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EFFECT OF TOXIC WORK ENVIRONMENT ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT, EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION AND PERCEIVED STRESS

Mustafa Ghassan M.Sadeq AL-CHALABI

Master's Thesis

Supervisor

Asst. Prof. Dr. Esin Yücel Karamustafa

Istanbul, 2022

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The thesis titled "EFFECT OF TOXIC WORK ENVIRONMENT ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT, EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION AND PERCEIVED STRESS" prepared by MUSTAFA GHASSAN M. SADEQ AL-CHALABI and submitted on 3/5/2022 has been **accepted unanimously** for the degree of MBA in Business Administration.

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I hereby declare that this thesis meets all format and submission requirements of a Business Administration Master's thesis.

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I hereby declare that all information/data presented in this graduation project has been obtained in full accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare all unoriginal materials and conclusions have been cited in the text and all references mentioned in the Reference List have been cited in the text, and vice versa as required by the above-mentioned rules and conduct.

Mustafa Ghassan M. Sadeq AL-CHALABI

Signature

DEDICATION

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to my supervisor Asst. Prof Dr. Esin Yücel Karamustafa for her valuable help, support, advice, and encouragement to conduct this study. Also, I would like to thank my family, friends and to everyone who helped me in one way or another during my master study journey.

ABSTRACT

EFFECT OF TOXIC WORK ENVIRONMENT ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT, EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION AND PERCEIVED STRESS

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This study aims to analyze the effect of toxic wok environment on employee engagement, emotional exhaustion, and perceived stress. Many dimensions of work environment valences were used in this study including workplace incivility, workplace bullying, workplace ostracism and workplace harassment. In addition, the study discussed and illustrated the sources of workplace toxicity which includes organizational culture, leaders, colleague and clients and work processes. A questionnaire has been used and includes 32 items with the Five-Likert scale (1: strongly agree, 2: agree, 3: neither agree nor disagree, 4: disagree, and 5: strongly disagree). The practical data of the study were collected from many hospitals in the city of Baghdad-Iraq. The target sample of the study are doctors, nurses, and paramedical staff. The questionnaire has been distributed online via Google Form and the number of valid responses received are 155 responses. The study results showed that toxic work environment has significant direct effect of emotional exhaustion and perceived stress without high effect on employee engagement. The study concluded that the direct relationship which exist between a toxic work environment and emotional exhaustion refers that if the employee works in a toxic work environment, this will cause and spread negative feelings between other colleagues.

The feelings which come from toxic work environment including uncivility, ostracism, bullying and harassment can be determined and cause to excessive stress. In addition, it is concluded that if the employee is happy and healthy, this will have an impact on better performance with high engagement and less emotional exhaustion and perceived stress. Therefore, it is necessary for organizations to construct a culture where employee can feel themselves better and less stressful.

Keywords: Toxic Work Environment, Employee Engagement, Emotional Exhaustion, Perceived Stress.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A toxic workplace is a common term heard in many organizations. Most of the people have intuitive feeling of what is meant by it: a work environment that interferes with employee conversation in certain ways inevitably harms employee psychological and emotional health. Although the term is widely used but there is much research in the organization psychology which addresses the concept of toxic work environments. Many researchers in the field of toxic work environments discuss this term and its effects on employees (e.g., Reed, 2004; Goldman, 2006; Reed & Olsen, 2010; Pelletier, 2010; Steele, 2011). However, this phenomenon is seen by a smaller number of participants outside of the manager's domain, such as interactions with colleagues (Frost, 2003; Hodson &Chamberlain 2010), work-related incidents (Frost, 2003, Ozcelik & Maitlis, 2004), and organizational culture (e.g., McClure, 1996; Flynn, 1999; Hartel, 2008; Walton, 2008; Shain, 2009).

In order to achieve a good accepting of the phenomenon from the existence broad probability, the study aims to examine the toxic work environment as a methodological case where the meaning of system is a set of associations that move or collaborate (System, 2016). In this regard, the current study considers many sides that may interact with the work environment, rather than looking only at the function of a particular person. However, the goal is to examine how the various features of the work environment may be related to the feelings of employees which their workplace environment is toxic. The word toxic means containing toxic substances or toxic when it can cause death or severe impairment, and it means very dangerous or harmful. In this study, toxic substances include social and organizational meaning and are denoted to be toxins and stressors. The toxic workplace environment is widely used to indicate toe the toxicity from any source with scientists and researchers focusing on many (e.g., toxic managers, toxic decision-making process). However, until the time of writing this study, there is no much research about toxic work environment and there is no clear definition for this term in the organizational psychology. However, Walton (2008) defines the toxic workplace as one where behaviors that cause toxic behaviors are prevalent and are dysfunctional, destructive, disruptive, abusive, and exploitative.

In addition, Shain (2009) defines a toxic work environment as one that involves continuous and repetitive forms of discrimination, abuse, or harassment that are neglected, tolerated, or supported by manager and in which insufficient steps must be taken to correct the issue. Along with the previous definitions, it has been noted that only the existence of pressure factors (e.g., destructive behavior and high workload) in the workplace environment does not certainly mean toxicity (e.g., Reed, 2004; Kaiser et al., 2007). In fact, in addition to the above definitions, there are many researchers refer to the meaning, continuity, and dose of stressors and to the members of organizational responses to them (e.g., Robinson & Frost, 1999; Frost, 2003; Ozcelik & Maitlis, 2004; Lawrence, 2008). This is compatible with many basic principles of toxicology that toxic effects depend on dose. Therefore, any material can be toxic with specific amount (Hodgson, 2004), and the toxicity is not a stuff of a material, but it defines the damaging results of a particular interaction with a host (Mueckter, 2003).

Based on the above, it can be said that the work environment is toxic from a systematic point of view and that the work environment is such that the pressure in the workplace reaches a critical level. Thus, it can have a harmful effect on the entertainment of employees. The toxic workplace environment is distinguished from associated compositions including bullying and poor supervision, and these pressures can exist in the toxic workplace environment. The toxic workplace environment indicates to a more public and damaging influences in workplace environment and is related to the continuity of pressure instead of the pressure itself. The dose problem refers to the fact that the pressure in a toxic workplace environment, whether critical or not, continues for a long period of time and its effects are amplified. Although the damage does not appear to be so great that the work environment could be described as toxic, given the dynamics of the work environment, it is not difficult to imagine that a toxic workplace environment can have long-term influence.

From the above, it can be seen that there is an excessive deal of interest in the literature regarding the relationship between a toxic work environment and workplace stress, which has led to extensive research on this topic. The focus of this study is to examine the effects of a toxic workplace environment on employee engagement, emotional exhaustion, and perceived health environment in Iraq. Generally, the current study will try to achieve the following objectives:

1. Detect the relationship between the effect of toxic work environment and employee engagement.
2. Detect the relationship between toxic work environment and emotional exhaustion.
3. Detect the relationship between toxic work environment and perceived stress.

The goal of the research is to develop a framework to help combat a toxic work environment. Most of the related research and studies were implemented in developed countries, particularly the US, UK, and many other Western countries. There are few related results for emerging and developing countries including Iraq and the Middle East in general. The few studies that have been conducted in emerging countries have focused on renewable energy because they believe that it plays an important role in social and economic development. As far as, it is known that the current study is considered one of the first studies to examine the impact of a toxic workplace environment on employee engagement, emotional exhaustion, and feelings of stress. Based on the above-mentioned literature, the study attempts to fill the gap of the above studies by addressing many concepts affected by a toxic work environment, namely employee engagement, emotional exhaustion, and stress perception. The study attempts to answer the following questions:

Q1: Does there any relationship between toxic work environment and employee engagement?

Q2: Does there any relationship between toxic work environment and emotional exhaustion?

Q3: Does there any relationship between toxic work environment and perceived stress?

The study is structured in six chapters. Chapter one provides an introduction about the study, chapter two provides a literature review about the study, and describes the four variables of the study: toxic work environment, employee engagement, emotional exhaustion, and perceived stress. Chapter three establishes relationships between the key concepts of the study. Chapter four provides the methodology of the study and how the study is analyzed, the study design, and the study instruments. Chapter five provides the research findings and tests the research hypotheses. Chapter six provides discussions on the results and the limitations of the study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Currently, in every organization around the world, there are many problems that need to be addressed and worked on to avoid similar circumstances that affect the entire organization. Some of these problems are toxic working conditions (such as workplace incivility, bullying, exclusion, and harassment) and they are the reason for physical and mental illnesses, high blood pressure, insufficient sleep, lower engagement at work, anxiety, appetite problems, depression, lower productivity, and demotivation where all these effects negatively on the success of the project (Mushtaq, Sultana & Imtiaz, 2015; Khan, Sabri, & Nasir, 2016). The similar types of these threats and harms, forms of work behaviors in the organization discourage employees from routinely participating, which reduces productivity and performance and ultimately leads to project failure (Pickering, Nurenberg & Schiamberg, 2017). Previous literature shows that there is a negative relationship between a toxic work environment and the performance of projects and the most percentage of these research confirms that organizations with high toxicity cause low project success and vice versa (Abbasi, & Hollman, 2000; Kitila, 2018). This study is an attempt to examine the effects of the toxic work environment on employee engagement, emotional exhaustion, and perceived stress. The study is applied on healthcare sector in Iraqi hospitals.

2.1. TOXIC WORK ENVIRONMENT

The work environment is the culture of workplace where the organization members face when they are inside the organization to achieve its objectives (Samuel, 2010). The work environment includes interactions of the employees with organization, their job and interaction with other employees (Macklem, 2005). The work environment is a set of reciprocal relationships between individuals in the workplace that can be organizational, human, and technical in nature (Anderson, 2013). The work environment can be divided into two classes: the cooperative work environment and the toxic work environment. The cooperative work environment refers to the soul with a society-oriented curriculum in which the employee and the employer have an empathetic relationship that promotes the physical and psychological entertainment of employees. A collaborative work environment leads to a sense of friendliness, cooperation, harmony, civility, happiness, joy, and simplification in the workplace (Pickering, Nurenberg & Schiamberg, 2017). The work environment can be toxic when individuals in leadership positions

are greedy, narcissistic, and use unwarranted means and resources to bully, threaten, bully, and humiliate others. Toxic work environments can cause many problems for employees, including depression, anxiety, stress and health problems, absenteeism, functional exhaustion, and negative work behaviors that lead to counterproductive outcomes and ultimately reduce workplace productivity (Pickering, Nurenberg & Schiamberg, 2017).

