Gordon Institute of Business Science
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The Effect of Destructive Bosses on Female Employee Engagement

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

7 November 2018

ABSTRACT

As the complexity and uncertainty of the business environment increases, the ability of leaders to face the ensuing challenges is being questioned to the point where research into ineffective leadership has become increasingly relevant. This is particularly important where leadership has become detrimental to the success of an organisation and the motivation and productivity of its employees. The aim of this study is to understand the perceptions of destructive leadership from the viewpoint of female employees, who are increasingly playing a more vital role in driving organisational performance and sustainability within the global workforce. The research further aims to understand the effect of destructive leadership behaviours on the engagement levels of female employees.

Qualitative, exploratory research was carried out in order to gain these insights, entailing in depth interviews with fifteen professional female employees across a diverse range of ages, races, industries and job seniority levels, who had experienced working for destructive bosses. The data gathered was then analysed by means of a thematic content analysis in order to identify the main themes and patterns evident in the data.

The overall research findings extend the literature on destructive leadership traits, from the perspective of subordinates in general, in terms of destructive leaders being abusive; manipulative; incompetent and arrogant. However, from the perspective of female employees, two additional traits were uncovered where women in the workplace believe that destructive bosses are both insecure and intolerant of them based on their gender. The research also revealed that all dimensions of female employee engagement (performance; commitment; satisfaction; identification and loyalty) were adversely affected while working for a destructive boss. However, employee loyalty and satisfaction were the most severely affected as the majority of the women interviewed attempted to leave their organisations while working for their destructive boss. This was enhanced by the fact that they believed that management did not care for employees as no action was taken against the offending bosses to remedy the situation and provide a safe working environment for female employees.

KEYWORDS

Effective leadership, destructive leadership, employee engagement, female workers, incivility

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master 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 AND PURPOSE

1.1 Introduction and Description of the Problem

Einarsen, Schanke Aasland and Skogstad (2007, p. 207) define toxic leadership (also known as destructive, abusive, derailed, incompetent, failed or bad leadership) as "the systematic and repeated behaviour by a leader, supervisor or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organisation by undermining and/or sabotaging the organisation's goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of his/her subordinates." The topic of destructive leadership has gained increased interest over the last few years as researchers have noted that the majority of studies previously conducted on leadership have focused almost exclusively on understanding the desirable personality characteristics of effective leaders with little focus placed on understanding the "dark side" of leadership behaviour. Mehta and Maheshwari (2014) state that the concept of destructive leadership has not been given due importance in the whole gamut of leadership theories developed over the years. This statement is supported by Chua and Murray (2015) who claim that scholarly interest has only recently shifted towards understanding the negative consequences of leaders failing to embody the traits of effective leadership.

These findings indicate that while research has recognised the importance of understanding the attributes and effects of good leaders, it has failed to adequately address the equally important concept of destructive leadership. This assertion holds particularly true in understanding the effects and consequences of destructive leadership on women in the workplace.

Furnham (2010) points out that there are various manifestations to a destructive leader. They could be inherently morally corrupt, bad decision makers, over promoted or just viewed as evil or deranged in light of their behaviour. The one thing they all have in common, though, is an impressive CV and track record of successes that has seen them rise to the top (Furnham, 2010). However, something eventually went wrong that caused them to fail to deliver on leadership expectations and to then be viewed as a bad boss, a stress carrier to colleagues and subordinates that could single-handedly destroy an entire organisation (Furnham, 2010).

Leadership derailment has thus become a topic of great importance and relevance in academic literature, as leaders seek to navigate a business environment of increased complexity and uncertainty and steer their organisations successfully through uncertain times. Failure to be effective in such circumstances could prove detrimental to organisational growth and sustainability as evidenced by the corporate scandals and failures that ultimately resulted in the global financial collapse of 2008 (Inyang, 2013).

However, the consequences of poor leadership decisions are not merely confined to potential financial disaster from business decisions taken, as the behaviours of deviant leaders themselves have been shown to psychologically affect subordinates to the point of reduced employee engagement and a resulting decreased bottom line (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Kompaso & Sridevi, 2010; Wollard, 2011). It is thus imperative that a more in depth understanding of destructive leadership and its effect on employee engagement is gained, particularly in the case of female employees who are constantly constituting a greater proportion of the global workforce.

1.2 Research Purpose

With women constituting over 39% of the total global workforce (Worldbank, 2018), the need to ensure that women remain engaged, motivated and productive in the workplace is key to ensuring sustained competitiveness and success in an increasingly dynamic and competitive global economy, yet, little work has been done in understanding the effect of destructive leadership on the employee engagement levels of women in the workplace. With so little research conducted on this topic, how do organisations expect to mitigate the negative effects of bad leadership on female employees if they do not understand what women perceive to be destructive behaviours, how they react to these behaviours and how working for a boss exhibiting these behaviours affects their engagement levels in the workplace?

The core purpose of the research is thus twofold and lies in understanding how women in the workplace perceive destructive bosses and their resultant effect on the various constructs of employee engagement as defined by Kumar and Pansari (2015, p. 68) i.e. "employee satisfaction, employee identification, employee commitment, employee loyalty and employee performance".

The research into this topic is relevant to business as it provides the organisation, its leaders and managers insights into the leadership behaviours that women consider harmful to their well-being and could potentially result in reduced job productivity, job role satisfaction, motivation and overall engagement in the workplace. Wollard (2011) says that the importance of ensuring that employees remain highly engaged lies in the fact that engaged employees exhibit higher levels of productivity, loyalty and overall well-being thus resulting in increased organisational profitability, however, global levels of workforce engagement are estimated to be just 30% (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Saks, 2006). It is thus imperative that organisations not only understand whether or not employees are engaged but also the reasons behind the disengagement of their employees, particularly female employees.

The importance of employing a gender diverse workforce, and ensuring that all workers are engaged, is in the fact that it enables companies to achieve a stronger bottom line due to the fact that men and women have different thoughts, perspectives and skills thus bringing different ways of problem solving to the table (Badal, 2014). Other benefits include the ease of access to key resources, including, knowledge and multiple lines of credit and the ability to serve a much more diverse customer base (Badal, 2014). Furthermore, it has been found that improved levels of financial performance are achieved at a business unit level in organisations that are able to achieve a highly engaged, gender diverse workforce (Badal, 2014).

From an academic viewpoint, the research undertaken contributes to the growing body of studies dedicated to understanding the perspectives and negative effects of destructive organisational leaders, particularly in relation to women in the workplace, an area in which research is currently in its infancy. The overall research problem is thus that organisations currently lack an understanding of what women consider to be destructive leadership behaviours and how these interactions affect their engagement levels in the workplace, which could ultimately detrimentally affect the financial performance of the organisation if not acknowledged and effectively rectified.

The objectives of the research are as follows:

Research Objective 1

Understanding the specific behaviours that are exhibited by leaders in the workplace, that lead to them being perceived as a destructive boss by female employees.

Research Objective 2

Understanding the various ways in which female employees react to perceived destructive bosses.

Research Objective 3

Understanding how destructive leadership behaviours affect female employee engagement.

In order to gain further insight into these objectives, the literature review undertaken in Chapter 2 has focussed firstly on the construct of leadership which is defined by Inyang (2013, p.78) as "the process of influencing people to work towards the attainment of organisational goals." As leadership research over the past decades has tended to be largely one sided in terms of understanding the positive and constructive aspects of leadership (Inyang, 2013), the traits and behaviours of effective leaders are firstly summarised in the literature review before moving on to the topic of leadership derailment in the form of destructive leadership. The various traits and behaviours of destructive leaders are explored as well as the effects of destructive leadership on subordinates. The section concludes by examining the factors that allow destructive leadership to still flourish in organisations.

The issue of employee engagement is then examined, including exploring various definitions of the concept. The consequences of reduced employee engagement are then analysed from both a financial and psychological perspective. The literature review concludes with examining the issue of workplace incivility towards female employees and the resulting consequences of this occurring.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Leadership

The basic purpose of organisational leadership is to effectively coordinate collective efforts in order to achieve shared goals (Yukl, 2012), yet, the concept of leadership is often enveloped in the misconception that a leader is someone "greater" than others with a life characterised by public visibility (Daft, 2012). Many fail to realise that true leadership is an everyday way of thinking and acting and has little to do with a formal title or position (Daft, 2012). In today's challenging and complex business environment, the importance of leadership lies in how effectively a leader is able to understand the changes occurring and navigate the turbulence of the environment while encouraging followers to proactively seek opportunities in the challenges faced (Morgan, 2013). It is therefore imperative to understand the effective leadership traits and behaviours that support the success of these efforts while recognising the destructive leadership patterns likely to derail an organisation's efforts to successfully navigate a volatile environment.

2.1.1 Effective Leadership

Countless studies on the topic of "leadership" have been conducted over the years, covering vastly varying elements and theories of the concept, with the majority of studies seeking to explain the attributes and effects of effective leaders and leadership. Shaw, Erikson and Harvey (2011) state that numerous approaches have been developed over the years to explain the requirements of effective leadership including "trait approaches, behavioural approaches, contingency theories, dyadic theories, neo-charismatic theories, social network theory, and complexity theory" (Shaw, Erikson & Harvey, 2011, p. 575).

In order to unpack and understand precisely what constitutes effective organisational leadership and why it is important, Ulrich and Smallwood (2012) took an outside view of the subject, focussing on the business values of effective leadership rather than the psychological principles of the subject. They found that leadership matters because it is the responsibility of leaders to identify and resolve the issues and expectations of stakeholders in order to improve the results of an organisation. They also found that good

leaders are executors who make things happen and are able to effectively foster the talent in employees to bring out the best in them. They are also keen on building the next generation of talent and they possess personal proficiency allowing them to successfully invest in themselves and others in order to earn trust and credibility (Ulrich and Smallwood, 2012).

Ulrich and Smallwood (2012) infer that while great individual leaders may come and go, strong leadership capability endures over the years, therefore leadership is more important than leaders. Effective leaders are able to build leadership capabilities though a leadership brand whereby overall leadership success is measured by the leader's success in delivering value to customers by effectively coordinating the actions of employees to meet their needs. Finally, effective leaders are able to ensure the sustainability of their leadership by altering their behaviour to suit a situation accordingly (Ulrich and Smallwood, 2012).

Yukl's (2012) model of effective leadership focussed on identifying effective leadership behaviours that influence the overall performance of an organisation and its people, leading to the development of a model termed the "Hierarchical Taxonomy of Leadership Behaviours" (Yukl, 2012, p 68).

Table 1: Hierarchical Taxonomy of Leadership Behaviours (Yukl, 2012)

Task-oriented	Clarifying
	Planning
	Monitoring operations
	Problem solving
Relations-oriented	Supporting
	Developing
	Recognizing
	Empowering
Change-oriented	Advocating change
	Envisioning change
	Encouraging innovation
	Facilitating collective learning
External	Networking
	External monitoring
	Representing

In the above leadership behaviours model, the purpose of task-oriented behaviours is to ensure work is performed efficiently by all members of the organisation. The category

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termed "relations-oriented behaviours" indicate behaviours that focus on improving the performance of people, while the aim of change-oriented behaviours is to increase adaptability and innovation. Finally, external factors focus on the acquisition of the key resources and data that are necessary in improving and promoting the performance and interests of the team, individual or entire organisation (Yukl, 2012).

Similarly, Hoffman, Woehr, Maldagen-Youngjohn and Lyons (2011) looked at how effective leadership is influenced by individual differences by focussing on both trait-like and state-like characteristics. Born out of the "Great Man" theory, the trait view on leadership is based on the belief that leaders cannot learn to be good leaders as good leaders are born with effective leadership traits (Hoffman et al, 2011). State-like characteristics, instead, focus more on the skills and knowledge of leaders. It was found that while trait-like differences more strongly resulted in effective leadership than state-like differences (albeit marginally), both are important correlates of effective leadership. Hoffman et al. found that, from a trait-like perspective, the traits most closely linked with strong leadership effectiveness were "achievement motivation, energy, dominance, honesty/integrity, self-confidence, creativity and charisma" (Hoffman et al., 2011, p. 365), while, from a skills perspective, effective leaders were found to have strong "interpersonal skills, oral communication, written communication, management skills, problem solving skills and decision making" (Hoffman et al., 2011, p. 365).

In his attempt to explain which precise leadership behaviours yield positive results, Goleman (2017) focussed on understanding the impact of emotional intelligence on six different leadership styles. Firstly, coercive leaders expect that subordinates immediately comply to their demands. Leaders who are authoritative are able to ensure people work towards achieving a common vision. Affiliative leaders get things done by building strong emotional relationships with followers. Democratic leaders use participation to achieve consensus in the organisation or team. Pacesetting leaders expect a constant display of excellence and an ability to direct oneself, while leaders who were coaches are intent on building a future leadership pipeline (Goleman, 2017).

Goleman stressed that each leader follows a different style which is usually dependent on the circumstances and situation that he or she finds themselves in at a specific time, with no leader constantly following just a single leadership style. It was found that leaders who used leadership styles that positively impacted the climate of an organisation (the flexibility of employees, how responsible they felt to the organisation, the levels of standards they set, the extent to which they felt that performance is accurately measured

and rewards are just, their clarity in terms of understanding the firms vision and purpose and their commitment to achieving a common goal) achieved better financial results than those who did not (Goleman, 2017).

In reviewing the empirical literature on behavioural traits, leadership and organisational success, Hogan and Kaiser (2005) found that with good leadership organisations thrive and succeed, reinforcing the psychological well-being of incumbents, whereas the actions of bad leaders result in misery for subordinates. These findings shift the spotlight from the myriad of articles and studies on the positive attributes and effects of good, successful leaders to the lesser covered topic of the perceptions of destructive leaders and their effect on the well-being of employees.

2.1.2 Destructive Leadership

At the heart of studies into destructive leadership is the study of Lipman-Blumen (2005) who claims that destructive leaders may be destructive in some situations but effective in others, leading to many followers being blind to the shortcomings of the leader, and possibly even preferring the destructive leader over others often due to the charismatic nature and enthusiasm exhibited by the leader. Lipman-Blumen defines a destructive leader as someone who engages in multiple destructive behaviours and who constantly exhibits certain dysfunctional personality characteristics. These personality traits and behavioural characteristics are considered destructive when they inflict some sort of mental, psychological or physical harm on their followers and their organisations. Harris, Kacmar and Zivnuska (2007, p. 253) suggest that "examples of abusive supervisory behaviours include public criticism, rudeness, breaking promises, inconsiderate actions, and the silent treatment." However, Lipman-Blumen (2005) stresses the fact that what one person might view as a destructive leader, exhibiting abusive behaviour, might be viewed as a hero by another, therefore understanding different views on leadership is important.

Limited research has so far been conducted in trying to understand the thought processes of employees in developing perceptions of abusive supervision and how employees react to such abuse both behaviourally and on a psychological level (Martinko, Harvey, Sikora, & Douglas, 2011). Reports on abusive supervision largely tend to be based on the experiences and perceptions of subordinates and these perceptions are likely to differ between subordinates (Martinko, Harvey, Sikora, &

Douglas, 2011). Martinko et al. (2011) found that subordinates' personal characteristics, more specifically their attributions and attribution styles (. i.e. their causal explanations for their outcomes such as ability, effort, etc), accounted for significant variances in how subordinates rated the abuse received from supervisors. Perceptions of abuse where more closely associated with subordinates' external and stable attribution styles (Martinko, Harvey, Sikora, & Douglas, 2011).

Harvey, Harris, Gillis and Martinko (2014) support this view of subjectivity in perceptions of abuse by pointing out that the majority of studies on abusive supervision have usually been from the perspective of subordinates and that the perception of the abusive boss's behaviour might differ between two subordinates, with the possibility that one subordinate might deem a boss's behaviour abusive while another might not (Harvey, Harris, Gillis and Martinko, 2014). They thus looked into the effects of, what they termed, "psychological entitlement" on employee's perceptions of abusive supervision, where psychological entitlement refers to the excessive levels of approval, compliments and remuneration that employees feel they deserve despite that fact that this is not aligned with their actual levels of capability and effort demonstrated. They found that employees with increased levels of psychological entitlement were often reluctant to accept criticism because of their positive self-views and biases, leading to negative feelings and behaviours in the workplace and heightened perceptions of abuse from supervisors, confirming the subjective nature of subordinate perceptions around abusive supervision (Harvey, Harris, Gillis and Martinko, 2014).

2.1.2.1 The Traits and Behaviours of Destructive Leaders

In discussing the concept of destructive and negative leadership, it is important to note that no leader is entirely and fully destructive, rather leaders operate along a scale of constructive and destructive leadership behaviour (Thoroughgood, Padilla, Hunter & Tate, 2012). Destructive leadership behaviour can range from simple gestures that are often viewed as insignificant to physical abuse and from petty theft to serious fraud against the organisation (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014).

In an attempt to understand follower perceptions of bad leaders, Pelletier (2010) undertook a study focussing on identifying the behavioural and rhetorical constructs associated with destructive leadership in organisations that followers collectively agree

are harmful to their well-being. Eight dimensions of harmful leadership were identified. Firstly, destructive leaders were actively witnessed attacking followers' self-esteem in the workplace by mocking or marginalising their efforts and contributions. Leaders also encouraged divisiveness in the workplace by pitting workers against each other or ostracising an individual, while encouraging others to do the same. Social exclusion by means of excluding individuals from important and relevant meetings was the third dimension identified (Pelletier, 2010).

Destructive leaders also promoted inequity through promotions and favouritism and exhibited abusive behaviours such as yelling and throwing tantrums to get a point across. The sixth dimension identified involved the leader using threats and tactics that threatened the security and psychological well-being of the follower such as coercion and threatening to fire employees if they do not do as told. The destructive leader also lacked integrity and was deceptive in their actions, for example, accepting credit for the work of others. The eighth and final dimension of destructive leadership identified in the study was a "laissez-faire" leadership style where the leader was often complacent in carrying out their leadership duties (Pelletier, 2010).

Of these eight dimensions of destructive leadership identified, Pelletier then went on to investigate which were considered to be most harmful to respondents, with 96% of respondents agreeing that attacks to self-esteem were the most harmful psychologically, followed by a leader's lack of integrity and abusiveness (Pelletier, 2010).

