# TOXIC MANAGEMENT AND INTENTION TO QUIT

*A qualitative investigation of the impact of toxic management and intention to quit among office staff in a wholesale office environment in Dublin, Republic of Ireland.*

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# Abstract

Title: TOXIC MANAGEMENT AND INTENTION TO QUIT

Toxic management has only recently been the subject of empirical research, despite numerous references in the popular press and in some publications. This research investigated the relationship between toxic management and intention to quit of office staff in a wholesale environment. Predominantly, the research focussed on the impact of toxic management on perceptions, attitudes and work experiences of the chosen staff.

Analysis was performed thematically and the collected data from the semi-structured interviews were analysed to show the relationship between toxic management and the employees' intention to quit. Previous employees who had resigned were interviewed in addition to those who had shown an intention to resign in the next short period of time. In all, six interviews were performed over a number of weeks and the collected data transcribed by this researcher.

It was found that toxic management styles had a direct effect on the individuals and on the culture of the organisation itself. There were issues around group cohesiveness, tight or abusive supervision, individual feelings of engagement, lack of communication and the relationships between the individual, their line manager and within the working group itself. Results from the analysis supported the development of a toxic climate within the organisation, a bullying culture and the impact on staff intention to remain in their role was directly related to the instances of toxic behaviour by line management.

There were suggestions for further research into other areas of the organisation and on other employees within the chosen organisation also.

*Key words: Toxic management; intention to quit; communication; culture*

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# Contents

# 1.    Introduction

Toxic management, or toxic leadership has profound and unintended consequences for individuals, including those who work with or under the control of individuals who portray levels of toxicity in their work. Such individuals may cause untold damage to employees, themselves and in some circumstances the entire organisation. Furthermore, toxic management may lead to organisations losing the very people they wish to retain, and my disengage individuals that otherwise may have suggestions and ideas that would help and develop themselves, their departments and the organisation overall.

Poor management within a business can negatively affect employees (Hamblin & Day, 1964), being related to increased levels of stress (Offerman & Hellman, 1996) and the ensuing reprisal this incurs when managers use negative and toxic forms of discipline (Townsend, et al, 2000). Ashforth (1997) found there was a correlating sense of powerlessness, and subordinates regularly felt isolated and troubled as a result.

This is akin to the findings of Tepper (2000) who found that the elevated levels of stress among subordinates who worked under what they viewed as abusive managers, resulted in a diminished level of commitment, and lower feelings of fulfilment, both within the working environment, and in their day to day lives.

In spite of these discoveries, alongside an abundance of casual and anecdotal testimony, little examination has been carried out into explaining the impact that toxic management has on an employees' intention to leave their position.

The organisation investigated in this study, which the researcher has kept confidential for the security of the participants, has had a distinct increase in staff turnover since a change of management structure was implemented in January 2018. The amount of office staff in the organisation is comprised of 47 individual roles. Of that, 18 have resigned from the organisation in the last year, and six have expressed their intention to resign in the next three months. This is a rate of 51% staff intending to quit. This high staff turnover creates a negative position for any company (DuBrin, 2010).

An investigation into the impact of toxic management on the office staff's intention to quit is necessary if the company is to remain one of the top organisations in the Irish food and wine import sector. This exploratory research aims to identify what defines toxic management, and

lead field research to define how this is perceived amongst staff, as well as the effect that toxic management has on an employee's choice to terminate their work within an organisation. For the purposes of this study, this research was carried out on one office in the Dublin location of the chosen organisation, using purposive sampling covering a small number of previous and existing staff across the organisation. Details of the organisation itself are set out in the context and rationale section of this introduction.

## 1.1.    Context and Rationale

Poor leadership within an organization has long been established to have an adverse impact on people (Hamblin & Day, 1964), linked with enhanced pressure (Offerman & Hellman, 1996) and later repression (Townsend, et al, 2000).

Ashforth (1997) discovered a correlated sense of powerlessness when managers used haphazard forms of punishment, and as a result, subordinates often felt isolated and unhappy. This was comparable to Tepper's (2000) results, which concluded that enhanced rates of stress among staff who worked under what they perceived as abusive executives resulted in a reduced level of engagement and a reduced level of fulfilment both in the professional setting and in their daily life.

Despite these results, there has been little inquiry in addition to an abundance of casual and anecdotal evidence to clarify the impact of toxic leadership on the intention of staff to leave.

## 1.2.    Problem statement

The organisation under investigation in this research is among the top 5 wholesale food and beverage wholesalers in the Republic of Ireland, specialising in premium foods and delivered via cool and temperature-controlled vans throughout the country. Foods are sourced internationally and transported to its sites in the Republic of Ireland for distribution. They are part of a larger and recognised wholesale and retail conglomerate and predominantly supply the retail markets in Ireland in Europe. The chosen organisation has offices in two locations in Ireland, and turnover per employee is approximately 140,000 Euro (2018) and had an annual turnover in 2018 of 44.8M Euro.

The organisation investigated in this study, which the researcher has kept confidential for the security of the participants, has had a distinct increase in staff turnover since a change of management structure was implemented in January 2018. The amount of office staff in the

organisation is comprised of 47 individual roles. Of that, 18 have resigned from the organisation in the last year, and six have expressed their intention to resign in the next three months. This is a rate of 51% staff intending to quit. This high staff turnover creates a negative position for any company (DuBrin, 2010). An investigation into the impact of toxic management on the office staff's intention to quit was necessary if the company is to remain one of the top organisations in the Irish food and wine import sector.

## 1.3.  Aims and objectives

### 1.3.1.  Aims

The aim of this research was to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of Dublin-based office staff, and the impact that toxic management has had on their decision to quit, or intention to resign from the organisation.

### 1.3.2.  Objectives

The objectives of this study were;

- To determine the existing levels of managerial toxicity in the organisation.
- To research theoretical concepts and data that underpin the chosen research area
- To interview appropriate staff in order to determine their perceptions and feelings towards to management in the context of their intention to quit
- To examine the impact of these perceptions on staff retention and intention to quit

## 1.4.  Research approach

After being employed with the aforementioned organisation, this researcher noted a particularly high level of staff turnover, in addition to a seemingly inflated level of stress amongst the office staff. This was in conjunction with an extremely negative view of the management of the organisation. In an effort to discover the reasoning behind the elevated stress levels and high turnover, the researcher gathered data for contextualisation, from management of the organisation, a number of employees themselves, including those who had resigned and those who intended to resign, and from theoretical researchers into poor and toxic forms of management, in addition on the concepts of employee stress and intention to quit.

In total, this researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with six employees of the organisation, across a number of departments, ages, with varying levels of authority from junior staff members through to management (See Participant section in the Research Methodology

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section of this dissertation). In addition, the gathered information was coded and analysed for similarities and patterns, and thematic issues were highlighted.

The research commenced with five pilot interviews, and any changes relevant were made subsequent to these. Based on the findings of these pilot interviews, the framework for the subsequent semi-structured interviews themselves were developed and allowed for the collection of the data used to extract the findings of this thesis (See Research Methodology Section for more details). Interviewees were assigned a letter, the interviews were held privately, and individually recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher, along with the written consent and permission of the candidates (See ethical consideration section of this dissertation for details).

Once the data was collected, categories were refined in order to code the data. This was done on an on-going basis over the course of the entire research process, influenced by the theoretical framework outlined by the researcher (See Research Methodology sections for more details).

## 1.5.    Theoretical Framework

A theoretical approach was developed from previously published managerial theories and concepts, which Grant & Osanloo (2014) suggest can help the researcher to implement constrictions to the study, and cement any connections made during the course of the investigation to the previous body of published works.

The researcher will explore theoretical concepts that they believe will form the foundation for analysis of the data and discussion of the findings. The initial exploration will be of primary concepts for data analysis (See Research Methodology Section for details of research approaches and rationale for the selection of methodology used for this research).

## 1.6.    Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is structured as follows:

Section 1 contains an introduction to the research. It sets the scene for the research and introduces the objectives and aims of the research itself. It also outlines the research philosophy of this researcher.

Section 2 contains a literature review. Primarily reviewing the theoretical concepts and literature pertaining to toxic management, the impact of toxic management on individuals and organisations, and concludes with an overall summary of the section.

Section 3 outlines the research methodology chosen by this researcher. It contains a description of the methodology, the chosen population and the data collection technique used in this dissertation. It also contains an overview of the analysis of the collected data, and the ethical considerations for this research.

Section 4 contains the analysis and discussion of the findings based on the questions posed and the interviews conducted. The findings section uses exemplar quotes to support the findings and to support the discussion of the data collected.

Section 5 outlines the conclusion drawn from the data. The conclusions section reflects the theoretical concepts outlined in the introduction and develops an overview of how the collected data supports or does not support the theoretical concepts from the literature review. This section also contains suggestions for further research.

The remaining part of the dissertation contains a personal reflection from this researcher's viewpoint on their experience of doing this research. In addition, there is a list of references used and referenced throughout the dissertation and the varying appendices that support the dissertation.

# 2.    Literature review

## 2.1.    Introduction

The overall goal of this chapter was firstly to establish the significance of the general field of study, then identify a place where a new contribution could be made. The bulk of the chapter was on critically evaluating the different methodologies used in this field to identify the appropriate approach for investigating the research question(s).

It was Reed (2004) from his research in the military, that outlined that leaders who exhibited destructive and negative behaviours, which according to Pelliter (2010) also existed in the private corporate sector.

Both authors agreed that toxic leadership inflicts detrimental effects on employees within organisations and potentially on the organisation itself in the long term. Thus, toxic leadership pertain to a culture of negativity in employees, and such a culture shows a lack of concern for employees, their health and wellbeing, and as in this dissertations case, retention and intention to quit by employees who are subjected to such negativity in the workplace.

In such an environment, employees may be rewarded for agreeing with the leader, and punished if they do not agree, and according to Reed (2004) toxic leadership is seen to create an environment where creativity, engagement, creativity and autonomy are curtailed and, in some cases, punished. The view of the toxic leader is that their position is paramount, and everyone else is their servant, and may eliminate subordinates who do not share their vision of themselves.

Toxic leadership remains an enigma, primarily on how toxic leadership is defined. According to Lipman-Blumen (2005) some people may view some leaders as being toxic while others may view the same leader as a hero. Furthermore, to add to the complexity, toxic leaders do not display all the traits of toxic leadership all the time (Lippman-Blumen, 2005).