In general, most toxic work environments are full of incivility, paranoia, and anxiety. This leads to an unsuitable atmosphere for intense communication (Macklem 2005; Musacco, 2009). It acts like a cancer that harms all shareholders of the company because it creates a toxic culture among managers and employees and eventually leads to a toxic environment within the company (Cheung & Yip, 2015). Toxic behaviors in the workplace can lead to an increase in organizational costs because the company's positive image is lost, self-esteem decreases, employee morale decreases, average turnover increases, practical life conflicts occur, absenteeism is high, employee health suffers, and employee productivity decreases (Pouliakas & Theodossiou, 2013). The toxic work environment is characterized by many negative harmful impacts such as the narcissistic behavior, violence, and defensive leadership, bullying behavior by directors and colleagues, threating and exclusion. Physical and mental disparity is a regular occurrence in toxic workplaces and is a dangerous situation because it has profound causes of high level of burnout and stress and cause a psychological pressure on employee health. The occurrence of work pressure leads to questionable outcomes and destroys organizational performance (Fiset & Robinson, 2018).

Toxicity in the workplace has been studied from a variety of perspectives, but currently there is no clear vision for this phenomenon. Researchers have classified individuals and processes in the work environment as toxic including toxic, managers, supervisors and leaders and toxic decision process (Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004; Padilla et al., 2007; Pelletier, 2010). Many researchers classify employee reactions as toxic, such as toxic feelings (Frost, 2003) and toxicity due to emotions (Lawrence, 2008), and others mention that the work environment is called a toxic work environment when it consists of many circumstances including personal conflicts (Hodson & Chamberlain 2010).

It is seen that workplace toxicity is defined by the constant acting out of negative passions by employees in response to conflictual circumstances, displacement between individuals in relation to the workplace, or organizational circumstances. Although there are many factors that can contribute to workplace toxicity, researchers typically focus on one or a few factors. Those who have looked at the various factors have focused heavily on toxic leaders and suggested how employee characteristics support their presence (e.g., McClure, 1996; Padilla et al., 2007). In general, the numerous viewpoints on work environment toxicity do not seem to be mutually limited, but instead of viewing the phenomenon through different lenses.

Although researchers view workplace toxicity from different angles, there is some commonality in the indications and resources of work environment toxicity in addition to some coherence in the suggestions that will develop. However, at this early phase of toxicity research, the considerations were essentially expressive, so there are few experimental results. Researchers have provided an idea of the form of toxicity in the workplace and its mode of action. However, more research is needed to understand this phenomenon in better way and eventually a broad theoretical framework must be implemented.

2.1.1. Sources of Workplace Toxicity

Researchers describe the toxicity in workplace environment as a result of personal interactions and also the formal and informal methods where the duties and the workplace are systematized (e.g., McClure, 1996; Robinson & Frost, 1999; Frost, 2003; Ozcelik, Maitlis, & 2004; Hodson & Chamberlain, 2010). Many researchers have considered the toxicity factor (including leaders) in isolation, although the dynamics involving many factors (such as leaders and culture) are adequately discussed, so this view is more comprehensive and deserves interest. In fact, it seems that the interaction of different factors in a workplace system is natural. This part includes many elements which are considered sources of work environment toxicity and they generally include leaders, colleagues and customers, work processes, and organizational culture.

2.1.1.1. Leaders

Leadership is considered the most important source of toxicity, encompassing a subset of dysfunctional or destructive behaviors and leadership traits. Toxic leaders are described as people who are self-interested, controlling, malicious, and abusive of power, their role, and their

subordinates (e.g., McClure, 1996; Frost & Robinson, 1999; Reed, 2004; Walton, 2007; Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007; Goldman, 2008; Gallos, 2008; Pelletier, 2010; Steele, 2011). Many researchers were suggested a model for executive toxicity (e.g., McClure, 1996; Lubit, 2004; Pelletier, 2010). Nevertheless, it is said that because of the personality, perception and position of all toxic leaders, generalizations must not be done about their behavior (Roy-Girard & Appelbaum, 2007). However, some researchers have found general agreement on the forms of behaviors and features which constitute the toxic leadership (e.g., Pelletier, 2010). It is argued that toxic leaders perform their leadership roles myopically (Kimura, 2003; Roy-Girard & Appelbaum, 2007; Steele, 2011) and unethically (Frost & Robinson, 1999), deceive others (Lubit, 2004; Walton, 2007; Pelletier, 2010) and manipulate guidelines (Pelletier, 2010). These leaders avoid making decisions until the occurrence of the crisis. In addition, they change the work directions quickly without strong basis (Bacal, 2000). Form the point of view of workers, toxic leaders may appear unexpected (Bacal, 2000; Kimura, 2003; Appelbaum & Roy- Girard, 2007), unbalanced in terms of what they say and what they do (McClure, 1996; Bacal, 2000). These leaders may frustrate and confuse the employees and can lead to unpleasant working conditions. As mentioned earlier, toxic leaderships directly harm employee by many ways such as exploitation (Lubit, 2004; Walton, 2007) and showing less obligation for their thoughts (Kimura, 2003; Pelletier, 2010). It is also argued that poor leaders share the credit for their management's success (Kimura, 2003) and guilt others for their deficiencies (Kimura 2003; Pelletier, 2010).

In this way, toxic managers seem to use employees for their interests rather than to benefit their organizations or the employees themselves. in general, if the toxic managers face obstacles, they are said to interact poorly, suppress dissent, be hurtful (Frost & Robinson, 1999) and aggressive (Flynn, 1999; Kimura, 2003; Pelletier, 2010; Steele, 2011), and behave angrily rather than discuss problems (McClure, 1996; Lubit, 2004). To get their way, these leaders have been shown to use strict effect strategies and pressure (Lubit, 2004; Pelletier, 2010; Steele, 2011).

As well as they use social elimination and attack the trust of the workers themselves (Pelletier, 2010). Thus, it can be seen as toxic leaders abuse employees when pushing their program and make it very hard for employees to process or leave the position. As mentioned earlier, toxic leaders relegate workers and do not respect them (Kimura, 2003; Reed, 2004; Ppelbaum & Roy-

Girard, 2007; Pelletier, 2010). They also do not care about workers' well-being and shun them (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007; Reed, 2004; Steele, 2011).

It is argued that these leaders do not take accountability for their behavior (McClure, 1996) and blame employees because of their personal problems (Steele, 2011). Therefore, toxic leader avoids his employees, and it appears that he distances himself because of his fears. Most of the research on workplace toxicity focuses on supervisors. This is not surprising because supervisors are seen as part of the power structure that creates and solves problems (Gallos, 2008). It appears that the search for toxic leadership is consistent with the definition of Shain's (2009) to the toxic work environment where the leader's unconstructive responses to workers' anxieties are reflected and result in harmful circumstances being under their direction. In addition, the manager himself or herself may be a source of bad behavior, harassment, or discrimination. The manager represents only one side of the work system, and although he or she may have harmful effects, he or she does not work in isolation from others and therefore must not be measured as the only source of toxicity. In fact, researchers were found that the toxicity sources are not unique to managers, suggesting that there is more for this phenomenon.

2.1.1.2. Colleagues and customers

It is relatively rare to find the personal sources of toxicity other than leadership. Nevertheless, some researchers were described how the behavior of organizational members is associated with toxicity. Specifically, conflict between individuals and agents has been found to be likely to be toxic to workers (Frost, 2003; Stein, 2007; Chamberlain & Hodson, 2010). Despite the source of conflict between individuals, the experiment may elicit negative reactions such as dejection and despair in workers and is therefore considered a toxicity source (Stein, 2007). The toxic chain is used to capture a wide set of work environment behaviors, ranging from toxicity to politeness to physically aggressive actions (Ghosh et al., 2011).

Incivility is considered a type of low-intensity irregular behavior and has an ambiguous intensity to offend and violate workplace standards for common respect (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Ghosh and colleagues (2011) described rude actions in the toxic chain, and they include abandoning to say, “thank you” and “please" sending "irritable" messages and treating people silently. Behaviors such as spreading rumors and gossip with malicious undertones are also

described as toxic, in addition to more intrusive behaviors such as bullying, threats, and intimidation (e.g., Frost, 2003; Brown, 2004; Ghosh et al., 2011). Direct aggressive actions are considered more dangerous on the toxicity chain and consist of attack and murder (Ghosh et al., 2011). In summary, personal toxicity can relate not only to the leader, but also to all individuals who interact with them in the workplace, from colleagues who are in the work environment, to mildly rude, to publicly aggressive actions to some degree.

2.1.1.3. Work processes

Many researchers mentioned that toxic interactions can arise not only from personal relationships, but also from the methods where job is organized (for example, Frost & Robinson, 1999; Frost, 2003; Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004; Chamberlain & Hodson, 2010). The work process's structure or even their absence, can be toxic to employees as a source of stress (Frost & Robinson, 1999). For instance, when production processes are ineffective or stressful, when activities are incoherently structured, or when control systems exert critical constraints, the circumstances are said to be toxic (Chamberlain & Hodson, 2010). In addition, inadequate supervision, performance targets, and inadequate goal attainment, as well as additional workloads, are labeled toxic, like employee interference in their personal lives (Reed, 2004).

Some researchers have taken a closer look at toxic work processes and linked them to emotional reactions. It is claimed that toxic decision-making processes in organizations produce a variety of negative emotions (Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004). It is also said that the process of toxic decision making involves initial anticipation on the part of decision makers and accumulation is related with negative emotions of employees. The final decision leads to emotions among workers and lack of compassion on the part of workers (Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004).

In addition, Avoidance of organizational honesty is considered toxic where the perception of biased treatment whether practical, distributional, or interactional, elicits emotive responses from employees (Lawrence, 2008). Therefore, organizational observes can be toxic to employees because they represent the working conditions they must endure.

