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Strategies to Resolve Toxic Leadership Styles Which Impede Employee Innovation

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Lilly Abdulrohman Mohamed

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Strategies to Resolve Toxic Leadership Styles Which Impede Employee Innovation

by

Lilly Abdulrohman Mohamed

MS, IE Business School, 2013

BS, American University in Dubai, 2012

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

May 2021

Abstract

Toxic leaders micromanage, threaten, and discourage employees from sharing their ideas, causing a decline in innovation. Export-based company executives need to understand how to resolve toxic leadership to enhance their companies' performance. Grounded in the transformational leadership theory, the purpose of this multiple case study was to explore strategies export-based company leaders use to resolve toxic leadership styles. The participants were four senior and frontline leaders from export-based companies in Ethiopia. Data were collected from semistructured interviews and document reviews and were analyzed with thematic data analysis. Four themes emerged: open and transparent communication, sustained counseling and training, teamwork and joint decision-making, and incentive and review frameworks. One key recommendation was to use sustained counseling and training to resolve toxic leadership styles. The implications for positive social change include the potential to improving the well-being and creativity of employees and favoring the creation of innovative products and services.

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Dedication

I dedicate this paper to my mother who has supported my love for education since the very beginning. I thank her for carrying the weight of the world to allow me to achieve all my goals. Growing up, she always used to teach me that I should be dedicated to my educational goals, as she is dedicated to making the best life possible for us both. When she saw me off to my first class in college, she said "My father used to say that he would sell the clothes off his back to send his children to school, and I, also, make that same commitment to you." Growing up, despite how busy my mom was, she dropped me off to school every day, was the first parent present come pick-up time, and showed up for me in countless ways, and still does, every single day of my life. A family of two is not only a family; it is the strongest bond there is. I am proud to be the daughter of the strongest woman that I know. I thank my mother, Alem Mengstu Meles, for her never-ending love and support. For always being my source of strength and comfort. I thank my mother for teaching me the value of love, for showing me to preach love over hatred, to do no harm to anyone no matter the circumstances, and most of all for teaching me the love of God. I wish to take these lessons of God, love, strength, and hard-work to make my mother proud and continue the family business of bringing light and joy to everyone around us. Of my entire blessings in life, having you as a mother is the greatest one. I hope and pray I can make you as proud as you make me and to one day become a resemblance of the magnificent woman that you are. There has never been and will never be a love like I have for you: I love you beyond any words. Simply put, you are my sun; my world not only revolves around you, you are also the light that brightens it.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Toxic leadership is amongst the harmful types of leadership styles. Toxic leadership is characterized by destructive behaviors of leaders towards their subordinates (Hadadian & Zarei, 2016). Bhandarker and Rai (2019) stated toxic leaders are divisive, act without integrity, and threaten the security and self-esteem of their employees. Hadadian and Zarei (2016) added that toxic leaders make unrealistic work demands and insult their employees. The negative characteristics of toxic leaders discourage employees' creativity, as employees are afraid to think independently and speak out. Employees who work for toxic leaders are discouraged from introducing positive changes to the workplace. Toxic leadership is detrimental to the well-being of employees and the success of organizations.

Background of the Problem

The types of leaders that are present in organizations directly influence the organizational environment through their leadership style. It is relevant to assign leaders that are conclusive to positive organizational outcomes, such as increased competitiveness. Some leadership styles are detrimental to the well-being of employees and positive organizational outcomes. One such type of leadership is toxic leadership; Hadadian and Zarei (2016) discussed that toxic leadership occurs when a leader exhibits destructive behavior, such as unnecessarily blaming employees, making unreasonable work demands, insulting employees, and undermining employees' achievements. It is important to understand the strategies leaders use to resolve toxic leadership in the workplace.

In contrast to negative leadership styles, good leadership styles enable employees and their organizations to strive. Elrehail et al. (2017) stated that proper leadership can foster a conducive workplace atmosphere that supports employee innovation. Leadership styles, such as transformational leadership, can lead to increased product and process innovation. Employee innovation is one of the elements that enable companies to strive in today's competitive business environment. Company leaders need to focus on undertaking the necessary hiring and training practices to resolve toxic leadership in the workplace. Leaders need to eliminate toxic leadership, given the detrimental role of toxic leadership towards employee innovation.

Problem Statement

Toxic leadership leads to a decline in job contentment and an increase in stress levels, absenteeism, and intent to leave (Labrague et al., 2020). As a result, positive workplace attributes, such as innovation and the ability to exercise creative freedom, decline in the presence of toxic leadership (Elrehail et al., 2017). Paul (2017) stated that 20% of leaders reported that they perceived their superiors to demonstrate toxic leadership in the workplace. Toxic leadership leads to negative feelings in employees, such as feelings of violation, uncertainty, belittling, and frustration (Malik et al., 2017). The general business problem is that toxic leadership negatively affects the level of innovation within organizations. The specific business problem is that some export-based company leaders in Ethiopia lack strategies to resolve toxic leadership styles, which impede employee innovation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies which export-based company leaders use to resolve toxic leadership styles, which impede employee innovation. The target population was senior and frontline leaders in two firms, one large and one medium, located in the Eastern Shewa Zone of Ethiopia who used strategies to resolve toxic leadership management styles. Avoiding toxic leadership in the workplace supports the advancement of a productive workplace environment. Toxic leadership hinders innovations, so the ability to increase organizational innovation through eliminating toxic leadership has positive implications for the Ethiopian economy. Increased innovation should be constructive to Ethiopia as the increased availability of innovative products, regarding added functionality or reduced cost can improve the living standard of the Ethiopian population.

Nature of the Study

Researchers need to select the appropriate research method and design based on the topic and nature of the research inquiry. The three primary research methods are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Yin, 2017). Quantitative research methods focus on using numerical data to empirically measure facts (Leppink, 2017). In quantitative research, researchers test hypotheses to answer the research question (House, 2018). I did not use the quantitative method as I neither collected numerical data nor tested hypotheses about variables' relationships or groups' differences. In qualitative research, researchers use words rather than numbers and qualitative research is more subjective (Walker & Boyer, 2018). Mixed methods combine quantitative and qualitative

research within a single study (Saunders et al., 2015). I did not use a mixed methods approach for this study as the quantitative portion was not necessary for conducting this research. Yin (2017) noted using the qualitative method enables for in-depth exploration of a topic. Qualitative research enables researchers to obtain rich and in-depth data (Farooq & de Villiers, 2017). A qualitative method is the best choice for the planned research on the strategies export-based company leaders use to resolve toxic leadership styles, as using a qualitative method enables an in-depth understanding of the topic.

Given the qualitative nature of my research on the strategies export-based company leaders use to resolve toxic leadership styles, I considered three qualitative designs: case study, ethnography, and phenomenology. A case study is a qualitative research design that is an intensive exploration of a person, group of people, or units such as organizations (Yin, 2017). Ethnography is used to offer a detailed description of the cultural practices of groups of people (House, 2018). Collecting data using the ethnography design is challenging as it is time consuming and it depends on the level of openness of the participants (Saunders et al., 2015). Phenomenology is a qualitative research design used to understand how people experience a given phenomenon (Walker & Boyer, 2018). Similar to ethnography, phenomenology is time consuming and gaining participants' trust is critical (House, 2018). I used a multiple case study design to explore the strategies which export-based companies' leaders in Ethiopia use to resolve toxic leadership management styles, which impede employee innovation. Yin (2017) discussed that multiple case studies are separate experiments on related topics; multiple case studies allow for replication and consequently several empirical evidences. I used interviews,

with open-ended questions, and document review to obtain descriptive results. Open-ended questions are designed such that these questions cannot be answered with a brief yes or no, enabling interviewees to offer explanatory answers (Saunders et al., 2015). I better understood the strategies leaders use to resolve toxic leadership styles in different organizations by conducting interviews with leaders of different organizations.

Research Question

What strategies do export-based company leaders use to resolve toxic leadership styles, which impede employee innovation?

Interview Questions

1. Based on your experience, how did you resolve toxic leadership styles to enhance employee innovation in the workplace?

2. How did you determine the effectiveness of the strategies for resolving toxic leadership styles within your organization?

3. What were the key barriers to implementing the strategies for resolving toxic leadership styles?

4. How did you overcome the key barriers to implementing the strategies for resolving toxic leadership styles within your organization?

5. Would you like to add anything further regarding strategies you use to resolve toxic leadership management styles?

Conceptual Framework

Transformational leadership was the conceptual framework of this research. Burns (1978) developed the concept of transformational leadership and stated that it is a

leadership style that appeals to the ideals and values of followers. Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) added that transformational leadership is a leadership style in which the leader creates a vision for organizational change and inspires followers to accomplish these visions alongside him or her. Kim and Yoon (2015) noted the role of transformational leadership in encouraging and facilitating organizational creativity. In comparison, toxic leadership is a type of leadership that violates the leader-follower relationship by resulting in increased job stress and decreased ability to innovate amongst employees (Hoffman & Sergio, 2020). Business leaders should refrain from using toxic leadership and adopt the transformational leadership style.

The presence of transformational leadership in the workplace has positive implications for employee innovation. Employing transformational leadership can increase employee innovation by allowing followers to take the initiative and exercise their creative abilities (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). The principles of transformational leadership are idealized attributes, idealized behaviors, inspirational motivation, stimulation, and individualized consideration (Burns, 1978). Kim and Yoon (2015) explained that the absence of these characteristics of transformational leadership in a leader's behavior reduces organizational innovation. According to Kim and Yoon, transformation leadership focuses on fostering a positive workplace environment. Transformation leadership is a viable conceptual framework for helping leaders to mitigate the role of toxic leadership in the workplace, and this framework enabled me to understand their successful strategies.

Operational Definitions

Authentic leadership: Authentic leadership is a leadership style that focuses on high moral character. Authentic leaders exercise a positive moral perspective, self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency, and positive psychological capital (Hoch et al., 2018).

Authoritarian leadership: Authoritarian leadership is a leadership style based on commanding leaders that demand unquestioned following from subordinates and impose strict workplace discipline (Guo et al., 2018).

Frontline leader: A frontline leader is directly accountable for the production of goods and services, as well as the management of clerical staff and shop floor employees (Gorder, 2015). Frontline leaders are also called line managers, office managers, and supervisors (Gorder, 2015).

Senior leader: Senior leaders are responsible for activities related to overlooking and guiding the overall performance of their organizations (Reimer et al., 2018). Senior leaders need to have the experience and skills required to direct the other leaders within the workplace to achieve organizational goals (Reimer et al., 2018).

Toxic leadership: Toxic leadership is a type of leadership that negatively affects employees and discourages innovation by violating the leader-follower relationship; toxic leadership is also known as destructive or bad leadership (Hadadian & Zarei, 2016).

Transactional leadership: Transactional leadership is a leadership style based on a system of rewards and reprimands based on employee performance; transactional leaders introduce structure, organization, and performance tracking (Ma & Jiang, 2018).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Researchers need to make certain assumptions throughout the research process. Assumptions in research are the ideas that the researcher and audience assume to be true given the research context (Ary et al., 2018). It is necessary to mitigate the effect of assumptions, given that assumptions are not verifiable. The first assumption was that the interviews will enable me to answer the research question. The interview sessions I held with the participants did allow me to answer the research question. The second assumption was that the research participants answered the interview questions truthfully and that the videoconferencing was convenient for the participants. Saunders et al. (2015) stated that research participants might exhibit social-desirability bias. I explained to the research participants that no answers were right or wrong to encourage them to share their viewpoints openly. Videoconferencing was comfortable and suitable for the participants and we managed to interact well. The third assumption was that I minimized interviewer bias through understanding my viewpoints before the interviews take place. During the interviews, I did not ask any leading questions and I was able to set aside my own biases. The fourth assumption was that the research participants had an understanding of the toxic and transformational leadership styles. I offered a brief definition of toxic and transformational leadership during the interview. I found that the participants understood the topic well and were able to answer the questions. The fifth and final assumption was that export-based companies increased exposure to international management practices and terminology. The interview sessions went well

and the participants were familiar with the terminology used. I made the five assumptions

listed above.

Limitations

All research projects are limited by elements that are beyond researchers'

influence. Limitations are potential weaknesses that are normally out of the researcher's

control (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Limitations arise from the decisions that

researchers make, such as the choice of research design. The first limitation was that I

collected data from two companies and four research participants in total. The viewpoints

of the participants might not represent the viewpoint of the larger population. The second

limitation was that I only contacted leaders that worked in export-based companies. The

third limitation was the presence of interviewer bias. At the time of this study, I was a

working professional in the Ethiopian business environment. I had to make sure that my

viewpoints did not affect the study's findings. The fourth limitation was that I only

considered the economic and cultural context in Ethiopia. Charoensukmongkol (2016)

shared how cultural context is needed to make sense of organizational complexities and

respond effectively.

Delimitations

Research projects are shaped by the decisions made by researchers. Delimitations

are the definitions or boundaries set for the study by the researcher (Theofanidis &

Fountouki, 2018). The companies that I selected were in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The

companies were export-based, and I excluded all companies that did not have an export

division. I focused on export-based companies, as I assumed that they increased exposure

to international management practices and terminology. I excluded participants that were not in leadership positions as the aim of this research was to understand how leaders perceive toxic leadership, as it related to organizational innovation. I selected participants that had worked at the company for at least 3 years. Tenure of 3 years or more was necessary, as it enabled me to understand how the level of innovation had either increased or decreased under the leadership of the research participant. Implementing organizational culture change, such as focusing on reducing the presence of toxic leadership in the workplace, takes anywhere between 90 days and 3 years ("How long does it take," 2016). I considered the maximum of 3 years as the ideal tenure of my participants as they had a better understanding of the practices that existed within their workplace. I excluded participants that were under the age of 18 years, as this was the legal age of consent in Ethiopia.

Significance of the Study

The business environment is more competitive than ever. Company executives need to constantly implement means of achieving a sustainable advantage in the marketplace through innovation (Retkoceri & Kurteshi, 2019). Innovation is one of the ways companies can ensure continued success. Company leaders need to focus on encouraging leadership styles that enhance innovation. Semuel et al. (2017) stated that the types of leadership present in the workplace directly affect the level of employee creativity and organizational innovation. Hadadian and Zarei (2016) stated that the presence of toxic leadership in the workplace diminishes employees' creative ability. Toxic leadership is negative to workplace innovation and leaders need to consider

leadership styles that prevent or resolve toxic leadership in the workplace. Leaders can raise the level of innovation, and consequently their organizations' competitiveness, through using strategies that resolve toxic leadership management styles.

Contribution to Business Practice

Innovation is one of the business elements that could result in a competitive advantage for organizations. Through innovation, business leaders can access new clients and new markets (Le, 2020). Leaders of organizations can directly influence innovation through the leadership styles they implement in the workplace. The ability to understand how leaders can resolve toxic leadership enables organizations to remain competitive and profitable. Alleviating the effect of toxic leadership in the workplace enables employees and leaders to focus on advancing effective business practices without experiencing the setbacks and detrimental effects of toxic leadership. Resolving toxic leadership potentially allows leaders of organizations to allocate more effort towards positive organizational factors, such as increased innovation.