According to Goldman (2009) toxic leadership is destructive, disturbing and at times dysfunctional supervision that spreads throughout the organisation, and Reed (2004) outlines that toxic leadership is a leader who bullies, threatens, yells and their mood swings which determines the climate in the office differently every day.

The impact of toxic leadership cannot be underestimated on the organisation and in particular on the individuals who work in such organisations. Tepper (2000) offers a concept of toxic leadership as a series of behaviours by the leader that disrupts the normal workings of an

organisation and are used to intimidate, manoeuvre, deceive and humiliate subordinates for their own personal gain.

This literature review is designed to develop the theoretical concepts associated with toxic leadership. This review is timely, particularly given the rate of staff leaving the chosen organisation and the impact that toxic management has on the organisation and on individuals who work in that environment.

The next section will give an overview of management and will progressively develop to cover the main areas under consideration for this dissertation. The section will conclude with a summary, before outlining the methodology used to gather the data.

## 2.2.  Management

According to DuBrun (2010, p. 3) managerial leadership can be defined as "the ability to inspire confidence and support among the people who are needed to achieve organisational goals". It is likely that, regardless of the level in which an employee operates, they will have a formal management or leadership structure within which they must operate. The managers and leaders which employees work under will wield some form of legitimate and coercive power over these employees (French & Raven, 1959).

There are several roles which managers should play within an organisation; establishing trust, encouraging greater teamwork, coaching subordinates to achieve success, assisting with all the decisions made by their team, increasing the team's abilities, forging a team, preparing for any changes which may be necessary, influencing the team to achieve greater success as a whole, supporting subordinates in their ability to carry out tasks, and assisting subordinates with the eradication of low-value tasks (DuBrin, 2010).

Carlyle (1841), known as one of the original leadership theorists, posited that great managers were born, and argued that individuals were not capable of learning the necessary skills to achieve prominence in leadership. His 'Great Man' theory was highly debated during the 19th and 20th centuries, which resulted in the theory that managerial skill is more than simply an array of predetermined characteristics, and in fact it is the utilisation of attributes that are the deciding factor (Howell, 2012).

However, Howell (2012) argues that good managers often display similar traits, for example being assertive, having good cognitive ability, confidence, and high levels of ambition. He

theorises that these are common traits of people who strive for advancement in their careers, therefore achieving leadership status. They often have the ability to inspire loyalty and confidence in subordinates, and are confident in their abilities (Howell, 2012).

Management can, however, be an adverse authority; Kellerman (2004) contends that some extremely resolute managers can be fundamentally evil, and yet still garner a following, whilst using violence, creating suffering, and causing torment, as well as engendering serious mental anguish to people. Something which epitomises this was demonstrated during World War II by Adolf Hitler in Germany, during his rise to political power, ultimately became a dictator and causing atrocities (Wheatcroft & Overy, 2012).

This, according to Howell (2012) outlines the strong place individuals and how they communicate with their followers into focus. And also, how strong or weak communication can impact greatly on the perception of followers on their leader.

## 2.3. Communication

According to Dawkins (2004), there is an increasing number of organisations which are acknowledging the risks posed to their reputation by poor corporate social responsibility, the missing puzzle piece of which is often communication. Staff in an organisation often rely on communication from managers to give them direction and feedback. When this line of communication is mismanaged, the barriers between managers and employees are often emphasised (Kokemuller, 2019). Poor communication to employees can often lead to fear, scepticism and confusion, which can damage both the reputation and morale of the company, especially when considering the opportunities employees often have to communicate with customers and those outside the organisation (Dawkins, 2004).

According to the American Management Association, trust is an essential element of communication within an organisation (Kokemuller, 2019). This trust is both an important aspect of communication, and deeply affected by poor communication, with employees feeling they are having information withheld from them, which can develop into an 'us versus them' mentality. This can develop from employees having goals and strategies not communicated to them effectively, creating a culture of distrust. In turn, this can seep into the organisational framework completely, creating distrust amongst not only management and staff, but also amongst individual teams within the organisation (Kokemuller, 2019).

Internal communication is often under-appreciated and not utilised correctly by companies, which can cause major governance and human resources issues within the organisation (Dawkins, 2004). Employee engagement is often one of the first casualties of this poor communication, stifling employee engagement, which can lead to lowered morale and increased staff turnover (Kokemuller, 2019). Staff in an organisation have an innate desire to form relationships with their colleagues, as well as having to put forward ideas and feel they are being heard. When there is a lack of communication, employees find it harder to trust the organisation, and thusly their colleagues and managers, which inhibits their ability to share ideas and build relationships. This in turn can have a lasting impact on employee morale, which often leads to higher levels of disengagement and can lead employees to look outside the organisation for a position (Kokemuller, 2019).

In addition, Kokemuller (2019), argues that a lack of communication can create serious inefficiency in an organisation, as it is necessary for both employees and management to work towards the same goals in order to maximise efficiency in the company. When faced with a lack of direction or, given mixed messages and pointed in several directions at once, staff can often become uncertain and directionless, leading to uncoordinated efforts and a lack of focus (Kokemuller, 2019).

Thus, when faced with a lack of direction, a feeling of inadequacy and falling morale, individuals in that scenario will look outwards for release from their feelings of insecurity and anguish, that is the impact of toxic management on employees wellbeing and on the organisation itself.

## 2.4.    Toxic Management

In spite of a correlation between traditional management models and positive outcomes, many toxic people in managerial positions often engage in destructive and damaging approaches that have a negative influence on both subordinates and the organisation itself, characterised as negative, toxic, and destructive styles of management (Kellerman, 2004).

According to Lipman-Blumen (2005), toxic management is not just a matter of mismanagement; it is comprised of managers with unfit character traits, exhibiting inhospitable behaviours, which inflicts significant and lasting damage to not only their subordinates but also to the company as a whole, often leaving them in a poorer position than they had been in beforehand. This argument is supported by Pelletier (2010), who classifies toxic management traits as including making

threats, enslavement, blaming other people for their errors, lying, deriding, excluding people, or ensuring team members are put in opposition with each other.

Notwithstanding the parallels between toxic management behaviour models, there are some compelling imbalances. For example, Ashforth's (1997) concept of petty tyranny, illustrates narrow-minded behaviours such as tyranny, belittlement, and the impeding of initiatives, used solely in order to wield power and command of their subordinates. Hitchcock (2015), also finds that toxic managers constructed barriers in order to reduce creativity and job satisfaction, yet he also found that toxic managers exhibited narcissistic and authoritarian characteristics.

As reported by Kellerman (2004), toxic management can be grouped into seven distinct styles;

- Incompetence, in which the manager and some subordinates either lack the required skill, or lack the inclination, to bring about positive changes.
- Rigidity, whereby the manager rigidly resists change, and all new concepts, whether due to an inability to change, or unwillingness to adapt.
- Intemperate, in which the manager acts as though they need more self-discipline, and subordinates do not intervene, either through inability, or reluctance.
- Callous, in which the manager and some subordinates disregard, and have no care for the requirements and wants of others, or of the organisation itself.
- Corrupt, wherein a manager and a percentage of subordinates have an abnormal level of shameful behaviour characteristics, including lying, stealing, and cheating, in order to give themselves an advantage.
- Insular, whereby the manager and a fraction of subordinates' disregard, and have no care for the health and wellbeing of others, even for whom they have responsibility.
- Evil, wherein the manager and some subordinates command power by using torture, devising and carrying out atrocities, and causing grievous bodily harm, as well as severe mental and emotional suffering.

Managers can display either one, or a blend of many of these models of toxic behaviours, which range in severity, however all of these can cause distress and harm to both the company and their subordinates, even those who are involved in the behaviours (Kellerman, 2004).

In addition, according to Kellerman (2004) and Bailey-Rug, (2019), such a mix of managerial display and behaviours are a combination of fear, ego and narcissism in individuals that perpetuate the level of toxicity in an organisation.

### 2.4.1. Narcissistic Management

The origin of the term narcissism stems from Greek mythology, when Narcissus became so infatuated with him own reflection in a pool, that he died of starvation because he could not look away (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019). In modern terms, it defines the admiration of oneself to a fault, wherein it becomes a social issue, creating problems with relationships and attitudes (Bailey-Rug, 2015).

According to Lubit (2004), when narcissistic individuals become managers, it feeds their arrogance and sense of grandiosity, often lacking real empathy for subordinates, and believing that societal rules are not applicable to them. They believe they are exceptionally important, and that they are entitled to exploit others of perceived lesser importance (Lubit, 2004).

Lubit (2004) also notes that challenging a narcissistic manager can be an extremely difficult and even dangerous, as they can be extremely sensitive about their ego and self-worth. They can be prone to outbursts of rage when presented with evidence or suggestions that challenge their self-image and can display poor judgement and high levels of aggression if this occurs. Lubit (2004) contends that this is due to the fragility of their self-esteem, resulting in boastful, exaggerated behaviours, and grandiose descriptions of their accomplishments.

In spite of this Lubit (2004) argues that narcissistic managers can in fact become very submissive and deferential when they are in the company of their superiors, often going so far as to idolise them if they feel they are supportive of the manager. This, however, will only last for a short time, as once they no longer feel supported, this idolisation can quickly turn to exploitation, anger, and deprecation of the superior.

This exacerbates the cycle of abuse suffered by individuals working in a toxic environment and when the leader perceives that their position is beginning to waver, the cycle may increase further, only adding to the individuals intention to do something to alleviate the situation, and as outlined in this dissertation their intention to quit.

### 2.4.2. The Cycle of Abuse

According to Mirowsky and Ross (2003), feeling distressed at work is often a symptom of a problem, rather than the issue itself, often caused by inequality in demands, accessibility of resources, and how an individual is treated. This is supported by Davenport et al, (2005), who argues that emotional distress in the workplace can lead to a slowdown in productivity, increased absences due to illness, which can in turn provide a perceived reason for managerial criticism.

Davenport et al, (2005), also argues for the cyclical nature of toxic managerial issues, asserting that toxic managers can create a hostile work environment by targeting a subordinate, and then gathering other individuals to participate in harmful actions against the targeted person. Often, this can result in the individual feeling and increase in their intention to quit, as they begin feeling as they are being forced out of the organisation (Davenport, et al., 2005).