2.1.1.4. Organizational culture

The toxicity sources that described previously were focused in part on workplace exposures. However, toxicity is said to describe the interaction between substance and host (Mueckter, 2003). Therefore, more attention needs to be paid to workplace dynamics. Toxicity is thought to arise from the interaction of toxic behaviors in the work environment and its severity relies on the number, repetitions, and strength of these behaviors (Flynn, 1999; Roy-Girard & Appelbaum, 2007). Others believe that toxicity arise when problems are chronic or spread across place and time, reinforcing each other, and creating a pervasive sense of contagion among employees (Stein, 2007). Toxicity is also thought to develop from the interaction between problems, actions, and emotions of organizational members (e.g., Frost, 2003; Ozcelik & Maitlis, 2004). In fact, Wilson (2014) mentioned that toxic leader is a problem in any organization that lacks control mechanisms. Since workplace behavior is dynamic, organizational culture can play a significant role to develop of toxicity in the workplace by effecting the continuity of pressure.

The organizational culture imprisonments the members of organizations as they interact with the work and each other and can be defined as: "a set of mutual basic expectations where the group has learned to solve the external acquisition problems of external integration, and internal integration. Therefore, it is shown to new followers as the right method to observe, think, and feel about these problems (Schein, 2010).

Organizational culture is constantly activated and created through the personal interactions of the organization's members to guide and constrain their behavior. Organizational culture is thought to influence behavior in methods which enable the toxicity development by support the destructive behaviors and preventing curative ones, although this has not been confirmed so far in practice (McClure, 1996; Frost & Robinson, 1999; Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007; Nursing Standard, 2011; Shain, 2009).

2.1.1.4.1. Culture supporting destructive behavior

McClure (1996) suggests that the main reason to the existence of toxic leadership is that the behavior may or may not be explicitly tolerated by the organizational culture. For example, a masculine culture where the issue is paramount, and problems are not discussed may encourage toxic leaders who behave angrily (McClure, 1996) because the behavior of leader is not

examined and may even be estimated by some. In this context, Padilla et al. (2007) suggested the toxic triangle, which states that destructive leaders cause harm not only because of their psychological characteristics, but also because they follow supporters who do not stop them and the environment that allows them. This implies that a convinced tolerance for a particular leader's critical behavior, and thus their continued ability to poison the situation, is the cause.

Flynn (1999) pointed out that organizational toxicity increases when the organizational culture enables leaders' toxic behavior. In fact, researchers have found that the hallmark of toxic leaders is that they fail to recognize employee fears and fail to perceive their distress (Pelletier, 2010; Goldman, 2008; Reed & Olsen, 2010; Steele, 2011). Goldman (2008) said that this amounted to complicity in toxicity development. Even if managers are aware to the fears of employees, they may neglect or fail to review sources of toxicity. Goldman (2008) suggested that they may be mishandling the situation. For instance, they may neglect or fail to check the sources of toxicity (e.g., Ozcelik & Maitlis, 2004; Goldman, 2008). They may take a company stands and rationalizes the situation or try to overpower the negative feelings conveyed by employees (Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004). Whether the manager's reaction results from lack of awareness, fear, or skill, a culture that allows such reactions may promote toxicity by allowing work pressures to continue without successfully processing them.

Researchers suggest that a culture that allows toxic behavior among managers may also influence employee behavior by affecting the type and sternness of conventional behavior in the work environment (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007). In fact, all the members in the organization, managers have the greatest impact on culture. It is said that destructive behaviors they engage in have a dual effect, influencing employees beyond the initial impact by creating a culture through which others are convinced to behave in similar toxic ways (Appelbaum et al., 2007). In this way, the organizational culture can contribute to the existence of toxicity by simplifying the spread of counterproductive behavior in the work environment.

2.1.1.4.2. Culture inhibiting remedial behavior

Organizational culture can contribute to the work environment toxicity by discouraging behaviors which may help improve the situation. Many researchers have recognized that managerial behavior is affected by outside driven conditions including uncertainty, perceived

threat, and financial crises, mainly in financial crises context (Flynn, 1999; Kimura, 2003; Kimura, 2003; Reed, 2004; Padilla et al., 2007; Walton, 2007; Walton, 2007; Carter & Yeo, 2008; Steele, 2011). The narrow focus on short-term improvements may motivate leaders to achieve their goals and may come at the expense of worker comfort. These leaders may lack bonuses or the motivation to address employee anxieties, or employee anxieties may be caused by the leader's strong focus on the performance. In cultures characterized by high levels of external control, performance expectations may result in limited effort and ability to deal with employee anxiety, and anxiety is likely to persist.

Toxicity in the workplace Managers talked about the concept of emotional culture, which can influence workers' willingness to experiment and how they can express and organize their feelings in the work (Alvesson, 2002; Hartel, 2008). Gallos (2008) indicated that acculturation can motivate unusual emotional replies, managing strategies, and mode of the communications so that workers can become socialized with the acceptance and continuity of toxins. Examples include choosing the direction of the threat due to the culture of "do not ask, just do what I ask you to do" (Yeo & Carter, 2008) and prohibiting face-to-face discussion of personal problems due to the culture of conflict avoidance (Goldman, 2008). In both cases, the stressor persists, which can have a negative impact on the worker. Reed and Olsen (2010) even believe that toxicity persists in the organization because people endure, protect, and may move to accept it.

In summary, organizational culture enables leaders and other members in the organization to act in ways which promote the toxicity development. Specifically, culture can promote destructive behavior and suppress contrasting communication and work related to pressure and its effects (e.g., McClure, 1996; Flynn, 1999; Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004; Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007; Padilla et al., 2007; Goldman, 2008; Ghosh et al., 2011). Regardless of whether the pressure motivates, acknowledges, protects, or neglects, the situation can be equally damaging because it is a constant threat. Thus, the constant threat from the organization can affect constant pressure in many ways and must be considered when assessing workplace toxicity.

2.1.2. Workplace Harassment

Daniels, Watson & Gedikli, (2017) discussed that the dignity of the individual is destroyed by different or undesirable behavior. Terrorizing and humiliating one person by another in the work

environment is referred to as work environment harassment (Burgess et al., 2018). Thus, workplace teasing related to race, creed, origin, genes, skin color, age, and ethnicity are part of a toxic work environment (Wright, 2013; Adikaram, 2016). The workplace harassment concept was discussed in 1978, and this topic has received much attention from many researchers because of its importance in today's world (Farley, 1978). In Asian countries, few studies have been conducted on this topic because Asians do not want to talk about this issue because they consider it as one of the "taboos" related to the workplace or domestic problems, but it is also a shame for the victims (Henning et al., 2017). People who talk or communicate about the harassment in workplace are very few particulates in Chinese work environment. Most studies on harassment of women in the work environment show an alarming ratio. Unfortunately, the workplace harassment problem does not attract much interest among men (Merkin & Shah, 2014). Men and women are affected by workplace harassment at different ages. Feminist researchers relate this concept to the middle-class or society dominated by male through which the gender discrimination is faced by women, male stereotypes, workplace threats, and paradoxical power threats that result in women being less educated due to the male-dominated society (Branch et al., 2013).

2.1.3. Workplace Bullying

Sultana and Mushtaq (2015) believe that bullying of workplace is a psychological shock to any individual or employee. Bullying, social isolation, insulting accusations, sarcastic ridicule, criticism, and humiliation by the employee or employer are classified as workplace bullying (Nielsen & Knardahl, 2015; Khan et al., 2016). Bullying increases in different situations and by different means and is not limited to the workplace (Ariza-Montes et al., 2013; Tao et al., 2015). It is seen as a deep root in the organization and negatively affect the well-being of employees and lead to mental illness and workplace burnout (Takaki et al., 2013).

Bullying can be organizational or individual, the latter of which is associated with conflict and can be described as false, good, subordinate, complex, random, personality disorder, carousel, delegated, escalated or gang bullying. Organizational bullying consists cultural bullying, team bullying (through supervisor tactics), and bullying treatment (AntÓnio & Moleiro, 2015; Leymann, 1996). Organizational bullying was first introduced by Leymann (Notelaers, De Witte

& Einarsen, 2010) and has developed with different forms in different countries and sectors (AntÓnio, & Moleiro, 2015). Bullying and toxic work environments accelerate work stress, depression, work destruction, high absenteeism, low work engagement, and poor work performance (Chung, 2018).

2.1.4. Workplace Ostracism

Ostracism can be described as separation in the workplace experienced by an employee because of his colleagues or employer, which has negative consequences for the development of the organization in terms of high turnover, lack of participation in the work and a high percentage of functional dissatisfaction (Sergio et al., 2013). There are many studies whose results show that workplace ostracism has a great effect on the psychological and physical state of workforce and that this bad experiment leads to conflict, stress, and negative results (Waldeck et al., 2017). Thus, ostracism in the workplace causes counterproductive work behavior, depressive behavior, emotional exhaustion, and negative work behavior (Shafran-Tikva et al., 2017). In critical situations, employees may stop using their skills and withdraw due to ostracism. Workplace ostracism reduces employee motivation and both the employee, and the workplace suffer from this problem in the form of decreased effectiveness.

2.1.5. Workplace Incivility

Many reports in the literature that show that the employee or employer is troubled or saddened for a reason because workplace standards are not being met, with the intent of creating stress for personal gain (Bar-David, 2018).

Nonverbal or verbal abuse and disrespectful behavior towards colleagues are also considered a part of workplace incivility (Schindeler, & Reynald, 2017). Managers, scientists, teachers, and medical professionals were focused to eliminate the causes of unproductive employees as the case when they enforced to sacrifice their respect for themselves, their satisfaction, their level of respect, and their productivity. In addition, every company must deal with socially harmful circumstances, depression, and isolation at a lower level of development (Adikaram, 2016). This type of deviance motivates employees to weaken their performance and create a bad image about the workplace between their colleagues (Koser, Rasool & Samma, 2018).