Erikson, Shaw and Agabe (2007) looked at identifying the typical core attributes that led to a leader being labelled as destructive by subordinates based on the "cognitive schema" perception of subordinates (Erikson, Shaw and Agabe, 2007). A total of 767 examples of behaviours that respondents believed classified their bosses as "bad" bosses were collected which "were then classified into eleven behavioural categories, namely (1) Autocratic Behaviour; (2) Poor Communication; (3) Unable to Effectively Deal with Subordinates; (4) Poor Ethics/Integrity; (5) Inability to Use Technology; (6) Inconsistent/Erratic Behaviour; (7) Poor Interpersonal Behaviour; (8) Micromanagement; (9) Poor Personal Behaviour; (10) Excessive Political Behaviour and (11) Lack of Strategic Skills" (Erikson, Shaw and Agabe, 2007, p. 32). Using these identified traits, Shaw, Erikson and Harvey (2011) then went on to classify seven distinct types of destructive leaders, with the worst type of leader exhibiting "acting in a brutal bullying manner; lying and other unethical behaviour; micro-managing and over controlling; inability to deal with interpersonal conflict or similar situations; not having the skills to

match the job and unwillingness to change mind and listen to others" (Shaw, Erikson & Harvey, 2011, p. 586). Yen, Tian and Sankoh (2013) found that the most prevalent destructive leadership behaviours, from the perspective of subordinates and in descending order, were: "played favourites; relied on authority; imposed his/her solution; guarded turf against outsiders; lost temper; insisted on one solution; administered policies unfairly; forced acceptance of his/her point of view; would not take no for an answer; treated subordinates in a condescending manner; demanded to get his/her way; showed off/bragged or boasted; criticised subordinates in front of others; delegated work he/she did not want and claimed credit for the work of others" (Yen, Tian & Sankoh, 2013, p. 598).

It is important to recognize that not all negative personality and behavioural traits result in abusive supervision. When seeking to understand negative leadership behaviour, the concept of the "Dark Triad" traits is often mentioned. These behaviours include Machiavellianism (cynical and misanthropic beliefs, callous, striving for money, power, and status), psychopathy (anti-social, lack of empathy), and narcissism (entitled, constant need for attention and admiration) (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016).

Wisse and Sleebos (2016) describe these traits as being exploitative, egocentric and manipulative, thus positively correlating with harmful behaviour. It was found that when combined with high position power, there was a high correlation between supervisor Machiavellianism and subordinate ratings of abuse from supervisors but there was no direct correlation between supervisor narcissism and psychopathy and abuse from supervisors (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). However, Mathieu and Babiak (2016) refute this claim in terms of psychopathy, finding a strong positive relationship between corporate psychopathy and abusive supervision and subordinate turnover intentions. Corporate psychopathy was also negatively related to job satisfaction (Mathieu and Babiak, 2016). Narcissism, in turn, was considered to be the least harmful of the dark triad traits, with findings indicating no adverse effects being reported on subordinates' overall well-being, and an actual positive relationship with subordinate career success (Volmer, Koch & Goritz, 2016).

2.1.2.2 The Effects of Destructive Leadership

Toxic leadership usually results in reduced employee performance, satisfaction and motivation (Lipman-Blumen, 2005). Schyns and Schilling (2013) questioned how

detrimental was the impact of destructive leaders and found that the strongest positively correlated relationship was between bad leadership and subordinate attitudes towards the destructive leader. It was found that bad leadership led to counterproductive work attitudes and behaviours from subordinates as a form of retaliation towards the negative behaviour of the leader (Schyns and Schilling, 2013). The detrimental effects on individual followers of abusive leaders were cited as severe emotional exhaustion and job tension, both resistant as well as deviant work behaviour, reduced job satisfaction resulting in increased turnover intentions as well as harmful effects on family life and well-being (Schyns and Schilling, 2013). It was proposed that a group of colleagues being exposed to the same destructive behaviour might serve as a moderator in reducing stress levels due to a shared feeling of dealing with a problem together rather than individually (Schyns and Schilling, 2013).

Harris, Kacmar and Zivunska (2007) looked at how much of meaning individuals assigned to their work and how this meaning could work to moderate the adverse effects of abusive leadership on the job performance of subordinates. They found that the relationship between abusive supervision and reduced employee performance tended to be at its strongest when employees were heavily invested in their work and found great meaning in the work they did. It was proposed that this was due to the fact that workers who were strongly connected their work felt they had more to lose in the threatening supervisor relationship they found themselves in and consequently spent more time diverting their energy and resources away from their everyday tasks and towards dealing with the abusive supervisor (Harris, Kacmar and Zivunska, 2007).

From a career satisfaction viewpoint, abusive supervision often leads to subordinates suffering from emotional exhaustion as they tend to feel that they lack the personal, professional and social support required to perform effectively and reach their personal career goals, which could, in turn, erode their feelings of career satisfaction (Jiang, Wang & Lin, 2016). This relationship between destructive leadership and feelings of reduced employee career satisfaction, can, however, be mediated to some extent by career self-efficacy and organisational tenure where it has been found that employees, who have spent a significant number of years with their organisations, gain knowledge and experiences over time that allow them to better handle coping with supervisory abuse (Jiang, Wang & Lin, 2016). It is also suggested that long tenured employees are better versed in understanding the formal power structures in the organisation and are therefore more comfortable and skilled at dealing with abusive supervisors within their environment (Kim, Liu & Diefendorff, 2015).

While the effects of destructive leadership are often detrimental emotionally and psychologically to the subordinate and financially from an organisational viewpoint, Jha and Jha (2015) suggest that most victims of abusive leaders endure the humiliation of such actions as they are either financially dependent on their jobs or fear the lack of security more than they fear the supervisory abuse if they were to leave the organisation (Jha & Jha, 2015). The consequence of this happening is often reduced employee engagement in the form of lower productivity, job-related dissatisfaction and psychological distress and anxiety (Jha & Jha, 2015).

While substantial progress has recently been made into gaining an understanding of the dark side of organisational leadership and its effects on employees and organisational as well as individual performance, studies into the negative behavioural traits of leadership are still fairly limited, particularly in understanding differences in how men and women in the workplace perceive destructive leadership. In their study into gender differences in the perception of good and bad supervisor behaviour, Singh, Nadim and Ezzedeen (2012) found that while women viewed good bosses differently from men around a number of dimensions, there were no significant differences in the way each gender perceived bad bosses. However, Chua and Murray (2015, p. 292) state that "whether female and male followers employ similar criteria on which to base their perception of a leader as destructive has not been explored."

2.1.2.3 Enablers of Destructive Leadership

Schyns and Schilling (2013) say that due to the negative effects of destructive leaders on employee well-being and organisational success, it is important to gain an understanding of exactly what triggers these destructive behavioural traits in leaders. With work environments that are now constantly reinforcing the importance of open communication, collaboration, transparency and flat structures in working together to achieve organisational goals, the question of how destructive leadership could possibly still occur is an important one to answer. One of the central models attempting to explain how destructive leadership is even possible in today's transparent world is the toxic triangle framework of Padilla, Hogan and Kaiser (2007), who say that it is the presence and confluence of three factors that allows destructive leadership to flourish in

organisations, namely, "destructive leaders, susceptible followers and a conducive environment" (Padilla, Hogan and Kaiser, 2007, p. 176).

The model suggests that destructive leaders possess high levels of charisma, are power hungry on a personal level, tend to be highly narcissistic, have a negative life history and are driven by negative emotions such as hate. Susceptible followers, in turn, are either conformers or colluders, with each supporting destructive leaders in their own way. The role of followers in enabling in supporting destructive leadership was expanded on by Thoroughgood, Padilla, Hunter and Tate (2012) who grouped susceptible followers into different groups, each with their own motivations in supporting the destructive leader. Followers were either needy lost souls desperate to please, authoritarians who believe in their leader's right to exert their power on their followers, passive bystanders who are motivated by fear, opportunists looking to align themselves to destructive leaders for self-gain and acolytes who share the same views and goals as the destructive leader (Thoroughgood, Padilla, Hunter & Tate, 2012).

Lastly an unstable environment characterised by threat and a culture that supports a lack of regular checks, balances and effective institutions is likely to envelop destructive leaders and susceptible followers, allowing toxic leadership to flourish (Padilla, Hogan and Kaiser, 2007). The environmental enablers of negative leadership are supported by Mehta and Maheshwari (2014) who point out that an organisation that cultivates destructive behaviour through its own internal policies and procedures such as excessive competition and unattainable deadlines or targets is likely to become an incubator for bad leadership. Where status is a motivator for leaders, abusive supervision is likely to occur in organizations that support mechanistic structures and hostile climates as destructive leadership is often viewed as being a legitimate style of leadership in such organisations (Hu & Liu, 2017).

Figure 1: The Toxic Triangle: elements in three domains related to destructive leadership (Padilla, Hogan and Kaiser, 2007)
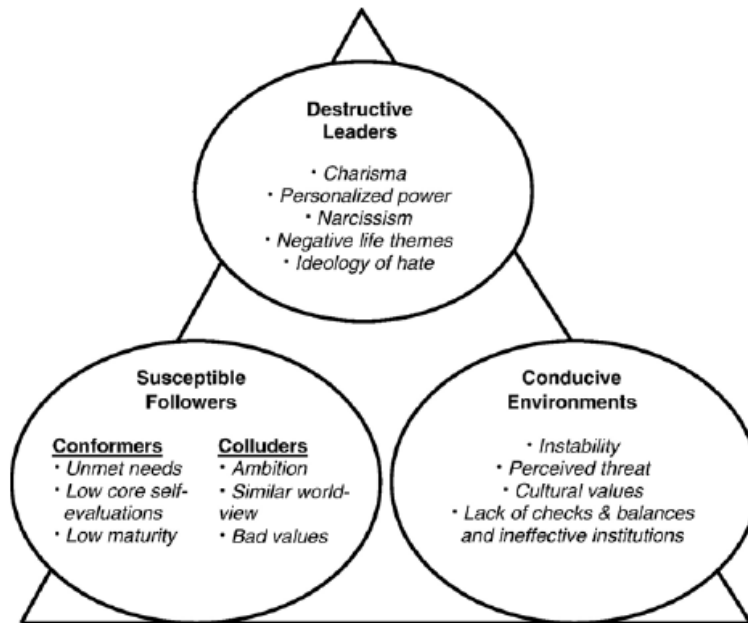
Hu and Liu (2017) looked specifically at understanding the antecedents to sustained abusive supervisor behaviour, where attaining status and influence was the key motivation behind the negative behaviour. It was found that where leaders had a higher social dominance orientation (SDO), there was an increased likelihood of them engaging in abusive supervisor behaviour due to their greater need to attain status which then allowed them to dominate others. The need to attain status is intensified when supervisors perceive a threat to their power (Hu and Liu, 2017).

Mehta and Maheshwari (2014) say that destructive behaviour is likely to occur when there are perceived threats to a leader's status and power which is likely to induce destructive leadership behaviour in vulnerable leaders. Leaders could also become addicted to the levels of control and power afforded to them in their position resulting in them resorting to destructive behaviours to hold onto such authority (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014).

2.2 Employee Engagement

In attempting to understand the concept of employee engagement on a deeper level, it is the studies of Kahn (1990) into the psychological conditions surrounding the levels of personal engagement at work that form the basis of all subsequent studies into employee workplace engagement. Kahn found that three psychological conditions explain how people either feel free to express themselves (on a cognitive, emotional and physical level) in the workplace or are more likely to disengage based on their experiences on a psychological level, namely, meaningfulness, safety and availability. These three conditions together shape the manner in which employees inhabit their work roles. Khan maintained that people either chose to express themselves or withdraw based on three questions around these conditions. These are "1) How meaningful is it for me to bring myself into this performance? 2) How safe is it to do so? and 3) How available am I to do so?" (Kahn, 1990, p. 703). Kahn says that if people found meaning in their work and had a strong sense of safety and availability, they are more likely to be express their preferred selves and be more personally engaged in the workplace (Kahn, 1990).

Rather than focussing on how to arrive at a state of engagement, Wollard and Shuck (2011) attempted to identify the specific antecedents to employee engagement as a means of developing a more engaged workforce. Individual and organisational level antecedents were identified with 21 antecedents each identified at both levels and with no overlapping between levels, as illustrated in the figure below. Of the 21 antecedents identified at the individual level, 11 are supported by empirical evidence while 13 organisational level antecedents are supported by some sort of empirical evidence (Wollard & Shuck, 2011). The implications of the research were that antecedents were not process dependent and organisations need to carefully research and understand all 42 antecedents identified across the two categories, as well as ensure the necessary processes are in place, if they are to develop the knowledge required to effectively develop a culture that supports an engaged workforce (Wollard & Shuck, 2011).

Figure 2: Individual-level and organizational-level antecedents of employee engagement (Wollard & Shuck, 2011)

a. Denotes antecedent with empirical evidence

Individual Antecedents to Employee Engagement	Organizational Antecedents to Employee Engagement
Absorption[a]	Authentic corporate culture[a]
Available to engage	Clear expectations[a]
Coping style	Corporate social responsibility[a]
Curiosity	Encouragement
Dedication[a]	Feedback
Emotional fit	Hygiene factors
Employee motivation	Job characteristics[a]
Employee/work/family status	Job control
Feelings of choice & control	Job fit[a]
Higher levels of corporate citizenship[a]	Leadership
Involvement in meaningful work[a]	Level of task challenge[a]
Link individual and organizational goals[a]	Manager expectations[a]
Optimism	Manager self-efficacy[a]
Perceived organizational support[a]	Mission and vision
Self-esteem, self efficacy	Opportunities for learning
Vigor[a]	Perception of workplace safety[a]
Willingness to direct personal energies	Positive workplace climate[a]
Work/life balance[a]	Rewards[a]
Core self evaluation[a]	Supportive organizational culture[a]
Value Congruence[a]	Talent management
Perceived Organizational Support[a]	Use of strengths[a]

2.2.1 Defining Employee Engagement

Kompaso and Sridevi (2010) mention that, currently, a single acceptable, concrete definition of employee engagement does not exist, however, it is generally accepted that it involves a two-way relationship between the subordinate and leader with certain expectations of both parties. Kumar and Pansari (2015, p. 68) define employee engagement as a "multidimensional construct that comprises all of the different facets of the attitudes and behaviours of employees towards the organization while the definition by Shuck and Wollard (2010) says that employee engagement is "an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural state directed toward desired organizational outcomes" (Shuck & Wollard, 2010, p. 103).

In order to reach a clearer definition of employee engagement, Shuck (2011) identified four widely cited, popular perspectives of the concept, the first of which was Khan's (1990) "need satisfying" perspective discussed above. The next approach identified was Maslach et al.'s (2001) "burnout-antithesis approach" which looked the relationship between employee engagement and burnout (Shuck, 2011). With this approach burnout was thought to erode engagement, leading to work that was once considered

pleasurable being viewed as meaningless due to exhaustion, cynicism, and ineffectiveness.

The third approach to understanding employee engagement was identified as the widely cited Harter et al.'s (2002) "satisfaction-engagement approach" based on the positive psychology framework that looked at engagement as a function of how satisfied and enthusiastic an employee was about their job. The fourth and final approach identified by Shuck (2011) was Saks's (2006) "multidimensional approach" which was the first model to suggest the possibility that employees experience different states of engagement, on a job and organisational level. Shuck (2011) emphasized that while no single one of these approaches has dominated the development of a definition of employee engagement over the years, it is Maslach et al.'s (2001) "burnout-antithesis approach" that has been the most widely cited in literature on the topic (Shuck, 2011).

2.2.2 The Consequences of Reduced Employee Engagement

While numerous studies exist attempting to the concept of employee engagement and its various constructs, the importance of understanding the implications of reduced employee engagement is often ignored and not effectively quantified by researchers and organisations. Macey and Schneider (2008) imply that the importance of understanding employee engagement is in the fact that at least one HR consulting firm has found that it drives a higher bottom line due to the fact that engaged employees exhibit increased productivity, experience increased job satisfaction, are more likely to reach higher sales targets and increased customer satisfaction and less likely to exhibit turnover intentions (Macey and Schneider, 2008). These findings are supported by Kumar and Pansari (2015) who say that increased levels of employee engagement are positively related to increased profitability growth and that measuring employee engagement can reveal areas for development and improvement for each employee.

Kompaso and Sridevi (2010) echo these sentiments by saying that increased employee engagement results in increased organisational performance due to the emotional connection that employees feel to their jobs and their organisation. If employees are enthusiastic about their job and employer, they will go the extra mile to ensure organisational success beyond what is expected of them. Wollard (2011) estimates that between 50% to 70% of workers are not engaged and that the failure of organisations to effectively measure and address disengagement often results in negative economic

consequences for the organisation, not just because employees are less productive but also because of the high monetary costs associated with employee turnover. Companies able to maintain high levels of employee engagement are also likely to achieve revenues that are up to 40% higher than companies with lower engagement levels due to the greater levels of effort and productivity demonstrated by employees (Herman, Olivo, & Gioia, 2003).

Other statistics indicate that increased employee turnover due to reduced engagement often results in separation, recruitment and training costs that can reach up to 200% of the former employee's salary (Wollard, 2011). Organisations also suffer in difficult economic times from the substandard work produced by employees who are disengaged and want to leave but cannot find other work. Disengaged employees could also resort to fraud and theft within the organisation and deviant property and production behaviours such as increased absenteeism and taking long breaks, all of which negatively affects an organisation's bottom line (Wollard, 2011).

2.3 Women in the Workplace

Women in the workplace constantly face numerous challenges in trying to achieve career success including inequality in terms of career advancement and wage gaps, discrimination, and harassment. These inequalities are expected to persist in the future unless issues of diversity and employee perceptions of the status quo are addressed (Krivkovich, Robinson, Starikova, Valentino and Yee, 2017). It is imperative for organisations to effectively address the challenges faced by female employees as it would be impossible for them to achieve sustainable growth by ignoring 50% of the global workforce (Badal, 2014).

2.3.1 Women and Workplace Incivility

Defined as "low intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect" (Andersson and Pearson, 1999, p. 457), the issue of incivility in the workplace, particularly towards female employees has garnered little attention in modern psychological literature (Lewis and Orford, 2005), yet the consequences of such actions are often devastating for the victims on a psychological, social and emotional level.

Reio, Jr. and Sanders-Reio (2011) point out the negative consequences of workplace abuse to be reduced job satisfaction, organisational commitment, job performance and even physical health, all of which could have detrimental effects on overall organisational financial performance. The health impairing effects of workplace bullying are supported by Park and Ono (2017), who found that workplace bullying led to both reduced workplace engagement as well as stress-related health problems due to the fact that the bullying increased employees' feeling of job insecurity.

Incivility could also stifle the creativity of employees, resulting in increased employee turnover and could even damage customer relationships when customers witness an act of rudeness against either another customer or another employee that is likely to ruin the reputation of the brand (Porath & Pearson, 2013). Just about all victims of workplace incivility react to their experiences in a negative way, and with up to 98% of workers reporting experiencing uncivil behaviour at work, this consistently chips away at the organisational bottom line (Porath & Pearson, 2013). Examples of workplace incivility include speaking to others in a belittling manner, making inappropriate remarks, and not listening to the opinions of others (Pearson & Porath, 2009).