This cycle of abuse is extremely hard to control once it has begun, as toxic managers are more unlikely than others to perceive the need to change their behaviours, and in fact can become aggressive and incensed if anyone were to suggest they should (Lubit, 2004).

### 2.4.3. Mobbing

During the undertaking of a study carried out by Michigan State University (2016), it was found that toxic managerial behaviour can be endemic in a professional working environment. The emotional taxation felt by subordinates working beneath a toxic manager can accumulate in a reduction in emotional self-control, which can in turn result in them behaving more hostilely toward colleagues. It was discovered that this pattern of contagious toxic behaviour often was unintentional and perpetuated by a lack of mental stamina and decreased levels of energy as a direct result of living with a toxic managerial environment.

In 1966, Konrad Lorenz first coined the term mobbing when researching animal behaviours. He attributed the behaviours to inbuilt animalistic instincts, bred through the Darwinian theory of survival of the fittest, Lorenz posited that people were also subject to these impulses, however they have the capability to control them (Westhues, 2018).

Westhues (2018), explains that in the mid-1980s, a psychologist by the name of Professor Heinz Laymann, began the practice of applying the term mobbing to toxic practices carried out in the workplace. British researchers Andrea Adams and Tim Field identified mobbing as a defined style of workplace bullying, which is not always immediately obvious, as it utilises more subtle forms of harassment like the spreading of rumours, or widespread discreditation, to create a hostile work environment (Davenport, et al., 2005).

Adding to this, Harper (2013), suggests that mobbing behaviour in the workplace is most likely to occur in an effort to force an individual to quit their position, particularly when there is minimal opportunity for employees to be removed from their roles, whether through contractual obligations, tenure systems, or in a unionised industry, and also in organisations where it is unlikely that an employee will choose to leave voluntarily due to financial commitments, or lack

of alternative work within the industry. Harper (2013) concludes that in organisations where there is minimal opportunity for advancement, mobbing is also more of an issue due to the perception of individuals who do advance as threats to authority or leadership. Emphasising the cruel and injurious effects of mobbing, Harper (2013) argues that the behaviour stems more from group psychology rather than just the effects of a toxic individual, even when it is clear that it has begun with a toxic person within a leadership position showcasing behavioural issues, is due to the transformation that occurs from individual attacks to those compounded by group psychology. This is in line with Shallcross et al (2008), who contend that workplace mobbing is a deliberate attempt to oust an individual, which spreads akin to a virus, spreading contagiously amongst employees in a mob like fashion via rumours and gossip, having been spearheaded by a manager or leader who deliberately uses harassment and emotional abuse to their subordinates.

## 2.5.    Effects of Toxic Management

Lipman-Blumen (2005) posits that a toxic management style can drastically impede a subordinate's drive, imagination, contentment, productivity, and their performance overall. It also heightens levels of stress, anxiousness, increases health issues, and increases the probability that they will choose to leave the organisation (Kellerman, 2004). This is supported by Davenport et al (2005), who argues that in addition to mental health issues such as anxiety and stress, persons suffering from workplace related stress can also suffer from sleep disorders such as nightmares and insomnia.

### 2.5.1.  Effects on the Individual

When an individual in command displays abusive behaviours, for example jeering, shouting, and making threats against their subordinates, it can be considered emotional abuse (Keashly, 2001). This corresponds with the findings of Barling Rogers, & Kelloway (2001), who argue that the executive role of the aggressor can exaggerate the impact that this abuse will have on a subordinate. In addition to this, Dekker & Barling (1998) contend that an aggressor in an authoritative position can be led to feel a sense of invincibility, which can in turn increase the probability of them taking part in these toxic and abusive behaviours. It is argued, however, by Price (2005) that this is not the case; toxic managers do in fact understand what is accepted as normal human behaviour, and simply do not believe that these standard behaviours apply to them, willingly acting in a way which they know to be wrong, yet justifying this by giving themselves an exception on the basis of their status as managers.

According to Hillard (2009), the effects of toxic management and mobbing were like each other, and the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including severe depression, psychotic episodes, insomnia, trauma tremors, selective mutism, and an inability to adjust. The mental impact of this kind of toxic workplace were comparable to the mental effects experienced by people who have experienced war or prison and can result in long-term substance abuse disorders such as alcohol addiction.

Additionally, friendships and relationships will often also suffer from the lingering effects of workplace trauma, and the victims may have severe difficulties recovering, and may die of suicide, with approximately 15% of all suicides in Sweden being likely the direct result of trauma from toxic management and hostile work environments (Hillard, 2009).

### 2.5.2. Effects on the Organisation

Subordinates gravitate towards an increase in health problems, as well as intention to leave, parallel to decreased feelings of job satisfaction, motivation, and loyalty to the organisation (Schmidt, 2014). It is posited by Reed and Bullis (2009) that this can correspond with an increase in overall staff turnover inside the organisational framework. Between the loss of efficiency by besieged subordinates, and cost of training an influx of new staff, companies are bearing costs of up to $14,000 per employee each year (Michigan State University, 2016).

In addition to this, Davenport et al (2005) argues that toxic managerial environments and mobbing typically occurs in workplaces which have a lack of organisation and controls in their production and practices, and often have inept management at upper levels. Therefore, Davenport et al (2005), suggests that the victims are often targeted due to them being exceptional, intelligent, competent, creative and showcasing integrity and dedication to their work.

This is contrasted by Harper (2013), however, who challenges the idea, arguing that while this can often be the case, it is just as likely to see individuals being targeted by their peers due to their lack of productivity, causing others to resent them, and begin a campaign of mobbing behaviour in order to force them to vacate their positions. Managers, on the other hand, are more likely to choose to victimise capable subordinates, because they feel threatened by their accomplishments and abilities (Davenport, et al., 2005).

## 2.6.  Summary

Toxic leadership receives less attention than it deserves, and in some cases, it is the very culture of the organisation, or the environment that the leaders operates that prompts toxicity in their leadership style.

The impact of such leadership behaviours needs examination, and particularly what individuals and organisations can do to protect themselves from the impacts of such behaviours.

There is no doubt that toxic leadership is dangerous to individuals and may lead to threatening the very future of the organisation itself. Individuals displaying such toxic behaviours need to be challenged and the environment that encourages such toxic behaviours needs to be challenged also.

Given the information garnered above in this literature review, the next section will endeavour to outlines how this researcher adopted a qualitative approach to gathering the data to examine the impact of toxic management on the chosen organisation.

# 3.   Research Methodology

## 3.1.   Introduction

Research, as described by Saunders et al (2016) is a task which individuals take part in in order to make discoveries and collect insights into things in a structured manner. Leedy and Ormrod (2013) support this premise by emphasising the orderliness of the methods of research, and outlining research as the organised analysis, collection, and interpretation of gathered data. This style of approach is designed to increase the likelihood of finding data which can answer the questions put forward by the researcher and seeks to add to the current body of knowledge available on the subject (Saunders, et al., 2016).

The research onion (See Appendix A), as developed by Saunders et al (2015), outlines the five stages of designing an effective methodology to conduct research. The beginning stage for any research is to define the subject of the study, which will lead to the next aspect; finding appropriate current research. Thirdly, the research onion theory states that the researcher will develop a strategy for the research and determine an appropriate timeframe; this is described as the fourth step. Lastly, the researcher would establish the type of methodology appropriate to this study. This framework assists the author by illustrating the various ways in which the data can be collected and creates steps that help outline the research study (Lewis, et al., 2015).

The remainder of this section will outline the approach adopted by this researcher, the use of interviews and the ethical considerations that were considered prior to, during and after the data collection.

## 3.2.   Research Approaches

Surbhi (2016) suggests that there are two styles of research approaches, quantitative and qualitative (See Appendix B). A quantitative, or analytical approach outlines sufficient standards used to ensure validity of the research, for instance the size of the sample required in order to establish a statistically accurate result (Melville & Goddard, 2004).

Although this technique is cognizant within a framework which is logical and can be scientifically confirmed, it is appropriate for use in investigation into numerous aspects of humanities and social sciences (Quinlan et al., 2019; Bryman, 2012). It is most effective for large

investigations that involve numerous respondents, enabling the researcher the ability to quantify the information using quantitative techniques, and statistical analysis (May, 2011).

As this research is primarily on the attitudes and perceptions of individual, surveys are not applicable in this context. Therefore, the use of a quantitative approach in this research context is not appropriate and will therefore not form part of this dissertation.

As discussed by Quinlan et al (2019) the qualitative, or inductive, approach is taken from the constructivist or interpretivist worldview. This requires the researcher to avoid inflicting their own impression of the research subject on the respondents (Banister, et al., 2011). This is in order to avoid contaminating the data received, which aims to study the individual elucidations and feelings of the respondent (Quinlan et al, 2019; Bryman, 2012). The next part of this section outlines the approach of this research to data collection and analysis.

### 3.2.1. Qualitative Research

According to Jennings (2010), qualitative research is founded on conjecture, and assumes that there are a variety of realities in the world, perceived by a variety of persons. Research which utilises qualitative methods, fixates on the social relationships between individuals and seeks to explore these individual realities (Daymon & Holloway, 2011).

Using a qualitative approach gave the researcher the ability to investigate and examine the opinions, findings, and experiences of the subjects extensively, in accordance with the objectives of this study (Quinlan et al., 2019).

In order to accomplish this, the methodology must encompass the responder's experiences, as opposed to those of the researcher. A pragmatic technique to guarantee this, is to develop interview questions which are open-ended. Also, further questions can be created to encourage the respondent to expand on the subject. This strategy is optimal for gaining knowledge into meaning, emotions, and experiences (Feilzer, 2010).

For the purposes of this investigation, research will be in the form of a contextual investigation, based on an inductive methodology, within a constructivist philosophy. It is a mono-technique, cross-sectional piece of research, using a series of semi-structured interviews (Lewis, et al., 2015).

The utilisation of semi-structured interviews will allow for several inquiries which may be asked of all participants and allows for adaptability in follow-up and probing of the responses (Lewis,

et al., 2015). This gives greater knowledge and understanding into the experiences and emotions of the interview participants (Bryman, 2012), when dealing with toxic management behaviour and the employees experiences of the impact on such administration on them personally.