2.2. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement is an important issue not only for academia, but also for businesses. This concept was first introduced by William Kahn in 1990. It implies that the organization leads its employees according to their functional roles, which can lead to the employee enthusiasm to work in the organization and then contribute of the organization success (Kahn, 1990). Thus, employee engagement is the element which best measures the strength of the organization. Employee engagement is the level of commitment and involvement of employees to the standards and values of their organization. The engaged employees are responsible for achieving their goals and encouraging their colleagues to achieve their goals to succeed in the organization. Kahn (1990, p.694) mentions that there are three psychological factors that make the employee committed: Feasibility, Security, and Availability. Hewitt Associates LLC (2004) proposed another important definition of employee engagement which is how individuals mentally commit with their group or organization that is measured by three behaviors as follows: tell, stay, and try (Anitha, 2014). According to Anitha (2014), there are seven factors of employee engagement, namely functional development, organizational policies, workplace environment, workplace entertainment, colleagues, team, compensation, training, and leadership. The study clarifies that there is a strong relationship between engagement of employee and their employee performance in the enterprise. It accomplishes that the strongest elements influencing employee engagement are work environment, colleagues, and team relationships (Anitha, 2014).

Topchik (2000) mentioned that the negativity of workplace starts with concerned or dissatisfied employees. When only a few number employees are influenced, it ranges such as a virus to the whole organization and negatively affects productivity of employees and the whole enterprise. So, people begin to leave the workplace because it is not pleasant. The Bureau of Labor Statistics clarifies that companies in the U.S. suffer losses of about three billion due to negative workplace impacts. A negative workplace can lead to an increase in average employee turnover, tardiness, and absenteeism.

It can be said that employee engagement is considered a type of physical and psychological relationship between the employee and his organization (Tanwar & Kumar, 2019). It aligns the personal objectives of employees with the visions of company that increases the productivity of employee and in turn, the company's productivity (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). The engaged

employees are balanced and emotionally connected to the company's vision and message, which shows the employee commitment to the company's goals (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Engaged employee work progressively, which enhances the company's value and reputation. Companies develop an environment that promotes high levels of employee engagement, and interacting employees are encouraged to seek support from their company (Kaliannan & Adjovu, 2015). Organizations develop good employee engagement approaches that align employee goals with organizational goals. Employee engagement is seen as a positive way to prevent many negative issues such as burnout and disengagement, and the positive emotions of employees are encouraged in the work environment.

Companies now recognize that the engagement of employees can motivate employee retention, customer satisfaction, higher performance, and organizational productivity and that the company has a competitive advantage when it engages its employees (Hayes, Schmidt & Harter, 2002). Employee engagement includes three main sides, and these sides can be summarized as follows (Alfes, 2010):

1. **The intellectual engagement:** in these sides, the employee intellectually interacts with organization and employees thinks continuously to enhance the organization and the employees uses knowledge to provide ideas to enhance the organization.
2. **Social engagement:** when the employee is organized to engage concepts with employees and other stakeholders in order to enhance the organization, the time of employee promotes the collaborative work in the organization and increase productivity.
3. **Affective engagement:** when the employee has positive feeling towards the organization, they think that the organization give them many benefits. So, they must be loyal with them to enhance the organization and success.

The reason companies invest time and money in developing employee engagement is that it is related to other organizational factors such as employee performance, friendly organizational climate, and productivity. When employees are engaged, they deal with customers in a friendly manner and it is good that these customers will visit the store again to buy the product of the company, generate profits that contribute to the company's profit, and the company's income will grow (Towers & Perrin, 2003). In addition, employee engagement effects positively on the satisfaction and health of employees because the company considers employment decisions and

discusses the company's main problems and successes with employees so that employees feel where the company values them. This leads to a positive feeling for the employee because it is beneficial for the company as satisfied employees are more productive than dissatisfied employees (Ruokolainen, Kinnunen & Mauno, 2007).

Employee engagement is the relationship between the employees and the organization and to what extent this relationship is strong. The organization can be successful if the engaged employees have feelings towards their organization and they effectively contribute to the success of the organization with their working time and efforts (Nagtegaal & Quirke, 2008). In one of the studies, it was found that the year an employee starts working is very important for the organization to retain them, provide training around their work, solicit employee comments, and take time to address their problems related to their work. These small efforts by the company will lead to employee engagement in the future (Trahant, 2009). The supervisor plays an important role in employee engagement because he is the only person who deals directly with the employees. Thus, the supervisor must effectively link the company's goals so that the employees achieve the company's goals. The result is lower employee performance and commitment to the company (Saks, 2006).

2.3. EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION

Job burnout is considered a type of stress and is one dimension (Daugherty and Cordes, 1993). On the other hand, Jackson and Maslach (1981) contend that burnout is a multidimensional construct that encompasses three characteristic features, including diminished the personal achievement, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization. The burnout definition is resulted from the theory of Maslach. Maslach’s theory states that burnout consists of three elements decreased personal achievement, depersonalization and emotional exhaustion with emotional exhaustion having the greatest impact on the individual. In addition, the theory states that burnout has many physical and psychological consequences for the individual (Wittmer & Martin, 2010). Others defined burnout as the condition of emotional exhaustion and distrust which arises repeatedly in individuals who perform any type of work (Maslach, & Jackson, 1981: 99). Most research on emotional exhaustion has focused on the personnel field because Maslach and Jackson (1981, 1986) mentioned that emotional exhaustion arises only in the

personnel field. It is recognized as a job-related hazard in a variety of professions that deal with people, including social work and education (Mashlach, 1976; Maslach & Goldberg, 1998). Studies of emotional exhaustion have been conducted with people who work in education and social service (Cordes & Daugherty, 1993). Vallen (1993) examined the burnout and organizational climate. The researcher concluded that there is a strong negative relationship between burnout in hospitality employees and certain institutional features. Specifically, hospitality organizations which lack trust in employees, exert strong control on employees, and do not foster collaboration were found to greatly increase burnout between employees.

Various authors agree that the emotional exhaustion is considered the first phase of burnout (Dougherty & Cordes 1993; Gains & Jermier, 1983). The emotional exhaustion indicates to the lack of energy and feelings due to the consumption of individuals because of high psychological demands (Yuanlaie, 2011). In addition, Gaines and Jermier (1983) mentioned which emotional exhaustion is associated with the depletion of emotional resources and includes feeling by frustration and fatigue. According to Babakus et al. (1999), frontline employees who lack the emotional energy can perform their jobs under pressure, and it is likely that emotional feelings lead to harmful events on frontline employee functional outcomes including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and functional performance.

Studies have detected that there is a negative relationship between burnout and functional satisfaction and each of the two experiments is driven by structures and organizational processes (Stechmiller & Yarandi, 1993; Thomsen, Soares, Nolan, Dallender & Arnetz, 1999 Kalliath & Morris, 2002; Burish, 2002). Burnout and especially emotional exhaustion are therefore associated with employee dissatisfaction (Kalliath & Morrish, 2002). Moreover, Conservation of Resources (CoR) states that dissatisfied employees with their work environment are less emotionally committed with their organization and are more likely to intend to leave the whole job when they feel that they are emotionally exhausted (Lee & Ashforth, 1996).

Emotional exhaustion in the workplace can be defined as a condition caused by the emotional and psychological stresses placed on employees. It has also been mentioned that work-family conflict and work-role conflict are positively associated with emotional exhaustion (Boles, Johnston & Hair, 1997). In addition, social support from colleagues is reported to have a moderate influence on work-family conflict and work-role conflict that satisfies workers (Rathi

& Barath, 2013). Factors that influence workers' level of exhaustion include work-related tension, functional satisfaction, age, and length of employment. In addition, exhaustion may cause absenteeism, job turnover, and intentions to quit (Saxton, Phillips & Blakeney, 1991). Employees who feel by optimal job desires show less exhaustion and more effective than employees with high job demands (Van den et al., 2008). A study on the level of emotional exhaustion among college faculty found that the level of emotional exhaustion was higher among female faculty than male faculty. Then age difference is important when it is associated with emotional exhaustion (Caccese & Mayerberg, 1984). Emotional exhaustion has been linked in studies to abusive supervision, performance, and employee job engagement (Aryee, S., Sun et al., 2008). Workers who experience burnout early in life have been found to be less likely to change jobs and more flexible (Cherniss, 1992).

2.4. PERCEIVED STRESS

Stress is a situation in which a person suffers from psychological problems, cannot perform productive actions, and develops negative emotions (Mullan, 2014). Stress leads to poor health condition of the person and his illness and increases the dissatisfaction of the employee (Mathisen, Einarsen, & Mykletun, 2011). As well as it is the reason for aggressive behavior of individuals and leads to negative behavior of employees in the work environment (Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008). The stress may prevent employees from building good relationships at work, and they may not find a friendly environment at work due to the stress (Turner, 2013; Treiber, Kummerow & Attell, 2017).

Stress negatively influences the mental health of individuals, and individuals need psychological support when they suffer from stress, as well as physical and psychological help in case of stress. In case of stress, individuals need the interest of others because they feel weak and need to be supported by their colleagues (Hogh, Hansen, Mikkelsen, & Persson, 2012). A study has shown that a worker's social class plays a moderate role. When class decreases, worker stress also increases (Mullan, 2014). When individuals experience less social support in their work or personal life, they face problems and these problems cause stress and this support may come from family or friends (Donnell & Macintosh, 2016). Moreover, stress leads to bad behavior

towards colleagues at work. So, the employee needs the social support from his colleagues at work to reduce the stress level (Thoits, 2011).

Stress negatively affects the employee productivity and effectiveness and lowers the quality of his work. Those who suffer from severe stress put themselves in an unfavorable situation and lose energy (Savery, & Luks, 2001). In addition, stress can cause a particular person's contextual behavior, such as helping others, to be destroyed, with the stress behavior negatively affecting all kinds of good behaviors, as the person suffering from stress tries to protect his or her physical and psychological energy under stress (Chung, 2018). In a normal situation, the individual will avoid the situation where there is a probability of loss, but in the case of stress, he cannot understand what is good and what is bad for him and will not understand the situation. So, this leads to high losses (Schilpzand, Leavitt, & Lim, 2016). Stress is one of the elements that put pressure on the productivity of employees in the company and greatly reduce the productivity level of the company.

Many researchers were found that there is a direct and strong negative relationship between stress and employee performance (Mathisen et al., 2011). Stress in the workplace can be managed and the curriculum used to manage stress is a good behavior of the manager towards the employees to reduce the level of stress for the employee manager (Matin, Razavi, & Campus, 2014).