Implication for Social Change

The ability of leaders of organizations to encourage innovation amongst employees through their leadership style has immense benefits for the development of employees, products, services, and added wealth. Le (2020) discussed how innovation leads to the creation of a knowledge economy and technological advancements. Employees are encouraged to exercise creativity, which enhances their knowledge base and their employment prospects. Meanwhile, customers experience improved lifestyles through the availability of innovative products and services. The presence of work

environments characterized by positive and ethical business practices enhance the well-being of employees (Kim & Yoon, 2015). Toxic leadership leads to negative emotional, physical, and behavioral consequences in employees. It is relevant to remove toxic leadership from the workplace and adopt leadership styles for effecting positive societal results, such as increased innovation. Increased innovation is beneficial to consumers as it leads to increased product or service utility, as well as reduced cost. Resolving toxic leadership leads to less stress in employees and improved work-home balance, which has positive implications for families (Hadadian & Zarei, 2016). In organizations where innovation is a priority, high levels of employee creativity and employee self-esteem exist. By eliminating toxic leadership, business leaders can improve organizational efficiency, and consequently, innovation can contribute to the betterment of society.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies that leaders use to resolve toxic leadership styles in the workplace. The conceptual framework for this study was transformational leadership. I will offer a description of transformational leadership. The literature review includes a section on the different leadership styles that I considered for the conceptual framework; these are transactional leadership, authentic leadership, and authoritarian leadership. I will continue the literature review with a discussion on the topic of leadership and the work of leaders. I will discuss frontline leaders and senior leaders, as both groups are included in the study. I will discuss toxic leadership, as well as the workplace effects of toxic leadership on employees and strategies to resolve toxic

leadership. The literature review includes information on innovation, export companies, and an introduction to Ethiopia as well as the Ethiopian business environment.

The keywords I used when researching the research topic are *transformation leadership, transactional leadership, authentic leadership, authoritarian leadership, toxic leadership, Ethiopia, innovation,* and *export companies*. I used Google Scholar and the Walden University library to locate the sources included in this study. The databases I used are ABI/Inform Complete, JSTOR, EBSCO Host, ProQuest, Emerald Insight, PsychARTICLES, Education Source, Business Source Complete, Science Citation Index, Science Direct, Directory of Open Access Journals, Supplemental Index, Expanded Academic ASAP, Social Sciences Citation Index, Academic Search Complete, Scholar Works, and Sage Publications. Out of the 107 sources I used, 71% were published in 2017-2021 and 91% were peer-reviewed. I formed a research strategy that allowed me to explore the appropriate academic sources for my research.

With this research, I aimed to identify how leaders resolve toxic leadership in the workplace to encourage innovation. I will offer some description of what is meant by the term innovation. I will discuss the three main types of innovation: product, service, and process. Product, service, and process innovation have their own characteristics and value propositions. Innovation requires talent management to flourish; the literature review contains a section on innovation management. Innovation management refers to the management and leadership practices required to support organizational innovation (Semuel et al., 2017). It is useful to understand that innovation requires management support to translate into tangible results.

This study includes the results from two export-based companies based in Ethiopia. Export companies have unique features and require leaders that are qualified at managing the global nature of export companies' business transactions (Jenner, 2018). Some export companies enter the global market as a means to increase their competitiveness in their local market; still, export company leaders need to continuously focus on innovation as a means to support continued growth (Jenner, 2018). I explored how export companies can benefit from increased innovation. The literature review includes a discussion on the types of leadership practices required to help export companies thrive in the global market.

Thereafter, the literature review offers context by including a discussion on Ethiopia. Ethiopia is a developing country with a predominantly rural population (Admasie, 2016). Ethiopia is experiencing one of the highest growth rates in the world propelled largely by its agriculture sector. The Ethiopian government strives to increase the living standard of the Ethiopian population by encouraging exports. It is essential to understand the attitude of the Ethiopian government and local businesses in undertaking innovation projects. The literature review includes an introduction into the Ethiopian economy, the Ethiopian business environment, and the prevalence of innovation in Ethiopia thus far.

Overall, the literature review includes definitions, introductions, and discussions on the following topics: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, authentic leadership, authoritarian leadership, leadership, toxic leadership, strategies to resolve toxic leadership, innovation, export-based companies, Ethiopia, Ethiopian business

environment, and frontline as well as senior leaders. The literature review will detail some of the most debilitating effects of toxic leadership, the types of leadership practices to support innovation, and the types of leadership practices required to help export companies perform well.

Transformational Leadership

The conceptual framework I will use for the study is transformational leadership. Transformational leadership, which was introduced by Burns (1978), is a type of leadership that focuses on addressing the values, principles, ideals, and conventions of employees. Transformational leaders inspire and work alongside their employees to achieve goals that exceed organizational expectations. Through their leadership practices, transformational leaders can raise the overall productivity of employees by motivating and engaging employees. Transformational leadership goes beyond forcing employees to follow guidelines, as transformational leaders rely on the role of motivating their employees to take initiative. As Wipulanusat et al. (2017) discussed, the transformational leadership style has proven most effective in increasing employee creativity and organizational innovation. Transformational leadership is linked to positive work outcomes related to increased organizational identification and commitment. Transformational leadership is a viable approach to increasing innovation in organizations without jeopardizing the well-being of employees.

Transformational leadership consists of four main ideas; each of the four main ideas of transformational leadership encourages positive workplace outcomes. Sheehan et al. (2020) discussed how the four pillars of transformational leadership encourage

employees to prioritize innovation. The four main pillars of transformational leadership are idealized attributes, idealized behaviors, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration (Burns, 1978). Idealized influence refers to the envisioning and self-assured nature of transformational leaders that sets high standards for employees and instills trust in their leader. Inspirational motivation provides employees with shared purpose and ambitions for joint organizational success. Intellectual stimulation occurs when a transformational leader provides subordinates with autonomy and involvement in decision-making, which leads to increased creativity. Individualized consideration is characterized by the selfless actions of leaders to relinquish control and support each employee's advancement through training. The four pillars of transformational leadership enable transformational leaders to motivate, initiate, and direct their employees towards a joint organizational mission. Transformational leaders form a relationship of mutual trust with their employee, which facilitates the implementation of ideas organization-wide.

Transformational leaders are different from other types of leaders in the tasks they perform. Transformational leaders support the exploration of new opportunities and ideas (Chen et al., 2019). Transformational leaders encourage their followers to take interest in a shared vision. Hetland et al. (2018) asserted that the transformational leaders challenge their followers to attain higher standards, align followers with tasks, inspire their followers towards change, and encourage independent thinking in their employees. An organizational environment of openness leads to the creation of positive workplace attributes and mediates the impact of negative workplace attributes. Leaders can use the transformational leadership style to encourage the open-communication of ideas and

enable employees to share their innovative ideas without fear of repercussions. Labrague et al. (2020) discussed how transformational leadership increases job contentment. Employees that work with transformational leaders have less intent to leave the organization. Leaders, using the transformational leadership style, can mitigate negative workplace factors, such as job stress, through forming a positive environment. Transformational leaders encourage positive workplace attributes, while minimizing the effect of negative workplace factors.

Transformational leaders positively contribute to innovation in the workplace. Wipulanusat et al. (2017) noted that transformational leadership is conclusive to employees' ability to contribute creative and innovative ideas as transformational leaders facilitate an open environment for innovation. Creativity and innovation are relevant to the success of both developed and emerging economies. Innovation leads to increased productivity, and this, in turn, supports economic advancement. It is useful for companies to implement transformational leadership styles within the workplace, given the role of innovation in improving companies' performance. Elrehail et al. (2017) explained how the leadership style present within organizations determines the extent of idea generation, goal setting, and most importantly, the formation of an organizational culture that supports innovation. Transformational leadership is considered one of the most effective leadership styles for enhancing workplace innovation. Encouraging innovation and improving the implementation of creative ideas is strategic to the success of companies. As Xenikou (2017) discussed, transformational leadership is linked to employees perceiving that the organizational culture is innovation-focused; which is relevant given

that transformational leadership is positively related to employee creativity and innovation. Employees are more likely to be creative when they perceived that the organizational culture is innovation-friendly. The role of transformational leadership in enabling employees to collaborate for innovation cannot be understated; transformational leadership is beneficial in supporting innovation.

I selected transformational leadership for the conceptual framework, as transformational leaders can use each of the pillars of transformational leadership to encourage innovation amongst their employees. Transformational leaders use idealized influence to convince their employees of the importance of moving towards an innovative workplace culture. Transformational leaders motivate their employees to work towards the company's innovation goals with full support and a positive mindset for the change towards added creativity. Transformational leaders use inspirational motivation to garner employee support, keenness, and motivation to perform and achieve the tasks required to reach increased organizational innovation. The idealized behavior pillar of transformational leadership is useful for transformation leaders to increase motivation. Transformational leaders can use idealized behavior to inspire and challenge employees to continuously improve the products, services, and processes existing within the company (Prasad & Junni, 2016). Transformational leaders use individualized consideration to use innovation projects as an opportunity to provide increased learning and capacity development for employees. Transformational leaders prioritize employees' needs and support employee growth. Transformational leaders boost human capital and increase innovation performance (Le, 2020). Employees that work with transformational

leaders can share their creative ideas without fear of negative consequences; the success of transformational leaders in encouraging employee innovation is evident.

Transformational leaders are present throughout the world. Tesfaw (2014) discussed the universality of the transformational leadership style and the success of transformational leaders globally, as they found that the Ethiopian government is looking to transformational leadership to achieve middle-income country status and gain access to foreign markets. Transformational leadership is positively linked to project success in Ethiopian non-governmental organizations. Tesfaw noted the success of transformational leaders in the Ethiopian government school system, as compared to other leadership styles, such as transactional and laissez-faire. Transformational leadership is embraced and acknowledged by the Ethiopian government and private organizations. Transformational leaders in Ethiopia inspired their followers to adopt novel and creative work approaches. Transformational leadership can successfully be used in Ethiopia's cultural context to support organizational success across different types of organizations.

Transactional Leadership

One of the leadership styles I considered for the conceptual framework is transactional leadership. Leaders that use the transactional leadership style use a system of rewards and reprimands towards employees; employees that excel at their tasks receive incentives, while employees that underperform get sanctions (Jensen et al., 2019). Transactional leadership is one of the prominent leadership styles used in organizations. Transactional leadership is most useful in organizations that lack stability and structure. Transactional leadership might be useful, or even necessary, in organizations marked

with unpredictability. For example, leaders in companies that are undergoing periods of change, uncertainty, or chaos should use the transactional leadership style. Companies' management often assign leaders that use the transactional leadership style to invite talent based on a system of attractive financial incentives (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015). In the long run, transactional leadership is not always sufficient to retain talent. Employees seek stability, intellectual stimulation, and a positive workplace environment, in the long-run. Leaders using the transformational leadership style aim to motivate and inspire their followers through personalized measures (Jensen et al., 2019). In contrast, leaders using the transactional leadership style primarily use quantifiable benefits to ensure optimal employee performance. It is important to note that the transactional leadership style is not usable in all types of organizations, which face different realities.

Leaders influence their employees through the leadership practices they exhibit. The type of leadership style within organizations predicts the workplace and employee outcomes directly (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015). Leaders largely determine employee creativity and companies' proclivity towards innovation. Leaders can encourage innovation through experience in managing creativity projects, assigning the relevant resources, and motivating their employees. It is necessary to use a leadership style that is considerate of the desired organizational outcomes. The transformational and transactional leadership styles are normally compared in understanding the effect of these leadership styles on employee creativity. Transactional leaders establish a system of performance-tracking to assess employees. Afsar et al. (2017) stated how working in a highly controlled workplace environment diminishes employee creativity. Leaders are

tasked with the responsibility of deciding how best to reach the targeted outcomes, based on the strategic goals of the company.

Transformational leaders use a style and approach that enables them to relate to employees. Transformational leaders use a more personalized approach and set the most favorable conditions for creativity and innovation (Afsar et al., 2017). In relation to transactional leaders, transformational and authentic leaders do not rely on extrinsic motivation tools; employees that work with transformational or authentic leaders are more likely to go above and beyond their assigned tasks. The motivating factors used by transactional and transformational differ greatly; business executives should understand the needs of a given organization prior to assigning the right types of leaders. According to the discussion on transactional leadership, this leadership style is not suitable as the conceptual framework for this study.

Authentic Leadership

Another leadership style I considered for the literature review is authentic leadership. Authentic leadership is a type of leadership style that encompasses principles of moral soundness and the primary values of authentic leadership are ethical perspective, self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency, positive psychological capital, and authentic behavior (Hoch et al., 2018). Given these positive qualities of authentic leadership, authentic leadership is considered a foundation for transformational, ethical, and servant leadership. The transformational, ethical, and authentic leadership styles consider employee well-being, in contrast to leadership styles that primarily focus on profitability. The concept of authentic leadership targets leaders' development of self-

guided positive virtue and high ethical character. Authentic leaders exercise self-awareness and exhibit self-regulated positive behaviors (Alilyyani et al., 2018). Authentic leaders help their employees find meaning in their tasks and promote inclusivity. Authentic leaders are conclusive to the development of a positive workplace environment.

Authentic leaders place a focus on supporting the wellness of those around them. Authentic leaders build a transparent relationship with their subordinates and foster mutual trust (Alilyyani et al., 2018). Authentic leaders appreciate contributions from their employees when making decisions and support employee engagement. Authentic leaders are optimistic and encourage positive self-development in their subordinates. Employees who work with authentic leaders are invigorated to share their ideas and contribute to the advancement of the workplace. Elrehail et al. (2017) noted that authentic leadership is not linked with both product and process innovation. In comparison, transformational leadership is positively related to product and process innovation. Authentic leadership is not an appropriate conceptual framework given the aim of the research topic: increasing innovation by addressing toxic leadership styles.

Authoritarian Leadership

Authoritarian leadership is a leadership style that is not common in western countries; authoritarian leadership is prevalent in some developing countries. Authoritarian leaders are commanding and control the key elements of their organization singlehandedly (Shu et al., 2018). Employees that work for authoritarian leaders cannot exercise initiative. Certain organizational situations require the speed and rigidity of

authoritarian leadership. For example, companies that lack an established leadership system or are undergoing crises often benefit from the directive orders offered by a knowledgeable authoritarian figure. In the long-run, however, authoritarian leadership is amongst the least recommended leadership styles in terms of employee well-being and creativity (Wang & Wang, 2018). Employee creativity relies on the freedom employees receiving from their leaders; authoritarian leaders do not foster innovation within organizations.

Authoritarian leadership is not always suitable for all types of organizations. Authoritarian leaders do not support the generation of creative ideas from employees and as a result, innovation diminishes in the presence of authoritarian leaders (Wang & Wang, 2018). Authoritarian leaders often resort to punishing employees that disobey the strict procedures and demands that they enforce; employees that work under authoritarian leaders are fearful of their leaders. Fearful employees cannot share and defend their novel ideas. Guo et al. (2018) discussed that fear leads to defensive silence, wherein employees resort to avoiding sharing their views and opinions with their leaders. Employees will intentionally withhold their ideas that are potentially useful from their superiors. Employees that are allowed and encouraged to voice their opinions are more likely to contribute innovative ideas. In contrast, employees that work in environments where they are forced to follow the status quo often fail to voice their ideas. Idea generation is a pillar of organizational innovation, and authoritarian leaders are not suitable for companies that focus on the need for innovation to support their growth.