From a supervisor incivility perspective, Reio, Jr. and Sanders-Reio (2011) found that the most frequent uncivil supervisor behaviours reported included "paying little attention to your opinion, neglecting to turn off their cell phones, doubting your professional judgment, not giving you credit when it was due, and talking behind your back" (Reio, Jr. and Sanders-Reio, 2011, p. 470). Linking back to the work of Kahn (1990) in terms of the various constructs of engagement, Reio, Jr. and Sanders-Reio (2011) found that while both supervisor and co-worker incivility negatively affected feelings of safety and availability, supervisor incivility more strongly affected availability engagement.

In seeking to understand the various constructs of workplace incivility, Schilpzand, De Pater and Erez (2016) identified three types of workplace incivility which were each distinct yet interrelated, namely, "experienced, witnessed and instigated incivility" (Schilpzand, De Pater and Erez, p. 66). Experienced incivility looks specifically at the feelings and behaviours of employees who have directly been the target of incivil workplace occurrences, whereas instigated incivility focusses on the instigators of workplace incivility in terms of its antecedents and outcomes (Schilpzand, De Pater & Erez, 2016). Witnessed incivility looks at the perspectives of incivility from the viewpoint of those that witness the incivility taking place. The research undertaken will specifically

focus on the construct of understanding experienced incivility from the perspective of women in the workplace.

Looking specifically at the effect of incivility on female employees, MacIntosh, Wuest, Gray and Aldous (2010) say that women who are bullied in the workplace cannot continue to work as they did before and instead follow a four-step process by which to cope with the bullying while continuing to work called "Doing Work Differently". The first step of the process was termed "Being Conciliatory" whereby women either used peace making tactics to manage the situation or attempted to avoid the bully.

Stage 2 was called "Reconsidering" and occurred when female victims realised that being conciliatory was not working in helping them continue with their work and they thus had to reconsider their responses to the bullying e.g. confront the bully. They then moved on to Stage 3 "Reducing Interference" which involves the women taking active measures to reduce the impact of the bullying. Finally, stage 4 "Redeveloping Balance" "is a process of re-establishing or redefining relationships to work and workplaces and finding how to harmonize work life with family and social life such that work no longer dominates" (MacIntosh, Wuest, Gray and Aldous, 2010, p. 924). At this stage of the process women ore usually on leave from work or have quit their jobs to permanently escape the bullying. Webster, Brough and Daly (2016) found that the most common coping mechanisms employed by most employees, regardless of gender, include assertively confronting the destructive leader, seeking support from colleagues, family and friends on a social level, constantly reflecting and thinking about the situation, taking leave to avoid the abuse and eventually leaving the organization (Webster, Brough and Daly, 2016). Erikson, Shaw and Agabe (2007) looked into how being the recipient of bad leadership made employees feel and found that the most common feelings noted were anger; lowered self-esteem; frustration and wanting to leave the organisation.

Brotheridge and Lee (2010) looked at the differences in how men and women emotionally respond to workplace bullying and found that whereas men employed more active coping strategies in the face of abusive behaviour, women were more passive in their coping strategies. For example, men would automatically regulate their emotions by attempting to directly reduce feelings of sadness whereas women would look at using positive emotions to decrease negative feelings such as sadness e.g. looking on the bright side of a bad situation (Brotheridge and Lee, 2010). The study found that for women, "being belittled by others significantly predicted increased confusion, having one's work undermined significantly predicted reduced happiness and increased

restlessness, and verbal abuse predicted sadness, restlessness, anger, and feeling confused" (Brotheridge and Lee, 2010, p. 694).

Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta and Magley (2013) looked at workplace incivility from a different angle, focussing on sexism, racism and ageism as modern manifestations of workplace incivility. It was found that gender and race rather than age contributed to a vulnerability towards workplace incivility with women reporting a greater vulnerability to workplace incivility than men. A strong interaction between gender and race contributed to stronger feelings of incivility so that it was women of colour who reported the worst cases of incivility in the workplace compared to men of colour and Caucasians of either gender (Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta and Magley, 2013). The study reported negative consequences for employee turnover intentions as a result of the reported incivility.

2.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature has revealed that numerous theories and approaches have been developed over the years to explain the requirements of effective leadership (Shaw, Erikson and Harvey, 2011), yet the ultimate purpose of an effective leader is to successfully coordinate collective efforts in order to achieve shared goals (Yukl, 2012), with today's complex business environment requiring leaders to successfully adapt to the constant change while encouraging employees to seek opportunities in the challenges faced (Morgan, 2013). The consequence of effective leadership is an organisation that is thriving and succeeding, however, when leadership fails in this regard, and is actually a destructive force in achieving these goals, this could result in misery for subordinates (Hogan and Kaiser, 2005).

The study of destructive leadership and its effects has only recently become a subject of research interest (Chua and Murray, 2015), however attempts to define destructive leadership behaviours and traits have found that destructive leaders typically exhibit negative behaviours such as autocratic behaviour; poor ethics/integrity; poor interpersonal behaviour; etc (Erikson, Shaw and Agabe, 2007). The ability of destructive leadership to continue to thrive in modern organisations has been attributed to the consequences of the confluence of destructive leaders, vulnerable followers and an environment that promotes harmful behaviour that makes destructive leadership possible (Padilla, Hogan and Kaiser, 2007) and is often driven by the need for leaders to

gain or hold onto status, power and influence (Hu and Liu, 2017; Mehta and Maheshwari, 2014).

One of the main consequences of destructive leadership is its erosion effect on the engagement levels of employees, with reduced engagement seen to negatively affect the financial performance of organisations (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Kompaso & Sridevi, 2010; Wollard, 2011; Kumar & Pansari, 2015). While no concrete definition of employee engagement currently exists (Kompaso and Sridevi, 2010), it is generally accepted to refer to employee's cognitive, emotional and behavioural states in the workplace (Shuck & Wollard, 2010) and embodies constructs including "employee satisfaction, employee identification, employee commitment, employee loyalty and employee performance" (Kumar and Pansari, 2015, p. 68).

In the case of women in the workplace, incivility often results in feelings of sadness, anger, and confusion (Brotheridge & Lee, 2010) and increased turnover intentions (Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta and Magley, 2013). However, the full effects of incivility in the form of destructive leadership on the employee engagement levels of female employees has not fully been explored, nor has the perceptions of destructive leaders from the viewpoint of female employees, resulting in a gap in the literature that would require further research exploration.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the literature review conducted in the previous chapter, the research will attempt to answer the following questions:

Research Question 1

What are the behaviours exhibited by bosses, that lead to them being perceived as destructive leaders by female employees?

Research Question 1 will focus on gaining an understanding of female workers' experiences with a boss whose actions were considered as destructive in an attempt to identify the specific behavioural actions and personality traits that were deemed destructive in some way in the eyes of the female employee.

Research Question 2

How do female employees react to destructive leadership behaviour?

The aim of Research Question 2 is to understand the general and varying ways in which female employees react to the destructive behaviour exhibited by leaders in the workplace.

Research Question 3

How does destructive leadership behaviour affect female employee engagement?

The aim of Research Question 3 is to understand how the experience of working for a destructive boss, the negative actions and behaviours exhibited by the boss and the feelings this led to affected the various constructs of the female participant's employee engagement, namely, employee performance, satisfaction, identification, loyalty and commitment.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1   Research Methodology and Design

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the overall research methodology followed in this exploratory, qualitative study. Firstly, the research philosophy reflected in the research was that of interpretivism. Research reflecting interpretivism usually involves conducting research amongst people (Saunders and Tosey, 2013), and as the focus of the research was to gather insights into the way women define and react to destructive bosses, interpretivism was reflected in the research philosophy. An inductive research approach was followed that involved observing patterns and repeated occurrences of behaviours exhibited by destructive bosses and the resultant responses of women, and then investigating a number of research questions around these observations in order to reach a conclusion.

As mentioned, the purpose of the research design was exploratory research. Van Wyk (2012) suggests that exploratory research is relevant when the research is addressing a subject of which very little is known and minimal research has been carried out. As the issue of the negative traits of leadership is a fairly recent area of interest in research and its impact on employee engagement has not fully been explored, an exploratory research design was most appropriate.

The research involved conducting in depth interviews with women in order to gain insights into their experiences with destructive bosses and their responses from an employee engagement perspective. The methodological choice followed was that of a mono method qualitative design as it involved a single data collection technique (Saunders and Tosey, 2013). As the research was based on data collected at just a particular point in time (a snapshot) during the interviews conducted, a cross sectional research design was followed (Saunders and Lewis, 2012).

4.2 Population

The population relevant in the study was every woman who has worked for a boss whose actions were perceived as being destructive in the eyes of the woman concerned. The

study focussed on professional, female knowledge workers with at least three years of professional work experience.

4.3 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis was the woman's perception of the destructive boss and how it affected their employee engagement in the workplace.

4.4 Sampling Method and Size

Non-probability sampling techniques were used to conduct the research as there was no sampling frame i.e. a complete, exhaustive list of the total population of female employees who had experienced a destructive boss could not be obtained, therefore the sample could not be selected from the population randomly. Two types of non-probability sampling techniques were used, namely, purposive sampling as well as snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is conducted when judgement is used on the part of the researcher in order to select the individual participants who will be most appropriate in helping answer the proposed questions around the research, ultimately allowing the objectives of the research to be effectively met (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). The type of purposive sampling employed was typical case sampling, whereby the women selected in the sample were typical and representative of the population. i.e. had experienced a destructive boss. Referrals from participants and peers constituted the snowball sampling technique.

In terms of the sample size to be interviewed, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016) recommend that where the aim is to understand common themes in the data within a homogenous group, twelve in depth interviews would likely be enough to recognize the main themes within the data till the point of data saturation is reached. However, if data saturation is not reached at the point of twelve interviews, further interviews may be required. A total sample size of fifteen women across diverse industries, ages and race groups was thus interviewed to ensure a thorough understanding of destructive bosses and their effect on the employee engagement of women was achieved.

4.5 Measurement Instrument

The measurement instrument utilised was that of semi structured interviews. The semi structured interview included an interview guideline that allowed for a degree of flexibility in questioning and gaining insights into the experiences of the women interviewed with destructive bosses. In alignment with the research questions, the questions in the questionnaire schedule firstly focussed on understanding the behavioural and personality traits of the bosses concerned, that were perceived to be destructive by the woman interviewed. The next question included in the questionnaire involved asking participants how they reacted to the destructive behaviour described in the previous question.

Participants were then asked to rate if working for a destructive boss caused each overall dimension of their employee engagement as, defined by Kumar and Pansari (2015, p. 68) i.e. "employee satisfaction; employee identification; employee commitment; employee loyalty and employee performance" to increase, decrease or remain the same. The final part of the questionnaire asked each participant to utilise a Likert scale to rate from 1-7 how different constructs under each of the five dimensions of employee engagement were affected by the behaviour of the destructive boss. The different constructs rated were derived from Kumar and Panasari's (2015) Engagement Scorecard below.

Figure 3: Employee Engagement Scorecard (Kumar and Pansari, 2015)

	EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION	EMPLOYEE IDENTIFICATION	EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT	EMPLOYEE LOYALTY	EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE
Number of items:	5	7	3	3	2
Items used to measure the concept	• Receives recognition for a job • Feels close to people at work • Feels good about working at this company • Feels secure about job • Believes that the management is concerned about employees	• Proud to tell others about employment • Feels a sense of ownership • Feels a sense of pride • Views the success of the brand as his own • Treats organization like family • Says "we" rather than "they" • Feels like it's a personal compliment when the brand is praised	• Commitment to deliver the brand promise increases along with knowledge of the brand • Very committed to delivering the brand promise • Feels like the organization has a great deal of personal meaning	• Content to spend the rest of his/her career in this organization • Does not have intention to change to another organization • Intention to stay is driven by competency in delivering the brand promise	• Performance in the last appraisal exceeded expectations • Believes there is increased opportunity for improved performance in this organization

A score of 1 on the Likert scale indicated a strong positive effect of the destructive behaviour described on the specific construct of employee engagement measured, whereas a score of 2-3 reflected a positive effect. A score 4 indicated no significant effect was experienced whereas a score of 5-6 indicated a negative effect occurred. Finally, a score of 7 was reflective of a strong negative effect. The interview guideline containing all the questions asked is included in Appendix 2.

4.6 Data Validity

The usability of the measurement instrument was ensured by conducting two pilot interviews prior to the actual data gathering process taking place. Bell (2014) suggests that the interview schedule being used be piloted in order to effectively test the duration of the interview, to ensure that there is no confusion or ambiguity around the questions and instructions included in the questionnaire and to allow items that do not contribute to the sound gathering of data to be removed. The following questions, as suggested by Bell (2014), were posed to the respondents at the end of the pilot interviews in order to ensure that all "bugs" were eliminated from the questionnaire prior to the actual data gathering interviews being conducted:

- Were any of the questions unclear or confusing? If so, will you say which and why?
- Did you object to answering any of the questions or did you feel any question was inappropriate?
- In your opinion, has any major topic related to the research been not been covered in the questions asked?
- Do you have any comments?

Slight adjustments where then made to the interview guideline after the pilot interviews were conducted to reflect the feedback received. The final interview guideline in Shown in Appendix 2.

4.7 Data Gathering Process

The data collection tool utilised was that of semi structured interviews. Semi structured interviews are usually associated with a qualitative research approach and involves the researcher covering a list of questions, related to various themes, with the interviewee, with the possibility of the themes and questions changing per interview i.e. the order of the questions may be changed or certain questions may be omitted depending on the organisational context of the discussion (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). Semi structured interviews thus allowed both flexibility and a degree of structure in understanding the perception of bad bosses and their effect on employee engagement from the viewpoint of the sample of women interviewed.

The data gathering process commenced once ethical clearance to proceed with the research was received from the relevant bodies. The letter of ethical clearance is available in Appendix 4. Data gathering involved the semi structured interviews being conducted on a one on one basis with each female employee interviewed. As per Saunders and Lewis (2012), with semi structured interviews a list of topics and set of questions is usually covered with the interview participant, however the questions do not necessarily follow a set order and were asked depending on the responses received from the participants. Benefits of utilising the semi structured interview included that the wording of the questions could be modified as deemed appropriate by the interviewer and inappropriate questions could be omitted and additional questions added, allowing for greater flexibility in the interviewing process (van Teijlingen, 2014).

A total of 15 semi structured interviews were conducted, with each interview session being scheduled for a duration of one hour. However, the interviews varied in time, depending on the person interviewed, with the longest interview lasting 58 minutes and the shortest 25 minutes. Participants received the interview questionnaire ahead of the session in order to ensure adequate preparation prior to the interview. The interviews were scheduled to take place at a location that was convenient for the participant with interviews taking place at participants' homes, places of work, study as well as coffee shops. All interviews conducted were recorded on an audio device, with permission granted by each participant, and detailed hand-written notes were taken at each interview to support the accurate gathering of data.

Participants were contacted either in person or by email to set up the interview and each interview began with the researcher providing the interviewee with a brief overview of the topic to be discussed. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their personal identities as well as of the data gathered. Each participant was provided with both an invitation to participate in the research (available in Appendix 1) as well as a letter of informed consent to sign (provided in Appendix 3) and was informed of their rights regarding the interview as well as of the responsibilities of the researcher and the purpose of the research being conducted. As per Bell (2014), it was made clear to each participant that approval to conduct the research was granted and each participant was informed of who will be viewing the data gathered as well as what is to become of the data on completion of the research.

4.8 Analysis Approach

The recorded data gathered was listened to as frequently as necessary to effectively identify the key patterns, themes and trends evident in the data which was then used as a basis for the categorisation and coding of the data. Coding was captured on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and involved the identification of themes evident in the data and the clustering of constructs around these themes. As proposed by Saunders and Lewis (2012), the following process was followed in analysing and looking for patterns in the qualitative data gathered: 1) create appropriate categories and related subcategories in order to accurately represent the data gathered from the interviews; 2) choose a relevant unit of data to attach to each category; 3) attach the data to the categories accordingly.

The process for Research Question 1 involved identifying different categories of perceived destructive leadership behaviours and their related sub categories. Frequency tables of the various constructs per category and subcategory were then created over a number of iterations to identify the most commonly recurring categories and themes. A similar process was followed in the analysis of Research Question 2, where the various ways in which participants reacted to the destructive leadership behaviour were clustered into different categories and ranked via frequency tables to identify the main patterns of behaviour over a number of iterations. The final findings for Research Questions 1 and 2 were then reviewed in collaboration with a registered industrial psychologist in order to ensure accuracy and relevancy in the creation of codes and the clustering of data. The process of analysis for Research Question 3 involved utilising a frequency analysis to identify the most common responses received regarding the effects of working for a destructive boss across each dimension of employee engagement analysed.

4.9 Research Limitations

The research was subject to a number of limitations based on both the research methodology followed as well as the scope of the research undertaken.

- The preliminary nature of qualitative research often necessitates the need for additional research to be carried out, usually in the form of quantitative research, which allows for further insights around the research subject topic to be gained (Saunders & Lewis, 2012)
- The use of non-probability sampling techniques means that every individual member of the relevant population does not stand a fair and equal chance of being chosen to be a part of the study, therefore the results will not be a statistical representation of the population (Saunders and Lewis, 2012) and one cannot generalise beyond the sample due to the validity of the data being compromised
- Qualitative interviews are subject to the biases and shortcomings of the researcher conducting the interviews
- Purposive sampling is judgemental by nature and thus subject to bias
- Biases are also likely to occur in exploratory research due to its subjective nature

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the data gathering and analysis processes that were carried out by means of in depth, one-on-one interviews with fifteen professional women followed by a thematic content analysis of the data. The results presented aim to answer the three research questions highlighted in Chapter 3 which were, in turn, informed by the literature review on destructive leadership and employee engagement presented in Chapter 2.

5.2 Description of the Sample

A total sample of 15 women who had experienced working for a destructive boss were interviewed. Each woman was a knowledge worker, at various levels of seniority within their organisations (from junior level to senior management), with at least three years of professional work experience. The women ranged from between 26 to 45 years of age and the racial split of the sample was five white women, six Indian women and four black women. Six of the women interviewed worked for a destructive boss that was male while nine perceived destructive bosses were of the female gender. Both judgement and snowballing sampling techniques were used to identify suitable interview participants. Snowball sampling constituted referrals from both interview participants and peers who were aware of women who were working, or had previously worked, for a boss whose behaviour was deemed as being destructive. As summary of the 15 research participants is available in Appendix 5.

5.3 Presentation of Results

The results of the research undertaken are presented per research question highlighted in Chapter 3 and are based on the responses received from the 15 in depth, semi-structured interviews carried out using the interview guideline in Appendix 2.