Occupational stress is a case where people are faced with fulfillment requirements at work that they cannot meet, and therefore succeed when the time comes. Consequently, the brain becomes unbalanced and cause work stress. One of the causes of workplace stress is aggression, uncivility, and ostracism. Workplace violence increases job stress between employees and negatively impacts sustained organizational performance. In addition, occupational stress negatively affects personal disruption between employees. Moreover, occupational stress affects employee decision-making capability that is opposed for the organization because the economic costs are high, turnover increases, performance decreases and absenteeism is high (Kitila, 2018; Pinheiro, Ivandic & Razzouk, 2017). Workplace violence and job stress negatively impact employee quality of life (Jay & Andersen, 2018). Literature shows that 65% of Chinese workers face occupational stress (Lelei, 2017). Evans-Lacko & Knapp (2018) also confirmed that occupational stress can end up leading to suicide attempts. Workplace violence and occupational

stress not only reduce employee productivity and organizational performance, but also affect occupational behavior (Maharaj, Lees & Lal, 2019).

Laguna and Mielniczuk (2017) argued that employees who suffer from high occupational stress undergo with mental illness and react with worry, violence, and isolation (Laguna et al., 2017). Thus, from the above explanation, the occupational stress intervenes between workplace violence and the performance of sustained job.

3. ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN KEY CONCEPTS

The current study examines the effect of toxic work environment on employee engagement, emotional exhaustion, and perceived stress. As it has been mentioned in last chapter, the literature is widely accepted opinions about the expecting power of employee engagement, emotional exhaustion, and perceived stress. In contrast, toxic work environment includes a relative complicated context because its literature is unclear. The literature shows that toxic environment is harmful as other physical deviant behavior. On the other hand, it is very difficult to detect that specific work environment is toxic. So, in various institutions, toxic work environment is hidden and continuously harms the climate of workplace. In this study, it is proposed that the toxic work environment undermines the organization by highly decreasing the employee commitment, increase the emotional exhaustion and perceived stress. Despite that many researchers examined the expecting power of toxic work environment on employee engagement, emotional exhaustion and perceived stress, this study attempts to analyze these concepts related with toxic work environment by using all of these concepts of employee commitment, increase the emotional exhaustion and perceived stress. Moreover, the toxic work environment concept is not analyzed totally only but the three elements of toxic work environment are also tested to determine more confidential results for the predicted effect of toxic work environment. So, a comprehensive model which consists of toxic work environment and its three elements are constructed. At this part of the study, the previous studies about the conceptual relationship between toxic work environment, employee engagement, emotional exhaustion, and perceived stress are referred, and the study hypotheses are constructed.

3.1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOXIC WORK ENVIRONMENT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

There are many studies which showed that there is a significant negative relationship between toxic work environment and employee engagement. (Kaliannan & Adjovu, 2015; Tanwar & Kumar, 2019). In addition, various researchers mentioned that hostility, aggression, and violence are real anomaly in the work environment (Roldán et al., 2013; Spector et al., 2014; Park et al., 2015). The current quick growth, very stressful environment, lack of compassion and the

personal problems are the reasons of frequent violence, aggression, and anger in work environment.

Work environment which suffers from mistreatment, stress and discriminatory interpersonal interaction will cause high damaged to the ethics and morals of employees when reach to the boiling point (Wressell et al., 2018). Moreover, these negative emotional behaviors damage many aspects in the organizational well-being and result in employee disengagement, emotional exhaustion, and inefficiency.

Bakker and Albrecht (2018) mentioned that employee engagement helps to promote the organizational survive, helps to increase the growth and development of organization, adds value to the human capital, create self-guided employee, adds a valuable value to the organization and contributive feeling. Das and Mishra (2014) clarified the employee engagement can be categorized into two types namely, job engagement and organizational engagement. Job engagement contributes in the commitment of employee who deals directly with commitment and work performance and at the end it contributes in the organizational development. The organizational commitment is directly associated with employee loyalty and employee commitment. Studes and research showed that the toxic work environment effects on the individual engagement, enthusiastic features and job satisfaction for work are negative and similarly the employee engagement and organizational engagement are negatively influenced (Arnetz et al., 2018). As well as Conservation of Resources (CoR) theory provides that the employees are negatively engaged with toxic work environment. Thus, employee engagement construction is expressively related with toxic work environment, and this leads us to assume the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a negative relationship between toxic work environment and employee engagement.

3.2. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOXIC WORK ENVIRONMENT AND EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION

The status of labor economy is characterized by the growth of employment instability. The instability of labor relationships directly effects the spread of toxic environment which have negative impacts on the social, psychological, and physical well-being of employees and the

work productivity. Many studies showed that toxic work environment has negative impact on employees and increase their level of stress because of unrealistic expectations imposed on them and have devastating effects on their psychical and psychological well-being. For instance, it is found that employers in North America spend billions of dollars in order to detect the negative effects of toxic work environment and toxic leaders on employees (Appelbaum & Roy-Girard, 2007).

The management is seen differently by employees where it is identified that there is a positive relationship between specific perception of employee and their decision to leave the job (Akca, 2017). Some employees consider the toxic leaders as heroes (Bell, 2017). Toxic employees, leaders and managers are characterized by many features which is called the "Dark Triad": Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism (Jonason, Slomski & Partyka, 2012). It must be mentioned that similar persons are always hold leadership positions and reach to their carrier quickly despite that the result of recent studies clarify the effect of psychopathic featured of managers on well-being of employees and their attitude towards the job (Mathieu et al., 2014).

Based on the systematic approach, the authors suppose that the workplace toxicity is determined by the existence of a set of elements (organizational toxins) in it including toxic practices for the management of employees, toxic management, toxic leaders, toxic workplace, toxic individual who constitute together the toxic culture of the organization (Fedorova & Menshikova, 2013). It is normal to assume that these factors present in many combinations. Toxic environment is considered dangerous to both the stability of the organization and persons work inside it where it manifests itself in toxic practices to the management of employee affairs. The unfavorable organizational environment is characterized by an atmosphere full of threats where the verbal threats, rumors, gossip, and insults thrive.

It is assumed that employees who work in toxic environment are more likely to suffer from many negative issues such as burnout comparing with employees who work in environment with constructive management. The burnout syndrome is a status which result from exposing to stress factors for a long time in the work environment.

Various researchers clarified that the emotional exhaustion is considered a first step of the burnout syndrome (Gaines & Jermier, 1983; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). The emotional

exhaustion indicates the lack of energy and feel that the emotional resources of individual have been used up due to the high psychological desires (Maslach, 1993). In addition, according to Gaines and Jermier (1983), the emotional exhaustion is related with decreasing the emotional resources and consists of feeling by frustration, fatigue and being used. Most of the common methods clarified that burnout of employee is characterized by exhaustion, reduction of job satisfaction and depersonalization (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1997). Moreover, the burnout symptoms consist of decreasing the motivation towards job, repeated conflicts, negative attitude towards job, irritation, boredom, fatigue, and burnout. There is no doubt that the development of burnout syndrome is associated with many internal and external factors (Embriaco et al., 2007). It is proven that burnout is affected by many personal, organizational, and professional factors. The most studies are what called the organizational factors that include the weak organizational work, disruptions in the communication and planning systems, bureaucracy, increase the personal responsibilities about the work results, the negative social and psychological climate of the team, the work details (for instance, the extreme work conditions), customers (incurable patients and people with mental diseases) which are described in literature studies (Koropets, Fedorova & Dvorakova, 2020).

It is found that burnout does not depend on the experience and age of persons where it is usually found with persons work with people such as salespeople, medical workers, and teachers. It is noticed that people have different degrees of burnout depending on their personal features, perception, and experience to the circumstances of activity and disorientation in personality (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, (1997). Nevertheless, there is no current acceptable general list for these personal features which can be used in the stage of employee selection.

Factors which increase the resistance of individual to burnout have been extensively studied and in most of these studies, it is found that the positive emotions and support from family, close friends in addition to have a hoppy and enough correctly organized free time decrease the probability of burnout syndrome development (Vodopyanova, 2009). Since the toxic management increases the level of stress associates with work, its presence in the organization contributes to develop the burnout syndrome at employees by disrupting the balance between life and work by creating negative emotions that result in the inability to renew the physical and psychological features. The aim of this section is to study the organizational toxin which

employee is regularly exposed and identify the elements of toxic environment which led to the development of emotional exhaustion at employee and can be hypothesized as follows:

H2: There is a positive relationship between toxic work environment and emotional exhaustion.

3.3. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOXIC WORK ENVIRONMENT AND PERCEIVED STRESS

It is found that there is a positive relationship between toxic work environment and perceived stress. Stress between employees is increased because of the occupational stress (Pinar et al., 2017; Friis, 2019; Gibbs et al., 2019). Stress in work environment is a status faced by individual in workplace where they face demands to fulfill that cannot be perceived and therefore the success is far. Consequently, this effects negatively on the balance of their minds. The worker stress is addressed by this condition. The valence in work environment is one of the reasons for workplace stress. The workplace stress is highly increased by the toxic work environment between employees and negatively effects the sustainable organizational performance. In addition, stress in work environment effects negatively on the personality disorder between employees. Furthermore, the decision-making ability of employee is negatively associated with workplace stress that is unfavorable to the organization because of high absenteeism, high turnover, low performance, and high economic expenses (Pinheiro, Ivandic & Razzouk, 2017; Kitila, 2018). The life quality of employees is negatively affected by the occupational stress and toxic work environment (Jay & Andersen, 2018). Frank and Dingle mentioned that the occupational stress motivates the suicide attempts (Evans-Lacko & Knapp, 2018).

The occupational stress and toxic work environment not only decrease the productivity of workers and the whole organizational performance by they also effect on the professional behavior (Maharaj, Lees & Lal, 2019). Laguna and Mielniczuk (2017) stated that employees who expose to high work pressures suffer from many mental diseases and tend to isolation, aggression, and anxiety. Moreover, the occupational stress and pressure associate with work intervene the relationship between job productivity and toxic workplace (Nikolić & Višnjić, 2020).