Authoritarian leadership is not suitable for reducing employees' turnover and encouraging innovation. Shu et al. (2018) found that authoritarian leadership leads to compulsory citizenship behavior, which means that employees are forced to carry out tasks that they feel stressed and uncomfortable performing. The inflexible nature of authoritarian leadership leads to increased employee turnover and reduced trust for the leader. Authoritarian leaders set an environment that diminishes employees' creative ability and innovative behavior. I will not use authoritarian leadership as the theory for my conceptual framework.

Leadership

Leadership is one of the key organizational elements that predict the success of organizations. The types of decisions that leaders undertake are: assigning resources, communicating stakeholders, value creation, and guiding employees (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015). Leaders can guide organizations towards their goals by executing change. Assigning the right leaders to the right tasks enables senior managers to meet strategic goals. Employees seek guidance and direction from their leaders. Leaders can set the tone of the organization and invoke employees to achieve targeted goals. Positive or negative organizational outcomes are primarily attributed to the types of leaders present within companies. Companies that fail to assign leaders with ethical values often suffer public scandals and failures (Prasad & Junni, 2016). Quality leaders, in contrast, can introduce an array of positive changes, such as innovation, that can secure the future of companies and their stakeholders. The success or failure of organizations is often

determined by leaders' success in directing employees towards organizational goals. Leaders can directly influence the level of innovation in companies.

Different types of leadership styles with discernable characteristics exist. As Hoch et al. (2018) discussed, some leadership styles, such as ethical, authentic, and servant leadership, are more progressive and centered around the well-being of employees. Researchers believe that other leadership styles are more suited to certain organizational outcomes. One particular type of leadership does not best suit all types of organizations. For example, transactional leadership is useful in situations that require structure. In comparison, leaders that use certain styles, such as transformational and authentic leadership, encourage employee creativity and innovation. The type of leadership style that is suitable for a given organizational situation depends on the external and internal environment of the firm. In my study, the focus is on eliminating leadership styles that impede innovation; selecting the right types of leaders to facilitate leadership is crucial.

Frontline Leaders

Different types and levels of leaders are present within organizations. Schwatka et al. (2019) affirmed that frontline leaders have direct contact with employees and are able to lead by example and motivate employees. Frontline leaders or managers are managers that are closest to the product or service, and most importantly the employees. Frontline leaders are more familiar and have increased knowledge of their employees. Frontline leaders are responsible for assessing the performance of employees based on their immediate observation of their subordinates (Gorder, 2015). Frontline managers are best able to influence their employees' well-being and performance. Given the nature of the

relationship between frontline leaders and their employees, frontline leaders are

significant in allowing organizations to achieve their strategic targets. The impact and

influence of frontline leaders are prevalent towards employees.

Frontline leaders play significant roles within with organization through having

direct contact with employees. Frontline leaders can communicate the directives and

values of the organization to employees (Schwatka et al., 2019). Frontline leaders serve

to effectively relay messages from the management team to the employees. Frontline

leaders serve as a platform for efficient and effective communication between senior

managers and frontline employees. The ideas that frontline leaders contribute are highly

valuable as these employees are in direct contact with the customers; frontline employees

can contribute ideas for service and product innovation (Karlsson & Skålén, 2015).

Frontline employees are the ones that implement organizational strategies; they have the

best insight into how to improve upon work processes through process innovation. In

most companies, frontline employees do not have direct contact with the research and

development or marketing departments. The role of frontline leaders in ensuring that the

ideas of frontline employees are translated into profitable innovations is crucial. Based on

these considerations, I have decided to include frontline leaders in this study.

Senior Leaders

Senior leaders do not have intimate contact with frontline employees, in contrast

to frontline leaders. Senior leaders are part of the upper management team of

organizations and are responsible for overlooking the company, as they are responsible

for the planning, budgeting, and organization of companies' activities (Reimer et al.,

2018). Senior leaders require advanced skills in certain areas to excel in their jobs; these skills are time management, emotional intelligence, and the ability to strategize with a long-term view. Senior leaders should have excellent oversight of their organizations and take responsibility for the performance of the organization. Employees throughout organizations look to the senior leaders to set the workplace culture, form the necessary strategies, and follow-up on the progress of the company. Even though senior leaders are responsible for multiple critical tasks, they cannot directly influence frontline employees. It is necessary to consider senior leaders in conjunction with frontline leaders.

Senior leaders play a significant role in helping their organization members undertake innovative efforts. When it comes to innovation, senior leaders are responsible for setting a climate that encourages employee creativity and innovation (Kim & Yoon, 2015). Senior leaders need to employ the right leadership style to aid their innovation efforts or goals. For example, senior leaders that use the transformational leadership style are most effective in introducing and sustaining innovation efforts. Senior leaders can drive innovation by facilitating knowledge creation. The link between organization performance, especially as it relates to organizational innovation, and senior leader involvement is evident. It is necessary to include senior leaders in this study, given the impact of senior leaders in mobilizing the right resources for increased company-wide innovation.

Toxic Leadership

Some leadership styles are ineffective and harmful to employees; one such type of leadership is toxic leadership. Xuanfang (2017) stated that toxic leadership behavior

includes wrongly blaming employees, making unrealistic demands, insulting, and refusing to acknowledge the accomplishment of employees. Toxic leadership, also termed destructive leadership, is a leadership style portrayed by inappropriate and aggressive behavior of leaders towards their subordinates. Employees in a toxic workplace environment suffer from frequent reprimand and emotional abuse. Toxic leaders possess personal characteristics that have harmful effects on subordinates. Toxic leaders engage in behaviors and actions that belittle, offend, and discourage employees. Toxic leaders micromanage, disrespect, are rude, do not listen, and act in a threatening manner towards their employees. Toxic leaders misuse their power and lead to a decline in employees' job satisfaction and morale (Hoffman & Sergio, 2020). As a result, toxic leadership is undeniably negative to employees' well-being.

Leaders that exhibit the toxic leadership style cause multiple negative workplace effects. Bhandarker and Rai (2019) stated that the presence of toxic leadership in the organization leads to a decline in organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and work commitment in employees. Toxic leaders and their abusive traits are detrimental to the psychological state of employees. Employees that are suffering from a state of mental distress cannot perform well at their tasks. Toxic leadership leads to job burnout in employees, as the emotional abuses of toxic leaders manifest into physical effects, such as job burnout, in employees. As Xuanfang (2017) noted, toxic leadership does not only affect individual employees; rather, toxic leadership leads to an organizational culture where employees are reserved and avoid sharing their inputs for fear of reprimand. A culture defined by a lack of communication is dangerous. The presence of toxic

leadership and an organizational culture that discourages employees from speaking out against destructive leadership practices can lead to organizational crisis. Toxic leaders have low competence and are unable to set organizational goals (Milosevic et al., 2020). Leaders that fail to set goals and plan for organizational success, in a skillful manner, harm the organization. Toxic leadership is detrimental to the potential positive contributions of employees, such as creativity and innovation.

When it comes to innovation in the workplace, toxic leadership is negatively linked to employee creativity and organizational innovation. Employees that belong to generation Y undertake most of the innovative efforts in companies; Xuanfang (2017) found that toxic leadership negatively affects Generation Y employees and reduces their ability to innovate. Innovation is necessary for the sustained growth of businesses and society. The detrimental nature of toxic leadership toward innovation should not be neglected and business executives should take steps to eliminate the presence of toxic leadership in the workplace.

Toxic Leadership and Employee Absenteeism

Toxic leadership has multiple negative workplace effects. Labrague et al. (2020) discussed that toxic leadership leads to frequent absenteeism in employees. Employee absenteeism leads to a decline in productivity and companies' management need to allocate additional resources to offset the impact of employee absenteeism, such as hiring additional staff. Cheang and Appelbaum (2015) discussed the example of how workplace absenteeism costs $40 billion USD annually in the United States of America. The need to decrease employee absenteeism caused by the presence of negative leadership styles is

relevant. Employee absenteeism increases with job stress and job dissatisfaction, as employees react negatively to the abusive treatment they experience. Similarly, employees often resort to avoiding or escaping the situation by avoiding going to work. Toxic leaders lead employees to resort to escaping their workplace, through their persistent negligence for the dignity and well-being of their employees. Toxic leaders, through their abusive behavior and the resulting organizational culture they establish, cause increased employee absenteeism. Absent employees cannot contribute to creativity projects, leading to an overall decline in organizations' ability to benefit from innovation.

Toxic Leadership and Employee Stress

Toxic leaders increase employee stress. Employee stress is a result of the perceived difficulty of the task employees are required to perform and the leader-follower relationship in organizations is a key determinant of employee stress and burnout (Cheang & Appelbaum, 2015). Job stress occurs when employees face pressures, such as deadlines, and working under unfavorable workplace conditions. Job stress can lead to job burnout unless the working conditions of a given stressed employee change. Job burnout is a significant condition that diminishes employees' ability to positively contribute to the workplace. According to Omar and Ahmad (2018), job burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal achievement. Leaders can assist their subordinates in dealing with these occurrences through their leadership practices, given the detrimental effects of job stress and job burnout. Harms et al. (2017), found that toxic leadership is positively linked to toxic leadership, while transformational leadership is negatively linked to toxic leadership.

Company executives need to assign leaders that can mitigate the level of stress in the workplace, rather than infuriate the situation. Removing toxic leaders from the workplace results in improved working conditions for employees, and, as a result, allows employees to enjoy a healthy state-of-mind.

Toxic Leadership and Job Satisfaction

Employees that work with toxic leaders experience a decline in job satisfaction. Naeem and Khurram (2020) discussed how job dissatisfaction caused by the presence of toxic leaders in the organization leads to increased employee turnover. Increased rates of employee turnover are costly to organizations and contribute negatively to the organization's culture; it is necessary to study the types of leadership that are useful in reducing turnover. Organization leaders should determine the presence and types of leadership styles that exasperate employee turnover. The presence of toxic leadership increases the effect of job stress on employees, and this leads to decreased job satisfaction. Employees that perceive the presence of toxic leadership start to distrust their leaders and the culture they form. Organization managers need to either train toxic leaders or remove these leaders to increase job satisfaction amongst employees. Toxic leadership leads to employee distress. Employee distress is one of the factors that lead to job dissatisfaction. Employees that are dissatisfied with their workplace circumstances cannot gain the confidence needed to share creative and innovative ideas.

Toxic Leadership and Workplace Productivity

One of the negative outcomes of toxic leadership is decreased productivity in employees. Rasool et al. (2019) considered toxic leadership traits, such as employee

exclusion, discourtesy towards subordinates, employee harassment, and workplace intimidation, and found that these traits result in decreased productivity amongst employees. Leaders can either motivate and encourage their employees or discourage them from progressing at their jobs. Employee productivity is related to the workplace environment that employees find themselves in. Leaders are responsible for setting the organization's culture of the company. Employees that perceive toxicity in the workplace are unable to perform at desired levels. Toxic leadership leads to decreased productivity through the following factors: low employee morale, increased absenteeism, employee stress, employee burnout, and declined employee health. Employees that are stressed and have weakened health cannot adequately contribute to the success of the organization. Leaders of organizations should invest in human resources experts to identify the presence of toxic leaders in the workplace. It is necessary to train leaders on collaborative means of improving productivity through prioritizing employees, for increasing employee innovation.

Strategies to Resolve Toxic Leadership

Toxic leadership can be resolved by using appropriate strategies. Paltu and Brouwers (2020) found that some toxic leaders perform well on some aspects and are not easily identified, as their followers do not or cannot report them. Tavanti (2011) stated that great managers can identify, address, and use strategies to transform toxic leaders along with the toxic environments they form. Toxic leaders leave their employees worse off through the damaging and unproductive characteristics they impose on their subordinates. Toxic leaders exhibit workplace behaviors that are fighting and controlling

rather than uplifting and inspiring towards their subordinates. Toxic leadership cannot be justified as a successful means for leaders to contribute to organizations. The prevalence of toxic leadership in workplace environments has led to stakeholders that are desensitized to the actions of toxic leaders. Although toxic leadership is sometimes difficult to recognize, toxic leadership is highly costly to companies. Toxic leaders eventually cause costs related to lowered employee morale, higher turnover rates, decreased productivity, and legal fees due to dispute settlements. Avoiding toxic leadership starts with recruitment practices. Companies' human resources policies should emphasize practices that promote hiring the right types of leaders and address how to avoid toxic leaders. The task of increasing innovation by resolving toxic leadership styles starts at recruitment and the training practices that senior leaders expose their teams to.

Toxic leaders create an unhealthy work environment that has intertwined effects on the organizational culture. Stoten (2015) stated that a company-wide implementation of virtue ethics principles is a viable strategy to tackle toxicity within organizations; virtue ethics refers to the values related to the moral character of people and the performance of moral acts. Toxic leaders lead to the formation of a toxic culture by forming vulnerable employees through their abusive actions and the environment of the organization becomes one that represents this dynamic. That toxic cultures emerge in organizations that fail to set, manage, and sustain values amongst the internal stakeholders of the organization. Effective communicative and openness are critical to ensuring that toxic cultures do not actualize within companies. Leaders with professional integrity are most willing to allow a transparent culture, as they do not have anything to

conceal. Forming a strategy of using a value statement that outlines the ethical principles of the organization to form the organizational culture is a viable means of resolving toxic leadership. Senior leaders should ensure that all levels of employees are included in the culture change process to support the success of the efforts. The planned organizational change should be specific to the cultural context that exists within the country of operation. Targeting the organization culture, in a contextually meaningful manner, is useful in resolving toxic leadership.

Leaders are responsible for finding means of resolving toxic leadership in the workplace. Tavanti (2011) found that empowering employees is a successful strategy in allowing subordinates to actively challenge toxicity. It is relevant to assign leaders that are supportive and understanding of the challenges that their subordinates face during times of change by respecting the process of error learning and understanding the value in resistance to change. One of the means of tackling toxic leadership is training leaders to have emotional intelligence and understand the impact of their actions on their subordinates. Stoten (2015) added that traditional hierarchical leadership models exasperate toxic leadership. Leaders need to focus on establishing a work environment that supports a healthy and productive atmosphere. Employees need to be involved in decision-making processes and encouraged to undertake greater responsibility. Senior management involvement is necessary for the continuity of toxic leadership elimination initiatives, such as employee empowerment and engagement.

Another strategy for resolving toxic leadership is organizational resilience. Organizational resilience has five steps: forming a new regularity, anchoring important

identities during times of disorder, maintaining communication networks, searching for alternative solutions to solving the disorder, and facilitating productive behaviors while avoiding unproductive behaviors (Buzzanell, 2018). Organizational resilience is a process that takes place when companies reorganize and encourage positive change during or after periods of disorder. For example, organizational resilience can be used to address toxic work environments that are often entrenched in the organizational culture. Organizational resilience is an adaptive transformative practice and the process requires participation from employees across the company. Detoxing toxicity requires multiple stages of action. Rooij and Fine (2018) stated that the first step is identifying how toxic leadership affected the structures and values in the organization. Managers need to avoid assigning blame on senior leaders and focus on establishing added transparency moving forward. Removing toxic leadership requires an overhaul of the existing culture and values in the workplace environment.