5.4 Results for Research Question 1

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: What are the behaviours exhibited by bosses, that lead to them being perceived as destructive leaders by female employees?

The aim of Research Question 1 was to understand the specific behavioural traits and actions exhibited by the participant's boss that led to the participant viewing the boss as being destructive, negative and harmful to the well-being of the participant as an employee, fellow employees or the department or organisation as a whole. In line with this, the questions in the interview guideline pertaining to this research question focussed on understanding the negative experience of the participant with the boss in question. Participants were asked to provide detailed accounts of their negative experience with the boss as well as details around the behavioural traits and actions exhibited by the boss that were viewed in a negative light.

5.4.1 The Behavioural Traits of Destructive Bosses

The questions around the behavioural traits of destructive bosses yielded 127 different constructs, which were then categorised into six distinct behavioural categories. These categories were then further split into relevant subcategories. The six behavioural categories identified were abusive; managerial incompetence; arrogant; insecure, manipulative and intolerant. Frequency tables were then used to rank the number of constructs within each subcategory and the findings were reviewed by a registered industrial psychologist to ensure the accurate grouping of the various constructs. A complete list of all 127 identified constructs together with their various groupings and frequencies is available in the Appendix 6. The overall split of the 127 constructs is highlighted in the table below.

Table 2: List of Destructive Behavioural Traits and Related Number of Constructs

Category	Number of Constructs
Abusive	49
Manipulative	33
Managerial Incompetence	21
Arrogant	13

Intolerant	7
Insecure	4

5.4.1.1 Abusive

The bulk of the behavioural constructs identified (49) fell into the "abusive" category which was then split into five subcategories, namely, bullying; made me feel incompetent; made me feel unimportant; unsupportive and unfair. Bullying behaviour by the bosses in question was the largest category, containing 18 of the 49 identified abusive constructs.

Table 3: List of Abusive Behavioural Traits and Related Number of Constructs

Rank	Theme	Number of Constructs
1	Bullying	18
2	Made me feel incompetent	12
2	Made me feel unimportant	12
4	Unsupportive	5
5	Unfair	2

Abusive Behavioural Traits (Bullying)

The most frequently cited behaviour within the bullying category was that bosses tended to treat employees as objects and "a means to an end" rather than as human beings in order to get things done in the workplace, with seven participants emphasising this as being destructive behaviour. The main driver behind this was thought to be that bosses wanted to look good in the eyes of their own bosses, with comments around this including, "he never stood up for what was right. It was always, if the boss liked something then that's what you would do even if it has a negative impact on the rest of the team. As long as he looked good in his boss's eyes he was fine." "His mentality was not, I am leading the team so I need to look after the team and help them. His mentality was I am the leader on the project and I need to ensure that everything on the project gets done and people are just a function of the project deliverables. It was like he just thought he managed the project, not the team. It was all about operational delivery".

Six participants also felt bullied by the fact that their bosses constantly clock watched employees to the point where they were afraid to take lunch breaks and felt intimidated to the point where they were afraid to leave their desks for fear of being reprimanded, with participants saying "even though she was never there, she started clock watching the team to make sure we were always there" and "I was told that in Treasury we don't take lunch breaks. In the last four years I took a lunch break maybe 20 times and when she sees that I have taken a lunch break, when I get back my email is flooded with tasks from her that I need to complete." Ranked joint second, with six mentions, was bosses being rude and humiliating employees in front of their co-workers by speaking to them in a disrespectful manner, especially in team meetings. Another significant way that bosses tended to bully participants was by making it difficult for them to take leave of any kind, be it annual, sick or religious leave. One participant went as far as lodging a complaint with her HR department who subsequently called a hearing with her and her boss after her boss initially approved her sick leave, then asked her to log it as annual leave a few months later. Some bosses even tried to sabotage the leave of employees, with one participant saying, "you had to beg and justify why you want to take leave and then she would sabotage you on the day you are meant to leave by suddenly asking for a whole lot of work." Destructive bosses were also described as "adult bullies" who constantly broke participants down with one participant saying "I felt like I was in an abusive relationship that I couldn't get out of."

Abusive Behavioural Traits (Made Me Feel Incompetent)

The second subcategory within the "abusive" category, containing twelve constructs, was "made me feel incompetent" in which participants described all the ways in which their bosses made them feel like they did not know what they were doing and were incompetent at their jobs. For example, one participant said that "he called me into his office every single day to tell me what I've done wrong and never gave me a chance to defend myself or give my side of the story. For example, he would say things like "the way you responded in that meeting to that question was really immature, you should have done it like that." But when I asked other people afterwards if they agreed with what he said, they would say no, you handled the situation really well."

The most commonly recurring theme within this category was that employees felt that their destructive bosses constantly nit-picked at their work and were hyper critical, picking on petty things like "the look and feel of documents rather than the content" and

making them do unnecessary rework, to the point that the employees felt like everything they did was wrong and began questioning their own competence. Participants said, "he would nit-pick and try to find fault with everything, which is fine, but it wasn't constructive. It was always in a manner that was very destructive and undermining and petty." "He was so influential that he made me feel like I didn't know what I was talking about. He could convince you to the point where you question your own beliefs and intelligence." "We were working on a deal and I had done all the valuations which were correct but he nit-picked at it for four hours only to end up with the same result." "You could write the most brilliant report but she wouldn't be happy with it because you used the word "because" rather than "however.""

Abusive Behavioural Traits (Made Me Feel Unimportant)

The third subcategory, also containing twelve constructs was the "made me feel unimportant" subcategory which highlights the ways in which the destructive bosses made employees feel like they didn't matter and their opinions were of no value in the work environment. Almost all respondents said that this was done by completely disregarding and belittling their opinions and contributions in the workplace. When they shared their contributions they were dismissed, undermined and belittled by their bosses to the point where they felt they added no value and were of no importance to the functioning of their teams and business units. One participant said, "I closed the two biggest deals the company ever closed, and are ever likely to close, and I was told by my boss, thank you for coordinating." Destructive bosses also made participants feel unimportant by dismissing them, not listening to them and speaking over them with one participant saying, "I would go to him to ask him to review my work and he would have absolutely no time for me. He just spoke over me" and "instead of just taking five minutes to listen to me, I had to set up a 30-minute meeting just to get his attention."

Abusive Behavioural Traits (Unsupportive)

The "unsupportive" subcategory contained five constructs and highlights the ways in which employees felt that their destructive bosses were not supportive of their career growth with the majority of participants saying that their bosses actively blocked their career growth by not allowing their applications for internal positions to progress, not supporting their studies and not allowing them to job shadow other roles they were interested in. One participant said "instead of having a conversation about my study leave with me and trying to come to a compromise, she contacted HR and I was told that

I didn't have enough leave for my studies and I have two options, I could either take unpaid leave or stop my studies. She even ordered an audit on all my leave including study, sick and vacation leave," while another said, "I couldn't study because me taking time off and being out of the office was inconvenient for her."

Abusive Behavioural Traits (Unfair)

The abusive category was rounded out with the "unfair" subcategory, with two constructs, where employees felt that bosses actively practised favouritism amongst certain employees or did things they didn't allow their subordinates to do like take personal phone calls and leave work early if they had an emergency. One participant said "my boss left the office for all sorts of reasons yet when a colleague had a crisis with her child at school and needed to leave early my boss told her to put in half a day's leave."

5.4.1.2 Manipulative

The second largest behavioural category identified was "manipulative" with 33 different constructs which were then grouped into three subcategories, immoral, deceptive and controlling. Immoral behaviour was the largest subcategory containing 18 of the 33 constructs.

Table 4: List of Manipulative Behavioural Traits and Related Number of Constructs

Rank	Theme	Number of Constructs
1	Immoral	18
2	Controlling	8
3	Deceptive	7

Manipulative Behavioural Traits (Immoral)

The most recurring pattern under the immoral subcategory, with eight mentions, was that perceived destructive bosses manipulated the performance scores of employees without any constructive reasoning or feedback behind it. They did not provide any regular

feedback to employees on areas for improvement during the year, leading employees to believe that they were doing a good job. Even where employees could prove that they performed well, their bosses would still capture poor performance ratings on the system, with one participant saying, "for the past four years my boss has ensured that I do not receive a performance bonus because since she was in charge of my scores and she stopped conducting performance review conversations with me. If I rated myself highly I had to write a long motivation explaining why and she would still put down my scores." Another participant said "in my performance reviews I was told I should be grateful for the average rating he gave me despite me pulling all the weight on the team, including his."

Four employees also mentioned that their boss's bad behaviour was enabled by them ensuring that they had the support of certain people within the team who they always treated well for this reason, with one participant saying, "my boss was really hard on his five direct senior reports, yet he was extremely lenient to the lower levels because he wanted them to like him. He felt if he had the support of the masses then five people didn't matter." Another participant said, "she tried to get the people of colour on her side, because she knew if things went wrong they would help her more." Four women also mentioned that they were aware of their bosses speaking negatively about them to others behind their backs, as they were informed by colleagues that this was occurring. Four women also mentioned that their bosses withheld important information from them so that they were unable to efficiently get their work done and thus made them look like they were not doing a good job, with one participant saying, "it reached a point where he withheld information and expected me to deliver so that I would be set up for failure," and another saying, "with any new initiatives, you are only given a portion of the information to get it done so you are bound for failure."

Manipulative Behavioural Traits (Controlling)

In the "controlling" subcategory, containing eight constructs, four participants said that their bosses constantly tried to control people and situations to their own benefit with comments like, "She tried to control my whole life. You had to run everything in your life past her. You couldn't even book a holiday without asking her" and "if he couldn't control me, it was an issue. He had to control everything including the manner in which I had to behave, and the meetings I attended." Another participant said, "it was like he used to dangle a carrot in front of a donkey in order to control people." It was also mentioned four times that participants felt their bosses "expected them to just do, not think," rather

than actually giving them the chance to add the value they wanted to add. Two participants mentioned that their bosses needed to constantly be aware of their every movement, while two said that they were not allowed to interact with people outside of their immediate team without their boss's permission, and if they did, they had to report back to their bosses on what was discussed.

Manipulative Behavioural Traits (Deceptive)

The final subcategory within the "manipulative" behaviour category, containing seven constructs, is the "deceptive" subcategory and highlights the fact that deceptive bosses said one thing to their employees yet did something entirely different. Examples include, "she would say one thing but then project something else. For example, she would ask for feedback then get offended when I tell her that the team doesn't like being micromanaged. Then if anything goes wrong, she would blame me and say that I told her not to micromanage and look what happened." "She would say you can take a lunch break and answer your personal calls but as soon as you do it the reigns are pulled back." Their actions therefore were not aligned with what they communicated to employees.

Deceptive bosses also passed off the ideas of their employees as their own, often after dismissing the idea from the employee when mentioned. "I often made lots of suggestions for improvements, but because I wasn't at a post high enough to be in meetings with "important" people, she would pass off my ideas as her own." Deceptive bosses were also good actors and could convince you of anything with one participant mentioning that her boss was so convincing that it was impossible to argue with him, saying, "he could convince you that a black chair was red and you would agree when you are with him. Its only when you leave his office and start to think about it that you realise its actually black." Another participant said, "he would initially give you the impression that he was your friend, and then try to find your weakness and use it to break you down." Deceptive bosses were also effectively able to cover up their bad behaviour with one participant saying, "HR told me I needed proof of her behaviour, but she was so devious that when she sent emails she would set them up so that someone who didn't know her wouldn't know how devious she was being."

Managerial Incompetence

The third category of destructive behavioural traits identified was managerial incompetence in the form of a lack of people skills, technical skills as well as personality and behavioural deficits. Participants felt that the incompetence displayed by their bosses in these various ways were destructive to their own well-being, the well-being of their team members as well as to the performance, credibility and reputation of their business units. This category contained a total of 21 different identified constructs split as follows:

Table 5: List of Managerial Incompetence Traits and Related Number of Constructs

Rank	Theme	Number of Constructs
1	Technical Skills	8
2	People Skills	6
3	Personality	4
4	Behaviour	3

Managerial Incompetence (Technical Skills)

The first and largest subcategory, with eight identified constructs, was incompetence in terms of technical skills. Four employees felt that their bosses lacked the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively carry out their job duties and therefore often relied on them to assist in ensuring the work gets done correctly. "She was there for much longer than I was yet she didn't know the system, she didn't know excel and she didn't know the work, so she would send the work to me to do then she would copy and paste it and say it's hers." "She used to try to give me feedback on something she didn't understand. We were trying to set up a new organisation design division yet she had never done organisation design before." Bosses also displayed poor decision-making skills and could never quite deliver on what was expected of them with three employees saying that their bosses were so incompetent that the rest of the business viewed their entire business unit as being incompetent resulting in them losing credibility and damaging their reputation while also damaging the growth of the business. One employee mentioned that "she managed to destroy in one year what took eight years to build" while another said "she didn't understand her environment so she didn't deliver any real change, she just did superficial things." Yet another said, "because she didn't understand the business and didn't collaborate, our whole division got the reputation that we didn't understand the

business and we didn't collaborate. People in the rest of the business were then very reluctant to engage with us and we couldn't successfully execute on what we had to do as we were tainted by association."

Managerial Incompetence (People Skills)

In terms of a lack of people skills, all participants interviewed felt that their destructive bosses completely lacked the ability to communicate, interact with and effectively manage people, both at a subordinate and client level. "There was no understanding on his side that what he was communicating was not being received. In his mind he was communicating and whoever wasn't receiving his communication, that was their problem, it had absolutely nothing to do with him". Six participants also felt that their bosses failed to give them frequent and regular feedback and guidance concerning their performance, so they never had a clear view of where their performance might have been lacking and where they needed to improve. As a result, they were often blindsided by negative feedback given by their bosses during performance reviews with one participant saying "he was not engaging, he would just tell me to sort things out without telling me what to do or how to do it." Four participants mentioned their bosses' failings around promoting team work and collaboration, with one saying, "he created an environment that never fostered teamwork and collaboration as he never enabled the team, so everyone felt they were working in their own little box".

Managerial Incompetence (Personality)

From a personality deficit perspective, a lack of emotional intelligence (EQ) was mentioned ten times with employees saying that their bosses were completely devoid of empathy and had very low EQ, with one person saying "he lacked the EQ to deal with issues that came along." Four participants also felt that their bosses lacked self-insight and awareness so they couldn't recognise the fault in their behaviour and were "completely oblivious" to the harm they were causing. Comments included, "she had the discipline to complete a seven-year doctorate in clinical psychology yet she lacked the self-insight to realise that the way she was, was making things harder and worse." "In her bubble she believed that she was doing an amazing job. She could not see the harm that she was causing." Three participants also mentioned that their bosses came across as not being fully stable on a mental and emotional level while another three felt that their bosses were completely inflexible in their thoughts and ways of doing things with little willingness to adapt.

Finally, managerial incompetence in terms of behaviour most often manifested itself in erratic behaviour, which was mentioned four times, so that "you never knew what you were going to get" at any given time with the boss. "One day she would be friendly, the next day the complete opposite. "She would treat me so badly then send me a WhatsApp with a cute picture. You start questioning yourself and asking yourself if you are crazy." Two women interviewed also mentioned that their boss's boss was destructive and their boss in turn began mirroring those bad behaviours in order to win favour with their boss. A lack of accountability was also evident in the fact that two bosses were always late to work and never present to make crucial decisions. "Although we could work flexible hours, she would come in at nine thirty in the morning, walk around and drink coffee and chat to everyone, then take a two-hour lunchbreak, she would go cut her hair, go to the shops, go pick up her kids, eventually come back then leave at three thirty. She wasn't there when decisions needed to be made."

5.4.1.4 Arrogant

Table 6: List of Arrogant Behavioural Traits and Related Number of Constructs

Rank	Theme	Number of Constructs
1	Egotistical	8
2	Power Distance Tactics	5

The fourth main behavioural trait identified was "arrogant", containing 13 constructs, which was then split into two subcategories i.e. egotistical and power distance tactics, containing eight and five constructs respectively.

Arrogant (Egotistical)

The main egotistical behavioural trait identified by seven participants was the fact that destructive bosses felt that they always knew better and were always right. The term "narcissistic" was mentioned by six respondents and four respondents mentioned that these egotistical bosses did not like being questioned or challenged in any way, as they absolutely believed that their way was the only right way. They could also never admit

when they did not know something and their egos prevented them from asking for help. One participant said, "I had a face to face conversation with him and I told him that when you do this, it makes me feel like this and he could not see the fault in his ways and acknowledge what he did wrong. He just made it seem like I was being emotional and hysterical and should be able to control myself better." Another said, "his arrogance gets the better of him because he has a chip on his shoulder that no one is better than him. He doesn't like being challenged, questioned or outshone." Yet another said, "you had to do things her way, and if it was not done her way then it was done the wrong way."

Arrogant (Power Distance Tactics)

The power distance tactics subcategory, containing five constructs, emphasises how destructive bosses promoted a power distance culture within their teams with five participants mentioning that their bosses were power and status driven and while three mentioned that their bosses promoted a hierarchical culture within their organisations. Bosses displaying this behaviour also never took accountability for their actions, often blaming subordinates for mistakes made with one participant saying, "he always covered his tracks and never took accountability for his mistakes. If there was a mistake in one of the deals, even one I had nothing to do with, he would say that I did it."

5.4.1.5 Insecure

Table 7: List of Insecure Behavioural Traits and Related Number of Constructs

Rank	Theme	Number of Constructs
1	Anxious	6

The insecure behavioural category had just one subcategory, anxious, containing six of the 127 identified constructs. Six participants mentioned that their insecure bosses displayed frequent anxiety with this anxiety manifesting from the fact that they felt threatened by others knowing more and being more competent than them. This was particularly true where the participant was their second in charge and was more knowledgeable and skilled and had close relationships with other team members so that team members would approach the participant rather than the boss with any issues or

questions. One participant said, "one of the KPI's in my contract was to supervise the team and only go to my boss with things that we couldn't sort out. However, my boss found out that people were bypassing her on everything and coming to me because she didn't have an open-door policy. She then called a meeting with the whole team and said to me in front of everyone "you are not their supervisor, everyone needs to come to me." We also have signatures on our emails, and since I started in 2010, her email signature has always been her name and contact details and title of "manager" but no qualifications. When I started my MBA, she put all of her qualifications on there and when I left the organisation in May 2018, one of my colleagues told me she took her qualifications off." Another participant said, "if he wasn't on top of things or didn't understand something I had done, he would feel very threatened. Especially when third parties explicitly asked to deal with me rather than him, it would grind him up."

The anxiety was also a function of one participant's boss being constantly negative and thus driving a negative atmosphere and feeling within the team, saying, "he was so anxious about things that he thought were going to happen that we could never just be in the moment."