The toxic work environment threatens by failure to fulfill the needs of employees, demands of psychological resources of employees decrease the ability of employee to achieve his goal and

decrease the social unity between colleagues (Kwan et al., 2018; Yang, & Treadway, 2018). It is found that toxic work environment contributes to workplace stress, increase blood pressure and anxiety between employees (Ghosh, Jacobs & Reio 2011). The low level of toxicity decreases the work environment stress and high level of toxicity in work environment increase the work environment stress and this relationship is confirmed by the ILO and the practical studies (Gardner et al., 2016). Based on the above literature, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: There is a positive relationship between toxic work environment and perceived stress.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. SAMPLING PROCEDURE

At this study, a convenience sampling method has been used to select the participants of this study and most of these participants are employees in Ministry of Health in Iraq. All the participants are Iraqi employees without any foreigners. There are no special criteria were used to selected except their job sector. A large sample of questionnaires has been published on online by using a Google form to reach the study participants. As a result, 155 questionnaires have been received and these questionnaires are used in the analysis operation of the practical data.

4.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is quantitative study where the practical data were gathered from a sample of employees work in health care environment in Iraq in both public and private health care environments by using a questionnaire and the items of this questionnaire will be adopted from previous research.

4.3. RESEARCH VARIABLES

This study includes four variables one of which is independent variable, and the others are dependent variables. The independent variable is the toxic work environment, and the three dependent variables are the employee engagement, emotional exhaustion, and perceived stress.

4.4. THE RESEARCH MODEL

The research model of the study has been developed based on the literature which have been mentioned before. The study model is shown in Figure 4.1. It includes one independent variable which is Toxic work environment and three dependent variables which are employee engagement, emotional exhaustion, and perceived stress.

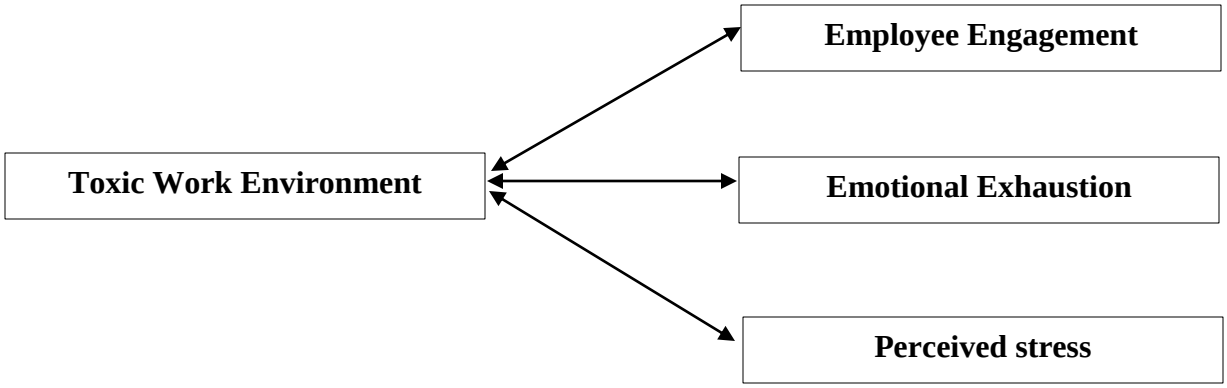

Figure 4.1: The research model

4.5. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Based on the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses are analyzed:

H1: There is a negative relationship between toxic work environment and employee engagement.

H2: There is a positive relationship between toxic work environment and emotional exhaustion.

H3: There is a positive relationship between toxic work environment and perceived stress.

4.6. MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS

The current study is based on the quantitative approach. The data collection method is based on survey. The study includes four variables one of which is independent variable which is toxic work environment and three dependent variables which are employee engagement, emotional exhaustion and perceive stress. The questionnaire of this study includes five parts. The first one is the demographic information. The second one is the toxic work environment section which aims to measure the toxic workplace environment elements based on Khan (2017) and includes 10 items. The third section is the employee engagement section which aims to measure the elements of employee engagement based on Rasool et al. (2021) and includes 4 items. The fourth section is the emotional exhaustion section which aims to measure the emotional exhaustion of employees based on Maslach and Jackson (1981) and includes 8 items. The fifth section is the perceived stress section and aims to measure the elements that cause occupational stress based on House and Rizzo (1972) and includes 10 items. This study employed the Five-Likert scale (1: strongly agree, 2: agree, 3: neither agree nor disagree, 4: disagree, and 5: strongly disagree).

4.6.1. Socio-Demographic Questions

The demographic section is the first section of the questionnaire and includes the demographic information to the respondents of the study and this information include gender, working experience, position and education as shown in Appendix A.

4.6.2. Toxic Work Environment Questionnaire

The toxic work environment is the second section of this study and includes ten items aims to measure the elements of the toxic work environment and the total of these items constitute the independent variable of the study as shown in Appendix A.

4.6.3. Employee Engagement Questionnaire

The employee engagement is the third section of the questionnaire and includes four items and the total of these items constitute the first dependent variable of the study as shown in Appendix A.

4.6.4. Emotional Exhaustion Questionnaire

The emotional exhaustion is the fourth part of the questionnaire and includes eight items and the total of these items constitute the second dependent variable of the study as shown in Appendix A.

4.6.5. Perceived Stress Questionnaire

The perceived stress is the fifth part of the questionnaire and includes ten items and the total of these items constitute the third dependent variable of the study as shown in Appendix A.

4.7. DATA ANALYSES

For data analysis, the Statistical Program of Social Science (SPSS 23) has been used. Many statistical methods were used to analyze the study data. The reliability, factor, correlation, difference test, one sample t-test and ANOVA test analyses were conducted to analyze the data of the study.

5. RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1. RESPONDENT'S PROFILE

The first stage of the analysis includes the profiles of the respondents where the results are illustrated in Table 5.1. the study results clarified that 60.6% of the respondents are male and 39.4% of them are female. The largest percentage of the respondents (51%) have work experience between 5-10 years followed by the respondents with work experience above 15 years and their percentage are (25.2%) and 23.9% of them have work experience between 5-10 years. In terms of work position, it can be seen that the largest percentage of the respondents work in administrative staff and their percentage is 36.8% followed by the respondents who work in middle manager with percentage of 35.5% and the rest of the participants work in senior manager and their percentage is 27.7%. In terms of education, it can be seen that the largest percentage of the respondents are with post-graduate degree and their percentage is (58.7%) followed by the respondents with undergraduate degree with percentage of (28.4%) and the rest of them have other degree with percentage of (12.9%).

Table 5.1: The profile of the respondents.

	N	**Percentage%**
Gender		
Male	94	60.6%
Female	61	39.4%
Working experience		
5–10 years	79	51%
10–15 years	37	23.9%
Above 15 years	39	25.2%
Positions		
Senior manager	43	27.7%
Middle manager	55	35.5%
Administrative staff	57	36.8%
Education		

Table 5.1: The profile of the respondents "tables continued".

Post-graduate	91	58.7%
Undergraduate	44	28.4%
Others	20	12.9%

5.2. RELIABILITY OF MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS

At this study, the Cronbach alpha value has been used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. The internal consistency of the variables was evaluated, and the reliability scores have been found above than 0.7 as illustrated in Table 5.2. This result clarifies that the interrelation between the items of the questionnaire is high.

Table 5.2: Reliability analysis of the study variables.

Concepts	**Cronbach's Alpha**
Toxic work environment	0.934
Employee engagement	0.725
Emotional exhaustion	0.718
Perceived Stress	0.747

5.3. FACTOR ANALYSES

The factor analysis measurement has been performed to determine the high level of interrelation between the variables of the study (Hair et al., 2006). The main goal from the analysis of this measurement is to see the number of dimensions the participants perceive and determine whether they are parallel with the literature or not. Before conducting the test on each factor, the sample adequacy measure is conducted to determine whether the data of study are suitable to apply the factor analysis or not (Sipahi et al., 2006). The Keiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericit have been used to represent these data. The purpose of KMO is to show if the practical data that used in the analysis is homogenous and include correlation between the variables of the study.

The lower level of KMO can be defined to be 0.5. Bartlett's test shows the statistical importance that there are important correlations between some variables of the study (Hair et al, 2006).

5.3.1. Toxic Work Environment

The total number of items included in the toxic work environment factor are 10 items. After the factor analysis, it is found that this result is parallel with the theoretical framework. None of the items have been extracted from the study. Table 5.3 shows the internal consistencies and explain the variance of the factor. It is found that the internal consistency of the toxic work environment factor is 0.934 which is considered accepted value and high enough to continue with further analyses. Also, it is found that the uni-factor for toxic work environment factor is 62.831 from the total variance.

Table 5.3: The results of factor reliability analyses of toxic work environment.

Toxic Work Environment		%Var: 62.831	Cronbach's Alpha: 0.934	Factor Loadings
10	Others at work did not invite or ask you if you want anything when they went out in a coffee break.			0.933
3	Your greeting has gone unanswered at work.			0.929
4	You unhappily sat alone in a crowded lunchroom in the work.			0.928
1	Others ignored you in the work			0.927
5	Others avoided you in the work.			0.926
7	Others in the work shut you out of the conversations.			0.926
9	Others in the work treated you as if you weren't there.			0.926
2	Others leave the area when you enter.			0.924
6	You notice that others would not look at you in the work.			0.924
8	Others refused to talk to you at work.			0.924

Table 5.4 shows the factor analysis results and it is shown that the results of factor analysis are satisfactory with 94%, KMO and significant Barlett's Test value.

Table 5.4: KMO and Barlett's test for toxic work environment.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy	0.940
Barlett's Test of Sphericity	
Chi-square	1004.698
Sig.	0.000
df.	44

5.3.2. Employee Engagement

Employee engagement factor includes four items. After the factor analysis, it is found that this result is parallel with the theoretical framework. None of the items were extracted in this factor. Table 5.5 clarifies that the findings of the factor loadings explain the variance of the factor and the internal consistency are illustrated. It is found that the internal consistency is 0.725 which has been accepted as adequately acceptable to continue with more analyses. The uni-factor is clarified as 54.891% of the total variance in employee engagement factor. Table 5.6 clarifies that the findings of factor analysis are satisfactory with 72.8%, KMO and significant Barlett's Test value.