## 3.3.    Theoretical Framework

A wealth of theoretical information was gathered from existing sources, including published literature, economic briefs, and previous reports into the concept. This gave the researcher the ability to collect and analyse the data from the interviews within the context of the theoretical outlook.

This allowed the researcher to support their findings, observations, analysis, and conclusions with an established theoretical perspective.

## 3.4.    Steps in the Process

The research was carried out using semi-structured interviews. Candidates were invited to participate, and in addition, a data sheet was sent to every participant, outlining the aim of this research, alongside clarification of the ethical and legal securities they are entitled to (Lewis, et al., 2015). Interviewees were audio recorded, with their written consent, and notes were taken as a form of observation to note abnormal occurrences, non-verbal communication, and any additional perceptions which arose during the interview process itself (See Appendix C and D for details).

Interviews were held at a location and time that fit with the participants' work and life patterns and lasted no more than one hour. Transcription of the data was carried out personally by the researcher, entering the collected data into an Excel document, line by line. The personal transcription of the gathered information allowed the researcher to understand the subtleties and articulations within the data more completely, and to take them into account for a more in-depth analysis of the collected data, and as such the researcher connected more fully with the data gathered (Bryman, 2012).

Analysis was led by the researcher through effective coding of the collected data, reading and perusing the information extensively to get a holistic understanding of the data collected. Showcasing of the findings was done in the form of a narrative, using exemplar quotes to support the findings (Lewis, et al., 2015). This was in order to help the reader to see the connection

between the data gathered, and the theoretical concepts (Bryman, 2011) which supported the researched area of toxic management.

### 3.4.1. Participants

The total population under review was of 47 individual roles. Of that, 18 had resigned from the organisation in the past year, 14 of which had been replaced, and an additional six had expressed their intention to resign in the next three months. That is a target population of 24. It was proposed to use purposive sampling (Bryman, 2011). Purposive, also known as criterion-based , judgemental or expert sampling (Bryman, 2011), produces a sample that is logically assumed to represent the chosen representation of the total population, it is non-random approach to selecting a sample for research, but represents a cross-section of the total population under investigation.

The use of snowball sampling was not considered, as the individuals that had previously left the organisation may not be known to the remaining staff, or that they had may be suggested by others for having particular views of the organisation, which may not be broad enough to garner effective research data for comparison.

This researcher conducted interviews with six people. As the author had access to data pertaining to those who had left the organisation and had personal knowledge of those intending to leave the organisation, the research included participants who have left and those who have expressed their intent to leave. The respondents were selected from a number of different departments within the organisation, and from various levels of authority within each department.

### 3.4.2. In-depth interviews

The chosen interview technique was considered from structured, semi-structured or unstructured, all of which had merit and demerit in each case.

An unstructured approach was not considered as that implies limited structure in questions, process and technique, and is prone to bias on behalf of the researcher. There is no predetermined topic for consideration and is helpful for a researcher that may have limited knowledge of their subjects and is not in this researchers' case. Such an interview technique may be viewed as a conversation as opposed to an interview (Bryman, 2010).

In contrast, the use of a structured interview was not considered by this researcher. A structured interview has a series of set determined questions, which may limit the option to go outside the

range of areas being researched. According to Bryman (2010), this type of interview technique does not allow the interviewer to explore in depth the answers that may emanate from the questions asked, it is akin to a quantitative piece of research.

The choice of this researcher was a semi-structured interview. This required the researcher have in-depth conversation type interviews with the participants. The use of a semi-structured interview allows for a limited set of pre-set topics or themes and allowed for probing of the answers individual to each participant whilst focussing on the overall aims of the research.

According to Bryman (2010), the use of semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to guide the interview process to get the information that is relevant for the aims of the research itself.

### 3.4.3. Pilot interviews

Interviews can be difficult at the best of times, and the use of pilot interviews are an important step in ensuring consistency and adequacy of the interviewing technique, questions and process of the interview itself (Bryman, 2010). Pilot interviews allow for the use of tone, time management and the development of a cooperative relationship between interviewee and interviewer.

Five pilot interviews were conducted by this researcher. The location and time of the pilot interviews was chosen by the interviewee themselves, to replicate the final interview process as much as was practical.

The pilot, on average, lasted 45 minutes, were recorded to ensure that the system worked effectively and precisely. Each interviewee was given the same information, the same introduction and the same process, with subsequent changes being made based on feedback from each interviewee as the process unfolded.

### 3.4.4. Preparation

In preparation for the interviews, this researcher was conscious of ethical issues, dress code and security of each participant and of this researcher themselves. It was agreed before the interviews that the dress code would be relaxed and non-threatening, thereby not giving any appearance of dominance by either party, with the aim of being comfortable at all times during the interview. In addition, all interviewees were given the chance to choose their preferred location and time for

the interview itself, which had no possibility of them coming to any harm, prior to, during or after the interview itself.

### 3.4.5.  The interview

Each interview was recorded, by agreement (See Appendix C and Appendix D for details), refreshments were supplied if required.

All interviewees were appraised of the reason for the research, the length of the interview potentially, and how the data was to be analysed, stored and secured effectively (See Appendix C and Appendix D for details).

This researcher kept eye contact as much as possible with each interviewee and was also conscious of body language in showing some form of misrepresentation or ill feeling towards something the interview may say, that could be mis-construed to show disdain of displeasure in any way.

In addition, each interviewee was appraised of the fact that observation was being done, and that notes may be taken during the interview, also how the observation notes and the notes themselves were to be used and secured.

### 3.4.6.  Subsequent to the interview

At the conclusion of each interview this researcher took a small amount of time to recall their thoughts, recap on their notes taken and to reflect on the interview itself. This was to recall the body language of the interviewee, their tone of voice or anything unusual that may have happened or was observed by the interviewer.

Observations were recorded on the interview guide sheet (See Appendix C for details), these observations would add to the data collected and would add richness to the data collected itself.

All interviews started with the introduction of the researcher, why the research was being undertaken and how the information was to be used, stored and security of the collected data itself. There was a short period of time at the commencement of each interview for general chit-chat, to put the interviewee at ease, and then the interview itself commenced.

Yes, no, questions were avoided as much as possible, and most interviewees were open and honest in their responses, and at the conclusion of the interview they were asked if there was anything they would like to add.

In conclusion, they were again reminded of the security and use of the data, and all were happy to accept that.

## 3.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethics in research can be characterized as the suitability of the conduct of the researchers, in association to the rights of people who may either be affected by the investigation, or who will participate in it (Lewis, et al., 2015).

As indicated by The Belmont Report (1978) there are three fundamental tenets of ethics in research, the first of which is regard for the individual, in which they state that the choices of independent people should be treated with deference; protections are needed for any candidates who are not capable of making their own decisions, and all candidates volunteering to share in the study require sufficient information to make the decision. The second standard is beneficence, which recommends that any assistance with research is combined with a positive balance of negative and beneficial characteristics, and that the researcher must attempt to ensure that any potential harm is minimised, and any potential advantages are increased (The Commission, 1978). Finally, it discusses justice; not only does justice agree that help with research is combined with a constructive balance of qualities, but also outlines that the author may not exploit defenceless persons or exclude individuals who may benefit without legitimate reasoning (The Commission, 1978).

Lewis et al. (2015), adds that it is also vital that any participants engaged in the study give informed and educated consent, and must do so voluntarily, without pressure or deception, and are completely informed about their participation and capacity to decide what questions they decide to answer, their rights to leave at any stage, withdraw their statements, and assess the data, and know exactly how the gathered data will be used. They have been given this information, and thusly gave consent, both which have been presented in written format (See Appendix C).

As this study includes both past and present employees of a specific organisation, confidentiality is a key consideration. All candidates have been given a number, so that identification of the participants will not be possible. No information has been collected from any participant that may, in any way, enable identification of them. All participants have been granted total confidentiality, and a ten-year moratorium has been sought on the study.

Furthermore, transcribed interviews were given back to the interviewed individual to ensure accuracy, consistency and if they wish to change anything they could do so. In addition, should any interviewee wishes to withdraw at that stage they were free to do so.

The collected information is only accessible to this researcher and their supervisor. All gathered data, notes, interview transcriptions, and audio recordings will be held carefully guarded, locked in a fire-resistant container, and any and all computers and software utilised will be password protected. All information has been destroyed within the guidelines of the Data Protection Act (2018).

## 3.6. Scope and limits of the study

### 3.6.1. Scope

The study focussed on individuals who had left or where intending to leave the organisation. To that end, the study was limited to a specific organisation, and on individuals who were permanently employed at the time of their departure from the organisation. In that context, the data collected, the analysis and findings cannot be generalised across the entire sector.

### 3.6.2. Limits and delimits

As in all qualitative research, there are limiting conditions, which are contained in the study's design process, and careful consideration needs to be given for such eventualities.

Any research of a qualitative nature is subject to the researchers' own perceptions, interpretations and knowledge, in addition to this researchers' bias, and as an internal researcher in the organisation, there may be a tendency to bias some of the information received.

Furthermore, some of the interviewees were personally known to the researcher, which meant that some of the interviewees were open in their responses, or were guarded in their responses, however, the range of interviews helped in minimising this anomaly.

To help limit these issues this researcher scrutinised and regularly reviewed the coding mechanisms used, this researched research agenda was clearly outlined to each interviewee, interview transcripts were read numerous times to ensure that no indication could be made as to who had had the interview.

In addition, the chosen population was quite specific, there was no age restriction, and no gender, marital, sexual orientation or race distinction made.

This was not a longitudinal study, it was a cross-sectional study, which again limits the generalisability of the findings across the entire sector, and the time frame was short it could not take account of changes of attitudes or otherwise over a longer period of time, or from one period of time to another.

Furthermore, this researcher ability to interview in depth was a limiting factor, and may have an impact on the data collected, as there is limited experience in interviewing techniques by both parties to this research. Also, the small number of participants limited the effectiveness of the collected data to assume a clear and quantifiable outcome that reflects the wider society or business in general.

## 3.7.    Analysis of the Findings

There are various choices available for analysing data collected from qualitative research. An example of these would be content analysis, thematic analysis, and domain analysis (Saunders et al., 2015; Bryman, 2012; Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). There are also several technological computer-based programmes that can be utilised, for example Qualtrics, ATLAS.ti,, and HyperRESEARCHTM (Quinlan *et al*., 2019). However, the researcher felt these computerised versions to be too technologically advanced and would prove extremely difficult to use with only a limited understanding of their functions. As such, a process of thematic and content analysis was selected in order to analyse the data collected during the course of this study.