5.4.1.7 Intolerant

Table 8: List of Intolerant Behavioural Traits and Related Number of Constructs

Rank	Theme	Number of Constructs
1	Gender	4
2	Race	2
3	Religion	1

The final destructive behavioural category, containing a total of seven constructs, was "intolerant," either on the basis of race, gender or religion. Gender was the most common form of intolerance displayed by destructive bosses and was directed entirely towards female employees. Two participants reported that their bosses only found fault with women, never with men and two reported that their male bosses said that women were overly emotional and "needed to manage their emotions better." Culture was cited by one participant as a potential reason for the behaviour of her boss towards her and the other women on the team, saying, "he was a Zulu man and in the Zulu culture, men tend

to overpower women. The men on the team got away with murder. They could be late for a meeting or not even pitch and he would not complain, yet if our watches were not synchronised he would say I am 30 seconds late." Two women also reported that although their bosses were female, they always treated other female employees poorly yet got along well with male colleagues. "She was very charming and persuasive to men but felt threatened by other women." Within the race subcategory, four participants felt that their bosses treated people of their own race better than they did others while one said that their boss did not want people of other races to progress. Just a single construct around religion was identified, where an employee mentioned that her boss was not tolerant of any religious leave that she tried to take.

5.5 Results for Research Question 2

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: How do female employees react to destructive leadership behaviour?

Research Question 2 sought to understand the varying and specific ways in which women respond to being subjected to the destructive behavioural traits exhibited by their bosses, as described in Research Question 1. After describing the perceived destructive behavioural traits of their bosses in questions one and two, the participants were asked directly to provide a detailed account of how they reacted to the described behaviour in question three of the interview guideline.

5.5.1 How Women React to Destructive Leadership Behaviour

The question on how the fifteen women interviewed reacted to the perceived destructive behaviour of their bosses yielded 45 different constructs which were then grouped into 10 different categories. The full list of identified constructs together with their groupings and frequencies is provided in Exhibit 6 in the appendix. The constructs within each category were then ranked through frequency tables and the results were reviewed and finalised in collaboration with a registered industrial psychologist in order to ensure the accuracy of the groupings. The 10 categories identified and their related number of constructs is as follows:

Table 9: List of Reactions to Destructive Behaviour and Related Number of Constructs

Rank	Theme	Number of Constructs
1	Had an emotional reaction	10
2	Tried to react positively	6
3	Reacted passive aggressively	5
3	Exiting Behaviour	5
5	Lost Confidence	4
5	Covered my bases	4
7	Did not react	3
7	Built a coalition	3
7	Was combative and confrontational	3
10	Escalated the boss	2

5.5.1.1 Emotional Reaction

Most of the women interviewed had some sort of emotional reaction to the destructive behaviour of their bosses, with the most common reaction, cited by six women, was that they cried while working for their destructive boss. One participant said, "I was so angry and frustrated that I cried and he told me I need to learn how to manage my emotions." Five said that facing this situation on a daily basis left them feeling drained and lacking energy with one participant saying "if someone breaks you down every single day, you don't have any energy left to do the work." Four women became completely detached and disengaged in the workplace during this time and four felt constantly stressed out and anxious with one woman saying "every day I would go home drained and stressed." Three of the women interviewed also felt like their destructive bosses made them feel helpless and disempowered in the workplace.

5.5.1.2 Tried to React Positively

The second biggest category identified was attempting to react positively to the destructive behaviour faced. Three women interviewed said they tried to react in a positive manner by having an open and honest conversation with their boss about the issues they were facing in the hope that making them aware of how harmful their

behaviour was to those around them would encourage them to take steps to improve how they behaved towards others in the workplace. While this course of action worked for a few months, all the women said that their bosses couldn't sustain their efforts at good behaviour as it just "wasn't in their nature." Two others also tried to react positively by using their situation as a learning experience with one woman saying "it made me stronger" and another saying it thought her "how to better handle situations like this in the future."

5.5.1.3 Passive Aggressive

Five constructs around passive aggressive behaviour were identified with three women reporting delaying getting their work done and pretending to be busy in front of the boss. One participant said, "I would do my work really fast and then just save it on my laptop and send it two days later." Two women said that they stopped putting in extra effort to get their work done in retaliation to their boss's behaviour while one became bitter towards the organisation and one actively looked for reasons not to go to work.

5.5.1.4 Exiting Behaviour

Ranked in joint third place with five constructs was "exiting behaviour" which was by far the category with the most recurring constructs, with all but two women interviewed exhibiting some form of exiting behaviour. A total of six participants left their organisation directly as a result of their bosses' destructive actions with one woman saying "the only thing I could do was leave." Four women actively looked for another position while working for the boss; while two left the role that reported to the boss and moved on to another role within the organisation.

5.5.1.5 Lost Confidence

Four constructs around the participants internalising the behaviour of their bosses and losing their self-confidence were identified. Three women reported losing their self-confidence during this time with one saying "she messed with my confidence a lot. A particular low point was when I just cried on the Gautrain on my way home as I felt personally attacked as if I wasn't good enough." Another said, "my confidence levels

have dropped substantially with regards to report writing, as I have to check against everything with her. My confidence levels in terms of what I'm capable of and what I can achieve have also declined." Two said that they began to question their competence with one participant saying "my biggest reaction was a sense of questioning my own ability." One said that she felt like a failure while another was very hard on herself.

5.5.1.6 Covered My Bases

Four constructs were identified in this category where participants felt that it was necessary to start covering their bases in order to avoid the wrath of their bosses. Two employees began overworking in an attempt to avoid the criticism and ensure that their bosses' excessive demands were met while one said, "I started documenting everything that took place between me and her in order to cover myself as I noticed she has a tendency to lie about certain things."

5.5.1.7 Did Not React

This category contained three identified constructs and the main pattern evident here was that three women said that they did not react to their boss's bad behaviour in the workplace as they did not want to give them the satisfaction of seeing that their behaviour was affecting them in any way. This was especially true where they felt that their bosses were trying to bring out the worst in them. One person just ignored the destructive behaviour as they worked independently and were able to separate themselves from their boss's behaviour while one said that they were, at first, submissive to being constantly broken down by their boss, saying "I would just sit there and listen to what he was saying as I didn't have the energy to fight back and I knew it would add no value."

5.5.1.8 Built a Coalition

Three constructs were identified in the "build a coalition" category which involved the participant attempting to unite team members and build a coalition against the destructive boss. Five participants said that they grew closer to their team by shielding them and acting as the buffer against the destructive behaviour of the boss so that they became a coalition against the harmful acts of the boss. This was particularly true where the

participant was the second in charge to the boss and took on the role of getting the team together and supporting each other in managing the situation. One participant said, "I said to the team we need to escalate her and we had to do it together because if it's just me it won't work, but they were too scared because they needed their jobs."

5.5.1.9 Combative and Confrontational

Three constructs were also identified in the "combative and confrontational" category. Four people were combative and actively confronted the boss on their behaviour, while one made a point of constantly arguing with the boss. Just a single person said that they stood up for themselves and fought their battle. One participant said, "I am an emotional person by nature so when I am disrespected I lash out. I'm very straightforward and not afraid to confront the situation. But this didn't go down well. I was seen as being aggressive and a trouble maker".

5.5.1.10 Escalated the Boss

In terms of escalating behaviour, two constructs were identified. Nine women tried escalating their bosses to either the boss's direct manager or the organisation's HR department, in the hope that the organisation will act to curb the bad behaviour of the boss. Two women tried to bring attention to the situation by highlighting the boss's negative behaviour in their 360-degree feedback appraisal. However, almost all participants said that nothing came off this as no action was taken against the manager by the organisation.

5.6 Results for Research Question 3

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: How does destructive leadership behaviour affect female employee engagement?

The aim of Research Question 3 was to understand how destructive leadership behaviour affects female employee engagement. The questionnaire consisted of two sections aimed at gathering data in order to effectively answering this question. Firstly,

interview participants were asked if each of the five dimensions of employee engagement i.e. "employee performance; employee satisfaction; employee identification; employee commitment and employee loyalty" (Kumar and Pansari, 2015, p.68), had either improved; stayed the same or decreased while working for the destructive boss in question. The frequency of each of these responses were then calculated to determine how each dimension was affected. Participants were then asked to use a 7-point Likert scale, shown below, to rate how the constructs under each dimension were affected while working for the destructive boss.

The following constructs per employee engagement dimension were assessed using the Likert scale:

Table 10: Likert Scale

1	Strong Positive Effect
2-3	Positive Effect
4	No Effect
5-6	Negative Effect
7	Strong Negative Effect

Table 11: Employee Engagement Dimensions and Related Constructs

Dimension	Constructs
Employee Performance	Job performance and productivity
Employee Satisfaction	Feelings of closeness with people at work
	Recognition for work done
	Feeling secure about your job
	Feeling good about working at the company
	Belief that management cares about employees
Employee Identification	Pride in speaking to others about your job
	Sense of ownership
	Viewing the success of the organisation as your own
Employee Commitment	Commitment to delivering on job expectations

	Feeling like the organisation has a great deal of personal meaning to you
Employee Loyalty	Turnover Intentions

In terms of the first question around whether or not the specific employee engagement dimension improved, stayed the same or decreased while working for the boss, the results depicted in the table below were found. The results highlight the frequency of each response with the modal category highlighted per dimension:

Table 12: Effect of Destructive Bosses on Female Employee Engagement

Dimension	Improved	Stayed the Same	Decreased
Employee Performance	3	4	**8**
Employee Satisfaction	0	2	**13**
Employee Identification	0	5	**10**
Employee Commitment	3	**6**	**6**
Employee Loyalty	0	2	**13**

The ranking of the constructs using the Likert scale is as follows:

Table 13: Frequency of Likert Scale Responses and Modal Categories

	Strong Positive	Positive	No Effect	Negative	Strong Negative
	1	2-3	4	5-6	7
Employee Performance					
Job performance and productivity	2	1	**4**	**4**	**4**
Employee Satisfaction					
Feelings of closeness with people at work	1	3	2	**7**	2

Recognition for work done			**5**	**5**	**5**
Feeling secure about your job			**8**	3	4
Feeling good about working at the company			4	5	**6**
Belief that management cares about employees			1	4	**10**
Employee Identification					
Pride in speaking to others about your job		1	**6**	5	3
Sense of ownership		1	**6**	5	3
Viewing the success of the organisation as your own		1	4	3	**7**
Employee Commitment					
Commitment to delivering on job expectations	1	2	**6**	3	3
Feeling like the organisation has a great deal of personal meaning to you			5	**6**	4
Employee Loyalty					
Turnover Intentions			2	3	**10**

While the results depicted in Table 12 indicate how each participant responded in terms of whether each overall dimension of employee engagement, on the whole, increased, decreased or remained the same while working for the destructive boss, with frequency tables then used to consolidate the responses, Table 13 shows the breakdown of these responses per the different constructs comprising each dimension. Frequency tables were then used to determine how frequently responses were ranked across the different Likert scale ratings, and the modal values were highlighted in order to easily recognise the most frequently occurring responses.

5.6.1 Employee Performance

Both open ended and ranking questions were used to source more detailed data around how the various dimensions of employee engagement and their respective constructs were affected. The questions around employee performance centred around understanding if the participant's job performance and productivity were affected while

working for their destructive boss. A total of eight respondents said that they believed their performance decreased while working for the boss. This finding was supported by the results of the Likert scale rating which shows that four participants felt that their job performance and productivity were negatively affected while working for the destructive boss while four reported a strong negative effect on job performance and productivity. This was primarily driven by the fact that participants found that they spent the majority of their time on unnecessary rework as a result of their bosses' pettiness and constant criticism, leaving them little time to do the work that mattered. Comments around this included, "my performance was affected because he nit-picked on everything to the point that I had to do ten extra things just to get the same answer." "You couldn't add value and perform the way you wanted to because you were constantly scared of what she would think and you were doing things you didn't need to do." "It's like I've become her executive PA. It's a monotonous cycle and I've lost interest in what I'm doing so my attention to detail has dropped and mistakes are creeping in."

Four participants said that their bosses' behaviour had no effect on how they performed, as they still did what they had to do, they just stopped going the extra mile, which spoke more to a decrease in commitment, with one participant saying, "my work output and quality were the same because I couldn't do shoddy work but I stopped going the extra mile."

Three participants reported an increase in their performance, although they maintained that this was not done in a positive way. One participant said "although I hated the way he did it, he did teach me. My performance improved because it made me work harder and think in a different way. But if he had put less pressure on me, it wouldn't have drained so much of my energy and I could have done even better." Two participants attributed the increase in their performance to the need to cover their basis leading to them overworking in order to ensure their bosses demands were met.

5.6.2 Employee Satisfaction

Thirteen out of fifteen participants said that their overall employee satisfaction declined while working for their destructive bosses with one participant saying, "I was very unhappy, I hated my job and I hated the way I started treating people in the same way that he treated me. I started using his words." Looking at the individual elements

comprising employee satisfaction on the Likert scale, in terms of feelings of closeness with people at work, seven participants say that this was negatively affected while working for the boss, while two said that the effect was a strong negative. Reasons behind this was that destructive bosses tended to isolate each member of the team so that there was no collaboration. Favouritism within the team also tended to isolate team members. Even where team members became closer, this was not always seen in a positive light with one participant saying, "even though the team became closer, it became a session where everyone just whined so it was very negative." Two participants felt no effect in terms of feelings of closeness with team members while three reported a positive effect and one a very positive effect, saying, "because of her, we grew closer together and we began covering for each other. If someone needed to fetch their child from school, she told them to put in a half day's leave. I used to say, put in the half day's leave but come in late tomorrow to cover up. I made sure they got it back because it wasn't fair." Another participant said, "because I felt so attacked by him I worked on my other relationships within the team to make myself feel better."

In terms of recognition for work done, five participants said that their bosses negatively affected their feelings of being recognised while another five reported strong negative effects around this dimension as they felt that their bosses did not recognise their work and contributions at all with one participant saying, "you need to respect your employees as much as they respect you and no one acknowledged all the effort I was putting in despite everyone being aware of it." Five reported no effect as even though their bosses might not have recognised their contributions, the broader organisation and senior management were aware of their value and recognised it accordingly.

Eight participants said that their bosses had no effect on them feeling secure about their jobs as they were too heavily reliant on the participant, especially where the participant was the bosses' second in charge. However, three participants did report a negative effect on their feelings of job security, while four participants reported a very negative effect with one participant saying, 'I know he wanted to get me fired because he told other people in the office that he wanted me out as he had promised my job to someone from the previous organisation he worked at." In terms of feeling good about working at the company while working for the destructive boss, five participants reported a negative effect while six reported a strong negative effect. Four reported no effect as they either

already didn't feel good about working at the company or were long tenured employees who felt like one person did not represent the culture of the whole company.

The overall feeling of decreased employee satisfaction was driven by the fact that four participants felt a negative effect around feeling that management cared about employees, while ten people rated this as a very strong negative effect. The reason behind this was that despite employees escalating their boss's harmful behaviour to senior management and HR, nothing was ever done about it. One participant said, "if management cared, they would have done something about her behaviour and her incompetence. She made a pregnant women's life at work so miserable that she almost gave birth in the office basement, yet still nothing was done about it." Another said, "when you try to escalate her to senior management you are told you have to go through your reporting lines, but the reporting line is her manager who is covering for her anyway so you are stuck." Yet another said, "management said you need to be mature about this and grow up. So, management never protected you and stood up for what was right."

5.6.3 Employee Identification

A total of ten participants reported a decrease in employee identification, due mainly to the fact that they felt that the organisation enabled the bad behaviour of their bosses with one participant saying, "I absolutely loved my company. I used to wake up and rejoice that I was going to work. But the environment changed when my boss took over". Another said, "I questioned if I belonged there because the environment enabled her behaviour. If you have a bad manager, you associate that bad manager with the company because they are promoting this behaviour." "It spoke to my morals and ethics and I couldn't work for an organisation that enables that sort of behaviour."

Five people reported a negative effect and three a very strong negative effect on both their pride in speaking to others about their jobs as well as their sense of ownership while working for their bosses with one participant saying, "you don't want to take ownership of what she has put in in a report, so you take less ownership," while another said, "I felt disempowered because I couldn't really own anything. She owned everything." One person reported an increased sense of ownership but was quick to point out that this was

not a positive as, "not delivering was not an option." Six people reported no effect on these two dimensions with one participant saying, "I don't identify much with the company in the first place as I work very independently, so it hasn't really had an effect and I understand that she's just one person out of 850."

Participants were so detached that seven reported strong negative effects on viewing the success of the organisation as their own, while three said the effect was negative. One participant said, "when the organisation does well, she doesn't give you the recognition you deserve for it, so you don't really view that success as yours." Just one person reported an increased sense of pride in speaking to others about her job while working for her destructive boss as well as a positive effect on viewing the success of the organisation as her own. This was a long tenured employee who attributed her pride and feelings of success to the good results the company was seeing due to the boss's commitment to achieving results, despite her not agreeing with how he went about doing it, saying, "while the MD was happy with the results he was getting, I don't think he knew the impact he was having on people. It's not what the company stands for."

5.6.4 Employee Commitment

Employee commitment was viewed in terms of commitment to delivering on job expectations with employees going the extra mile and putting in extra effort to get things done by either working extra hours or sharing new ideas and ways of working. Six people reported decreased employee commitment (three said it was a negative effect and three a strong negative effect). Comments around this included, "she derails my tasks for clients so you think what's the point, because she holds reports back for petty reasons. I used to sleep at one in the morning and then she wouldn't release it on time so now I just work during normal work hours as there's no point," "I decided not to work one minute more than I had to," and "I deliver as minimal as possible." Six people reported no effect on their commitment to delivering while three reported positive or strong positive effects on commitment mainly due to their work ethic or not wanting to give their bosses the satisfaction of seeing that they were having an effect on them, with one participant saying, "I was committed because I didn't want to give him the satisfaction that he was winning. I was more committed to getting the work done to prove him wrong". Another said their commitment "stayed the same because I had a reputation to maintain and

because of my work ethic." A few participants also reported increased commitment but not for positive reasons, with one saying, "you've got no option but to deliver because you fear the implications of not delivering."

Participants were also questioned about their commitment in terms of whether they felt their bosses had an effect on the personal meaning they assigned to their organisations. Six people reported a negative effect around this dimension while four said the effect was a very strong negative. One participant said, "I used to drive past the company for ten years and say I want to work there and when I started working there I felt like I was home. Now I can't stand to even walk into the building." Five people reported no effect on personal meaning. This was mainly long tenured employees who felt that their bosses did not represent what their companies stood for or employees who felt like they never did fit in at their organisations, with one saying, "it was a very Afrikaans culture, so I felt like I never really fit in."