Table 5.5: The results of factor reliability analyses of employee engagement.

Employee Engagement		%Var: 54.891	Cronbach's Alpha: 0.725	Factor Loadings
11	You really throw myself into my job and organization engagement.			0.733
13	You willingly give my time to help others who have work-related problems.			0.676
14	You always complete the duties specified in my job description.			0.617
12	You fulfil all responsibilities required by my job.			0.608

Table 5.6: KMO and Barlett's test for employee engagement

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy	0.728
Barlett's Test of Sphericity	
Chi-square	125.439
Sig.	0.000
df.	6

5.3.3. Emotional Exhaustion

The total number of items in the emotional exhaustion factor are 8 items. After the factor analysis, it is found that this result is parallel with the theoretical framework. No item has been extracted from the study. Table 5.7 clarifies that the results of factor loadings, explain the variance of the factor and internal consistencies are illustrated. It is found that the internal consistency is 0.718 which is accepted and highly enough to continue with more analyses. The uni-factor is explained 33.95% of the whole variance in emotional exhaustion factor.

Table 5.7: The results of factor reliability analyses of emotional exhaustion.

Emotional Exhaustion		%Var: 33.95	Cronbach's Alpha: 0.718	Factor Loadings
21	You can manage the amount of my work well.			0.709
19	After working, you have enough energy for my leisure activities.			0.705
15	There are days when you feel tired before you arrive at work.			0.7
22	When you work, you feel energized.			0.693
17	You can tolerate the pressure of my work very well.			0.692
20	After my work, you feel worn out and weary.			0.677
16	After work, you tend to need more time than in the past in order to relax and feel better.			0.674
18	During my work, you feel emotionally drained.			0.664

Table 5.8 shows that the results of factor analysis are satisfactory with 74.9%, KMO and significant Barlett's Test value.

Table 5.8: KMO and Barlett's test for emotional exhaustion.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy	0.749
Barlett's Test of Sphericity	
Chi-square	246.737
Sig.	0.000
df.	28

5.3.4. Perceived Stress

The perceived stress factor includes 10 items in of the factor analysis of perceived stress. After the factor analysis, it is found that this result is parallel with the theoretical framework. None of the items were extracted from the study. As clarified in Table 5.9, the item loadings results explained variance of the factor and internal consistency are shown. It is found that the internal consistency is 0.747 and this value is considered adequately accepted to perform further analyses.

Table 5.9: The results of factor reliability analyses of Perceived Stress.

Perceived Stress		%Var: 31.402	Cronbach's Alpha: 0.747	Factor Loadings
30	You have felt that you are on the top of things.			0.748
26	You have felt confident about your capability to handle the personal problems.			0.739
27	You have felt that things were going my way.			0.735
29	You have been able to control irritations in my life.			0.735
28	You have found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do.			0.729
23	You have been upset due to something which happened suddenly.			0.728
31	You have been frustrated due to things which were outside my control.			0.718
24	You have felt that you are unable to control the significant issues in your life.			0.714
25	You have felt nervous and stressed.			0.713
32	You have faced problems piling very high which you cannot not overcome them.			0.697

According to the results that are presented in Table 5.10, the results of factor analysis are satisfactory with 70.4%, KMO and significant Barlett's Test value.

Table 5.10: KMO and Barlett's test for Perceived Stress

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy	0.704
Barlett's Test of Sphericity	
Chi-square	374.797
Sig.	0.000
df.	45

5.4. MEAN VALUES AND CORRELATION ANALYSIS

5.4.1. Mean Values

The mean values to the whole main variables are assessed to detect out how they are perceived and desired by the employees in Iraqi Ministry of Health in different positions at the managerial and non-managerial positions. Based on the mean values of the analysis for all of the four variables of this study, it can be seen from Table 5.11 that the toxic work environment variable (mean= 3.12) came into prominence, and it is the highest value between the means value of the rest of the study items.

Table 5.11: Mean values of toxic work environment, employee engagement, emotional exhaustion, and perceived stress

Concept	Mean values
Toxic work environment	3.12
Employee engagement	2.13
Emotional exhaustion	2.26
Perceived stress	2.44

5.4.2. Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis has applied in this study to find out the relationship between the variables of study. The correlation analysis is used to measure the association between two variables. The direction and strength of the relationship between the variables can be examined too by conducting the correlation analysis. Table 5.12 shows the results of correlation analysis of the present study.

Table 5.12: Correlation Analysis for all variables

		Toxic work environment	Employee engagement	Emotional exhaustion	Perceived stress
Toxic work environment	Pearson correlation	1	0.003	0.430**	0.507**
	Sig. (2-tailed		0.967	0.000	0.000
	N	155	155	155	155
Employee engagement	Pearson correlation	0.003	1	0.161*	0.21
	Sig. (2-tailed	0.967		0.045	0.797
	N	155	155	155	155
Emotional exhaustion	Pearson correlation	0.430**	0.161*	1	0.610**
	Sig. (2-tailed	0.000	0.445		0.000
	N	155	155	155	155
Perceived stress	Pearson correlation	0.507**	0.21	0.610**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed	0.000	0.797	0.000	
	N	155	155	155	155

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 5.12 shows the correlation analysis to all values of the study. Toxic work environment is not significantly correlated with employee engagement. Thus, H1 is rejected. Toxic work environment is significantly correlated with emotional exhaustion and perceived stress at r= 0.430 and r=0.507 respectively. There is a weak and positive correlation between toxic work environment and emotional exhaustion. Besides, there is moderate and positive correlation between toxic work environment and perceived work stress. Thus, H2 and H3 are supported.

5.5. INDEPENDENT SAMPLE T-TEST ANALYSIS RESULTS

At this stage of the study, association between gender and the main variables of the study was performed by conducting the independent sample t-test. This test clarifies whether gender creates any difference between the main concepts of the research. The gender variable has been divided into two groups male and female and the result of this analysis is shown in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13: Independent Samples T-Test Results – Gender.

		N	Mean	Std Dev.	t value	p value
Toxic work environment	Female	94	2.95	0.979	-0.2658	0.428
	Male	61	3.39	1.023		
Employee engagement	Female	94	2.11	0.567	-0.526	0.062
	Male	61	2.16	0.727		
Emotional exhaustion	Female	94	2.24	0.519	-0.596	0.1.653
	Male	61	2.29	0.450		
Perceived stress	Female	94	2.36	0.510	-0.2.186	0.078
	Male	61	2.55	0.532		

The independent sample t-test result in table 5.13 showed in terms of employee engagement, emotional exhaustion, and perceived stress; there is no significant difference on gender.

5.6. ANOVA ANALYSIS RESULTS

To investigate if the employee engagement, emotional exhaustion and perceived stress differ in terms of work experience, position and education, ANOVA test has been applied.

ANOVA test analysis results was conducted to compare the effect of work experience on employee engagement, emotional exhaustion and perceived stress as shown in Table 5.14, Table 5.15, and Table 5.16 respectively. Work experience of participants is divided into three groups (Group 1: 5-10 years, Group 2: 11-15 years and Group 3: Above 15 years).

Table 5.14: ANOVA Test Results – employee engagement and work experience.

Work experience groups	Mean	Std. deviation	Lavern's statistic	Sig.	F	Sig.
5-10 years	2.13	0.616	0.477	0.622	0.693	0.502
11-15 years	2.22	0.641				
Above 15 years	2.04	0.666				

Group differences				
Work experience groups		Mean differences	Std. Error	Sig.
5-10 years	11-15 years	-0.083	0.126	0.881
	Above 15 years	0.088	0.127	0.866
11-15 years	5-10 years	0.83	0.126	0.881
	Above 15 years	0.171	0.150	0.586
Above 15 years	5-10 years	-0.88	0.127	0.866
	11-15 years	-0.171	0.150	0.586

The ANOVA test results in table 5.14 show that no significant ($F=0.693$, $p>0.001$) differences were identified between employees who have work experience from 5-10 years, 11-15 years and above 15 years in terms of employee engagement. In order to analyze individual differences between the groups, post-hoc comparisons have been evaluated by the use of Dunnett's T3. There is no significant difference of work experience groups in terms of employee engagement.

Table 5.15: ANOVA Test Results –emotional exhaustion and work experience.

Work experience groups	Mean	Std. deviation	Lavern's statistic	Sig.	F	Sig.
5-10 years	2.27	0.473	0.411	0.664	0.006	0.994
11-15 years	2.26	0.501				
Above 15 years	2.26	0.534				

Group differences				
Work experience groups		Mean differences	Std. Error	Sig.
5-10 years	11-15 years	-0.011	0.098	0.999

Table 5.15: ANOVA Test Results –emotional exhaustion and work experience "tables continued".

	Above 15 years	0.005	0.101	1
11-15 years	5-10 years	-0.11	0.098	0.999
	Above 15 years	-0.006	0.119	1
Above 15 years	5-10 years	-0.005	0.101	1
	11-15 years	0.006	0.119	1

Table 5.15 clarifies the ANOVA test results between work experience groups and emotional exhaustion, and it is shown that no significant (F=0.006, p>0.001) differences were identified between employees who have work experience from 5-10 years, 11-15 years and above 15 years in terms of emotional exhaustion. Post-hoc comparisons have been evaluated by using Dennett's T3 to check the individual differences between the groups. It is shown that the mean differences between all of the groups are not significant at 0.05.

Table 5.16: ANOVA Test Results –perceived stress and work experience.

Work experience groups	Mean	Std. deviation	Lavern's statistic	Sig.	F	Sig.
5-10 years	2.44	0.543	0.022	0.978	0.079	0.924
11-15 years	2.45	0.529				
Above 15 years	2.41	0.494				

Group differences				
Work experience groups		Mean differences	Std. Error	Sig.
5-10 years	11-15 years	-0.008	0.106	1
	Above 15 years	0.035	0.1	0.979
11-15 years	5-10 years	-0.008	0.106	1
	Above 15 years	-0.044	0.118	0.976
Above 15 years	5-10 years	-0.035	0.1	0.979
	11-15 years	0.044	0.118	0.976

Table 5.16 clarifies ANOVA test results between work experience and perceived stress, and it is clarified that no significant (F=0.079, p>0.001) differences between employees who have work experience from 5-10 years, 11-15 years and above 15 years in terms of perceived stress. In order

to check the individual differences, the post-hoc comparisons have been assessed by the use of Dennett's T3 to examine the individual differences between groups. It is shown that the mean differences between all of the groups are not significant at 0.05.