## 3.8.    Interpretation of the Findings

In order to interpret the data, the researcher coded and grouped the data into thematic categories, in order to find similar interpretations amongst the answers received by the interview candidates. This required the researcher to continually progress through the interview transcriptions and the recorded interviews to ensure they have taken into account changes in the tone, manner, and voice of the interviewee when answering the questions posed, in addition to the answers provided.

# 4. Analysis and discussion of findings

Having completed the interviews and transcribed the resulted data. This researched coded and analysed the data gathered, see previous section for details of this process. The following information in this section outlines the findings from the data with the use of exemplar quotes to support the analysis.

## 4.1. Communication

One hundred percent of the candidates interviewed believed the communication of the organisation to be poor, with Candidate G suggesting that this in all likelihood "adds to a lot of frustration in the company, because… a lot of things you're hearing is hearsay, which caused a lot of fear and a lot of confusion in people". This is in line with the findings of Dawkins (2004), who argued that poor communication between management and employees can lead to fear, skepticism and confusion, which can cause damage to both the reputation and morale of the organisation.

The researcher also found that communication was severely hampered by a lack of trust in the management, as five of the six candidates did not feel comfortable expressing ideas with their manager, and two thirds not comfortable speaking with their manager at all. Candidate B felt that speaking to their manager opened them up to being "interrogated all the time", and Candidate D suggests that management "kind of tend to gang up on you in a way". Candidate C believed that they had been publicly embarrassed whilst trying to articulate an idea, "so now I keep my mouth shut". Candidate F felt similarly, stating that "you'd rather just sit there and not say anything because you just don't want to get into an argument" and felt that the lack of communication affected them directly as "one manager will tell you one thing. And then another manager will tell you another thing. And then when you do what one person tells you not to do, you get into trouble", while Candidate G stated that they felt they couldn't trust their manager as "everything that I told her was 100% not confidential". Candidate C felt that within the organisation, "people hide things from each other, and ... there's no trust".  This aligns with Kokemuller (2019), who states that employee engagement is often one of the first victims of poor communication, which in turn stifles employee engagement, leading to lower morale and increased turnover of staff. He argues that this is because staff in an organisation want to form personal and lasting relationships with their colleagues, as well as have the ability to vocalise their ideas and feel they are being

listened to. When there is a dearth of sufficient communication, employees may find it harder to trust the company, and in turn find it hard to trust their colleagues and managers, which constrains their ability to share potentially useful ideas and build the meaningful relationships that they desire. This often can have a detrimental effect on employee morale, which often leads to higher levels of disengagement and can lead employees to look outside the organisation for a position, increasing turnover for the organisation (Kokemuller, 2019).

In addition to this, none of the candidates received training for their roles upon commencing work with the organisation. This in turn led to all respondents operating in a learning-by-doing style of training, with Candidate B suggesting that they felt the organisation had "just no interest in helping you", with half the respondents stating that the standard of training was non-existent. Dawkins (2004) agrees with these findings, expressing the idea that within organisations, communication is often poorly applied by management, which can cause problematic human resources and morale issues within the business. Further to this, Kokemuller (2019), found that this lack of communication can create detrimental issues with inefficiency in an organisation, as employees, if confronted with a lack of direction, or given conflicting directions or giving several briefs at once, staff can often be unsure of what to do, becoming uncertain and directionless, leading to poorly coordinated work efforts and a lack of engagement (Kokemuller, 2019).

## 4.2.  Toxic Management

When asked to describe the culture of the organisation, half of the respondents stated that they felt it was a culture of blame, with the other half of interviewees believing it to be poor and hostile. Candidate F stated that "they'll stab you in the back in a second… I've seen it loads of cases, they'll take you down so that they look good", and Candidate G believes that "there is just no staff morale". Fifty percent of the respondents believed that staff got along well amongst themselves but Candidate E stated that "it's not a work... It's a prison. There's nothing". Kellerman (2004) believes that because many toxic people in managerial positions engage in destructive and damaging behavioural approaches, which can have a negative influence on both subordinates and the organisation itself, characterised as negative, toxic, and destructive atmosphere and style of management. In addition, Lipman-Blumen (2005), found that toxic management is not just a matter of mismanagement and in fact inflicts significant and lasting damage to not only their subordinates but also to the company culture as a whole.

When asked about the company strategy, one third of the candidates felt they had an understanding of it, with Candidate G suggesting that it was likely to be "let's just work out our staff into the ground and try and make as much money as possible". Five of the six candidates interviewed felt uncomfortable expressing ideas, as they felt they would be criticised, or would be shot down, with Candidate D stating that management "kind of tend to gang up on you in a way. So sometimes they just kind of shut you down", and Candidate C arguing that "I have done… and I was shot down. And like it was really embarrassing because it was in a meeting and there was a room full of people and like my manager literally laughed at me… Well it was humiliating to be honest, so now I keep my mouth shut". Candidate F felt similarly, stating that "you'd rather just sit there and not say anything because you just don't want to get into an argument". These findings are supported by Pelletier (2010), who finds that toxic management traits can include making threats, enslavement, blaming other people for their errors, lying, deriding employees and their ideas, excluding people, or ensuring team members are put in opposition with each other. In agreement with this is Ashforth's (1997) concept of petty tyranny, illustrating how narrow-minded behaviours such as tyranny, belittlement of employees and their ideas, and the impeding of creative initiatives, is often used solely in order to cultivate a feeling of power and command over their subordinates. Hitchcock (2015), also found that toxic managers constructed barriers in order to stifle ideas, creativity and in turn job satisfaction.

When discussing specific toxic managerial behaviours, two thirds of the candidates were not comfortable speaking to their manager with Candidate B stating that "I don't want to be interrogated all the time. But it always happens when I get in front of that person", and Candidate G believing that "everything that I told her was 100% not confidential". In addition to this, the candidates found they often displayed other extremely toxic behaviours, with Candidate C explaining that their manager "has refused to speak to me since I handed in my notice. She is pointedly ignoring me", and that the manager is "such a nasty person, she made comments about my weight and my family and a whole load of stuff. She's an awful toxic person" and referring to another employee being screamed at for making an error. Candidate D felt that "my manager is a bit flaky, but I think I'd rather that than someone who like, verbally abuses me, you know? Like some of the other managers". Candidate E described their manager's behaviour as "just nasty" and that they felt like they were "the minions on the floor... being treated like a minion", claiming that "she just joined the senior management in tormenting the minions straight off", and became tearful when discussing the treatment of a former colleague under the hands of this

manager. Candidate F, who cited the atmosphere and management for their reason for leaving the organisation said that "it's so unprofessional the way they like, split us down the line, I think, and then just management make you feel like absolute shit... I want to move to a company where I feel like an adult and am respected… There's no respect in this fucking company." Kellerman (2004), denotes that toxic management can be grouped into various distinct styles, including callousness, in which the manager often disregards the requirements and wants of employees, or even of the organisation itself, and insular, through which the manager has little to no care for the health and wellbeing of others, regardless of whether or not they have a responsibility toward them. Managers can display a mixture of several of these models of toxic behaviours, however all of these can cause serious distress and harm to their subordinates.

In addition to this, one third of the candidates interviewed had been offered a promotion only to have the offer retracted at a later stage. Candidate G states that "I was offered a promotion… and It was agreed with the financial controller at the time, and the director… during a meeting, the director turned around in front of the board of directors the group and said, 'No, I did not know that was going to cost me money. I do not agree to that, take it out.' I was never told that, that my promotion was being retracted until 12 weeks later", which is similar to the experience of Candidate F who explains that the offer of promotion was retracted for unknown reasons, stating "Well they said it was because, em, I was going on Maternity Leave". One third of the candidates had been promoted, however all felt there was no progression available within the organisation, and Candidate B arguing that "they don't want people to succeed… they just want them to stay in their box".

## 4.3.  Effects on the Individual

When asked whether or not they found the work environment stressful, one hundred percent of respondents stated they did, with two thirds stating that they often brought work home. The remaining one third stated that they had previously, but it had become the cause of additional stress so they had chosen to no longer bring work home with them. All respondents stated that they spent additional time outside of their allotted hours doing work-related tasks, with Candidate E stating that they believed they did over twenty hours additional work per week and arguing that "I couldn't cope. Like I genuinely, I was having panic attacks and everything, like. I was, like, I was burnt out. And so stressed out. I felt like that, I, if I kept going, I was just gonna burn myself out. And I wasn't appreciated for the work that I did. Like if someone had said thanks a mil for that, I really appreciate you doing that, things might've been different". Two

thirds of respondents mentioned suffering from various mental health issues stemming from the workload and environment within the organisation. These findings are in line with that of by Davenport et al, (2005), who argues that people suffering from workplace related stress can also suffer from mental health issues such as anxiety and stress, and sleep disorders such as nightmares and insomnia. This echoes the findings of Lipman-Blumen (2005) who argues that a toxic management style can severely impede a subordinate's drive, engagement, imagination, contentment, productivity, and their overall performance. It also severely elevates levels of stress, anxiousness, and increases health issues, and the probability that they will seek to leave the organisation (Kellerman, 2004). This is also in line with Davenport et al, (2005), who observed that in addition to these inflicted mental health issues such as anxiety and stress, some employees suffering from workplace related stress can also experience sleep problems such as nightmares and insomnia.

## 4.4.    Intention to Quit

According to Lipman-Blumen (2005), a toxic management style can drastically impede a subordinate's drive, imagination, contentment, productivity, and their performance overall. It also heightens levels of stress, anxiousness, increases health issues, and increases the probability that they will choose to leave the organisation (Kellerman, 2004). This was in line with the findings of the researcher, as during the conduction of the interviews, one hundred percent of the respondents stated they had felt the need to look outside the organisation for a position. The predominant reasoning behind the need to look outside of the organisation was cited as poor management, with all candidates describing this as the driving force behind their decision to leave. Lack of progression, lack of resources, and lack of support by management were also factored into the decision to leave the organisation. As stated by Candidate G "How many people went out the door before me? And how many people have left since? You know, everyone I speak to, every member of staff that I speak to that still currently there, they're not happy. You know, there's not one person in that building that I know that is happy".  This is in line with Davenport et al (2005), who found that toxic managerial environments and mobbing behaviours often occur in workplaces which have a lack of organisation and controls in their practices, and often have inept management at the upper level.