5.6.5 Employee Loyalty

All but two employees reported negative effects on their employee loyalty with ten people saying their bosses had a very strong negative effect on their feelings of loyalty towards their organisations. One long tenured employee said "I stayed because I had been with the company for 15 years and was happy with the way the company treated me. I wasn't ready to give up." The other said, "I would never leave because of one person, there are bad people everywhere." All other participants reported that they either left the organisation due to their bosses' behaviour, left the role that reported to the boss or were trying to leave by actively searching for another job. Comments included, "working for him was the last straw," and "it's hard to be loyal to something that treats you poorly."

5.7 Conclusion

The various themes and constructs identified in the fifteen interviews undertaken around understanding the perceptions of female employees regarding destructive leadership behaviours, general reactions to these behaviours as well as the effect of these behaviours on the various dimensions of female employee engagement have been

presented in this chapter. The aim of Chapter 6 is to explore these results more fully by investigating contrasts and commonalities to the existing literature presented in Chapter 2 and to potentially identify new insights that may support a greater understanding of how destructive leadership behaviour affects female employee engagement.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore a more in-depth analysis of the results of the qualitative research described in Chapter 5 by comparing the results to the findings of the literature presented in Chapter 2. This will be conducted in order to determine if the research findings agree with the findings of the literature review, contrast the findings of the literature or add entirely new insights to those presented in the literature review and will be conducted per each of the three research questions presented in Chapter 3:

- What are the behaviours exhibited by bosses, that lead to them being perceived as destructive leaders by female employees?
- How do female employees react to destructive leadership behaviour?
- How does destructive leadership behaviour affect female employee engagement?

6.2 Discussion of Results for Research Question 1

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: What are the behaviours exhibited by bosses, that lead to them being perceived as a destructive leader by female employees?

The aim of Research Question 1 was to identify the specific behavioural traits exhibited by leaders that women in the workplace perceived to be negative or harmful to their own well-being, the well-being of their team or the organisation as a whole. As shown in Table 2, a total of 127 behavioural constructs were identified from the 15 interviews conducted. These were then grouped into six separate categories (themes), each consisting of a number of subcategories related to the theme. The six categories identified were abusive; managerial incompetence; manipulative; arrogant; intolerant and insecure. Interestingly, these findings correlate closely with the worst type of leader described by Shaw, Erikson and Harvey (2011) in their study into the seven types of destructive leaders, with the worst type of leader being the "Cluster 7" leader who exhibited the following characteristics: "acting in a brutal bullying manner; lying and other unethical

behaviour; micro-managing and over controlling; inability to deal with interpersonal conflict or similar situations; not having the skills to match the job and unwillingness to change mind and listen to others" (Shaw, Erikson & Harvey, 2011, p. 586). The "intolerant" and "insecure" categories identified in the research, although the smallest of the six categories identified, add a new dimension of insight into how destructive leaders fail to fully engage with and understand their subordinates in the workplace, from the perception of female employees.

In discussing the behaviour of their destructive bosses, participants' overall understanding of a destructive leader was in line with the definition of Lipman-Blumen (2005), as all participants spoke of a boss who engaged in multiple destructive behaviours and constantly exhibited dysfunctional personality characteristics to the extent that it caused some kind of psychological, mental or physical harm to employees (Lipman-Blumen, 2005). Further to this, the issue of subjectivity in the perceptions of destructive supervisory behaviour was also evident and aligned to the findings of Lipmen-Blumen (2005), Martinko et al. (2011) and Harvey et al. (2014) who stressed that what might be deemed as destructive behaviour by one employee may not be seen in a negative light by another. This was found to be particularly true where interview participants said that their bosses were good to certain people, such as people of colour and lower level employees, and ensured that they had their support so that their behaviour was not viewed as being destructive by these subordinates, thus creating a group of susceptible followers that helped enable their destructive behaviour (Thoroughgood, Padilla, Hunter and Tate, 2012).

The following discussion focusses on the leadership behavioural traits identified as being destructive by the 15 participants interviewed and contrasts it to the findings of destructive leadership behaviours highlighted in the literature review in order to understand if the research findings support or contrast with the literature or if entirely new insights into destructive leadership behaviour have been gained.

6.2.1 Abusive

As per Table 3, the "abusive" category of destructive leadership behaviours was the largest identified behavioural category, containing 49 of the 127 identified behavioural constructs and further grouped into five subcategories, i.e. bullying; made me feel incompetent; made me feel unimportant; unsupportive and unfair. Examples of abusive

behaviours were consistent with the findings of Harris, Kacmar and Zivnuska (2007) who cited public criticism and rudeness as key examples of abusive supervisory behaviours. In line with this, being rude and humiliating employees in front of others was one of the most commonly recurring responses grouped under the "bullying" category with six participants mentioning that their bosses frequently engaged in this behaviour.

Additional insights that support the literature was that the most frequently recurring response under the bullying category, mentioned by seven participants, was that participants felt bullied when bosses treated employees as objects rather than people in trying to get things done. This is in line with the findings of Erikson, Shaw and Agabe (2007) who found that the category of perceived destructive behaviour with the highest response rate was leaders' inability to effectively deal with subordinates, with one of the main responses being leaders "not recognising staff as people" (Erikson, Shaw & Agabe, 2007, p. 35). An additional insight, not supported by the literature, is that six participants felt bullied when their bosses constantly clock watched the team so that employees were too afraid to take lunch and bathroom breaks for fear of reprimand.

"Made me feel incompetent" and "made me feel unimportant" were grouped as separate subcategories under the broader abusive category and speaks to the various ways in which employees were made to feel that they were not effectively performing their job roles and their contributions were not of value in the workplace. This was primarily done by bosses constantly criticising the work of employees to the point of being petty (mentioned by 12 participants) and demeaning and belittling their opinions and contributions (mentioned by 13 participants). This finding supports the work of Pelletier (2010) who found that mocking and marginalising the efforts of employees was used as a means of attacking their self-esteem and was one of the eight dimensions of harmful leadership which was also found to be the most psychologically harmful form of workplace abuse. Further to this, two participants also support Pelletier's (2010) finding of social exclusion as a dimension of destructive leadership by saying that they were excluded from important team decisions and were not even allowed to hire their own team members.

While Erikson, Shaw and Agabe (2007) mention poor staff development as one of the traits of a destructive leader's inability to effectively deal with subordinates, the fact that abusive bosses tended to be unsupportive of the career growth and aspirations of employees seems to be largely overlooked in the literature and could signal a gap in understanding the behavioural traits of destructive bosses. With nine out of fifteen

participants mentioning that their bosses actively blocked their career growth either by not allowing them opportunities to study or explore other areas of interest within the business, the "unsupportive" subcategory under the broader "abusive" category provides a new insight into how destructive leaders tend to be abusive towards subordinates.

Finally, it was found that abusive leaders tended to be unfair in their interactions with employees, with three participants mentioning that their bosses actively practised favouritism amongst certain individuals in the team. This is in line with the findings of Pelletier (2010), who found that destructive leaders tended to promote inequity in the workplace through promotions and favouritism. Yen, Tian and Sankoh (2013) also found favouritism to be the most frequently cited form of leadership behaviour perceived as destructive by subordinates.

6.2.2 Manipulative

The second largest behavioural category identified, shown in Table 4, was the manipulative category containing 33 of the 127 identified constructs which were then further split into three subcategories, namely, immoral; deceptive and controlling. This category highlights all the ways in which destructive bosses tried to control the behaviour and lives of employees through underhanded and deceptive means. Pelletier (2010) labelled this dimension of destructive behaviour as bosses exhibiting a lack of integrity and being deceptive in their actions. An example provided by Pelletier (2010) was bosses taking credit for the work of employees, which was one of the most frequently mentioned constructs under the "deceptive" category with five participants citing this behaviour from their bosses. Erikson, Shaw and Agabe (2007) grouped taking credit for the work of others under the "poor ethics/integrity" category of destructive leadership behaviours while Yen, Tian and Sankoh (2013) mentioned it as one of the 15 most prevalent behaviours of destructive leaders. Within this category, seven participants also said that their bosses were deceptive by saying one thing yet doing something else entirely, so that they were never able to fully trust the intentions of their bosses.

Immoral behaviour was the largest manipulative subcategory, counting for 18 of the 33 identified manipulative constructs and accounted for some new insights into the immoral behaviour of destructive leaders. The most frequently mentioned construct in this category, cited by eight participants, was that their bosses manipulated their performance scores without adequate feedback or reasoning provided. Other frequently

mentioned forms of immoral behaviour were bosses ensuring that they had the support of certain people on the team, such as lower level employees or people of colour (mentioned by four participants) as well as speaking in a negative manner about the employee behind their back to other team members (also mentioned by four participants). A significant finding in terms of immoral behaviour was that four employees mentioned that their bosses actively withheld important information from them so that they could not effectively get their jobs done. Related to this was the fact that three participants felt that their bosses actively set either them alone, or their entire team, up for failure. In support of Pelletier's (2010) findings on destructive leadership, divisiveness in terms of pitting teams against each other was also mentioned by one participant while two participants said that team divisiveness was created by isolating each member of the team from each other so that collaboration was not possible.

Controlling behaviour was the next biggest subcategory under the broader "manipulative" theme with the main finding being that four participants felt that their bosses tried to control not only how they behaved and what they did at work, but rather they tried to control their entire lives, from which meetings they attended to when they took leave. Four participants also mentioned that they felt controlled when their bosses just expected them to do what they were told rather than think for themselves. Two participants said that their bosses needed to constantly know where they were while the element of control was evident by another two participants saying that their bosses tried to control their interactions with colleagues outside of their direct teams. Overall, the manipulative category was reflective of two of the three dark triad traits i.e. Machiavellianism (cynical and misanthropic beliefs, callous, striving for money, power, and status) as well as psychopathy (anti-social, lack of empathy), traits that Wisse and Sleebos (2016) describe as being exploitative and manipulative. Micromanaging and overcontrolling was also mentioned by Shaw, Erikson and Harvey (2011) as one of the traits of the worst type of destructive leader.

6.2.3 Managerial Incompetence

Managerial incompetence is often cited in literature as a key dimension of destructive leadership with seven out of eleven of Erikson, Shaw and Agabe's (2007) categories of destructive behaviour relating to some sort of incompetence on the part of the destructive leader. These categories are "poor communication; unable to effectively deal with subordinates; inability to use technology; inconsistent/erratic behaviour; poor

interpersonal behaviour; poor personal behaviour and a lack of strategic skills" (Erikson, Shaw and Agabe, 2007, p. 32).

The research findings are fully in support of the literature findings in this respect. The managerial incompetence category, highlighted in Table 5, consisted of 21 of the 127 identified behavioural constructs and were grouped by a lack of technical skills, a lack of people skills, personality deficits as well as behavioural deficits. A lack of technical skills was the largest subcategory and speaks to the fact that four participants felt like their destructive bosses lacked the relevant technical knowledge in their respective fields to effectively get the work done, while three felt that their bosses lacked proper decision-making skills. Three participants felt that their bosses were so incompetent in their jobs that they damaged the success and reputation of their business unit.

From a people skills perspective, all 15 participants felt that their bosses lacked the necessary interpersonal and communication skills to effectively deal with people, both at a subordinate and client level. A lack of people skills was also reflected in the fact that six participants felt that their bosses failed to effectively provide them with the guidance and feedback required to ensure that they were meeting their job expectations while four felt that their bosses could not foster teamwork and collaboration within the team.

In terms of personality deficits, 10 out of the 15 participants interviewed mentioned that their bosses lacked the emotional intelligence and empathy required to be effective leaders while four felt that their bosses lacked the self-insight and awareness required to understand when their actions and behaviour were wrong. Three participants also felt that their bosses sometimes came across as mentally unstable while three mentioned their bosses' inability to be flexible and adapt to new situations.

The last form of managerial incompetence was in terms of destructive boss's behavioural deficits, with the main finding being that four participants felt that their boss's behaviour was so erratic that you never knew what you were going to get with them at any given time.

6.2.4 Arrogant

The "arrogant" theme, containing 13 constructs was further sub-divided into "egotistical" and "power-distance tactics" subcategories, as shown in Table 6. The egotistical

subcategory contained 8 of the 13 constructs identified as being arrogant and the main finding highlights the "narcissistic" aspect of the dark triad of behavioural traits, with seven participants saying that their bosses felt that they knew it all and were always right while six participants directly described their destructive bosses as being narcissistic. Related to this, four participants said that their bosses did not like their decisions or opinions to be questioned or challenged in any way, while three participants said that their bosses were so arrogant that they couldn't admit when they needed help and ask for it. The "power-distance tactics" subcategory contained five constructs and highlights the fact that destructive bosses tend to be status driven (mentioned by four participants) and hierarchical (mentioned by three participants) in their behaviour and management style. Overall, the research findings in terms of the "arrogant" category of destructive leadership behaviour refute the claim of Volmer, Koch & Goritz (2016) and Wisse & Sleebos (2016) who say that narcissism is the least harmful of the dark triad traits and does not result in any negative effect on subordinates' well-being. The narcissistic leadership behaviour described by the research participants was found to be damaging to their well-being as employees, especially where the narcissistic bosses blamed them for everything that went wrong and refused to take accountability for their actions.

6.2.5 Intolerant

In support of the findings of Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta and Magley (2013), sexism and racism were found to be a basis for abusive supervision, from the perspective of female employees. Participants felt that their destructive bosses were intolerant and discriminated against them based on race, gender or religion. Seven constructs fell under this space, as depicted in Table 8, with four out of the seven related to women feeling discriminated against by their bosses due to their gender. Bosses either treated female workers poorly compared to men and only found fault with women or told their female employees that they were too emotional and should be better able to control themselves in the workplace. In terms of race, four participants felt that their bosses treated people of their own race, be it black or white, better than they did people of other races. Just a single participant reported feeling discriminated against based on religion, with this occurring when their boss refused to grant them religious leave.

6.2.6 Insecure

The final, and smallest, destructive behavioural category identified was insecure behaviour which was reflected in the constant anxiousness displayed by destructive bosses. Six participants said that their bosses were insecure and felt anxious due to the fact that they easily felt threatened by others in the workplace which supports the literature of Mehta and Maheshwari (2014) who posit that vulnerable leaders who perceive threats to their status and power often resort to destructive leadership tactics in an attempt to hold onto their power. Anxious bosses were also found to be paranoid, had a negative attitude and took things personally which supports the "poor personal behaviour" findings of Erikson, Shaw and Agabe (2007) who found destructive leaders tended to be overly emotional.

Overall, the research supports the literature findings on what subordinates generally perceive to be destructive leadership behaviour in terms of destructive leaders being abusive; incompetent; manipulative and arrogant. However, from the viewpoint of female employees, the research adds new insights along two additional dimensions i.e. intolerant and insecure, which highlights how women feel discriminated against by their bosses either on the basis of their gender or race and the fact that they view destructive leaders as being insecure, anxious and easily threatened.

6.3 Discussion of Results for Research Question 2

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: How do female employees react to destructive leadership behaviour?

How women react to dealing with destructive leadership behaviour is largely an unexplored topic in existing literature on the dark side of leadership and, as a result, the research provides new insights into how women react when facing this workplace challenge. While MacIntosh, Wuest, Gray and Aldous (2010) describe the four-stage process women usually follow in trying to cope with workplace bullying in general, the research looks at the more general and immediate reactions of women in coping with a destructive boss, in particular. The way that women react to destructive leadership behaviour was found to be largely a function of their personality as well as their seniority within the team and their tenure within the organisation. Ten categories of reactions to negative leadership behaviour were identified consisting of a total of 45 different constructs, the split of which is shown in Table 9. These categories are, reacted

emotionally; tried to react positively; exiting behaviour; passive aggressive behaviour; lost confidence; built a coalition; combative and confrontational; did not react; covered my bases and escalated the boss.

6.3.1 Reacted Emotionally

Almost all the women interviewed had some sort of emotional reaction to dealing with their boss's negative actions and behaviour with 10 out of the 45 constructs falling within this category. Six women reported feeling such despair and frustration that they cried either at work itself or when they were out of the office. Five women reported that dealing with the destructive boss left them feeling drained and lacking the energy required to effectively complete their tasks. Related to this, four women felt that they were in a constant state of stress and anxiety while working for the boss in question while others felt detached and disengaged or hopeless and disempowered. Overall, these findings support the literature of Schyns and Schilling (2013) and Jiang, Wang & Lin (2016) who cite severe emotional exhaustion and job tension as a key consequence of having to deal with a destructive leader. Erikson, Shaw and Agabe (2007) also found that increased stress levels were reported as the most common effect in their study into the effects of bad leaders on subordinates.

6.3.2 Tried to React Positively

In line with the findings of Brotheridge and Lee (2010) who say that women try to use positive emotions to overcome negative feelings, a few women attempted to react positively to the situation they found themselves in with their bosses. The women who attempted to deal with the situation in a more positive manner were mostly found to be either at a senior level within their team, often functioning as the second in charge to their boss, or they were long tenured employees who were with their organisations for a long time (usually between ten to fifteen years). In these cases, three women claimed to try to overcome the situation by having an open and honest conversation with their bosses around the issues they were experiencing while two decided to accept the situation as an opportunity to learn and claimed it taught them how to better handle similar situations should they encounter them in the future.

6.3.3 Exiting Behaviour

Exiting behaviour was the category with the most frequently recurring responses across all ten categories of reactions to destructive leadership behaviour. Almost all of the women interviewed displayed some sort of exiting behaviour in trying to deal with the situation with their destructive boss with six women saying that they left their respective organisations as a direct result of their boss's actions. Four tried to leave while working for the boss by actively looking for another position outside of the organisation, while two remained with the organisation but left the role reporting to the boss. Another two questioned if they made the right choice in taking the job and considered leaving although they did not actively pursue other opportunities. This supports the findings of Webster, Brough and Daly (2016) and Porath & Pearson (2013) who found that most employees, regardless of gender, eventually leave an organisation due to bullying. The fact that almost all the women interviewed exhibited some sort of exiting behaviour also refutes the claim of Jha and Jha (2015) who say that employees often endure the humiliation of supervisory abuse as they are financial dependent on their jobs or fear the lack of security more than they fear the abuse.

6.3.4 Passive Aggressive Behaviour

Passive aggressive behaviour in the form of delaying getting work done, pretending to be busy or not putting in extra effort were displayed by five women in retaliation to the bosses' behaviour. One participant also mentioned looking for reasons not to go to work as a way of coping with the situation while one said that she became bitter towards the organisation. This finding supports the literature on the potential negative effects on organisations' bottom line due to the reduced levels of commitment and motivation of disengaged staff (Wollard, 2011; Jha & Jha, 2015).