It is important to understand how employees can contribute to resolving toxic leadership. Tavanti (2011) recommended that followers that work with toxic leaders can use strategies to resolve workplace toxicity by recording any negative interaction with toxic leaders with written documents and follow company procedures to report such incidents. Employees that work for toxic leaders should first understand that toxic leaders negatively affect the overall health of the organization. Employees should first try to talk to the toxic leader in a non-aggressive manner to resolve the negative behaviors or actions they are experiencing. Employees should never glorify the toxic leader and refuse to engage in any actions that could negatively affect the organization in the long run.

Employees should maintain their view of toxic leadership as a negative workplace element and use peaceful approaches towards resolving toxic leadership.

Finding a means to address the abusive behaviors of toxic leaders is an organizational responsibility. Toxic leaders need to acknowledge their shortcomings and take effort toward change by avoid belittling, humiliating, and mistreating employees in the organization with less positional power (Rooij & Fine, 2018). Managers and employees within the organization need to jointly participate in the process of recovering the workplace environment. Toxic leaders need to be humble, be their authentic selves, and encourage employees to strive alongside them. Toxicity reduces employee motivation, creativity, engagement, and workplace productivity. Senior managers need to put systems in place to ensure that toxic leadership is properly detected and addressed, as it is needed for the sustainability of a healthy workplace environment.

Innovation

Innovation is a term that has many different definitions and interpretations. Hirte and Roth (2018) summarized innovation as the conversion of ideas and knowledge into new and commercially successful products, processes, and services. The two main types of innovation are product and process. Product innovation is the creation of new products or services based on market demand. Product innovation refers to the improvement of existing products. Process innovation is concerned with changes in organizational practices required to create the end product or service. Process innovation focuses on the resources, tools, and procedures required to produce a product or service in a more efficient or cost-friendly manner. All types of innovation increase the competitiveness

and continuity of organizations; encouraging leadership styles that facilitate added innovation are beneficial to the success of companies.

Product and service innovation are important, as they allow organizations to remain competitive. Both product and service innovation enable companies to better address their customers' needs (Retkoceri & Kurteshi, 2019). Traditionally, the success of innovation was measured in terms of the economic value offered to the developing firm. However, the success of innovation now is primarily based on the value offered to the customer or end-user. This occurs, as customers are willing to pay more for products or services that fulfill their requirements to a better degree. Process innovation is useful in helping companies to organize themselves in a way that allows them to understand and capture the market demand, and this again offers a competitive advantage. Product and service innovation are a source of competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Innovation Management

Innovation is the implementation of a new or improved product, process, marketing method, or new organizational business practices. Innovation management is the practice of promoting innovation across the organization by establishing systems for planning, organizing, and controlling innovation efforts (Hirte & Roth, 2018). Innovation is critical to the survival and sustainability of organizations. Today's business environment is characterized by increased competition and evolving customer demands. Company executives need to establish a means of successfully addressing their innovation demands. Companies need to assign leaders to manage the task of innovation management.

Company heads can attain innovation targets through assigning quality leaders as innovation managers. Jasimuddin and Naqshbandi (2018) observed how knowledge-oriented leadership, which is a type of leadership that often incorporates transformational leadership, is most useful in fostering innovation. Innovation managers need to focus on team-building practices to increase employee creativity. Innovation management is a source of competitive advantage for organizations; leaders control the level of innovation within their organizations through the leadership practices they implement in the workplace. The type of leadership style present in the workplace directly affects the level of innovation. Company executives need to carefully assign the right leaders when attempting to cultivate company-wide innovation.

Innovation is useful in responding to market demands in a timely manner; innovation managers need to ensure the availability of material and leadership practices to support this goal. Wipulanusat et al. (2017) discussed that the transformational and consideration leadership styles are key predictors of employee creativity, and as a result, organizational innovation. The success of innovation projects is dependent on the availability of financial, technological, and most importantly, leadership support. Innovation management and upper-management support for innovation is a precondition for the success of innovation efforts. For example, the transformational leadership style is more effective than the transactional leadership style in encouraging creativity amongst employees. Leadership practices that focus on employee well-being are key factors behind the success of innovation efforts.

Innovation is sometimes associated with radical ways of thinking and thinking outside of the norm. Innovational managers need to ensure that their employees are acting ethically as they innovate. Gregory (2016) found that innovators can assume more ethical responsibility and gain an in-depth understanding of ethical issues when they are encouraged to join their managers in decision-making processes related to ethics. Innovators often neglect to factor in the importance of ethics when creating new services or products. Some leaders fail to engage their subordinates when forming ethical guidelines related to innovation projects. Innovators, at times, experience an internal struggle when trying to manage their ethical responsibilities with their desire to constantly come up with the next best ideas. Leaders should provide support and assist their employees in navigating the ethical qualms that exist for innovators.

Export Companies

Export companies are engaged in the activity of manufacturing and sending products or services from domestic markets to overseas markets in exchange for payment. Exporting is usually the first-step small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) take towards internationalization (Joneghani & Joneghani, 2019). Companies often target the export market to gain a competitive advantage through attaining a larger market audience. In some cases, companies are forced to explore the international market due to a lack of demand in their local vicinity. Company managers use exporting as a means of improving their prospects in their domestic markets, as well. Exports allow companies to increase their profitability by achieving better prices in the international market, reducing production costs through scale savings, and learning opportunities from their foreign

partners (Jenner, 2018). The export sector is attractive given the opportunities for growth, knowledge, and profitability. Leaders of companies that seek to engage in the export market should improve their capabilities to meet the demands of the international market.

Export activities require companies to acquire and develop capabilities that will enable them to survive in the global market. Export companies need to achieve their targeted sales performance by forming ideal pricing, strategies, and firm characteristics (Kambey et al., 2018). SMEs are amongst the most relevant players in the export sector; nevertheless, SMEs often do not have sufficient knowledge of the elements needed to succeed in the global market. The leaders of some SMEs lack access to market information, networks, strategic planning capabilities, and resources needed to excel in the international market. Export-companies need to acquire skills in areas specifically related to foreign trade, such as international logistics, trade agreements, and global marketing. It is important to note that export performance is greatly influenced by external factors: market demand, competition, and availability of raw materials. Export company leaders need to consider multiple factors, from internal leadership to market conditions, to survive in the global marketplace.

The performance of export-companies is one of the economic factors that governments pay close attention to. This is especially true of developing economies that seek to use their resources to encourage a thriving export industry (Jenner, 2018). Successful export-companies can create employment opportunities that improve the livelihoods of their local population. Exporting allows a country to earn foreign currency, which is necessary to procure relevant items, such as medicines and medical equipment.

Exporting-companies serve as an excellent means of introducing international quality and production standards into the country. Exporting-companies can support the growth and development of other similar companies that cater to the export market. Governments usually offer incentives to encourage the entry of export-companies into the market, as well as the continuity of existing export-companies. Some of the benefits that government economic agencies often offer exporting companies are periods of tax breaks, subsidies, state-sponsored marketing campaigns, and access to loans (Joneghani & Joneghani, 2019). Governments are key stakeholders in the success of export companies, and companies' leaders need to seek the support of all stakeholders to enhance export-performance.

Managing Exporting Companies

Export-companies can benefit from increased competitiveness and added profitability through their foreign engagement. Governments of countries that encourage companies to engage in export activities have improved foreign currency reserves, reduced unemployment rates, and as a result, provide an improved lifestyle for their population (Uysal & Mohamoud, 2018). Companies need to position themselves and prepare to take advantage of the benefits of involving in international markets. SMEs are associated with faster decision-making, which serves as an advantage in international markets given the dynamic nature of business transactions. Larger firms have specialized resources and often benefit from production scales. Edeh et al. (2020) confirmed that, as with larger firms, SMEs can attain innovation and export targets for organizational success. All companies that engage in exports can direct their actions towards improved

export performance. Companies can leverage their existing advantages to enhance their exposure to international markets.

Leaders in export-companies are expected to understand how to form effective export strategies and train their employees to excel in the international market. Charoensukmongkol (2016) discussed the importance of cultural intelligence, meaning to have an understanding and consideration for the norms of people from different backgrounds, in supporting export success. Assigning the right leaders and having access to a quality labor force determine export success. Cultural awareness allows employees to gain a deeper insight into the varying global market needs, which allows for more effective strategic planning. Innovation is a key determinant of export performance as it allows companies to seize market opportunities through improved products or services, as well as more affordable options. Leaders and managers in export-companies have to implement means to encourage company-wide innovation through firm-wide cultural knowledge training.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a country located in East Africa. Ethiopia is one of the few countries that was never colonized and has a unique culture. More than 80% of the Ethiopian population lives in rural areas and the country finds itself in the early stages of demographic transition (Vieider et al., 2018). Ethiopia, with a population of around 115 million, is the most populous landlocked country in the world. The Ethiopian government is tasked with ensuring an economic environment of growth to improve the living standard of the Ethiopian population. Over 60% of the Ethiopian population is under the

age of twenty-four ("Ethiopia," 2018). The availability of labor is one of the positive factors in Ethiopia in terms of economic growth potential. Currently, Ethiopia has one of the lowest gross domestic products (GDPs); the Ethiopian government has been forming policies to encourage continued economic growth.

Ethiopia has been a democratic state since the Ethiopia People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came into power in June 1995. Since 1995, the Ethiopian government has worked to boost the economy through liberalization and encouraging public investment (Admasie, 2016). The Ethiopian government has formed favorable monetary and fiscal policies to facilitate rapid economic growth. Access to international markets and capital influxes have contributed to the growth in Ethiopia. Ethiopia is one of the least urbanized countries in the world and agriculture plays a significant role in the economy. However, given the role of global warming and decreasing land-quality due to over-farming, the Ethiopian government is looking to alternative means of advancing the economy.

Reducing poverty is a key concern in developing countries. Agricultural transformation is an effective strategy in reducing poverty (Vandercasteelen et al., 2018). The Ethiopian government has been working towards utilizing the large arable land available through increasing farmers' productivity. Governments in developing countries should allocate resources to marketing agricultural products. The resources required to boost agricultural production and sales include investment in advanced farming technology, research facilities, and marketing channels. The Ethiopian government is

increasingly exploring the role of innovation in introducing added productivity and new sales prospects to advance the agricultural sector in Ethiopia.

Ethiopian Business Environment

Ethiopian business owners have experienced significant changes in the business environment over the last 60 years. From 1957 until 1973, during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie, the Ethiopian government encouraged the private sector and investment from domestic as well as foreign investors (Rahmato & Ayenew, 2017). The period of economic growth came to a sudden halt in 1975 when the Derg-regime implemented socialist policies. Derg government policies placed a limit on personal wealth and all businesses were taken over by the government. The Derg-regime abandoned its policies limiting private ownership of businesses in 1990. After the democratically elected government of EPRDF established control in 1995, the Ethiopian government has continued to take effort to encourage business owners through various incentives.

Economic growth is a primary part of the Ethiopian government's approach to improving the living standard of its population. The economic growth plans of the Ethiopian government especially highlight the role of encouraging exports to raise the living standard of the Ethiopian population (Admasie, 2016). Ethiopian export companies need to meet international quality standards to compete in global markets. Ethiopian government officials have organized various export-facilitating institutes to assist exporters, such as organizations that educate and control companies' quality standards. Ethiopian export companies have experienced success in raising quality standards through collaborating with domestic unions. Ethiopian export companies are focusing on

continuous improvement, aided by government programs that sponsor training opportunities and locate market destinations. The government has acknowledged the relevance of economic growth through export companies.

Business owners in Ethiopia face a few notable challenges. The first is the lack of access to capital. Although microfinance is available for smaller businesses, medium-sized firms often struggle to secure financing; Ethiopian business owners spend over 300 hours per year settling their taxes (Rahmato & Ayenew, 2017). Ethiopian business owners face limited access to quality inputs, in terms of raw materials and skilled labor and they need to resort to importing inputs, leading to added costs. Ethiopia is a country that is still undergoing a period of industrial development; as a result, Ethiopian business owners are constrained by a lack of infrastructure in certain regions. Businesses in Ethiopia primarily operate on cash transactions. The government does not have a systemic way to control the underground economy, which makes up around 36% of the GDP (Gobena & Van Dijke, 2016). The tax authorities in Ethiopia often resort to coercive means to ensure that business owners carry out their taxation obligations, reducing Ethiopian business owners' confidence in the tax authorities. The tax authorities in Ethiopia focus on being procedurally just and avoid coercive means of raising taxes to encourage added business participation.

Family-owned businesses and entrepreneurial ventures are prevalent in the Ethiopian economy. Family businesses account for a significant portion of the investments in Ethiopia (Venugopal et al., 2014). Family businesses are unique due to the inter-relationships that exist between the family members within the company. Family

business owners need to consider the role of succession planning, professionalization, and gender disparities when establishing and operating their businesses. Family-owned business owners often focus on the longevity of the business and do not solely focus on profitability. A few challenges are associated with family businesses. The most significant challenge is that members of family businesses fail to organize themselves in changing times. When it comes to entrepreneurs in Ethiopia, most of these business owners tend to serve all the major roles within the organizations they form. Entrepreneurs in Ethiopia should receive training to facilitate better work sharing, decision-making, and technology adoption, to ensure the continuity of their businesses.

Innovation in Ethiopia

Innovation is a key driver of industrial growth. However, as it is, the presence of innovation efforts across firms in Ethiopia is low due to the lack of active firm engagement in product and process innovation to the costs required to invest in technology, research and development, access to finance, and improper information dissemination (Wakeford et al., 2017). Innovation is required to facilitate growth while remaining conscious of environmental concerns. Ethiopia is a developing country with a largely agricultural economy. The Ethiopia government is working hard to raise the living standard of its population and reach middle-income status in the next 10 years. Ethiopian economic policymakers are now focusing on moving towards industrialization by following the Chinese example of growth. Kebebe (2019) discussed that the increase in the urban population in Ethiopia and the rise of the middle class has created increased demand for products. Currently, the level of innovation efforts across firms in Ethiopia is

limited. The Ethiopian government should facilitate innovation by offering attractive incentives and opening channels to increase the exchange of information amongst stakeholders. Relatedly, Kebede and Mitsufuji (2017) noted that in developing countries, such as Ethiopia, governments need to intervene through policies directed at encouraging countrywide innovation efforts. Leaders in the private sector in Ethiopia need to take initiative at the firm level to move towards added innovation projects, given the impact on economic growth.