When asked if there was anything that would prevent them from leaving the organisation, one cited extenuating life circumstances causing a delay in making a decision due to the possibility of their partner relocating in the near future, however all candidates stated that the organisation

itself was nor providing them with any reason to stay. Candidate B stressed that leaving the organisation would ultimately delay their long-term career goals, but felt that this was a worthwhile sacrifice to make given how unhappy they were within the company, stating that "my need to remove myself from this place outweighed my need to stay in my intended career path… I can't keep going home in tears every day. Your health is more important." This mirrors the findings of Schmidt (2014), who posited that subordinates gravitate towards an increase in health problems, as well as developing an intention to leave, along with severely decreased feelings of satisfaction in their role, lowered levels of motivation and loyalty to the company. In addition, Reed and Bullis (2009) asserted that this can often correspond with a marked increase in overall staff turnover and serious loss of efficiency by beleaguered subordinates.

## 4.5.    Effect on the Organisation

One hundred percent of the respondents stated they had felt the need to look outside the organisation for a position. The predominant reasoning behind the need to look outside of the organisation was cited as poor management, with all candidates describing this as the driving force behind their decision to leave. Schmidt (2014) also found that when subordinates found management poor, they had increases in health problems, as well as an elevated intention to leave the company, alongside decreased feelings of job satisfaction, loyalty to the organisation, and motivation to carry out their tasks efficiently. In addition, Reed and Bullis (2009) asserted that this can lead to an increase in staff turnover and loss of efficiency, which along with the cost of training an influx of new staff, can incur costs of up to $14,000 per employee each year (Michigan State University, 2016).

When asked if they found their managers' engaged with their role, only one third of the respondents felt they were engaged, and only one in six felt that they could trust their manager's capabilities. Candidate B described their manager as "careless", and Candidate C suggested that "they haven't a clue what's going on, some of them can't even work the computer system… You can blame competitors or whatever but it's not… customers can see through your bullshit and your excuses too". Candidate F stated that their manager "hasn't got a clue what he's doing. He doesn't even be here half the time", and Candidate G suggested that their manager "would have pushed her responsibility down on to lower members of staff and the team, and only one third of candidates interviewed felt they were supported by management in their role. Additionally, only half of the candidates felt they were able to achieve their goals and tasks properly, with Candidate E stating that they were "able to achieve it, but only done to a certain standard, that- it

was done but right, not 100%- I couldn't give my 100%". This is aligned with the findings of Lipman-Blumen (2005) who argued that a toxic management style can acutely impede a subordinate's ambition, drive, imagination, contentment, productivity, and their performance overall, and increases the likelihood that they will endeavour to leave the organisation for another position (Kellerman, 2004). Candidates all felt that the poor and toxic management practices were having a negative effect on the company. Candidate B explains that "when management is bad, just the whole place falls apart". Candidate C echoes this, asserting they can "see her negativity impacting the whole team" and suggests that "a bad manager can really… do proper damage". The high staff turnover rate has also affected the morale, as Candidate F explains; "every week someone's leaving, like new people are coming in, you barely know anybody" Candidate G believes the organisation has greatly suffered, opening that "it has massive potential but… to grow a company you have to invest in the company, and that company has just plateaued now, they're not going anywhere". Poor communication is also a negative element affecting the organisation, with Candidate D arguing that the management are "not very good at communicating it down the line. So probably just that really, communication", and Candidate E believing that "the main thing in [company] is communication... And the big gap between senior managers (and) the minions on the floor". This is in conjunction with the arguments of Davenport et al (2005), who found that toxic workplace environments and mobbing typically occurs in companies which have poor organisation and weak controls in their practices, and often have upper level management which is not fit for purpose. It is therefore believed that the victims of mobbing and toxic managerial practices are targeted due to them being exceptional, intelligent, competent, creative and showcasing integrity and dedication to their work, causing the organisation to lose high potential employees.

## 4.6. Summary of the Findings

The data showed that one hundred percent of the candidates interviewed believed the communication of the company to be very poor, with one candidate suggesting that this in all likelihood "adds to a lot of frustration in the company, because… a lot of things you're hearing is hearsay, which caused a lot of fear and a lot of confusion in people". The research also found that the communication within the company was affected by a lack of trust in the management, as the majority of candidates did not feel comfortable expressing their ideas with managers, and two thirds were not comfortable even having a conversation of any sort with their manager. This aligned with the findings cited in Chapter Two, where Kokemuller (2019), found that a lack of

communication can create serious issues with poor efficiency in an organisation, as employees, as poorly communicated directions can cause staff to be unsure of what to do, creating a cycle of poorly coordinated work efforts and lowered engagement (Kokemuller, 2019). This followed when candidates were asked to describe the culture of the organisation, with half of the respondents stating that they felt it was a culture of blame, with the other half of interviewees believing it to be negative and hostile.

When discussing the company strategy, only one third of the candidates felt they had any real understanding of it, with Candidate G suggesting that it was likely to be "let's just work out our staff into the ground and try and make as much money as possible". The feelings of the candidates being in line with toxic management are supported by Pelletier (2010), who found that toxic management traits can include blaming others for errors they have made, and lying. Additionally, Ashforth's (1997) concept of petty tyranny, showcases how narrow-minded behaviours such as this are often used solely in order to develop what amounts to what is for all intents and purposes a power trip.

In reference to specific toxic managerial behaviours, two thirds of the candidates were not comfortable speaking to their manager, with Candidate B stating that "I don't want to be interrogated all the time. I want to move to a company where I feel like an adult and am respected… There's no respect in this fucking company." The researcher found that this was supported by the arguments of Kellerman (2004), who found that toxic management can be grouped into various distinct styles, including showing employees a lack of respect, in which the manager often disregards the needs of employees, and has little to no care for the feelings, health and wellbeing of others, regardless of  their responsibility toward them.

When asked about the perceived levels of stress they felt within the workplace, one hundred percent of respondents felt it was a stressful environment, with two thirds stating that they often felt the need to bring work home. This corresponds with the findings of by Davenport et al, (2005), who goes on to suggest that people suffering from workplace related stress can also suffer from mental health issues such as anxiety and stress, and sleep disorders such as nightmares and insomnia.

When discussing their decision to leave the organisation and enquiring as to whether there was anything that would prevent them from doing so, no candidates felt that the company could prevent them from seeking a position elsewhere. Extenuating life circumstances was the only

real factor, with a candidate stating that what was causing a delay in them making a decision was the possibility of their partner relocating in the near future. Candidate C believed that leaving the organisation would ultimately cause issues in their long-term career goals, but believed that this was a sacrifice they were willing to make given how they felt they were mentally affected by working for the organisation, stating that "my need to remove myself from this place outweighed my need to stay in my intended career path… I can't keep going home in tears every day."

When discussing the management of the company, Candidate B described their manager as "careless", with Candidate C suggesting that "they haven't a clue what's going on, some of them can't even work the computer system… You can blame competitors or whatever but it's not… customers can see through your bullshit and your excuses too". , and another claiming that "he doesn't even be here half the time", and Candidate G suggested that their manager "pushed her responsibility down on to lower members of staff and the team". Only one third of candidates interviewed felt they were supported by the line management in their roles. Ultimately, the candidates believe the company was severely negatively impacted by poor management with one stating that "every week someone's leaving, like new people are coming in, you barely know anybody", and Candidate G positing that "it has massive potential but… to grow a company you have to invest in the company, and that company has just plateaued now, they're not going anywhere".

# 5.  Conclusions

In exploring how managers exhibiting toxic and negative behavioural traits in a specific Dublin based fine food import company can cause employees to seek positions outside the organisation and thusly increase staff turnover, this study has focused on four main aspects: toxic management, poor communication practices, the effect this has on subordinates, and the impact this has on their intention to quit the organisation.

In this final chapter, the researcher will summarise the main conclusions in each of these specific areas, preceded with a consideration of the effects of toxic managerial behaviours and negative company culture, before assessing the limitations of the study and any perceived implications for any future research and thusly laying out the recommendations found from the research.

The study was designed to enable data analysis reflecting the impact of toxic managerial behaviours on an office-based employee's intention to quit in a specific fine foods import company based in Dublin, Ireland.

To capture organisational diversity, a range of staff at a range of levels from various departments within the company. The assumption was that these employees and departments would vary in terms of middle or line management style, the level at which the various employees operated, and the diversity of roles with which they were tasked with carrying out. Analytically, these presumed variances were confirmed, with a variety of issues and managerial styles becoming apparent during the course of the research.

However, these contextual managerial influences were not just objective forces acting on the organisation; the impact of these differences was varied by individual and cumulative perceptions and the individuals' interpretation of these factors in each case.

Because of this, a foundational element of the study was to identify the major managerial factors and aspects of the organisation which interviewees themselves saw as impacting most powerfully on the overall culture, atmosphere, and ultimately staff turnover and their own individual intention to quit.

When compiled together, these factors offered a detailed and complex overview of the organisation and its managerial practices and styles and defined a key component of the research and in developing the thematic analysis.

## 5.1.   Effect of Poor Communication

In accordance with the findings of Kokemuller (2019), the researcher found that managerial communication was vitally important, particularly in the light of a previous organisational restructure and change of ownership, as the lack of communication and secretive nature of management in the organisation discussed in Chapters Three and Four had led to several employees fearing for the future of the company and their own personal place within the company, leading many of them to feel unsafe in their positions. One of the objectives of the research was to ensure that the research captured the communicative nature of the management in the organisation, and the impact that this had on employees' intention to quit, as it was shown in Chapter Two, poor communication can and does have a major impact on employee job satisfaction, trust in the organisation, intention to quit, and staff turnover.

It is clear that communication, whether good or bad, has an impact on individuals, their engagement, and in this researchers' case, individuals intention to quit from the organisation.