6.3.5 Lost Confidence

A lowered self-view/self-esteem was one of the main findings in Erikson, Shaw and Agabe's (2007) study into how bad leaders make subordinates feel. In support of this, a total of four constructs around internalising the behaviour of the boss and losing self-confidence emerged from the interviews. Three women said they lost self-confidence while two said that they began doubting themselves and their abilities while being treated poorly by their bosses. One participant reported feeling like a failure while another said she was very hard on herself in dealing with the situation.

6.3.6 Built a Coalition

Seeking social support from co-workers; family and friends is often a way for employees to cope with bullying in the workplace (Webster, Brough and Daly, 2016). A few women reported gathering support from their teams during this time in order to collectively deal with the boss's behaviour. Five women said that they took on the role of being the buffer between the boss and the rest of the team to help ensure the team remained motivated and productive despite the boss's behaviour while another said that she tried to get the team to work together to escalate their boss to senior management. Another said that she found the team had grown closer together in order to form a support system in dealing with the boss.

6.3.7 Combative and Confrontational

Webster, Brough and Daly (2016) claim that combative and confrontational behaviour is a common way for employees to deal with incivility in the workplace. The research supports this view with four participants said that they actively confronted their bosses about their behaviour, however, this way of dealing with the abuse was largely a function of the personality of the four women who responded in this way, with most of these women saying that they were extroverts and it wasn't their personality to sit back and do nothing while being treated poorly. One participant said that she constantly argued and disagreed with her boss in order to get her point across while another said that in confronting her boss she felt like she had stood up for herself and fought her battle.

6.3.8 Did Not React

Opposite to those who were combative and confrontational with their destructive bosses were the introverts who said it was not their personality to be confrontational. One participant said that she was submissive to the bad behaviour while another said that she tried to ignore it as much as possible. However, three participants said that they did not react to being treated badly by their bosses as they did not want to give them the satisfaction of getting a reaction out of them.

6.3.9 Covered My Bases

A new insight gained is that a number of women reported that they had to ensure that all their bases were covered in order to avoid conflict with their bosses. In support of Maslach et al.'s (2001) "burnout-antithesis approach" to employee engagement, two women reported doing this by overworking to ensure all their bosses' demands were met, while another said that she began documenting all incidents that occurred with her boss in order to ensure she had adequate backup should the need occur. One participant said that she began copying her team members on all correspondence with the boss to ensure her boss did not blame her if anything went wrong while another said that she ensured that she got the approval of her boss's boss in order to proceed with new initiatives.

6.3.10 Escalated the Boss

Eleven out of the fifteen women interviewed reported that they tried to escalate their boss's behaviour to HR or senior management (nine women) or tried to bring awareness of their behaviour by mentioning it in their 360-degree feedback (two women). An interesting finding is that all eleven women reported that no action was taken against their bosses by their organisations when the behaviour was reported. The other four women reported not even bothering trying to escalate their bosses as they knew that nothing would be done about it. This finding supports the work of Erikson, Shaw and Agabe (2007) who found that bad leaders often faced no consequences from their organisations regarding their actions. It was actually found that over 44% of bad leaders

were promoted or rewarded during their time at the organisation (Erikson, Shaw and Agabe, 2007) which is a cause for serious concern and warrants further investigation into how organisations deal with bad leaders.

Overall, in trying to understand how women react to dealing with a destructive boss, the most frequently cited response was that they either tried to exit the organisation or the role reporting to the boss. This is in support of the findings on reduced employee engagement and increased turnover intentions to be discussed in Research Question 3. Another frequently cited response was that they tried escalating the boss's behaviour to the broader organisation, however, in all cases no action was taken against the destructive boss in question by any of the organisations. This then speaks to a reduced belief on the part of the women interviewed that management in their organisations care about employees, which is again to be further explored in the discussion of the results for Research Question 3.

6.4 Discussion of Results for Research Question Three

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: How does destructive leadership behaviour affect female employee engagement?

The aim of Research Question 3 was to understand how working for a boss exhibiting destructive leadership traits affected the employee engagement of female employees around five dimensions of engagement, "employee performance; employee commitment; employee satisfaction; employee identification; and employee loyalty" (Kumar and Pansari, 2015, p. 68). In order to understand this, participants were first asked to explain if working for the destructive boss caused each overall dimension of their engagement to improve; remain the same or decrease. The frequency of these responses was captured in Table 12. A more detailed understanding of this was then sourced utilising a Likert scale to rank how the different constructs around each dimension were affected. The various constructs assessed per dimension are described in Table 11, with the responses captured in Table 13.

6.4.1 Employee Performance

An overall decline in job performance and productivity were reported by eight out of the fifteen participants interviewed, which supports the literature findings that toxic leadership results in reduced job performance and productivity which ultimately has an adverse effect on an organisation's overall financial profitability (Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Kompaso and Sridevi, 2008; Wollard, 2011; Jha & Jha, 2015; Kumar and Pansari, 2015).

Key reasons behind the decline in performance were cited as bosses withholding information so that the participant could not get their work done to the standard they would have preferred; a lack of guidance and support from bosses so that participants were not aware if they were performing well or not and constant rework as a result of petty criticism which took away focus from the main tasks to be completed. Four participants said that while their commitment in terms of going the extra mile declined; their overall performance and productivity remained the same due largely to their work ethic and a need to protect their brand within their organisation. Three participants mentioned an improvement in their overall performance but not necessarily in a positive way, as they felt that they had to constantly work harder to meet the unreasonable demands of their boss, resulting in an increase in performance. The role of long tenure again played a role with one participant, who said that while the boss's way of treating her was not acceptable, it forced her to think differently and she learnt a lot more in the process, which supports the findings of Jiang, Wang & Lin (2016) and Kim, Liu and Diefendorff (2015) into how long tenure reduces the adverse impact of abusive supervision on an employee's ability to effectively handle the situation as well as their overall sense of well-being in the workplace.

6.4.2 Employee Satisfaction

Employee satisfaction was found to be the dimension most negatively affected by destructive leadership behaviour, together with employee loyalty, with thirteen out of fifteen respondents reporting a decline in their overall employee satisfaction levels while working for their destructive boss. This finding supports the literature of Jiang, Wang &

Lin (2016) who posit that the career satisfaction of employees decreases when working for a destructive boss due to the emotional exhaustion they feel in having to deal with the situation. Of the various dimensions of satisfaction ranked on the Likert scale, the main driver behind reduced satisfaction levels was the fact that fourteen out of fifteen respondents reported a negative effect on their belief that management cares about employees, with ten people reporting this being a very strong negative effect.

This finding is in line with Erison, Shaw and Agabe's (2007) finding that bad leaders face no consequences from their organisations for their harmful actions. All but one participant felt that their organisations took no action in addressing the behaviour of their boss, despite numerous escalations to senior management; human resources as well as their boss's direct line manager. Two participants were even told by their boss's manager that no action will be taken against their boss as "I am too scared of her" to do anything. The role of an enabling boss was strongly evident in the research as most participants felt that their bosses were heavily protected by their own bosses and were often in cahoots with their boss whereby they both exhibited similar destructive behaviour and protected each other from facing the consequences of their behaviour. This failure on behalf of organisations to protect their employees is in line with the conducive environment aspect of the Padilla, Hogan and Kaiser's (2007) toxic triangle, and resulted in participants losing faith in their belief that management cared about their well-being, driving a decline in satisfaction levels. This was supported by the fact that eleven out of fifteen participants also reported a decline in feeling good about working at the company while working for the boss in question while ten reported a decline in feeling that they received adequate recognition for work done, be it from their boss or the broader organisation.

An interesting finding was that despite the whole team usually being subjected to mistreatment by the boss, nine participants reported that this resulted in a negative effect on feelings of closeness with people at work, with only four saying that the experience brought the team closer together, which refutes the findings of Schyns and Schilling, (2013) and Webster, Brough and Daly (2016) who say that employees often seek the support of colleagues as a coping mechanism in dealing with workplace incivility and dealing with the problem collectively helps reduce stress levels. Participants said that reasons behind this were that collectively whining about the boss was not a positive experience; the boss isolated each member of the team so that there was no connection

and collaboration between them and the participant distanced themselves from people on the team who had a good relationship with the boss.

Another significant finding was that eight participants reported that they experienced no effect on their feelings of job security while working for the boss. This was especially the case with participants at a senior level who were usually the boss's second in charge and claimed that their bosses were too reliant on them to fire them while long tenured employees said that they were well known in their organisations and felt no threat in losing their jobs as the broader organisation knew of the value they added and it would not be easy for their bosses to have them dismissed. The seven participants who did feel a negative effect on their job security were either in a role at a junior level or were new to the organisation.

6.4.3 Employee Identification

A total of ten participants reported a decline in their employee identification while working for the boss as they began questioning if they belonged at that particular company. This ties back to the "feeling that management cares about employees" aspect of employee satisfaction, as participants felt that their organisations were promoting the bad behaviour of their bosses by not taking any appropriate action to rectify the issue leading to a decline in participants being able to identify with the values of the organisation. The biggest driver in terms of the decline in employee identification was the report by ten participants who said they experienced a negative effect in terms of viewing the success of the organisation as their own as they were either detached from the organisation or felt like they didn't get to add the value they wanted and therefore did not feel like they contributed to the success of the organisation. Eight people also lost pride in speaking to others about their job and eight reported a decline in their sense of ownership mainly as they felt their bosses were so controlling that they never really were able to own a piece of work entirely.

Those who reported no effect on the different constructs of employee identification were usually long tenured employees who were ingrained into the culture of the organisation so that they felt that one person (the boss) was not representative of the entire company.

One long tenured employee even reported a positive effect along all three constructs of employee identification due to the strong improvement in financial results the boss was able to achieve even though she didn't approve of how the boss went about achieving it.

6.4.4 Employee Commitment

Effects on employee commitment were assessed based on the extra effort that employees put in to get things done as well as the sharing of new ideas and improved ways of doing things. Six employees said that their overall sense of employee commitment to delivering on job expectations decreased and they stopped putting in extra effort and working long hours as they felt "what was the point?" while working for the destructive boss. This is in line with the literature which says that reduced employee commitment is often experienced as a result of employees dealing with workplace incivility and this reduced commitment, in turn, ultimately results in eroding the bottom line of organisations (Reio, Jr. and Sanders-Reio, 2011). This finding also supports the work of Schyns and Schilling (2013) who say that counter-productive work practices are often used as a means of retaliation towards the behaviour of negative leaders. However, this finding was not conclusive as six people reported no effect on their commitment levels as they felt either that they had a reputation to protect and couldn't afford not to deliver their best or that they had no option but to deliver to keep their boss happy. Three people reported an increase in employee commitment but not in a positive way as all three reported working extra hard to either cover their bases or because they did not want to give their boss the satisfaction of winning.

The other construct of employee commitment assessed was "feeling like the company has a great deal of personal meaning to you." In this respect, ten participants felt a negative effect on feeling like their company meant something to them. This supports the literature as it was found that if employees felt an emotional connection to their jobs, they are likely to be more committed and go the extra mile to ensure organisational goals are met, which implies a reduced emotional connection is likely to result in reduced commitment (Kompaso and Sridevi, 2010). Again, it was mostly long tenured employees who reported no effect on this construct as they were able to view the boss as a separate entity to the rest of the organisation and believed that their boss's behaviour was not what the company stood for.

6.5.5 Employee Loyalty

Together with employee satisfaction, employee loyalty was the engagement dimension most negatively affected by destructive leadership behaviours, with thirteen out of fifteen employees reporting a decline in their sense of loyalty to their organisation while working for the destructive boss. This is in line with the "exiting behaviour" findings in question two where almost all employees exhibited some form of exiting behaviour in reacting to the harmful actions of their bosses. Again, only two long tenured employees said that they were with their respective companies for a long time and would not leave because of one person. These findings strongly support the literature as employee turnover is observed as one of the key consequences of reduced engagement brought about by destructive leadership behaviour (Macey and Schneider, 2008; Wollard, 2011; Schyns and Schilling, 2013; Mathieu and Babiak, 2016).

In summary, the research indicates that all five dimensions of female employee engagement are negatively affected by destructive leadership behaviour, with further insights highlighting that employee satisfaction and loyalty are the two dimensions most adversely affected by the harmful actions of bad bosses. The research also indicated that tenure plays a strong role in mitigating the negative effects on employee engagement brought about by working for a leader exhibiting destructive behavioural traits.

6.6 Conclusion

The qualitative research findings into female employees' perceptions of destructive leaders support the existing literature on what is believed to be destructive leadership traits and behaviours from the perception of subordinates and can thus be used to contribute to the existing literature on this topic. The research also generated new insights into how women react to destructive leaders and supports the existing literature claiming that all dimensions of employee engagement are adversely affected by destructive leadership behaviour.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter consolidates the main findings of the qualitative research undertaken in order to answer the three research questions described in Chapter 3 around female employees' perceptions of destructive leaders, their reactions to the negative behaviour of these leaders and the resulting effects on their employee engagement in the workplace. It also highlights the managerial implications of the research, revisits the research limitations and suggests areas for future research around the topic of destructive leadership and employee engagement.

7.1 Principal Findings

7.1.1 Female Employees' Perceptions of Destructive Leadership

Regarding what women in the workplace perceive to be harmful and destructive behaviours on the part of their bosses, the research found evidence of six behavioural categories in answer to this question, namely, abusive; manipulative; managerial incompetence; arrogant; intolerant and insecure. Abusive behavioural traits dominated the findings and were driven by the fact that women felt that their destructive bosses were bullying and made them feel both incompetent and unimportant in the workplace. Manipulative behavioural traits was the second largest category identified and described all the ways in which female employees felt that their bosses were immoral; deceptive and controlling. The most frequent responses driving this category were that female employees felt that their destructive bosses manipulated their performance scores without reason and adequate feedback; they were prone to saying one thing yet doing another and they constantly tried to control all aspects of their lives.

Managerial incompetence was the third largest category identified and explained the constructs around how women found that their bosses lacked the necessary technical and people skills to be effective in their roles as managers as well as their behavioural and personality deficits that drove their destructive behaviour. Key to this finding was that all the women interviewed mentioned that their bosses lacked the communication and interpersonal skills required to effectively understand and manage people with a lack

of emotional intelligence and empathy being a key personality deficit identified. Arrogance on the part of destructive bosses took on two dimensions, power distance tactics as well as egotistical behaviour with narcissism and a constant belief of always being right and knowing best being the dominant findings.

These four identified behavioural categories of abusive; manipulative; managerial incompetence and arrogant fully support the literature findings of what employees in general perceive to be harmful leadership behaviour, closely aligning with what Shaw, Erikson and Harvey (2011) found to be the worst type of destructive leader i.e. a leader who exhibited the following characteristics: "acting in a brutal bullying manner; lying and other unethical behaviour; micro-managing and over controlling; inability to deal with interpersonal conflict or similar situations; not having the skills to match the job and unwillingness to change mind and listen to others" (Shaw, Erikson & Harvey, 2011, p. 586). However, from the perspective of female employees, two additional destructive behavioural categories emerged from the research, these were "intolerant and "insecure" behaviours on the part of their destructive bosses. The "intolerant" category highlights the fact that women in the workplace often feel discriminated against on the basis of their gender, often being told by male bosses that they are too emotional and need to learn to control themselves better and feeling that on the whole, male colleagues are treated with more respect.

Although Mehta and Maheshwari (2014) recognise that vulnerable leaders often perceive threats to their position of power and status and thus resort to harmful tactics to hold onto their position, the issue of insecurity being a trait of destructive leaders is seldom mentioned in the literature and is thus a new insight gained into understanding destructive leadership behaviour from the viewpoint of female employees. The research found that insecurity was evident in the behaviour of destructive leaders in the form of constant anxiousness, paranoia, a negative attitude and taking things personally, all of which drove feelings of being threatened and resorting to destructive behavioural practices to manage the perceived threats.

7.1.2 Female Employees Reactions to Destructive Leadership Behaviour

Little literature currently exists to explain how women in the workplace react to being faced with a harmful and destructive boss. The research thus contributes to gaining an improved understanding of the topic and found that "exiting behaviour" was the overall key finding in answering this question. All fifteen women interviewed either exited the organisation or the role reporting to the boss or attempted to look for a new role while working for the destructive boss. How women reacted to their bad bosses was also a found to be a function of their personalities, their seniority levels in terms of their roles as well as their length of tenure within their organisations. It was found that women who were either naturally extroverted, held a senior role or had been with the organisation for a number of years (or some combination of these three factors) were more open to being confrontational with their bosses and challenging their actions and behaviour while women who were more introverted; held a junior role or were new to the organisation tended to be more submissive and did not react to their bosses destructive behaviour.

An interesting finding was that the majority of women attempted to escalate their boss and bring attention to their harmful behaviour in an attempt to deal with the situation, yet no action was taken by the broader organisation to hold the bosses accountable for their actions, with the bosses' direct managers playing a key role in protecting the boss and ensuring that they did not face reprimand for their actions.

7.1.3 The Effect of Destructive Bosses on Female Employee Engagement

The effect of working for a destructive boss was assessed along five dimensions of employee engagement, "employee performance; employee commitment; employee satisfaction; employee identification; and employee loyalty" (Kumar and Pansari, 2015, p. 68). While all five dimensions were found to be negatively affected while working for a destructive boss, employee loyalty and employee satisfaction were the two dimensions most negatively affected, with thirteen of fifteen respondents reporting a decrease in loyalty and satisfaction while working for the bad boss. The finding on decreased employee loyalty aligns with the "exiting behaviour" pattern on assessing reactions to destructive leadership behaviour while the decrease in employee satisfaction was driven by a decline in employees' "belief that management cares about employees" mainly due to the fact that no action was taken against the bosses for their destructive behaviour by the broader organisation.

7.2 Implications for Management

Maintaining high levels of employee engagement have been found to positively affect an organisation's bottom line due to increased productivity, commitment; satisfaction, creativity and lower turnover intentions on the part of employees (Herman, Olivo, & Gioia, 2003; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Kompaso and Sridevi, 2010; Wollard, 2011; Kumar and Pansari, 2015). As the research shows that destructive leadership behaviour adversely affects employee engagement around all five dimensions, it is imperative for management to actively ensure that adequate mechanisms are in place to recognise and effectively deal with destructive leadership within the organisation in order to ensure long term sustainability.

With women constituting an increasing proportion of the global workforce, diversity within an organisation is increasingly becoming a strong driver of organisational sustainability and ensuring the needs of female employees are effectively met in the workplace therefore becomes a key managerial priority. A worrying finding in the research is that organisations don't seem to be treating the issue of destructive leadership and corporate bullying against female employees with the adequate levels of attention, with almost all the women interviewed reporting that no action was taken against their destructive boss to remedy their behaviour and ensure a more conducive work environment for female employees.