Every country experiences differences in assuming innovative endeavors. Tian et al. (2018) stated that a country's national culture consists of the shared attitudes that reflect the behavior and customs of the society and affects the way members of a culture perceive organizational factors and leadership styles. Globalization has necessitated continuous innovation to secure firm profitability and continuity. As the Ethiopian government is working towards encouraging the adoption of innovation within companies, it is useful to explore the cultural factors that affect the level of innovation in Ethiopian firms. Continuous innovation goes alongside a commitment from companies' managers to facilitate sustained learning and knowledge sharing throughout the organization. National culture determines the best way to motivate employees within the culture towards organizational goals. Beyene et al. (2016) discussed the prevalence of high power distance in the national culture of Ethiopia; power distance is defined as the level of power inequality within organizations; companies with high power distance are hierarchical and all levels of employees do not participate. High power distance is negatively linked to learning and innovation. Although high power distance is part of the

Ethiopian national culture, leaders in Ethiopian companies can take steps to encourage employees and alter employees' perceptions of learning and innovation.

Transition

In this section, I discussed the research topic, strategies that leaders in Ethiopia use to resolve toxic leadership styles in the workplace. The first section includes the following subsections: background of the problem, problem statement, purpose statement, nature of the study, research question, interview questions, conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, significance of the study, and a review of the professional and academic literature. The topics of the literature review are transformational leadership, transactional leadership, authentic leadership, authoritarian leadership, leadership, frontline leaders, senior leaders, toxic leadership, strategies to resolve toxic leadership, innovation, innovation management, export companies, managing exporting companies, Ethiopia, Ethiopian business environment, and innovation in Ethiopia. The following section, Section 2, includes the following subsections: purpose statement, role of the researcher, participants, research methodology and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments, data collection techniques, data analysis, and reliability and validity. The final section, Section 3, includes a discussion on the application to professional practice and implications for change. The subsections of Section 3 are introduction, presentation of findings, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for research, reflections, and conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

The project section of this research paper starts with the purpose statement and role of the researcher. The second section includes a discussion on the participants of the study and the population. I discuss the research methodology, design, data organization, and data analysis. The second section includes information on the topic of research ethics and I discuss the reliability and validity of the research project.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies which export-based company leaders use to resolve toxic leadership styles, which impede employee innovation. The target population was senior and frontline leaders in two firms, one large and one medium, located in the Eastern Shewa Zone of Ethiopia who used strategies to resolve toxic leadership management styles. Avoiding toxic leadership in the workplace supports the advancement of a productive workplace environment. Toxic leadership hinders innovations, so the ability to increase organizational innovation through eliminating toxic leadership has positive implications for the Ethiopian economy. Increased innovation should be constructive to Ethiopia as the increased availability of innovative products, regarding added functionality or reduced cost can improve the living standard of the Ethiopian population.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I was responsible for studying my research topic, collecting data, analyzing the data, and reporting my findings. Ary et al. (2018) explained that researchers in qualitative studies are the data collection instruments. I followed the

applicable research and ethical guidelines to confirm the quality of the research outcomes. Maintaining research ethics is essential to the integrity of research projects (Shaw & Satalkar, 2018). I have reviewed sources and academic articles that discuss research guidelines. I have focused on books that highlight interview techniques and the case study method. Noble and Smith (2015) discussed how qualitative researchers can increase the quality of their study by addressing validity and reliability concerns. I addressed the validity and reliability of the study.

One of the main responsibilities of researchers is to minimize personal bias in their work. Shaw and Satalkar (2018) noted that researchers need to uphold objectivity despite possible sources of bias that influence them. I had a personal link with the research topic as I worked in an export-based company in Ethiopia. I had knowledge and experience in the export industry in Ethiopia. Researcher bias can lead to undue influence on the data collection and analysis process; therefore, researchers should be aware of their biases and attempt to stay objective in their research (Shaw & Satalkar, 2018). I took effort to understand my viewpoints to reduce bias. Noble and Smith (2015) noted that researchers should acknowledge that multiple realities exist to avoid a biased view. I used bracketing to avoid projecting my views during the interview process. Bracketing refers to the efforts researchers take to set aside their personal beliefs and experiences with the research phenomenon before and during the research process (Baksh, 2018). Although I was familiar with the research topic, I allowed the interviewees to freely share their ideas without interruption. I formed interview questions that are not leading to

ensure that the uncorrupted thoughts of the participants are reflected. I focused on ensuring that I did not influence the participants' responses.

I used an interview protocol when conducting the interviews (Appendix A). An interview protocol allows for the collection of quality data through facilitating a comprehensive and consistent data collection procedure (Yeong et al., 2018). Interview protocols are useful in ensuring that researchers collect the necessary data in the allocated interview time by using the guidelines to control the conversation (Yeong et al., 2018). I used member checking once I complete the interviews. Member checking is the process in which a researcher shares their interpretation of the interview with the participants to assess validity (Madill & Sullivan, 2018). Birt et al. (2016) added member checking is a tool useful in validating, verifying, and assessing data. Researchers that use member checking increase the rigor of data analysis by verifying the accurate transcription and data analysis (Saunders et al., 2015). I shared my interpretation of the interview transcripts with the interview participants and allowed them to comment on whether my analysis accurately captured the interview. Naidu and Prose (2018) stated that member checking is useful in confirming the results of the research with participants. I provided the participants with an opportunity to identify any points that were not accurately captured or elaborate on points that the participants feel were underrepresented, and adjusted the interview transcripts, accordingly.

I followed the concepts outlined in the Belmont Report for dealing with participants. The concepts defined in the Belmont Report are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects and

Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). The safety, well-being, and comfort of

participants is a priority throughout the data collection and information dissemination

stages (Patten & Newhart, 2017). I maintained the privacy and confidentiality of

participants by using codes instead of the participants' names or organizations when

discussing the findings. I obtained consent from the participants before recording the

interview sessions. I shared the interview transcripts and summary of findings with the

participants for added transparency.

Participants

Given the research topic, I selected participants that are relevant to the research

project. Random sampling was not suitable as the participants needed to meet a specified

list of requirements. I only considered research participants that have a leadership

(frontline or senior) position in exporting companies based in Ethiopia. The participants

had successful experience in using strategies to resolve toxic leadership. I used purposive,

nonrandom sampling to identify the participants that meet the study requirements. Patten

and Newhart (2017) discussed how researchers can use purposive sampling for a targeted

approach towards answering the research question. I approached the Ethiopian Chamber

of Commerce office to obtain a list of export-based companies in Ethiopia, with

headquarters in Addis Ababa. I approached the human resources department

representatives of these companies to inquire about the management of the companies'

willingness to identify leaders within the organization that meet the study inclusion

criteria and are willing to participate in the study. I asked the human resources

department representatives to forward my study invitation to potential participants and

the participants contacted me by email to state their willingness to participate. I e-mailed

the participants a consent form after they confirmed their willingness to participate in the

study. The consent form contains a summary of the study's objectives, the intended

benefits of the study for the Ethiopian export industry, an estimate of the time I required

of them, and a statement of voluntary participation. I informed the participants that they

could withdraw from the study by informing me via face-to-face, phone, or e-mail any

time before or during the interview. Following, I set up the interview time and date based

on the participants' availability.

I established a working relationship with the interview participants to ensure the

success of the interviews. Drabble et al. (2015) discussed three interviewer strategies to

establish a working relationship with participants: cultivating rapport and maintaining a

connection, demonstrating responsiveness to interviewee content and concerns, and

communicating regard for the interviewees and their contribution. I established rapport

with the interviewees by starting each interview with informal conversation. I provided

the participants with information on the purpose of the study. I demonstrated

responsiveness by practicing active listening and reassuring the participants that I am

interested in their responses through reaffirming words. I showed regard towards the

participants by exercising respectful attention and allowing the participants to share their

thoughts without showing any negative judgment, both through my expressions and

words.

Research Method and Design

Researchers need to select a suitable research method and design based on the nature of the inquiry. The three primary research methods are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Yin, 2017). Quantitative researchers normally use numerical data and qualitative researchers use words (Leppink, 2017). In mixed method research, quantitative and qualitative data are combined within a single investigation (Walker & Boyer, 2018). I did not use a mixed methods approach as I did not use quantitative data in this research. I used a qualitative research method to identify strategies leaders use to resolve toxic leadership styles, which impede employee innovation. The second decision regarding my research is the choice of research design. The four main research designs in qualitative research are mini ethnography, focus group, narrative inquiry, and case study (Saunders et al., 2017). Patten and Newhart (2017) discussed how researchers can use a case study design to understand the detailed thoughts and ideas of their research participants. I collected data from two senior and two frontline leaders across two export-based companies in Ethiopia using a case study design.

Research Method

The research method for this study is qualitative. Yin (2017) confirmed that qualitative research is optimal for studying the principal motives, views, and opinions of participants. One of the principal differences between qualitative research and quantitative research is that the former relies on deductive reasoning, while the latter relies on inductive reasoning (Bansal et al., 2018). Researchers that use quantitative methods deduce new knowledge that relies on logical reasoning; in contrast, researchers

that use qualitative methods allow for new insight to surface (Leppink, 2017). I selected

the qualitative method, as it enabled me to explore the underlying ideas of my

participants on the effect of toxic leadership in the workplace through deductive

reasoning. The quantitative method is more structured and does not allow for an in-depth

exploration (House, 2018). The primary data collection methods in quantitative research

are surveys and questionnaires (Ary et al., 2018). Quantitative research is useful in testing

hypotheses and I did not test hypotheses in this study. The nature of quantitative data

collection methods, such as surveys and questionnaires, limits participants' ability to

communicate their inner thoughts in detail (Ary et al., 2018). Quantitative research was

not suitable for this study, as I needed to obtain detailed responses from the research

participants.

Research Design

Researchers have different types of research designs available to them. The four

qualitative research designs in qualitative research are mini ethnography, focus group,

narrative inquiry, and case study (Saunders et al., 2015). Mini ethnography involves

obtaining data on a particular group, community, or subculture by asking questions based

on observations (Patten & Newhart, 2017). Ary et al. (2018) discussed that the mini-

ethnography design is best suited to understanding cultures and the success of the design

largely depends on the openness of participants. I did not use the mini-ethnography

design because I studied individuals within organizations rather than groups or cultures.

In focus groups, a small group of research participants from the target population comes

together to answer open-ended questions on their thoughts (Saunders et al., 2015). One of

the drawbacks of focus groups is that participants might experience groupthink (Patten & Newhart, 2017). Participants in focus groups offer less in-depth responses as compared to individual interviews (Saunders et al., 2015). I did not use focus groups, as I needed to collect detailed responses from the research participants. A narrative inquiry relies on creating meaning from secondary sources, such as stories, autobiographies, and journals (Yin, 2017). Ary et al. (2018) stated that narrative inquiry design raises validity concerns. I did not use narrative inquiry, as I did not collect data from indirect sources. A case study is an in-depth and detailed examination of a case (House, 2018). I used a case study design, as it was most suited to the research topic. As Patten and Newhart discussed, the case study method enables researchers to understand complex issues. Case studies are categorized into descriptive, exploratory, or a combination of descriptive and exploratory (Saunders et al., 2015). A descriptive case study is used to describe the phenomenon, as it exists (Yin, 2017). An exploratory case study is useful in understanding a given phenomenon and opening up investigations (Ary et al., 2018). I used an exploratory case study, as I explored the strategies leaders use to resolve toxic leadership styles in the workplace.

I considered data saturation in the research design. Data saturation occurs when no new themes arise and no new information emerges during data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Fusch and Ness (2015) stated that data saturation occurs when enough information is available to replicate the study. The study included data from four research participants. Fusch and Ness stated that a minimum of six interview participants is ordinarily required for data saturation; however, the actual number of participants for

data saturation depends on the target population. Fusch and Ness recommended the following points to ensure data saturation: using interview questions that can be used with different participants, using a saturation grid demonstrating the main topics of interest, taking measures to address personal bias, and using data triangulation. Data triangulation is useful in reaching data saturation and relating data from different sources guarantees that the data is rich in depth (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I used semi-structured interviews to collect data. The questions I have formed were used with different participants with ease. I used methodological triangulation by collecting data through document review, in addition to the interviews.

Population and Sampling

The population consisted of leaders in export-based companies located in Ethiopia. The leaders were of legal age of consent, with tenure of at least 3 years at their current company of employment. The leaders had experience in resolving toxic leadership styles in the workplace. I interviewed both senior and frontline leaders. For this study, I used purposive sampling to select the study's participants. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling; this means that the selection of participants is not random. Sharma (2017) discussed how non-probabilistic sampling techniques allow for the purposive selection of participants that can be used to answer the research question more accurately. This study includes four research participants. Researchers select participants based on the purpose of the study in purposive sampling (Ary et al., 2018). Purposive sampling allows researchers to select the relevant participants for the study based on the research inquiry (Sharma, 2017). Therefore, using

purposive sampling, researchers can recruit participants that have the relevant knowledge in the field of research (Ary et al., 2018). Fusch and Ness (2015) stated that data saturation occurs when sufficient information to replicate the study exists. Becker (2012) suggested that in qualitative research, a number as low as one participant is sufficient based on the depth of inquiry. I enlisted a total of four participants in the study. I used questions that are applicable across all the interviewees to ensure data saturation. I used methodological triangulation to ensure data saturation by collecting data from both interviews and document review. The interviews took place through video conferencing, and as such, participants were able to select a private and quiet environment for the interview sessions. Ary et al. (2018) noted that research participants need to be in an environment where they feel safe to share information. Mneimneh et al. (2018) noted that privacy is an important element of interviews. Mneimneh et al. found that interviewers cannot dictate the level of privacy at participants' work settings. Interviewees might under or over report negative information in the presence of a third party (Mneimneh et al., 2018). I had opted not to conduct the interviews within the participants' workplace to maintain the quality of their responses, as they might fear that their colleagues could overhear the interview.

Ethical Research

Researchers are responsible for undertaking ethical research. The protection of human participants through ethical research is one of the responsibilities of researchers (Grant & Sugarman, 2004). I have researched the ethical codes and standards required before undertaking research initiatives with human participants. The Institutional Review

Board (IRB) has standards that detail the ethical standards of research at Walden University. The IRB approval number for this study is 10-15-20-0676613. The three principles outlined in the Belmont Report are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects and Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). I followed the three principles discussed in the Belmont Report. As the primary data collection instrument, I complied with ethical research guidelines as follows. The first ethical research task I undertook is to obtain consent form from the participants before any research procedure takes place. A consent form is needed to ensure that potential participants have the necessary information to make an informed decision (Lee, 2018). Lynch (2020) discussed that some participants may choose to withdraw for personal or noncompliance purposes. I informed the participants that they can withdraw from the study at any point during or before the interview through any means they find most convenient, such as through email, text message, or phone call. Before the interview, I discussed the purpose of the study with the participants and I informed them that I would provide them with a transcript of the interviews. I also offered to share a summary of the findings with the participants.

Offering incentives to research participants is an area of ethical concern. Grant and Sugarman (2004) stated that corruption of judgment occurs through undue influence when participants receive incentives high enough to offset their aversion to taking place in studies that they would otherwise opt to avoid. I did not offer any financial incentives to participants. The interview took place virtually through video conferencing. I ensured participant confidentiality. In qualitative studies, it is possible to preserve the

confidentiality, not the anonymity of participants. I used codes to ensure the confidentiality of the participants, as well as the companies that employ the participants. I assigned a code to each of the participants and used these codes when discussing the findings. I used a computer application, File Shredder, to shred the files associated with the codes after I completed the study. As per Walden University requirements, I am keeping the documents related to the interview on a hard drive located in a locked cabinet and I will delete the documents in 5 years. I shared a summary of my findings with the participants.