## 5.2.   Effect of Toxic Management

As referenced in the discussion in Chapter Two, in the writings of , the study of toxic management within organisations faces a number of theoretical and observational challenges, one of which is to understand the differences between incompetent management and toxic mangerial behaviour traits such as placing blame, or publicly humiliating a subordinate, an issue that has been researched at length in various academic literatures. The distinction between toxic managerial traits and a simple lack of competency typically occurs in the personal and individual attitudes of the management; varying between simple acts of ineptitude to downright abusive displays of behaviours (Lipman-Blumen, 2005).

Within the aforementioned organisation, the management style distinction is likely most sharply defined by the examples of rude and bullying behaviours of the management that have been outlined by the candidates interviewed and has greater significance and emotional impact than merely incompetence, for the reasons outlined in Chapter Two. Notably, the tensions between employees and management when staff denigrate to make suggestions or put forward ideas, lead to the conclusion that the management are in fact displaying harmful and toxic behavioural traits, and impeding the progress of the organisation and damaging the trust and morale of the employees. Our analysis of the organisational management, therefore, can conclude that the managerial styles of the company are often toxic, and have a damaging effect on the staff, often

leading to an increase in stress and poor mental health, withholding of possibly innovative ideas and perceptions for fear of the way in which they will be received, and ultimately factoring into their intention to quit, causing higher staff turnover and an increased overall cost to the company (Davenport, et. al., 2005).

The consequences are vast and complex, and leads to many employees who, for a variety of reasons, feel conflicted or be reluctant to put forward their ideas or even communicate with management. As discussed in Chapter Two, communication is vital for any organisation and any impediment to that can have a detrimental effect on the day to day running of the business, as well as give way to the possibility of hampering potential development and growth of the company (Kokemuller, 2019). To address this toxic style of management effectively, paying full attention to its emotional complexity and impact on the staff, the researcher took the approach in this study to address the emotional and mental impacts on the subordinates, and how it impacted their ability to carry out day to day tasks and their overall job satisfaction, as well as their general feelings towards the organisation and the effect it had on their intention to quit their roles. The first aim of the research was to seek out and differentiate between various feelings towards management as understood by the respondents, rather than imposing any external meanings. The result is ultimately more complicated, but nevertheless more complete overview of the management in the chosen organisations, as understood, articulated and exercised on a day to day basis by both upper and middle level managers of the organisation both formally and informally.

## 5.3.    Intention to Quit

To examine the effect of these toxic behaviours on the subordinates further, this report drew upon the individual candidate's intention to quit their positions and seek employment elsewhere, and the reasoning behind this decision. The differentiation between explicitly toxic and incompetent forms of managerial behaviours, and between general work related stress and toxic managerial traits in practice (Davenport at. al., 2005), enables the researcher to distinguish between satisfied but stressed employees, and employees whose stress and upset is embodied by the toxic behavioural traits inflicted on the individual candidates, and their determination to remove themselves from these negative managerial practices.

In turn, this research then helped to outline the challenges faced by the candidates in the in attempting to carry out their day to day tasks, and to translate this into the perceived levels of

stress this caused, and the impact this had on both their ability to carry out their duties effectively, and to translate it, in practice, to their decision to leave the organisation and seek employment elsewhere, through determining the levels and effects of victimisation, humiliation, and placing of blame. As a consequence, this study concentrated significantly on issues of management within the organisation using toxic behavioural traits in practice, for instance embarrassing employees in their attempts to put forward ideas and opinions. Equally, however, there was the task of translating these individual feelings and opinions into recognisable and transferable knowledge of the impact this had on their intention to quit the organisation. Similarly, this specific focus enabled the identification of specific issues and gaps in the managerial practices, from both upper and middle management. A particular theme that interested the researcher in light of the findings of this research was the lack of formal training, progression, and development in the organisation, and its impact and significance when compared with other, more on the job forms of learning.

Although this research focused on management styles and the effects of toxic managerial behaviours, a large proportion of the candidates' intention to quit has been the severe lack of ability to progress within the organisation, against which managerial styles and behaviours are often juxtaposed. It was therefore important to pay particular attention to the ways in which management acted towards their subordinates and how this was perceived to be unfair to or acting against the best interests of the employees and the organisation.

Taking these various aspects together produces a third key finding which emerges from the research, notably the strong tendency for negative managerial behaviours, particularly those regarding poor communication practices, to be more pervasive throughout both middle and upper management, and throughout the organisation as a whole. The managerial trait of neglecting to place any trust in the staff, and management insistence on concealing important strategies and facts from subordinates, along with the perceived lack of care for staff and focus on financial discourse tended to create a negative feeling of fear and concern amongst employees, and ignoring the potential value of any alternative ideas, knowledge and viewpoints.

Although the theoretical framing of this research was largely informed by contemporary research and knowledge on managerial tactics, communication, and learning, which emphasises the important social nature of an employees' role in an  organisation, it also emphasises the importance of positive social interaction and interpersonal relationships in the workplace, which

the findings discovered was sorely lacking in the aforementioned organisation, impacting directly on the candidates intention to quit their roles and seek employment elsewhere.

There is no doubt that the findings presented in this dissertation reflect badly on the managerial style associated with toxic management in the chosen organisation, and that the organisation itself may very well have lost potentially capable and good employees due to the toxic nature of the management regime in the organisation (DuBrin, 2010). There are a range of other options for further research and the next section outlines areas for consideration, in no particular order for further and future research.

## 5.4.    Recommendations for Future Research

The research conducted during the course of this study has lent strong support to the concept that toxic managerial behaviours not only exist within the specific organisation, but also suggests that it has a significant impact on the intention to quit of the candidates interviewed. It has also demonstrated that poor communication and ineffective managerial styles can lower the perceived value of an employee's role and their ability to perform their tasks on a day to day basis, as well as significantly impacting on their mental wellbeing and levels of job-related stress. However, the small scale of the company studied, and the time constraints involved in the study inevitably creates severe limitations for how well this qualitative research is capable of tapping into the severity of the subject it is concerned with, that of toxic management and its effect on an employees' intention to quit and the overall increase in staff turnover.

One clear limitation is the restriction in the range of candidates available within the organisation. The research has adopted standardised and universally accepted theories of conduct for case study design and selection of candidates which emphasises the importance of choosing organisations which showcase a variety of working conditions and styles of employment, and which rely on qualitative and analytical, rather than statistical, generalisations to deduce findings across different types of organisations and sectors. Consequently, it is reasonable to conclude that challenges to staff based on management behaviours may equally be found in other varying organisations across various categories of business. However, the importance of having an overall understanding of workplace conditions and their effects on subordinates also suggests the possibility that different varieties of conditions may create differing outcomes. Only by extending the research across a variety of sectors and organisations systematically, in order to consider all potential impacts of toxic managerial behaviours, is it possible to conclude that the

impact of toxic and negative managerial behaviours on an employees' intention to quit are fully considered in the overall research design.

Secondly, another perceived limitation is in the number and range of candidates who participated in the study. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the research has applied the concept of small-scale purposive sampling, as opposed to large-scale random sampling methods to select candidates for interview. Because of this, the findings are clearly restricted to the diversity of experiences and occurrences encountered by a selected group of candidates. The qualitative nature of this study allowed the researcher to choose the selection of interview candidates carefully in order to guarantee an appropriate range of respondents across a variety of departments and levels of seniority, and then to consider their various experiences in reasonable depth. However, there is evidently scope for further research which explores the issues raised by the interviewees through larger-scale or random sampling of candidates across a variety of organisation and employment sectors.

Thirdly, the lack of study of the managers themselves, and their knowledge, reasoning, and their insight into their own behaviours is also inevitably a constraints on the researcher's ability to conduct a thorough investigation into the depth of knowledge that would be required to get a holistic overview of managerial knowledge, decisions, and motivation. The data obtained has provided a variety of insights into the ways in which different managers act, communicate, and use their managerial authority and how this relates to the treatment of subordinates in professional circumstances. However, each of these interactions in which these various managers are implicated is worthy of research in their own right. Studying a wider variety of managerial activity was beyond the scope of the current research, as there was a significant time constraint, as well as the emphasis being on subordinates' individual perceptions. As such, there is theoretically room for further research on exploring in greater intensity any or all of the interactions which involve the managers mentioned adequately in their own right. Research of this sort may utilise similar research methods but could also employ more quantitative techniques and analysis. This research has mentioned areas in which further study could highlight significant details about the manger's perceptions of their interactions with employees, as well as their own opinions of their behaviours, however this researcher has not been able to investigate these in a significant fashion.

Fourth, the style of this research has been vital in exploring and understanding the impact of toxic and negative managerial and communicative methods in practice, however there is

significant further research that could be carried out in order to gain a deeper insight into these behaviours. Time constraints meant that it was not feasible to extend this facet of the research in its entirety, for example through extended periods of shadowing of employees and managers in the workplace or investigating the aforementioned interactions further. A more extensive study is a suggested method in which to build on the insights from this research in order to gain more comprehensive insights into the behaviours involved.

Lastly, and by no means the least part, recent changes to the ownership of the organisation, and consequently the managerial and organisational structure of the organisation poses a number of additional important potential queries about the nature and reasoning behind managerial attitudes and behaviours, within a changing organisational framework. The limited scope of this research has not extended to managerial insights, which showcases the need for further exploration into the attitudes and perceptions of the upper and middle management within the organisation, giving insight into the mindset and strategies employed in the organisation, which subordinates may not be privy to.

# 6.    Personal reflection

This has been probably one of the most challenging things I have undertaken. I acknowledge that my close relationships and my knowledge of the organisation is a limiting factor and plays a role in my judgement of the resultant data collected. To safeguard this potential bias, I followed a series of safeguards, checks were made regularly with colleagues and my academic supervisor on progress and development of the dissertation.

There were a number of assumptions made by me during the research of this dissertation, for example, I assumed that all those interviewed would be honest and open with me, and I with them, and also that the information gathered was accurate and genuine and not subject to skewing.

This research has given me a deep appreciation of the attitudes of individuals and their relationship with their management and their colleagues, and I am grateful for their participation and good will. Also, this research has shown the variety of attitudes, perceptions and beliefs that individuals have, which in turn will broaden my knowledge and appreciation of others perception and their point of view, which is different from my own.

Furthermore, this dissertation has helped me develop my research, interviewing and analytical skills for which I am grateful. I have no doubt that this experience has added to my knowledge and my skill-base for the future.