It is therefore recommended to senior management and executives that in order to drive greater employee loyalty and productivity from female employees, all reported incidents of managerial bullying and abuse be recognised and thoroughly investigated to establish the validity of such claims. Should it be found that managers have been behaving in a manner that is harmful to the psychological, physical or emotional well-being of employees or actually detrimental to the organisation as a whole, on a financial or reputational level, then adequate action be taken to remedy the situation. A precedent should be set within the organisation that harmful, destructive leadership behaviour will not be enabled and tolerated and employees should be made to feel that they are working in a safe environment where management do actually care for their well-being, as management ultimately need to recognise that strong financial results obtained

through negative means is not as sustainable in the long-term as the results driven by a diverse, loyal and motivated workforce.

7.3 Limitations of the Research

Further to the research limitations described in Chapter 4, the following additional limitations have been identified:

- The researcher was not experienced in carrying out qualitative interviews, as such the data collected from the interviews could have been affected by the biases and shortcomings of the researcher.
- The limited time frame meant that only fifteen women could be interviewed for the research. Had more time been available, a greater number of participants could have contributed to the study, thus increasing the validity of the results.
- The sensitive nature of the study might have led to some participants being more guarded in their responses, particularly where they were still working for the boss being discussed.

7.4 Suggestions for Future Research

As stated by Chua and Murray (2015, p. 292) "whether female and male followers employ similar criteria on which to base their perception of a leader as destructive has not been explored." As such, it is recommended that destructive leadership, reactions to destructive leadership and its effect on employee engagement be studied from the viewpoint of male workers as well, in order to understand if there really are significant differences in the way that the sexes view and react to bad leaders or if Singh, Nadim and Ezzedeen (2012) were correct in saying that there were no significant differences in the way that men and women perceive bad bosses.

A key research finding that warrants further investigation, is the role of long tenure in limiting the effects of bad leadership on employee engagement. The research found that long tenured employees were more inclined to believe that the actions of the destructive

bosses were not representative of the entire organisation and that management really do care about the well-being of their employees. As such, their engagement levels were less affected by the destructive actions of their bosses and they displayed greater employee loyalty, claiming that they would not leave the organisation because of the actions of one person.

As per Padilla, Hogan and Kaiser's (2007) toxic triangle enablers of destructive leadership, evidence was found to support all three dimensions of the toxic triangle, with participants mentioning that the environment of the organisation, followers that the destructive leader was good to and the personality of the destructive leader themselves all worked together to enable the behaviour of the leader. However, what is seldom mentioned is the role of the boss of the destructive leader in protecting and enabling the negative behaviour of the boss. The majority of research participants claimed that their boss's boss played a key role in ensuring that the boss was never made to repent for their actions, either because they were very similar people and thus shared a close relationship; because they mirrored the behaviour of their boss thus ensuring their support; because they achieved results regardless of how they behaved, with the outcome being more important to their boss than how the results were achieved or because their boss was too scared of them to actually reprimand them in any way. As per Figure 4 below, the overarching role that the destructive boss's boss plays in enabling their behaviour is a key finding that warrants further study.

Figure 4: The Enabling Role of The Boss's Boss in the Toxic Triangle of Destructive Leadership
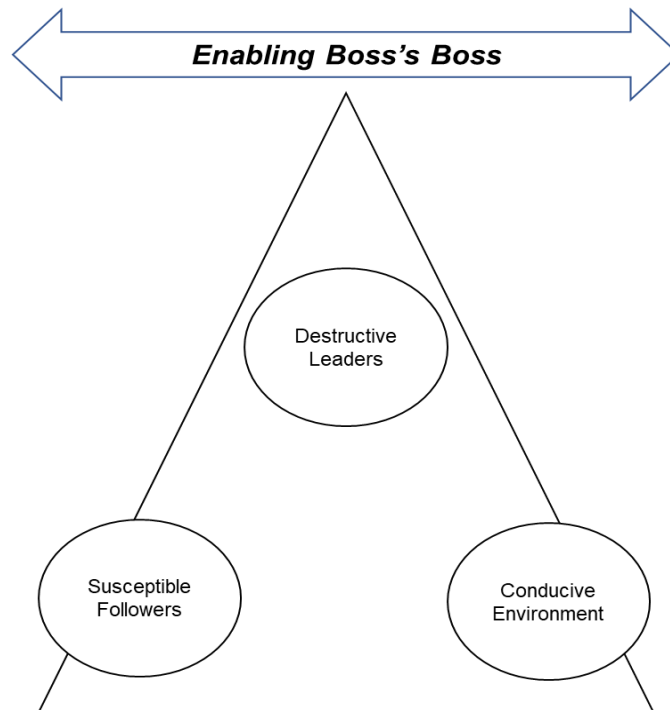
7.5 Concluding Remarks

The objectives of the qualitative research undertaken, as described in Chapter 1, were to determine what female employees perceive to be destructive leadership behaviours; how they tend to react to these behaviours and how their employee engagement levels are affected while working for a boss exhibiting these behaviours. In achieving these objectives, it was found that female employees tend to find bosses who are abusive; manipulative; incompetent; arrogant; intolerant and insecure to be destructive to their well-being in the workplace. They tend to react to this behaviour by escalating their destructive bosses to the broader organisation in the hope that action is taken to rectify the situation. They also exhibit "exiting" behaviour, where they look to either leave the role reporting to the boss or they attempt to leave the organisation entirely.

Working for a destructive boss negatively affects all the dimensions of the female worker's employee engagement but employee satisfaction and loyalty are the two

dimensions most negatively affected and are driven by the fact that they feel that management do not care about the well-being of employees as often no action is taken against the destructive boss for their harmful behaviour. The implication of the research is that management cannot ignore the needs of women in the workplace as they are increasingly playing a greater role in driving financial performance and organisational diversity has now become key to ensuring the long-term sustainability of an organisation. Consequently, management needs to ensure that adequate mechanisms are put in place to prevent the support of a toxic culture that both enables and rewards destructive leadership behaviour while ensuring that those who do exhibit such behaviours are made to face the consequences of their actions so that, ultimately, a safe working environment is provided for all female employees.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Invitation to Participate in Research

Date: ————————————

Name: Start Time:

Age: End Time:

Race:

Date:

_____

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today to participate in this research project entitled "The effect of destructive bosses on female employee engagement." It is truly appreciated.

The aim of this interview is to discuss your experience with working for a boss that you perceived as being destructive in some way. The purpose of the research is as follows:

- To gain an understanding of what female employees perceive to be destructive leadership traits
- To understand their reactions to managers displaying these traits
- To understand how the traits identified as being destructive affect the various constructs of the female worker's employee engagement in the workplace

Please remember that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the option of ending the interview at any time. Furthermore, please be advised that identifiers of both yourself and the boss in question will neither be requested nor reported. The data gathered will therefore be stored without any identifiers. With that in mind, the interview is meant to be exploratory and conversational, I thus encourage you to be as open and honest as possible in discussing your thoughts and experiences.

Before we begin, may I kindly ask that you sign the consent form and confirm your permission to electronically record the interview?

Appendix 2: Interview Guideline

1) Please describe your negative experience with the boss in question

2) What were the different behavioural traits exhibited by the boss during this time that led to you perceiving them as a destructive boss?

3) How did you react to this behaviour displayed by the boss?

4) People often react to destructive leadership behaviours in different ways, with some behaviours having an effect on employees (either positive or negative) and others not. The aim of the next part of the interview is to understand how your experience affected your employee engagement around five dimensions.

- Employee Performance
  o Was your job performance and productivity either adversely or positively affected while working for this boss?
  o Please explain

- Employee Satisfaction
  o Was your overall job satisfaction either adversely or positively affected while working for this boss?
  o Please explain

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- Employee Identification with the organisation
  - Was your overall sense of identifying with the whole company either adversely or positively affected while working for this boss?
  - Please explain

- Employee Commitment
  - Did your commitment to delivering on your job expectations increase or decrease while working for this boss?
  - Please explain

- Employee Loyalty
  - Did you end up leaving this organisation? How long after you experienced this boss' behaviour
  - If so, was it as a direct result of the boss's behaviour?

5) Is there anything further you would like to add?

The aim of the next part of the interview is to understand on a scale of 1 to 7, how the destructive leadership behaviours discussed in the interview affected the various constructs of your employee engagement while working for the boss in question.

Key

1   Strong Positive Effect

2-3   Positive Effect

4   No Effect

5-6   Negative Effect

7   Strong Negative Effect

                                                Rating

Employee Performance

Job performance and productivity

Employee Satisfaction

Feelings of closeness with people at work

Recognition for work done

Feeling secure about your job

Feeling good about working at this company

Belief that management cares about employees

Employee Identification

Pride in speaking to others about your job

Sense of ownership

Viewing the success of the organisation as your own

Employee Commitment

Commitment to delivering on job expectations

Feeling like the organisation has a great deal of personal
meaning

Employee Loyalty

Turnover intentions

Is there anything else you want to tell me about this experience?

Thank you very much for sharing your experience with me. Please rest assured that all
that you have told me will be kept completely confidential.

Appendix 3: Informed Consent Letter

Dear Participant,

I am conducting research on how women in the workplace perceive destructive bosses and the resulting effect of working for a destructive boss on female employee engagement. The interview is likely to take approximately an hour of your time and would involve discussing your experience of working for a boss you perceived as exhibiting destructive behaviour.

Please note that your participation in this interview is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. All data will be reported without identifiers i.e. neither the identity of yourself nor the boss in question will be reported on and you are free to use a pseudonym for the boss in question during the interview.

If you have any concerns, please contact my research supervisor, Margie Sutherland, or myself. Our details are provided below.

Researcher Name: Judika Maharaj

Email: 17386323@mygibs.co.za

Phone: 0767275185

Research Supervisor Signature: ———————————————

Email: sutherlandm@gibs.co.za

Phone: 0731706917

Signature of Participant: ———————————————

Date: ————————————

Signature of Researcher: ———————————————

Appendix 4: Ethical Clearance Letter

Gordon
Institute
of Business
Science
University
of Pretoria

14 June 2018

Maharaj Judika

Dear Judika

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

Appendix 5: Summary of Research Participants

Participant	Age	Race	Gender of Boss
1	45	White	Male
2	30	Black	Female
3	31	White	Male
4	37	White	Female
5	38	Indian	Male
6	33	White	Female
7	38	Indian	Female
8	38	Indian	Female
9	37	Indian	Male
10	33	Black	Male
11	26	White	Male
12	38	Black	Male
13	34	Indian	Female
14	34	Indian	Female
15	34	Black	Female

Appendix 6: List of Categories and Constructs (Destructive Behavioural Traits)

a) Abusive (Bullying)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Treated people like objects not human beings	7
2	Constantly clock watched the team	6
2	Rude & humiliated me in front of others	6
4	Constantly broke me down	5
4	Was demanding and made unreasonable requests	5
6	Made it very difficult to take leave	4
7	Behaved like an adult bully	3
7	Was a tyrant & facetious	3
9	Constantly tried to keep me busy	2
9	Destroyed team morale	2
9	Not allowed to take a lunch break and personal calls	2
12	Was passive aggressive towards me	1
12	Used to target specific people	1
12	Invaded personal office space	1
12	Did not respect your personal time	1
12	Always threatened me that she would report me to HR	1
12	Regularly would ask each person on the team what value they were adding	1
12	Never delegates my work when I'm on leave then says I am always behind	1

b) Abusive (Made me feel incompetent)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Was constantly critical and petty	12
2	Made me feel look and feel incompetent	5
3	Made me question my competence and my abilities	4
3	Made me do unnecessary rework	4
3	Micromanaged me	4
6	Took away my authority to make decisions	3
6	Blamed me for everything that went wrong	3
8	Nothing I did was good enough	2

9	Constantly told me what I was doing wrong	1
9	Told me I didn't know what I was doing	1
9	Made me constantly justify why I rated my performance highly	1
9	Said she has no idea why I was hired	1

c) Abusive (Made me feel unimportant)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Was belittling/demeaning/undermining and disrespectful of my contributions & opinions	13
2	Spoke over me	2
2	Did not involve me in important team decisions	2
2	Had no time for me & was dismissive	2
5	Insensitive to what I was saying	1
5	Made me feel like I was wasting his time	1
5	Acted indifferent towards me	1
5	Never gave me his undivided attention	1
5	Told me I couldn't handle feedback and criticism	1
5	Did not let me add the value I wanted to add	1
5	Picked on my dressing	1
5	Criticised me on a personal level	1

d) Abusive (Unsupportive)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Blocked my career growth	9
2	Did not support me studying	3
3	Did not give me any recognition for my work	2
4	Did not acknowledge my study leave	1
4	Did not let people take time off in a crisis	1

e) Abusive (Unfair)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Practised favouritism amongst certain people	3
2	Did things others were not allowed to do	1

f) Manipulative (Immoral)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Manipulated my performance scores	8
2	Made sure they had the support of certain people	4
2	Spoke to others negatively about me behind my back	4
2	Withheld information so I couldn't do my work	4
5	Set me/the team up for failure	3
6	Demands work be done urgently then does not review and release it on time	2
6	Isolated each person on the team so there was no collaboration	2
6	Tried to get me fired	2
6	Tried to sabotage me	2
10	Pitted teams against each other	1
10	Tried to find out your weaknesses then use them against you	1
10	Told other people that he wanted me out	1
10	Tried to coerce me to leave	1
10	Got someone else to offer me a job so I'd leave	1
10	Downgraded my job role and didn't tell me why	1
10	Tried to get people to turn against me	1
10	Tried to bring out the worst in me	1
10	Agreed with me one on one but went against me at meetings	1

g) Manipulative (Controlling)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Constantly tried to control people and situations	4
1	Expected me to just do what they wanted, not think	4
3	Always needed to know where you were and what you were doing	2
3	Not allowed to engage with anyone outside the team without her permission	2
5	Command and control attitude	1
5	Needed to get their permission for everything	1
5	Tries to control your whole life	1

5	Wanted to be copied on all communications	1

h) Manipulative (Deceptive)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Said one thing but did another	7
2	Passed off my work and ideas as their own	5
3	Constantly covered up their bad behaviour	1
3	Was superficially charming	1
3	Starts off being good to you then slowly shows her true colours	1
3	Was a very good actor	1
3	Very convincing - could make you believe anything	1

i) Managerial Incompetence (Technical Skills)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Lacked certain skills required to do the job	4
2	Poor decision-making skills	3
2	Could never quite deliver on expectations & get the job done	3
2	Damaged the reputation & growth of the business due to incompetence	3
5	Did not understand the system & environment	2
6	Highly inefficient	1
6	Poor project management skills	1
6	Didn't deliver any real change just did superficial things	1

j) Managerial Incompetence (People Skills)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Lacked communication and interpersonal (people) skills	15
2	Never provided guidance and constructive feedback	6
3	Did not foster teamwork and collaboration	4
4	Could not effectively interact and build relationships with clients	3
5	Lacked leadership skills	2
5	Did not enable & frustrated the team	2

k) Managerial Incompetence (Personality)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Lacked emotional intelligence	10
2	Lacked self-insight and awareness	4
3	Exhibited mental stability issues	3
3	Lacked flexibility and the willingness to adapt	3

l) Managerial Incompetence (Behaviour)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Erratic behaviour	4
2	Began reflecting the bad behaviours of their boss	2
2	Was constantly late & never there to authorise decisions	2

m) Arrogant (Egotistical)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Always felt they knew everything & were always right	7
2	Highly narcissistic	6
3	Didn't like being questioned/challenged	4
4	Could not admit that he doesn't know & ask for help	3
5	Could not see the fault in their ways	2
5	Didn't like being out shorn	2
5	Felt she was better than everyone else	2
8	Acted like a one-man team	1

n) Arrogant (Power Distance Tactics)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Was power and status driven	4
2	Was very hierarchical	3
3	Never took accountability for their behaviour	1
3	Did not trust their own people to get the job done, used consultants	1
3	Told the team she's not here to make friends	1

o) Intolerant (Gender)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Never found fault with men, only women	2
1	Said women are too emotional	2
1	Was female, yet treated women poorly compared to men	2
4	Felt threatened by other women therefore did not support them	1

p) Intolerant (Race)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Was good to people of their own race and bad to those who weren't	4
2	Did not want people who were not of their race to progress	1

q) Intolerant (Religion)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Not tolerant of religious leave	1

r) Insecure (Anxious)

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Easily felt threatened	6
2	Constantly felt anxious and paranoid	1
2	Always had a negative attitude	1
2	Took things personally	1

Appendix 7: List of Categories and Constructs (Reactions to Destructive Leadership Behaviour)

Category	Construct	Frequency
Did not react	Didn't want to give them the satisfaction of getting a reaction out of me	3
	Was submissive to the abusive behaviour	1
	Ignored the behaviour as much as possible	1
Escalated the boss	Escalated the boss to their manager & HR	9
	Raised my concerns in his 360-degree feedback appraisal	2
Built a coalition	Acted as the buffer for the rest of the team	5
	Tried to get the team together to escalate	1
	Grew closer to colleagues as a support system	1
Lost Confidence	Lost self confidence	3
	Started doubting myself and my abilities	2
	Felt like a failure	1
	Was really hard on myself	1
Was combative & confrontational	Confronted him/her about their behaviour	4
	Constantly argued and disagreed with her	1
	Stood up for myself & fought my battle	1
Exiting behaviour	Left the organisation	6
	Looked for another position	4
	Left the role	2

	Constantly considered leaving the organisation	1
	Started questioning if I made the right choice taking this job	1
Covered my bases	Overworked to cover myself	2
	Started documenting all incidents that occurred	1
	Copied everyone on correspondence with her	1
	Started going to her manager to get approval for things	1
Tried to react positively	Had an open, honest conversation to address the issues	3
	Took it as a learning experience	2
	Adapted to the situation - learnt how to behave with her based on her moods	1
	Offered to teach him how to treat me better	1
	Killed her with kindness	1
	Initially felt sorry for her	1
Passive Aggressive Behaviour	I'd pretend to be busy/delay doing things so she doesn't give me more work	3
	Stopped putting in extra effort	2
	Became bitter towards the organisation	1
	I was passive aggressive towards her	1
	Looked for reasons not to go to work	1
Emotional Reaction	I cried	6
	Felt drained and lacked energy	5
	I was completely detached & disengaged	4
	Felt constantly stressed out & anxious	4
	I felt helpless & disempowered	3

	I took the negativity home & it affected my home life	2
	I was emotionally drained & depressed	2
	I felt like I was losing the person I was	2
	Triggered a lot of health issues	1
	Fainted from over working & neglecting myself	1