Data Collection Instruments

Researchers collect data using data collection instruments. Saunders et al. (2015) stated qualitative data collection tools include interviews and document review. I was the primary data collection instrument for this study. The first instrument I used is interviews. Yin (2017) stated that interviews are one of the most common data collection methods in qualitative research. Researchers engage in interviews to gain an in-depth exploration of the views, experiences, beliefs, and motivations of participants (Gill et al., 2008). According to Gill et al. (2008), the three types of interviews are structured, semistructured, and unstructured. Structured interviews are not suitable for in-depth explorations and unstructured interviews are time-consuming and difficult to manage (Yin, 2017). I used semistructured interviews with open-ended questions. I used document review by evaluating reports and planning documents that include details on how employees receive reviews, how leaders guide organizational culture change, and how innovative ideas are implemented throughout the organizations. The types of

reviews that employees receive enabled me to understand the type of leadership style present within the organization. The documents related to innovation assisted me in establishing the role of leaders in the innovation process.

I addressed research quality concerns by considering the role of researcher bias, validity, and reliability in the data collection process. Research validity refers to the appropriateness of the research tool and reliability refers to the consistency of the research process (Leung, 2015). Member checking is the process of sharing the interpretation of the interview with the participants to maintain the validity or trustworthiness of the data collected (Candela, 2019). I used member checking by setting up a follow-up interview with my participants to ensure that I had captured the discussion accurately. Methodological triangulation is the use of more than one data source to enhance the validity of a research project (Cypress, 2018). According to Yeong et al. (2018), researchers can use interview protocols to ensure preparedness and collect comprehensive data in a systematic manner. I used an interview protocol to ensure that I am prepared for the interviews and that I obtained detailed responses from the participants to answer the research question. I included the interview protocol in Appendix A. The interview protocol includes a sample of the transcript I used to introduce the study guidelines to the participants, the interview questions, and the closing part of the interview, where I thanked the participants for their participation.

Data Collection Technique

The data collection technique of qualitative research varies from quantitative research. Twining et al. (2017) stated that the criteria for evaluating qualitative research

are different from quantitative research. Twining et al. noted the objective of any research

project has to link to the research problem. I used semistructured interviews and

document review to collect data from four research participants. Gill et al. (2008) stated

that interviews are suitable to explore the views, experiences, beliefs, and motivations of

participants. Semistructured interviews are more flexible than structured interviews and

allow the interviewer to obtain detailed answers from the interviewee (Saunders et al.,

2015). I used an audio recorder to record the interview sessions with the participants.

Yeong et al. (2018) stated that an interview protocol is a document used to aid

researchers in checking for the alignment between the research question and the interview

questions and staying mindful of the delimitations of the study. I used an interview

protocol to guide my discussion with the participants and remind myself to share key

details with the participants, such as the use of an audio recorder and the confidentiality

measures I took. I provided the interview protocol in Appendix A.

Preserving participants' confidentiality is necessary in some research situations.

Researchers that collect data using interviews allow their participants to share sensitive

matters without the lack of privacy, as is the case with group settings (Gill et al., 2008).

The interview process is often lengthy and transcribing the responses is time-consuming

(Saunders et al., 2015). I reviewed the appropriate interview techniques to minimize

researcher bias, facilitate an informative interview session, and ensure the safety of my

participants, as well as myself. I used document review to collect data. Document review

is using documents, printed and/or electronic, to gain insight and understanding of the

research question (Saunders et al., 2015). Saunders et al. (2015) listed some of the types

of documents used in document review as minutes of meetings, manuals, and letters. Bowen (2009) stated that document review is useful for developing understanding and finding meaning in a cost-efficient manner. Bowen noted the drawbacks of document review include lack of complete information and intentional blocking of some information. However, document review can be used in conjunction with other data collection methods for data triangulation (Bowen, 2009). I used two data collection instruments to enhance the data collection.

I selected one senior manager and one frontline leader each from two export-based companies in Ethiopia. I sent an invitation to the participants by sending an e-mail to the human resource department representative of their respective companies detailing the purpose of the study, how I would ensure their confidentiality, and stating that I would share a summary of the findings with them when the study is complete. Before I started the interviews, I sought the participants' approval for the use of an audio recorder and proceeded based on their approval. Leung (2015) stated that the quality of research depends on the quality of the data collection process. Relatedly, Birt et al. (2016) discussed the importance of exploring the reliability of qualitative research through member checking by sharing the interpretation of the results with the participants. I used member checking and allowed the participants to comment on my interpretation of the interview. I focused on maintaining the quality of the research project starting with data collection.

Data Organization Technique

Data organization is one of the key elements in confirming research quality. According to Cypress (2018), data organization contributes to the quality of the research project by facilitating data analysis. The success of data organization and the resulting data analysis allows researchers to accurately present their findings (Ary et al., 2018). Data interpretation is based on the identification of patterns in qualitative research (Twining et al., 2017). To identify patterns, researchers should keep accurate records of the data they collect (Twining et al., 2017). I carefully organized the data to facilitate the pattern identification process. The tools I used are reflective journals, research logs, labeling systems, and an audio recorder. I used codes to represent the participants to ensure their confidentiality. I kept careful records of the codes I assigned to each of the participants. I used an audio recorder during the interviews. Audiotaping provides an unimpeachable source of data and ensures the completeness of data (Cypress, 2018). I then used Microsoft Word to transcribe the interviews. I took field notes during the interviews to recall relevant themes. I kept research logs to help me identify themes in the documents I review. Patten and Newhart (2017) stated the importance of categorizing data and recombining evidence. I used ATLAS.ti to keep track of emerging themes by tracking codes and linking these codes to the related themes. I used ATLAS.ti to visualize the data I gathered from different data sources. I then used ATLAS.ti to recombine the evidence I gathered from the interviews and document review, as well as relevant articles and notes I took throughout the research process. I kept all documents related to the

research, such as the interview notes and audio recording, on a hard drive in a locked

cabinet for 5 years, after which I will destroy all data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurs after successful data collection and organization. Data

analysis is the process of making sense by exploring, describing, interpreting, and

understanding data (Cypress, 2018). Twining et al. (2017) stated that data triangulation

enhances the quality of research projects through the use of more than one data source. I

used methodological triangulation, as I used evidence from different data sources. I

performed document reviews, in addition to conducting interviews. Data triangulation is

useful in cross-checking the consistency of data and researchers can reduce the risk of

using a single data source using data triangulation (Cypress, 2018). I improved the

quality of the research by using more that one data source.

Data analysis is a multi-step process. Data analysis is the process of examining,

categorizing, tabulating, testing, and recombining evidence (Ary et al., 2018). Cypress

(2018) listed the steps of data analysis as follows: preparing and organizing the data,

reducing the data into themes through a process of coding, condensing the codes, and

representing data. The first step, preparing and organizing the data, involves saving

digital files using a naming system and securing data. The files I analyzed include the

interview transcripts that I transcribed using Microsoft Word and documents I obtained

from the companies. Following, I created codes by making sense of the various sources

of data I collected and reduces these codes into themes. Themes are broad units of data

that are made up of several codes to form an idea (Cypress, 2018). Organizing data is a relevant pre-step in facilitating data analysis.

I used a qualitative software program, ATLAS.ti, in the data analysis process. Firmin et al. (2017) stated that qualitative data analysis software programs assist researchers in data organization, tracking codes, and data storage. ATLAS.ti is a support tool that is useful in helping researchers manage, visualize, and analyze data. I used ATLAS.ti to categorize, tabulate, and recombine the data I will collect. I used ATLAS.ti to visualize the different sources and types of data I collected and track the codes and themes I created. I introduced keywords of my planned research topic into ATLAS.ti. I used the deductive approach to qualitative data analysis. I used the research question and the conceptual framework to guide the data analysis process.

After I collected the data, including the transcription of the interviews, I linked the responses I obtained with the existing literature on the relationship between toxic leadership and innovation. I related the emerging themes to the conceptual framework. Noble and Smith (2015) stated that researchers need to explore topics and research related to their research topic. I kept exploring how the research topic interrelates with emerging findings on the impact of toxic leadership on organizational innovation. I used ATLAS.ti in the process of correlating the key research themes with literature.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity in qualitative research are relevant concepts related to the quality of research. Noble and Smith (2015) discussed that in qualitative research, no statistical methods for establishing reliability and validity are present. Although in

qualitative studies researchers do not use numerical information, the value researchers

obtain by using qualitative research to gather rich data and discover patterns from words

cannot be neglected (Leung, 2015). Ary et al. (2018) discussed that the requirements for

assessing the quality of qualitative research are different from those of quantitative

research. For example, the focus in assessing quantitative research is ensuring the

generalizability of the findings, whereas the focus in qualitative research is the usability

of the research process in comparable cases (Yin, 2017). Researchers can use the

concepts of reliability and validity to enhance the quality of their research (Yin, 2017).

Qualitative researchers, as with quantitative researchers, have the ability to ascertain the

quality of their research using reliability and validity.

Reliability

Reliability is one of the measures used to establish the quality of research. In

quantitative research, reliability refers to the consistency or repeatability of the research

process (Golafshani, 2003). Noble and Smith (2015) stated that reliability describes the

consistency of the analytical procedures used in the research. Dependability is a term

used in qualitative research that links to the concept of reliability in quantitative research

(Golafshani, 2003). Researchers can ensure reliability or dependability by using inclusive

and comprehensive data, as well as performing constant data comparison (Leung, 2015).

Golafshani (2003) discussed how dependability is achieved when researchers take

measures to verify and examine the data they collect. Cypress (2017) discussed how

researchers use member checking and the principles of data saturation to ensure

dependability. Member checking is a process in which researchers share the analyzed

data from the interviews they conduct with the interviewees (Madill & Sullivan, 2018).

Member checking is a useful strategy that allows researchers to confirm their

interpretation with the participants (Naidu & Prose, 2018). I used member checking by

scheduling a follow-up interview with the participants to share my analysis of their

interviews and confirm that I have accurately captured their ideas. I improved the

dependability of the research process by confirming the data I collect through interviews

by using member checking.

Validity

Validity is useful in assessing the quality of the research process. According to

Noble and Smith (2015), research validity refers to the integrity and applicability of the

research methods. Validity is related to the accuracy in which the findings correctly

reflect the data (Noble & Smith, 2015). Validity addresses the appropriateness of the data

collection processes (Leung, 2015). Validity covers questions on the soundness of the

research question, research design, sampling methods, and data analysis. Credibility is

the trustworthiness of the findings (Noble & Smith, 2015). Credibility can be attained

through member checking and data triangulation (Saunders et al., 2017). I used member

checking by engaging the participants after the initial interview to share my interpretation

of the interview discussion with them and obtain their feedback. I used methodological

triangulation by collecting data from two data sources: interviews and document review.

Transferability is related to the usability of research findings in different

circumstances. Transferability is the extent that the results of qualitative research can be

applied in other situations with similar theoretical models (Leung, 2015). Researchers

should establish transferability to allow the audience of the research to assess the applicability of the findings in similar situations (Cypress, 2017). Some of the strategies for achieving transferability are using purposive sampling, providing thick data descriptions, and using robust data (Cypress, 2017). I selected the research participants using purposive sampling and I will use probing questions to collect comprehensive responses.

Another measure for testing the quality of qualitative research is confirmability. Confirmability refers to the level to which the research findings receive the support and approval of others (Leung, 2015). As Cypress (2017) discussed, two of the strategies to ensure confirmability are data triangulation and audit trails. I used methodological triangulation to confirm my findings from multiple sources. I kept a reflective journal on the data collection and analysis process to audit the research process and identify potential cases of bias.

Data saturation is a concept used by researchers to test whether they have collected sufficient data. Braun and Clarke (2021) discussed that data saturation is the point at which no new themes or codes emerge from the data; data saturation is reached by using more than one data source and including detailed data in the analysis. Fusch and Ness (2015) suggested that researchers should use interview questions that apply to different interviewees and address personal bias to reach data saturation. I used open-ended interview questions that are usable with all of the potential interviewees for my study to reach data saturation. I wrote interview questions that are not leading to minimize influencing the participants. I used member checking and confirmed that I have

accurately captured the views of the participants by setting up a follow-up interview. I used methodological triangulation to reach data saturation by collecting data from interviews and document review. Data saturation occurs when there is information redundancy and no new codes emerge from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I stopped collecting data when I collected enough information to replicate the study and no further themes emerge.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I discussed the research plan, my role as the researcher, and the research decisions I made for this study. Section 2 includes the data collection decisions associated with my qualitative research. The subsections of section two are purpose statement, role of the researcher, participants, research method, research design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments, data collection technique, data analysis, and reliability and validity. In the following section, Section 3, I will present the findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, and recommendations.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

This section includes the presentation of my findings, discussed theme-by-theme, and the conclusions I have reached. Section 3 includes an introduction, presentation of my findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, and recommendations for further research. I will also share my reflection on the process of my study and end with a concluding statement.

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies which export-based company leaders use to resolve toxic leadership styles, which impede employee innovation. The participants pointed to the importance of effective communication in resolving toxic leadership styles, which impede employee innovation. Four main themes emerged from my study: open and transparent communication, sustained counseling and training, teamwork and joint decision-making, and incentive and review frameworks. The findings showed that leaders try to tackle toxic leadership tactfully and procedurally.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question was: What strategies do export-based company leaders use to resolve toxic leadership styles, which impede employee innovation? After jointly analyzing the two sources of data (interviews and document review), I identified four different themes: open and transparent communication, sustained counseling and training, teamwork and joint decision-making, and incentive and review framework. I found that

the themes that emerged align well with the conceptual framework, transformational leadership.

Theme 1: Open and Transparent Communication

The first theme that emerged is open and transparent communication. The participants shared that they found open and transparent communication to be critical in identifying and tackling toxic leadership. Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of the subthemes that formed Theme 1.

Table 1

Open and Transparent Communication

Subtheme	Frequency	Percent
Transparency	5	10.4
Straight-forward relationship	7	14.6
Sharing	17	35.4
Active Listening	9	18.8
Meetings	6	12.5
Communication Skills	4	8.3

P1 shared that there should be transparency between employees and leaders when communicating. P1 stated, "If there is clear and transparent communication, the nature of the relationship between the management and employees cannot become toxic." P2 stated

that the nature of the communication between the management and employees should be characterized with honesty. P2 said, "Lying and giving wrong information to employees needs to be avoided." P3 also shared their practice of verifying the correctness of the information being communicated to employees, as a means of tackling toxic leadership styles. P4 discussed how communication is only effective when leaders share the right information with their subordinates.

The second subtheme that emerged is the importance of having a straightforward relationship. P1 discussed how they work to prevent toxic leadership styles by encouraging a straightforward relationship between the employees and the management of the company. P2 stated how they perform personal site-visits alongside employees to enable direct communication and problem identification. P3 discussed that having a direct relationship with employees and allowing all levels of employees to directly approach the management of the company allows them to identify toxic leaders in a timely manner. P3 said, "You need to have open communication, not only top-down but also bottom-up the management chain." P4 also noted that leaders should directly be available to their employees on-site to provide the necessary support.