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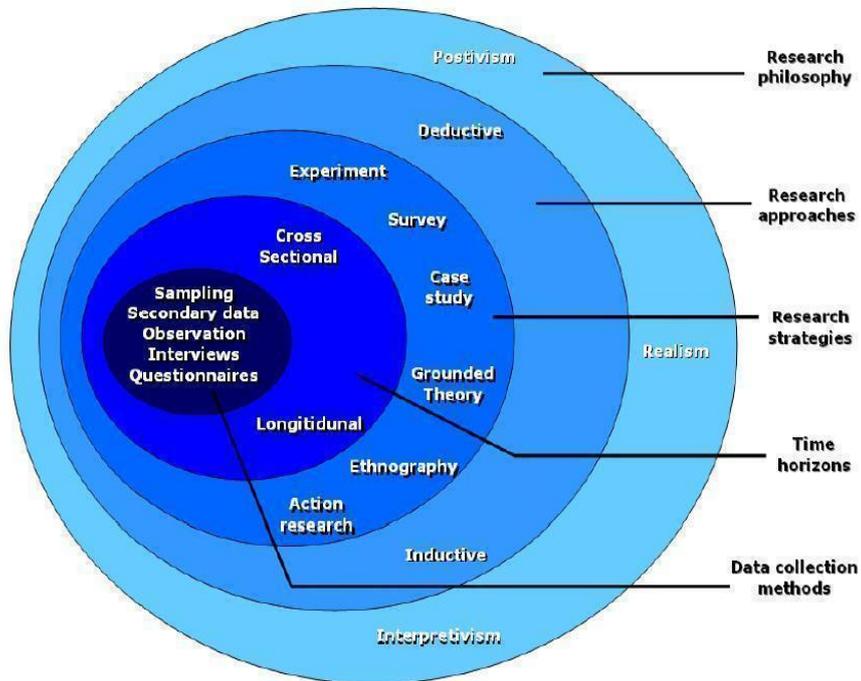
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# 8. Appendix A - The Research Onion



(Source: Saunders et al, 2012).

# 9.    Appendix B - Research Approaches

| BASIS FOR COMPARISON | QUALITATIVE DATA | QUANTITATIVE DATA |
|---|---|---|
| Meaning | Qualitative data is the data in which the classification of objects is based on attributes and properties. | Quantitative Data is the type of data which can be measured and expressed numerically. |
| Research Methodology | Exploratory | Conclusive |
| Approach | Subjective | Objective |
| Analysis | Non-Statistical | Statistical |
| Collection of data | Unstructured | Structured |
| Determines | Depth of understanding | Level of occurrence |
| Asks | Why? | How many or How much? |
| Sample | Small number of non-representative samples | Large number of representative samples |
| Outcome | Develops initial understanding. | Recommends final course of action. |

(Source: Surbhi, 2016)

# 10. Appendix C – Invitation to Participate

**Interview Request Form**

21ˢᵗ May, 2019

Dear Participant,

*Reference: Research Interview Request*

Please see attached a copy of the Research Information Sheet and Consent Form, as discussed during our previous conversation.

I would be grateful if you would consider taking part in the proposed research. If you agree to participate, please return the attached consent form on or before the 25th of May, 2019.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Gargan

Student Number: 17146330

# 11. Appendix C – Information Sheet

The aim of this proposed research is to generate substantive theory on the researched area of toxic management in your organisation and its impact on intention to quit.

The researcher is Helen Gargan, an assistant wine buyer in the organisation, and is doing this research as a part-time student at National College of Ireland, under the supervision of .

**Invitation**

You have been invited because of your position as a member of former member of staff of said organisation. Your participation is voluntary, and there are no consequences should you decide not to participate in this research.

**What is requested of you?**

You are requested to attend for interview, at a time and a place to suit you, and have an open interview. The interview itself shall be approximately 45 minutes in duration, and some notes and recording may take place, subject you your approval prior to the commencement of the interview.

There may be a requirement for a short follow-up interview to ensure accuracy and understanding of some of the information received.

Data will only be viewed by myself, my supervisor.

**Risks to you for participation**

There are no perceived potential risks associated with this research, however, should you feel that you can no longer participate or wish to reconsider your attendance at interview, you may of course withdraw at any stage.

You may withdraw your involvement and the information supplied during the interview and subsequent to the interview at any time up to the data being anonymised.

**What happens the information supplied by you?**

The information supplied will not in any way be forwarded to any third party or shared with any other participant. The information is for use in this research only and will not be forwarded to any agency for use in any form.

Data will be treated confidentially and no names, dates, family details, or any form of identification will be used. The data will be stored for five (5) years from the date of completion of the project itself. Data will be archived in a locked storage facility under my name only.

**Further information**

Should you have any queries of this research or have any questions regarding any information contained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to contact me at Helem.Gargan@gmail.com or by phone on +353(0)857144897 (*Telephone numbers and email*

*address changed for the purposes of this dissertation only, to ensure the privacy of contact for this researcher*).

Please see the attached invitation, and I would request you sign it and return to me at your convenience.

This information sheet may be kept by you.

Helen M. Gargan, Student Number: 17146330.

# 12. Appendix D – Interview schedule

**Interview schedule**

Interview Number:                    Date:

**Introduction:**

1 – Introduce myself

2 – Explain research focus and aims

3 – Ensure consent form is read, fully understood and signed

4 – Ensure that they are clear the interview is being recorded, and possible length of the interview itself, in addition to the only people who have access to the transcripts are myself and one transcriber, who will sign a confidentiality agreement.

5 – Ensure that they understand they may withdraw at any stage of the process up to when their data are pooled and anonymised and before the findings have been published, without repercussions.

6 – General talk to put interviewees at ease, whilst ensuring equipment is working effectively and accurately.

**Area of Questioning:**

Q 1. Outline the duties and challenges involved in a typical working day.

Probe (Necessity)

Q 2. Do you feel under pressure to be on time?

Probe (Reasoning; Developed; Personal control of; type of working contract; research focus; seniority)

Q 3. Do you feel you have enough time to carry out your duties?

Probe (Choice of contract; hours of work; administration; research focus; stress, organisational requirements of you)

Q 4. Do you feel your duties are fair and achievable?

Probe (From management; Colleagues; On work load; Stress levels; Writing; Classes; Personal; Feedback both formal and informal; influence you have in decisions that affect you; research objectives)

Q 5. Do you have sufficient knowledge to complete your duties?

Probe (Colleagues; Management; Reward; Teamwork; Your attendance at work/class times; beyond the call of duty; the organisation and its overall objectives)

Q 6. How would you describe communication in the organisation?

Probe (Colleagues; Management; Personal feelings; Engagement; Contribution to the overall organisational objectives)

Q 7. Why do you feel it is poor/good?

Probe (Responsibility levels; Conformity; Quality issues; Work-loads)

Q 8. Do you feel you are kept in the loop when appropriate?

Probe (Colleagues; Management; Personal feelings; Engagement; Contribution to the overall organisational objectives)

Q 9. Do you feel there is good communication within your team?

Probe (Colleagues; Management; Personal feelings; Engagement; Contribution to the overall organisational objectives)

Q 10. Do you feel comfortable vocalising your ideas?

Probe (Colleagues; Management; Personal feelings; Engagement; Contribution to the overall organisational objectives)

Q 11. How does a typical team meeting work?

Probe (Colleagues, Management, Responsibility levels; Conformity; Quality issues; Work-loads)

Q 12. Is there good engagement in staff meetings?

Probe (Colleagues; Management; Personal feelings; Engagement; Contribution to the overall organisational objectives)

Q 13. What do you think should be done differently?

Probe (Responsibility levels; Conformity; Quality issues; Work-loads)

Q 14. Do you know the company strategy?

Probe (If not, why not?)

Q 15. How would you describe the culture of the organisation?

Probe (Open, friendly, blame, hostile etc.)

Q 16. Do you find your managers are engaged with their role?

Probe (Responsibility levels; Conformity; Quality issues; Work-loads)

Q 17. Do you feel supported in your work by your manager?

Probe (Management; Personal feelings; Engagement; Support)

Q 18. Do you feel comfortable speaking with your line manager?

Probe (Management; Personal feelings; Engagement; Support)

Q 19. Do you trust your manager's capabilities?

Q 20. Have you received any coaching or training in your position?

Probe (Why do you think you have/have not received this training?)

Q 21. What kind of training did you receive?

Probe (In-house, external, learning by doing etc.)

Q 22. Are you clear on your role?

Q 23. Do you feel you understand your role and its effect within the company?

Probe (Management; Personal feelings; Engagement; Support)

Q 24. Do you have specific set KPIs?

Q 25. Do you have specific set tasks?

Q 26. Are you completing or achieving these goals?

Probe (Why do you think this is the case?)

Q 27. Do you feel the work environment is stressful?

Q 28. Do you bring work home with you?

Probe (How many hours per week would you spend doing work outside of your allotted hours?)

Q 29. Have you felt the need to look outside the organisation for a position?

Q 30. Do you feel there is progression available within the organisation?

Q 31. Have you ever been promoted?

Probe (If so/if not, why do you feel this is the case?)

Q 32. Is there anything preventing you from staying in the organisation?

Probe (Give examples)

Q 33. Is there anything preventing you from leaving the organisation?

Probe (Give examples)

Q 34.. Is there anything else you would like to add or say before we conclude?

**Notes** (by me):

- How did the interviewee appear to me:
- Atmosphere / location:
- Disposition to talk / motivation to take part in the interview:
- Gestures, non-verbal signals, eye contact:
- Interaction during the interview:
- Difficult phases:
- Specifics of the interview or the interview situation:
- The (three) main points that I remember from the interview;

1.

2.

3.

**Overall:**

Biographical information:

**Age:**

**Gender:**

**Number of years of service:**

**Duration of Interview:**

**Any other area you wish to add:**

**Conclusion:**

1 – Switch off recorder

2 - Review what has been discussed

3 – Outline what now happens with the information

4 – Explain that I may need to contact them again or arrange another short interview to ensure accuracy and clear up any points I may not fully understand

5 – Ask for biographic information, written down, not recorded, to show years of service, level of education, type of employment status, hours of normal week during normal semester, gender, range of modules and programmes.

6 – Thank them for their time and attendance.

**End**

# 13.  Appendix E – Similarity Report

The submission similarity report for this body of work is 16%.