deal with toxic leaders: awareness of their attachment style, follower type and coping strategy; being able to identify a toxic leader; and reporting channels.

For followers, it is suggested that they become aware of their attachment style, follower type and related coping strategy. By understanding this they are more likely to be able to adapt more quickly to their coping mechanism and deal better under a toxic leader. Additionally, they can identify if their coping mechanism will work under the specific toxic leader or if they need to adapt and engage with an alternate coping method based against the type of toxic leader.

Further, by followers being able to identify a toxic leader they will have the ability to act accordingly and engage with the relevant coping mechanism, as well as look into how they can use company procedures to protect themselves from the toxic leader. Added to this, by looking into the reporting channels that the company offers, followers can protect themselves through the company systems and procedures. Through the combination of identifying their coping mechanism as well as understanding the reporting channels, followers will be more equipped to deal with a toxic leader and learn how to engage with such leaders to ensure that they are able to successfully perform their jobs whilst coping.

Companies

It is critical that companies realise the negative impact that toxic leaders have on the organisation. Once followers are exposed to toxic leaders, they begin to lose

faith in the overall company as the leader mars their experience. This leads to companies losing talent and intellectual property. Additionally, followers who leave companies due to a toxic leader are potential reputational risks for companies to consider. The experience under the toxic leader becomes the one thing that followers associate with the company, and often this becomes the negative message that surrounds conversations they have regarding the company. Companies need to ensure that they have adequate channels in place through which followers can report toxic leaders.

Reporting channels and their effectiveness is a key aspect that companies need to adhere to, to ensure that followers feel that they can safely report their toxic leader. As can be seen in Figure 7, the lack of effective reporting channels impacts directly on followers, by them suffering from the effect on the toxic leader. This then forces them to engage coping mechanisms. An effective reporting channel would mean that the impact on followers would be lessened and potentially such individuals would stay on at companies that support them, rather than leaving due to a toxic leader.

7.3. Limitations of Research

While the research was conducted to the best of the researcher's ability as per the method outlined in Chapter 4, the following limitations must be identified:

1. The sample size for the research was minimal and was focused specifically on knowledge workers.

2. Biases, both interviewer and respondent bias must be noted. Interviewer bias could have occurred due to the interviewer being inexperienced to conduct in-depth interviews and the potential impact this may have had on the data collection. Additionally, respondent bias may have occurred in the interviews as they respondents may have distorted their answers fear of repercussion, as well as the research topic being subjective.

3. The sample offered a limited geographical representation, with all respondents being from Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa. This geographical bias must be considered for further research.

7.4. Future Research Ideas

Future research in the area of toxic leaders and leadership could consider four topics:

1. Aligned with the works of Padilla et al., (2007), greater research on toxic leaders and the impact on followers in relation to the work environment needs to be conducted. From this research it is apparent that the concept of the toxic triangle is indeed relevant and that to fully understand the impact, it is important to look at the leader, the follower and the environment.

2. Interestingly, Respondent 2 brought up the topic of vengeance. This raises an area for future research, understanding how toxic leaders impact followers to the point where they may be driven to vengeful acts. Research into this would offer a new information for companies to consider when promoting individuals to positions of leadership.

3. Another area for future research is company reputation in relation to negative leadership. Understanding the potential negative impacts that companies may face due to negative leaders is important.

4. Another area for future research is studying leaders who have been identified as toxic and investigating if they ever partook in EQ testing, what their results were and if there is a consistency in EQ amongst toxic leaders.

7.5. Summary

This research found that toxic leaders have severe negative impacts on followers. The potency of this impact is based largely against the attachment style and follower style of the individual.

The findings of this research adds to those of Lipman-Blumen (2005a), and other academics who have portrayed some of the traits associated with toxic leaders, and the impact that these individuals have on followers. This research also offers new evidence to this field, presenting that the behaviour of toxic leaders is driven by causal factors which influence the way in which such leaders behave.

Through the taxonomy of attachment style, follower type, coping strategy & coping behaviours, the research hopes to empower followers to identify their attachment style, follower type and subsequent coping strategies, and in doing so assist them in coping under toxic leaders. Additionally, this research aims to empower companies to identify the potential negative impact that toxic leaders have on a company and take greater caution when appointing individuals to leadership roles.

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Chapter 9.   Appendix

9.1. Appendix 1: Ethics Approval

Gordon Institute of Business Science
University of Pretoria

04 June 2018

Zeller Marion

Dear Marion

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

Please note that approval is granted based on the methodology and research instruments provided in the application. If there is any deviation change or addition to the research method or tools, a supplementary application for approval must be obtained

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

Kind Regards

GIBS MBA Research Ethical Clearance Committee

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University of Pretoria

A. Demographics

Age

20 – 30	31 – 40	41 – 50	51 – 60	60+

Gender

Male	Female

Race

African	Coloured	Indian	White	Other

Size of organisation

     a) <50 people

     b) 51 – 100 people

     c) 101+ people

Number of years' experience

<5	5 – 10	11 – 20	21 – 30	31 – 40	41 – 50

Gender of toxic leader

Male	Female

B. Qualitative

Toxic Leader

1. Have you ever reported directly to a toxic leader, and for how long?

2. What behaviours did your leader exhibit that you believe were toxic?

3. How did these behaviours make you feel?

4. At the time of the toxic leadership, were any of your colleagues experiencing the same feeling?

Follower Behaviours

5. How did you respond to this form of leadership?
6. Why do you think you reacted in such a way?
7. What happened due to your reaction?

Coping Mechanisms

8. How did you cope under this leadership?
9. Why did you choose that particular reason/style of coping?

Opinions

10. Do you think your perceptions of the toxic leader's behaviour was influence by your own behaviours, beliefs and values? And how so? What 3 words would you summarise as your inherent behaviours, beliefs and values?
11. Why do you believe certain leaders adopt toxic leadership behaviours?

9.3. Appendix 3: Email Invitation

Dear _____

I am finalising an MBA at Gordon Institute of Business Science and am in the process of completing the compulsory research report component of my degree. My research is titled *Toxic leaders' behaviour: The effects on followers and their coping mechanisms*. The aim of the research is to understand how and why followers are impacted by toxic leaders.

I would greatly appreciate your participation in this research by agreeing to be interviewed on the subject matter. The interview will be semi-structured and take approximately 90 minutes. I plan to conduct the interviews during the months of June and July. Please find attached a copy of the consent form that you will read prior to commencing. The interview will be confidential.

The research questions I aim to answer through this process are as follows:

Research Question 1: What are the behaviours that followers observe in toxic leaders?
Research Question 2: What impact do toxic leaders have on their followers?
Research Question 3: What coping mechanisms do followers use to cope with toxic leaders?

Interviews can take place at the Gordon Institute of Business Science or at a location of your choice.

Please can you confirm your agreement to take part, as per our communication and indicate your availability during the months of June and July 2018.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,

Marion R Zeller
marionzel@gmail.com
072 777 3118

9.4. Appendix 4: Consent Form

I am conducting research on toxic leaders, their behaviours and the impact on followers. The aim of the research is to understand how and why followers are impacted by toxic leaders.

The interview is expected to last about an hour, and will help us understand the impact of toxic leaders on individuals. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty.

All data will be reported confidentially without identifiers. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below.

Marion R Zeller	Margie Sutherland
Researcher	Supervisor
marionzel@gmail.com	sutherlandm@gibs.co.za
+27 72 777 3118	+27 73 170 6917

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____