The third subtheme is the sharing of concerns and ideas. P1stated that they share ideas with employees and how employees are provided with both informal and formal platforms to share their concerns or creative ideas. P2 stressed the role of experience sharing in eliminating toxic leadership in the workplace. P3 also noted how sharing allows for input on the presence of toxic leadership, as well as how to resolve it. P3 said, "Ideas are coming, it depends on the issues and problem, and then you can solve it

accordingly." Similarly, P4 noted how sharing their experience with employees decreases the presence of toxic leadership in the organization by facilitating good leadership practices.

The fourth subtheme is active listening. P1 discussed how they practice active listening of the concerns and ideas brought forward by subordinates. P2 shared how they use active listening when discussing with toxic leaders before offering an alternative to their negative leadership style. P2 said, "I listened to the leader (toxic) properly and tried to respond in a way that would not create negativity." P3 also noted the relevance of listening to colleagues. P3 stated, "The rule I use is to listen first and talk second; I believe in listening 95% of the time and talking only 5% of the time." P4 also shared their belief that listening to their subordinates leads to improved problem identification in the management chain.

The fifth subtheme is meetings. P1 shared how engaging in frequent meetings provides employees with an opportunity to discuss the challenges they are facing, such as dealing with toxic leaders. P2 shared how they used meetings as a platform to receive feedback from employees and denounce toxic leadership behaviors. P3 shared their experience on how toxic leaders are revealed in meetings through the discussion that ensues amongst all members of the organization. P4 said they use meetings to brief employees on the necessary skills and practices to avoid toxic leadership.

The sixth subtheme is communication skills. P1 noted that the ability to effectively communicate eliminates shortcomings in leadership. P2 shared that the ability to talk and listen properly facilitates improves the outcomes of the discussion. Similarly, -

P3 shared that the manner in which leaders communicate determines the success of meetings. P4 stated, "Knowledge without the ability to successfully communicate is not useful on its own."

Connection to the Conceptual Framework

The first theme that emerged, open and transparent communication, is consistent with the conceptual framework, transformational leadership. Le and Lei (2019) discussed how transformational leaders facilitate increased dialogue and create an environment of timely support. The four pillars of transformational leadership are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Burns, 1978). Theme 1 can be linked to idealized influence and inspirational motivation. By using idealized influence, transformational leaders can serve as role models and gain the trust of their subordinates (Le, 2020). By encouraging open communication lines, leaders allow employees to look up to them for honest guidance. Theme 1 is related to idealized influence as transparent communication fosters trust in employees. Labrague et al. (2020) stated that transformational leaders use inspirational motivation to provide employees with a clear idea of the expectations, goals, and visions set for the organization. Through open and transparent communication, leaders can effectively share their mission statement and provide the support needed to allow employees to reach their goals.

Connection to the Literature

Theme 1, open and transparent communication, is consistent with the existing literature on strategies to resolve toxic leadership. Naeem and Khurram (2020) discussed

that leaders should communicate with employees to understand their experiences with toxic traits that their leaders might possess. Leaders should understand that not all employees would take the first move to approach others in the organization with their experiences of toxic leaders. As such, leaders should take an added step to increase their availability to employees. Le (2020) found that employees should be able to share their ideas without fear of repercussions for increased innovation in the workplace. Employees that find themselves working for a toxic leader are discouraged from speaking out and as such, cannot contribute to the improvement of the organization. Buzzanell (2018) concluded that leaders need to maintain open communication networks to encourage innovation.

Theme 2: Sustained Counseling and Training

The second emergent theme was sustained counseling and training. The participants discussed how they attempt to resolve toxic leadership by engaging toxic leaders through various interventions, such as counseling and providing continued training. Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage of the subthemes that formed Theme 2.

Table 2

Sustained Counseling and Training

Subtheme	Frequency	Percent
Knowledge Sharing	22	36.0
Guidance	14	23.0
Training	16	26.2
Counseling	9	14.8

The first subtheme is knowledge sharing. P1 discussed the importance of know-how and knowledge in fostering positive leadership practices. P1 said, "We (leaders) have to transfer our knowledge and expertise to all levels of employees." P2 said that inability to share knowledge is a characteristic of toxic leaders and as such, they advise leaders to share their knowledge continuously. P3 said that they believe in sharing their experience to tackle toxic leadership styles. P4 discussed how they share the relevant skills and experience with employees.

The second subtheme is guidance. P1 noted, "Employees can complete tasks with excellency when their leaders provide adequate guidance." P2 shared their experience with offering guidance to toxic leaders in an attempt to help them neglect their toxic leadership practices. P3 discussed how they guide the leaders in their organization on how to tackle toxic leadership styles based on their experience in the organization. P4

also noted that one of the primary tasks of a leader is to guide their employees. P4 said, "A leader should know the way and show the way."

The third subtheme is training. P1 shared how training ensures that employee safety is placed at the forefront. P2 shared how they use various training seminars to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of toxic leadership styles. P3 shared how they offer training to toxic leaders to allow them to understand the shortfalls of their practices. P4 noted that toxic leaders can arise from a lack of knowledge. P4 shared that they intervene to train leaders on the necessary technical, operational, and leadership practices.

The fourth subtheme is counseling. P1 noted how they use the first and second incidents of leaders exhibiting toxic leadership styles to counsel them and rehabilitate them. P2 shared that they will offer counseling to toxic leaders to guide them in the right direction that is conclusive to employee well-being and organizational goals. P2 said, shared their experience of using teaching moments to help subordinates understand the value of teamwork and collaboration. P3 discussed that, in their organization, toxic leaders are offered counseling from members of the staff that are senior to them. P3 noted that the senior management is often involved in the counseling sessions to allow toxic leaders to realize the negativity and severity of their actions. P4 discussed how they counsel employees to resolve their toxic leadership styles. P4 stated, "I believe in training, teaching, and communicating with toxic leaders rather than firing them."

Connection to the Conceptual Framework

Theme 2, training and counseling, is closely linked to transformational leadership. As Chen et al. (2019) discussed, transformational leaders create an opportunity for

knowledge sharing. Transformational leaders use individualized consideration to allow their followers to reach their full potential and advance through training (Kim & Yoon, 2015). Through continued training, leaders can raise the skill level of their employees to avoid a toxic environment created by a lack of knowledge. Leaders can also enable toxic leaders to change their leadership style for the better and achieve their professional needs. Hadadian and Zarei (2016) discussed how transformational leaders set an environment that encourages the abilities and enhances the practices of their followers. Transformational leaders create an environment that is conclusive to innovation using training and counseling.

Connection to the Literature

The existing literature supports the role of training and counseling in resolving toxic leadership styles. Stoten (2015) discussed the involvement of senior management in counseling and training as an effective strategy in resolving toxic leadership styles. The participants all stated that senior management is involved in the process of resolving toxic leadership styles by counseling toxic leaders. Le (2020) found that transformational leadership leads to a workplace environment of increased know-how sharing; this, in turn, leads to added innovation. Training employees is a useful strategy in creating awareness of the negative effects of toxic leadership and raising the knowledge base, which supports innovation. Hoffman and Sergio (2020) discussed how supporting organizational learning is positive in resolving the toxic leadership style. Training and counseling employees and leaders are strategies that the participants used to resolve toxic leadership styles.

Theme 3: Teamwork and Joint Decision-Making

Participants also stated that they believe in teamwork and joint decision-making practices. The participants shared that involving more people in decisions ensures that the organization does not fall victim to an autonomous toxic leader. Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage of the subthemes that formed Theme 3.

Table 3

Teamwork and Joint Decision-Making

Subtheme	Frequency	Percent
Shared Responsibility	10	17.5
Shared Outcomes	9	15.8
Joint Learning	6	10.5
Teamwork	11	19.3
Belongingness	7	12.3
Joint-Decisions	14	24.6

The first subtheme is shared responsibility. P1 shared their belief in creating a sense of shared responsibility in the organization. P1 said, "We cannot cast the blame only on the employees, everyone has to share the responsibility." Similar, P2 said, "All employees need to band together and work." P3 discussed how there is always more than one person responsible for undertaking a given organizational task. P4 discussed how

they assign at least two people in charge of the same department to foster shared responsibility.

The second subtheme is shared outcomes. The participants discussed how they demonstrate that all levels of employees experience the growth or downfall of the organization together. P1 said they inform their employees of the shared nature of outcomes. Speaking of their employees, P1 said, "We grow together." P2 shared that all employees share joint outcomes, and as such, should collaborate to attain higher standards. P3 said that all levels of employees participate in meetings with the management team, as everyone shares the results of the organization. P4 discussed how the actions of all employees and their leaders can either lead to the growth or failure of the company.

The third subtheme is joint learning. P1 said, "Top management and their employees will jointly keep learning together from the beginning of the year to the end." P2 said they use exercises to create joint learning opportunities to understand best practices together. P3 said that organizational improvements are undertaken given the input offered in meetings from all employees. P4 discussed that they are directly available on the work-site to engage employees and understand means of improving performance together.

The fourth subtheme is teamwork. P1 discussed that they believe in the power of putting different minds together to come up with solutions. P2 stated that they believe in coming from a team and working for the team. P2 said,

I create exercises within our management review meetings to demonstrate the

importance of teamwork, an element without which we could not reach our

vision. I asked all the members how to increase productivity and this helped them

to understand that they cannot do it without each and every departments'

involvement. Therefore, they came to understand the value of teamwork.

P3 shared that they believe in putting teams together to report issues and propose

solutions. P4 discussed how they do not believe in putting personal interests first and that

employees should collaborate.

The fifth subtheme is belongingness. P1 discussed how they believe in creating a

sense of belongingness in their employees. P2 shared the importance of belongingness

and stated, "I stress the importance of respect, teamwork, and shared *We* language." P3

shared how they create a sense of belongingness by allowing all employees to have a say

in the organization's outcomes. P4 stated that they create belongingness through working

alongside employees and allowing them to improve, rather than resorting to terminating

employment, as much as possible.

The sixth subtheme is joint decisions. P1 discussed how multiple employees

engage in planning and discussion before any significant decisions are made. P2 shared

how they believe in taking ideas from their employees and coupling them with their

experience before making decisions. Similarly, P3 discussed the importance and

necessity of joint decisions. P3 said,

 For example, if I am taking every decision, I can sometimes be harsh or not

understanding the problems fully. One person cannot be 100% sure and accurate.

>You have to take leadership decisions in consultation with the different levels of
>
>management.

P4 said that they believe in assigning a junior to each leader for decisions to be taken jointly and to minimize the impact of toxic leaders, shall there be one.

Connection to the Conceptual Framework

Theme 3, teamwork and joint decision-making, is connected to transformational leadership. One of the pillars of transformational leadership, intellectual stimulation, is when transformational leaders involve followers in decision-making (Xenikou, 2017). As such, the model of joint decision-making discussed by the participants is in-line with the intellectual stimulation aspect of transformational leadership. Using intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders awaken an interest in problem-solving and idea formulation amongst employees (Labrague et al., 2020). The participants allow their employees to come together as a team and openly share their ideas, leading to an improvement in the employees being able to generate ideas and improve the performance of the organization.

Connection to the Literature

Theme 3, teamwork and joint decision-making, is also connected to the existing literature on resolving toxic leadership styles. Sheehan et al. (2020) found that one of the ways to tackle toxic leadership styles is to avoid divisive practices. The participants used teamwork to foster increased communication amongst the different departments and the individuals within those departments. Buzzanell (2018) discussed that one of the strategies to resolve toxic leadership is to avoid hierarchical models of leadership. All the

participants discussed how they avoid placing all decisions with one leader to introduce multi-faceted inputs for decision-making process.

Theme 4: Incentive and Review Frameworks

The four participants discussed the need for a framework and to have procedures in place to fairly administer employees and deal with toxic leaders in a timely and effective manner. Table 4 shows the frequency and percentage of the subthemes that represent Theme 4.

Table 4

Incentive and Review Frameworks

Subtheme	Frequency	Percent
Review	16	32.7
Incentives	9	18.4
Procedures	18	36.7
Termination	6	12.2

The first subtheme is review. P1 discussed how they review and evaluate the relationship with leaders to detect issues in a timely manner. P2 noted the importance of review mechanisms to detect toxic leaders in the workplace and take measures to address the concern. P3 stated that reviewing leaders and issuing warnings to toxic leaders, as needed, is necessary. P4 discussed reviewing performance serves as a signal of the success or failure of leadership in place.

The second subtheme is incentives. The participants shared their belief in using incentives based on performance. P1 discussed how they offer incentives based on tangible achievement to motivate employees. P2 noted that they recommend leaders and employees for incentives based on their performance. P2 said, "Do not give rewards based on who you like best, it needs to be based on performance." P3 discussed that, in their organization, incentives are offered based on a fair review process. P4 shared that they use performance metrics to incentivize leaders and employees.

The third subtheme is procedures. The participants discussed how there need to be procedures in place to deal with toxic leaders, once they are identified. P1 said, "The human resource department has rules and regulations that need to be followed. It is a lesson for all employees that we follow the rules and do not act emotionally or immorally." P2 discussed that there should be procedures that are applicable to all employees. P3 said, "Toxic leaders will easily be identified and remedied, if there is a proper reporting system." P4 shared that they use procedures to assess and reallocate employees based on their conduct.

The fourth subtheme is termination. The participants noted that they use various means to deal with toxic leaders and that if all the measures fail, they have to resort to firing the toxic leader. P1 discussed that toxic leaders are given a chance to remedy their behavior and if that fails, they are terminated using the procedures in place. P2 discussed how toxic leaders that fail to show improvement despite interventions might need to be terminated. P3 also shared that toxic leaders that refuse to adopt better leadership practices will be fired. P3 said, "If they do not change, we have to change them." P4

discussed that they have found it necessary to terminate toxic leaders, as they did not respond to measures to help them change their leadership style.

Connection to the Conceptual Framework

Theme 4, incentive and review framework, is related to transformational leadership. Transformational leaders allow employees to shift from self-interest to joint organization change (Chen et al., 2019). Having a consistent, transparent, and workable framework allows for good work to be recognized while imposing strategies to discourage toxic leadership styles. The inspiration motivation pillar of transformational leadership is related to how leaders instill a shared purpose and motives for organizational success (Xenikou, 2017). With leaders setting clear and attainable objectives, employees can work towards organizational success, while benefiting from incentives. Transformational leaders use idealized influence, another pillar of transformational leadership, to instill trust in employees (Wipulanusat et al., 2017). Leaders that use a transparent reward and review system show their followers that they are fair and can be trusted.

Connection to the Literature

Theme 4 is well connected to the existing literature on how to resolve toxic leadership styles. Rooij and Fine (2018) discussed that added transparency is used to resolve toxic leadership styles. If the procedures that are used to incentivize and review employees and leaders are procedural, there is no room for favoritism or ambiguity. Hoffman and Sergio (2020) discussed that toxic leaders misuse their power. Having a working framework minimizes toxic leaders' ability to unjustly harm employees through

negative reviews. Milosevic et al. (2020) discussed how toxic leaders can be unwilling to set goals. Hence, having a framework in place allows employees to perform towards their organization's goals. Further, having a reporting framework allows for employees to report the toxic traits they see in their leaders (Naeem & Khurram, 2020). Employees need to play an active role in tackling toxic leadership. Leaders need to create a framework that allows employees to report their experiences with the toxic leaders, and toxic leaders need to be dealt with procedurally.

Applications to Professional Practice

Leaders worldwide increasingly understand the importance of staying innovative for sustained positive performance. Retkoceri and Kurteshi (2019) stated that innovation leads to the ability to meet consumer demands, stay competitive, and get in a position to take advantage of market opportunities. As such, leaders should find means of encouraging innovation while removing all factors that lead to a decline in creativity from the workplace. Chen et al. (2019) discussed how transformational leaders encourage the exploration of new opportunities and knowledge. Transformational leaders create an environment that supports innovation. In contrast, toxic leaders influence their subordinates in a destructive manner, leading to a decline in positive organizational aspects, such as innovation (Paltu & Brouwers, 2020). The findings in this study present strategies that export-based company leaders in Ethiopia have successfully used to resolve toxic leadership styles to enhance employee innovation.

The four themes that I presented based on the interviews and document review I gathered, can be applied to professional practice. Theme 1, open and transparent

communication, is a useful strategy in tackling toxic leadership. Hoffman and Sergio

(2020) found that leaders need to encourage transparency and increased communication

with their subordinates to successfully respond to employees' needs. Employees develop

a sense of trust when they belong to an open and transparent organization. Employees

that trust their leaders are able to share their ideas without fear. Sheehan et al. (2020)

discussed that leaders with professional intent allow transparency in their organizations.

A workplace culture of openness and transparency enables employees to speak out

against toxic leaders. Increased communication between employees and the management

team allows for problems to be identified and resolved in a timely manner. Open and

transparent communication allows for the timely identification of toxic leaders.

Therefore, open and transparent communication is the first step in dealing with the

presence of toxic leaders in organizations.

In addition to open and transparent communication, leaders should create a

platform for knowledge sharing. Theme 2, sustained counseling and training, is a strategy

that all participants have used to resolve toxic leadership styles and create a workplace

environment that does not foster toxic behaviors. Milosevic et al. (2020) discovered that

the main intent of toxic leaders is to hide their own incompetence and maintain control.

As such, training toxic leaders increases their knowledge and provides them with the

necessary know-how to successfully guide their subordinates. Paltu and Brouwers (2020)

discussed that toxic leaders increase negative factors, such as stress, absenteeism, and

discontentment, in employees. The participants' commitment to counseling toxic leaders

is a significant strategy in resolving toxic leadership. All participants noted that they try

to deal with toxic leaders without using harsh methods and greatly rely on counseling as the first step in rehabilitating a toxic leader. Toxic leaders are given an opportunity to reflect on their behavior and adopt a better way of operating, equipped with knowledge from the training and guidance from the counseling.

Leaders can tackle toxic leadership by creating a workplace that does not follow a traditional hierarchical model. Tavanti (2011) suggested that leaders should avoid increased hierarchy and rely on a model that welcomes input from employees. Theme 3, teamwork and joint decision-making, is a strategy that can be used to provide more leverage to employees while minimizing the effect of toxic leaders on the organization. Chen et al. (2019) discussed how leaders need to set the way towards moving from individual-level interest to collective organizational change. Therefore, encouraging teamwork allows for a shift towards the well-being of the organization and its members, as a whole. One of the characteristics of toxic leaders is divisiveness (Kim & Yoon, 2015). Through allowing teamwork and joint-decision making, leaders can mitigate the effect of toxic leadership in the workplace and ensure that all employees have a say in the organization's outcomes. Teamwork and joint-decision making will ensure that organizations do not fall victims to the behaviors and actions of lone toxic leaders.

Leaders that set an organization culture that follows a framework for how employees are reviewed are perceived as transparent. Theme 4, incentive and review framework, is a way of targeting toxic leadership styles. Naeem and Khurram (2020) discussed how there should be systems in place to enable employees to report toxic leaders. Having a framework where complaints are effectively received and rightful

decisions are made allows employees to report factors that harm their well-being and the organization's performance. Labrague et al. (2020) discussed how toxic leaders are intolerant and self-promoting. Incentives and reprimands are handled more rightfully when more than one individual overlooks performance evaluations. Having procedural review processes does not allow for toxic leaders to unjustly target employees. As such, employees are not discouraged by the possibility of suffering from unfair review outcomes.

Implications for Social Change

Resolving toxic leadership styles which impede employee innovation has positive implications for social change, as well. Toxic leaders harm the well-being of employees by increasing turnover, stress, and decreasing employee engagement (Hadadian & Zarei, 2016). Employees that work for toxic leaders experience a decline in their wellness and are fearful to share their ideas. Xenikou (2017) noted how toxic leaders negatively affect employees' readiness for innovation. Toxic leaders harm an organization's employees, as well as the prospects of the organization to remain competitive through using innovation. Removing the presence of toxic leadership in the workplace has positive implications for social change.

Ethiopia is a developing country with a population of around 115 million. Kebebe (2019) discussed how the rising vast population of Ethiopia requires new, improved, and more sustainable products for the continued growth of the economy. Innovation is the ability to meet customer needs and stay ahead of the competition by taking advantage of market opportunities (Daksa et al., 2018). Through increased innovation, the general

population can benefit from the availability of new and improved products and services. Further, the Ethiopian economy relies on export for foreign currency generation. Building strong export-based companies will increase the inflow of foreign currency into Ethiopia and allow the population to have greater access to international markets. Increased innovation can lead to the establishment of a knowledge economy, technological improvements, and global competitiveness (Le, 2020). The ability to grow Ethiopia's exports through innovation will lead to knowledge sharing and employment opportunities that will improve the living standard of Ethiopians.

Recommendations for Action

Leaders, frontline and senior, of organizations can use the findings discussed in this study to resolve toxic leadership styles which impede employee innovation. The findings are useful to both leaders that have already experienced toxic leadership in their organizations, as well as leaders that might experience toxic leaders in their careers. The executives in the human resources (HR) departments of organizations can also understand how to facilitate the right framework to allow employees to be rewarded based on their performance and enable them to report toxic leaders. Given the destructive effects of toxic leadership, leaders can implement the following strategies to support positive leadership styles in their organizations: encourage open and transparent communication, create counseling and training opportunities, foster teamwork and joint decision-making, and follow incentive and review frameworks.

Human resources leaders should encourage open and transparent communication to enable employees to come forward regarding their experiences with toxic leaders.

Toxic leaders cannot be remedied unless they are reported to the concerned leaders within the organization (Hoffman & Sergio, 2020). Leaders that form a culture where openness and transparency are the norms allow their employees to come forward and signal the presence of toxic leadership styles before they manifest into organizational destruction. Chen et al. (2019) discussed how leaders need to promote increased communication to allow the exploration of new ideas. Increased communication and encouraging employees to share conflicting ideas without fear promotes added innovation in the workplace.

One of the causes of toxic leadership is lack of relevant knowledge. Alemayehu et al. (2020) discussed that lack of knowledge leaders to unfavorable attitude on innovation adoption. Leaders of export-based companies in Ethiopia and the HR department executives of these companies need to jointly increase the opportunities for training continually. Training will increase the knowledge base of the entire organizations' employees and allow leaders to stay up-to-date. Leaders should also have systems in place to offer counseling to toxic leaders and enable them to reflect on their actions. Offering counseling to toxic leaders is a useful strategy in helping a toxic leader adopt positive leadership attributes.

Centralized decision-making models allow for toxic leaders to cause greater harm to employees and the organization, as a whole. Leaders of export-based company leaders in Ethiopia should encourage teamwork and joint decision-making to create dialogue amongst the members of the organization and allow employees to have a say in the organization's outcome. As Stoten (2015) discussed, avoiding a hierarchical model is

relevant in the move towards resolving toxic leadership styles. Therefore, having more than one person in charge of decisions reduces the chances of toxic leaders unfairly harming employees. In addition, combining the perspectives of different members of the organizations enhances the quality of the decisions made. Buzzanell (2018) discussed that toxic leaders try to create a divisive environment. Leaders should encourage teamwork to increase the togetherness of the members of the organizations and defeat toxic leadership through joint effort.

Company executives need to encourage ethical practices and justice by ensuring that employees are fairly rewarded for their efforts and that toxic leaders do not get away with harming others in the company. Leaders of export-based companies in Ethiopia should create a framework, along with the members of the HR department, to assess incentives based on performance. Employees that believe in the fairness of incentives will work honestly to attain benefits. The leaders within the HR department should also create procedures for how toxic leaders can be brought forward by employees. Employees will gain the confidence to come forward if they believe that their concerns will be taken seriously and acted upon in a transparent manner.

I will share a summary of my findings with the four participants of the study. The findings of this study can be dispersed in training to leaders, HR executives, and employees. I will share the findings through training conferences aimed at the export-based companies in Ethiopia to encourage them to use the strategies discussed to resolve toxic leadership styles for increased employee innovation.

Recommendations for Further Research

There are limitations in this study that can be addressed through further research. Future researchers can also expand the scope of the study to research related elements. One of the limitations of this study is that data were collected from two companies and a total of four participants. The findings of the study might not be applicable to the larger population and future researchers can look at a greater number of participants. Another limitation is that I have only considered export-based companies in Ethiopia. Future studies should include findings from other types of companies and also explore if the findings are applicable outside of the Ethiopian cultural and economic context. I recommend that the study be repeated with more participants, across different types of organizations, and in different cultural contexts.

Future researchers can also explore how toxic leadership affects different generations and how leaders can resolve other types of bad leadership. Xuanfang (2017) discussed how Generation Y members are increasingly engaged in innovation projects and are greatly affected by toxic leadership. Researchers can explore how toxic leadership affects different parts of the population. Milosevic et al. (2020) discussed that there are different types of bad leadership and that the intent behind bad leadership varies. Future research papers can focus on how leaders' intent affects the type of leadership and how bad leadership can be resolved in different situations.

Reflections

When I started my DBA journey, I started a new phase of my life and I found myself having extra time to finally fulfill my lifelong dream of obtaining a doctorate.

What I did not realize is that throughout the following years I would face grueling work schedules, relentless travel, and many personal ups and downs. Through it all, my DBA journey has been my staple and I have come to know my personal strength through it. It has been an incredible journey of learning and self-fulfillment. Achieving my DBA will serve as a reminder of the power of the mind and that we can achieve what we set our minds to.

When starting the DBA program, I did not believe that much was being done in Ethiopia to tackle toxic leadership. The lessons I have learned throughout my study have enabled me to neglect my biases and look to the data for my findings. The data collection process has revealed to me that some leaders in Ethiopia are going above and beyond to look after their employees. The interactions I have had with the participants and the literature I was exposed to revealed that there are leaders that are actively working to eradicate toxic leadership and encourage innovation in their organizations. I hope to become a leader that fosters well-being, professional growth, and innovation in those around me.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies which export-based company leaders use to resolve toxic leadership styles. Toxic leadership is destructive to the well-being and performance of employees. Toxic leadership is not a suitable style to increase employee creativity and organizational innovation in companies. Innovation is a pillar behind the continuity and success of companies and an engine for economic growth (Daksa et al., 2018). Toxic leadership does not serve employees,

innovation, or social change. Leaders need to use actionable measures to resolve toxic leadership in their workplaces. Paltu and Brouwers (2020) discussed that often only a few members within the organization are aware of toxic leaders when there is a lack of open communication. Leaders need to create a culture where employees do not suffer the consequences of toxic leadership in silence by creating opportunities for interaction with all levels of leadership within the company. Daksa et al. (2018) noted that on-job training is useful in encouraging good leadership and innovation. Leaders need to provide the necessary resources to ensure that continued training is offered to leaders and employees to mitigate the downfall that arises from lack of knowledge of the job. After leaders identify toxic leaders within their organization, they need to provide counseling and intervene to offer an alternative to toxic leadership. Through facilitating open communication, counseling, and training, leaders can start to mitigate the role of toxic leadership.

One-sided decision-making means that toxic leaders can exert greater power over the organization and harm employees. Through teamwork and joint decision-making, the members of organizations can interact openly and avoid experiencing the effects of toxic leaders in silence. Leaders need to encourage teamwork and demonstrate to employees that they cannot succeed without each other. Sheehan et al. (2020) discussed how working as a team leads to alignment and collective optimism in employees. In addition, joint decision-making is a useful strategy in ensuring that the role and effect of toxic leaders is minimized and that the organization does not falter under bad leadership.

Leaders should rely on a framework to guide how employees are incentivized and leaders are reviewed. A formal review procedure enables employees to believe in the justness of their inclusion or exclusion from incentives. Ensuring that employees have means to report toxic leaders will reduce the risk that they will suffer in silence and reinforces the belief that the organization does not support toxic leadership.

Toxic leadership has detrimental consequences on employees and organizations. Given the presence of an ever-increasingly competitive business environment, elements, such as toxic leadership, that are known to negatively influence innovation, should be eradicated. Leaders need to ensure that many employees do not suffer under the malice of one leader by giving a voice to employees and using the feedback they receive to eliminate toxic leadership in the workplace. Leaders can put procedures in place to discourage the rise of toxic leadership by promoting communication, providing sustained training, encouraging teamwork, and offering just reviews. Leaders should also exercise their right to fire toxic leaders, in consideration of the overall health of the organization and its members. Although toxic leaders cause a multitude of harm to organizations, they can be dealt with in a way that enables them to return to functional leadership practices.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is Lilly Abdulrohman Mohamed. Thank you for joining me for this interview today and your willingness to participate in my study. The interview will take between 45 minutes to an hour. The purpose of the research project is to explore strategies which export-based company leaders use to resolve toxic leadership styles, which impede employee innovation. I will ask you five interview questions to enable me to answer the overarching research question. I will be asking you follow-up questions based on your response. I will be recording this interview session and taking notes throughout our interview. Please inform me if you are not comfortable being recorded. I assure you that no one will hear the recorded audio except for my committee at Walden University and I. I will ensure your confidentiality by using a code to represent you when discussing my findings. I will be keeping all data related to our interview today on a hard drive in a locked cabinet and delete it after 5 years. Do you have any questions for me related to the research project or our interview today, before we start the interview?

1.   Based on your experience, how did you resolve toxic leadership styles to enhance employee innovation in the workplace?

2.   How did you determine the effectiveness of the strategies for resolving toxic leadership styles within your organization?

3.   What were the key barriers to implementing the strategies for resolving toxic leadership styles?

4.   How did you overcome the key barriers to implementing the strategies for resolving toxic leadership styles within your organization?

5.   Would you like to add anything further regarding strategies you use to resolve toxic leadership management styles?

Thank you for taking the time and effort to participate in my study. I appreciate your contribution to my research project. Once I go through the data from our interview today, I will be contacting you for a follow-up interview. The follow-up interview will allow me to assess if I have accurately captured your thoughts and it will allow you to clarify some of the points you feel were not addressed adequately.