Another ANOVA test analysis was conducted to compare the effect of education on the three dependent variables of the study employee engagement, emotional exhaustion and perceived stress and the results are shown in Table 5.17, Table 5.18, and Table 5.19 respectively. The education variable is divided into three groups (Group 1: Post-graduate, Group 2: Undergraduate and Group 3: Others).

Table 5.17: ANOVA Test Results – employee engagement and education.

Education	Mean	Std. deviation	Lavern's statistic	Sig.	F	Sig.
Post-graduate	2.14	0.648	0.107	0.899	0.236	0.790
Undergraduate	2.09	0.633				
Others	2.2	0.588				

Group differences				
Education		Mean differences	Std. Error	Sig.
Post-graduate	Undergraduate	0.052	0.117	0.959
	Others	-0.063	0.148	0.964
Undergraduate	Post-graduate	-0.052	0.117	0.959
	Others	-0.115	0.163	0.859
Others	Post-graduate	-0.063	0.148	0.964
	Undergraduate	0.115	0.163	0.859

Table 5.17 clarifies the ANOVA test results between employee engagement and education. The results show that no significant ($F=0.236$, $p>0.001$) differences were identified between employees who have post-graduate, undergraduate and other degree in terms of employee engagement. Post-hoc comparisons have been assessed by using of Dennett's T3. It is shown that the mean differences to all of the groups were not significant at the 0.05. The education groups do not show any significant differences.

Table 5.18: ANOVA Test Results – emotional exhaustion and education.

Education	Mean	Std. deviation	Lavern's statistic	Sig.	F	Sig.
Post-graduate	2.3	0.475	1.588	0.208	1.679	0.190
Undergraduate	2.15	0.480				
Others	2.34	0.574				
Group differences						
Education		Mean differences	Std. Error	Sig.		
Post-graduate	Undergraduate	0.152	0.088	0.240		
	Others	-0.035	0.138	0.991		
Undergraduate	Post-graduate	-0.152	0.088	0.240		
	Others	-0.187	0.147	0.506		
Others	Post-graduate	0.035	0.138	0.991		
	Undergraduate	0.187	0.147	0.506		

Table 5.18 clarifies the ANOVA test results between education and emotional exhaustion. It is shown that no significant ($F=1.679$, $p>0.001$) differences were identified between employees who have post-graduate, undergraduate and other degree in terms of emotional exhaustion. Post-hoc comparisons have been evaluated by using Dennett's T3 to check the individual differences between the groups. The mean differences between all of the groups were not significant at the 0.05. As well as the results did not show any significant differences between the education groups.

Table 5.19: ANOVA Test Results – perceived stress and education.

Education	Mean	Std. deviation	Lavern's statistic	Sig.	F	Sig.
Post-graduate	2.4	0.494	2.364	0.098	1.290	0.278
Undergraduate	2.43	0.619				
Others	2.62	0.093				
Group differences						
Education		Mean differences	Std. Error	Sig.		
Post-graduate	Undergraduate	-0.22	0.107	0.996		

Table 5.19: ANOVA Test Results – perceived stress and education "tables continued".

	Others	-0.207	0.107	0.170
Undergraduate	Post-graduate	0.022	0.107	0.996
	Others	-0.185	0.132	0.417
Others	Post-graduate	0.207	0.107	0.170
	Undergraduate	0.185	0.132	0.417

Table 5.19 clarifies the ANOVA test results between education groups and perceived stress, and it is shown that no significant ($F=1.290$, $p>0.001$) differences were identified between employees who have post-graduate, undergraduate and other degree in terms of perceived stress. Post-hoc comparisons have been evaluated by using Dennett's T3 to check the individual differences between the groups. The mean differences between all the groups were not significant at the 0.05. Also, the results did not show any significant differences between the education groups.

Another ANOVA test analysis was conducted for the effect of position on employee engagement, emotional exhaustion and perceived stress as shown in Table 5.20, Table 5.21, and Table 5.22 respectively. Position of participants is divided into three groups (Group 1: Senior manager, Group 2: Middle manager and Group 3: Administrative staff).

Table 5.20: ANOVA Test Results – employee engagement and position.

Position	Mean	Std. deviation	Lavern's statistic	Sig.	F	Sig.
Senior manager	2.22	0.844	5.133	0.007	0.997	0.371
Middle manager	2.15	0.638				
Administrative staff	2.04	0.404				

Group differences				
Position groups		Mean differences	Std. Error	Sig.
Senior manager	Middle manager	0.071	0.155	0.956
	Administrative staff	0.177	0.139	0.501
Middle manager	Senior manager	-0.071	0.155	0.956
	Administrative staff	0.106	0.101	0.650
Administrative staff	Senior manager	-0.177	0.139	0.501
	Middle manager	-0.106	0.101	0.650

Table 5.20 shows the ANOVA test results between employee engagement and position. The results show that no significant (F=0.997, p>0.001) differences were identified between senior manager, middle manager, and administrative staff in terms of employee engagement. Post-hoc comparisons have been evaluated using Dennett's T3. It is shown that the mean differences to all the groups were not significant at the 0.05. The education groups do not show any significant differences.

Table 5.21: ANOVA Test Results – emotional exhaustion and position.

Position groups	Mean	Std. deviation	Lavern's statistic	Sig.	F	Sig.
Senior manager	2.22	0.488	0.025	0.976	0.762	0.469
Middle manager	2.33	0.496				
Administrative staff	2.26	0.495				
Group differences						
Work experience groups		Mean differences		Std. Error		Sig.
Senior manager	Middle manager	-0.106		0.100		0.644
	Administrative staff	-0.006		0.099		1
Middle manager	Senior manager	0.106		0.1		0.644
	Administrative staff	0.099		0.094		0.642
Administrative staff	Senior manager	0.006		0.099		1
	Middle manager	-0.099		0.094		0.642

Table 5.21 clarifies the ANOVA test results between position groups and emotional exhaustion, and it is shown that no significant (F=0.762, p>0.001) differences were identified between senior manager, middle manager, and administrative staff in terms of emotional exhaustion. Post-hoc comparisons have been assessed using Dennett's T3 to check the individual differences between the groups. The mean differences between all the groups were not significant at the 0.05. Furthermore, the results did not show any significant differences between the position groups.

Table 5.22: ANOVA Test Results – perceived stress and position.

Position groups	Mean	Std. deviation	Lavern's statistic	Sig.	F	Sig.
Senior manager	2.37	0.546	0.236	0.790	0.620	0.539
Middle manager	2.49	0.531				
Administrative staff	2.43	0.507				
Group differences						
Work experience groups		Mean differences		Std. Error		Sig.
Senior manager	Middle manager	-0.118		0.110		0.630
	Administrative staff	-0.054		0.107		0.943
Middle manager	Senior manager	0.118		0.110		0.630
	Administrative staff	0.065		0.098		0.882
Administrative staff	Senior manager	0.054		0.107		0.943
	Middle manager	-0.065		0.098		0.882

Table 5.22 clarifies the ANOVA test results between position groups and perceived stress, and it is shown that no significant differences were identified between senior manager, middle manager, and administrative staff in terms of perceived stress. Post-hoc comparisons have been evaluated using Dennett's T3 to check the individual differences between the groups. The mean differences between all the groups were not significant at the 0.05. Also, the results did not show any significant differences between the position groups.

6. DISCUSSION

The topic of toxic work environment and employee engagement have attracted and motivated of various scholars. However, similar types of studies have been performed in developed countries. As far as known that this study is the first of its type in Iraq and no studies at this topic were conducted at that country previously. The study addressed many gaps in the literature about toxic work environment. The first of these gaps is that a measurement has been created to evaluate the feelings of employees that their work environment is toxic, and this issue has not been implemented previously. The measurement did not include only the response of the respondent that my environment is toxic but also included the other features to the toxicity phenomenon in work environment such as whether there is continuity in problems effected negatively. The use of this measurement in future research will be beneficial to conduct further research about reliability and validity. Particularly, it will be remarkable to manage the toxicity measurement in different points of survey than the open interview because their think that their work environment is toxic or not.

This can be achieved by obtaining the open element immediately after the toxicity measurement in this study, the responses of some participants for their work environment have affected by the previous questions and lead to higher compatibility between the measurement and descriptions of the respondents. The measurement of toxicity in the current study helped to fix a second gap in the literature which is the creation of experimental relationship between perceiving toxic work environment and wellbeing on the individual level. Also, this study helped to fix the gap in literature associate with the necessity to explore the contribution of culture in toxicity at work environment practically.

Above all, the goal of this study is to explore the toxicity in work environment and its effect on employee engagement, emotional exhaustion, and perceived stress. The results provided evidence on different factors in work environment involved in toxicity which refer to the support to have a vision about this phenomenon. So far, only few research suggested high level frameworks to calculate the different effects on toxicity. Padilla et al. (2007) suggested the toxic triangle where the destructive leadership is perceived as a function for factors in three directions: the destructive leaders themselves, vulnerable followers, and conductive environments.

In addition, Walton (2008) suggested a framework to understand the toxicity through three dimensions: the behavior of executive managers, the organization context (such as its culture and climate) and the external environment of the organization. Despite that these frameworks capture the contributions of significant persons in toxicity and recognize their complex dynamicity, it is focused on the leader which means it focuses eventually on how to allow the harmful behavior and the effects of leaders. The findings of the current study refer that toxic work environment significantly effects the emotional exhaustion and perceived stress with less influence on employee engagement.

The first hypothesis of the study deals with the negative relationship between toxic work environment and employee engagement and the results showed that there is no relationship between toxic work environment and employee engagement based on the correlation results of the study. The engaged employee oversees achieving his personal objectives and motivate the coworkers to achieve their objectives towards accomplishing success for the organizations. Kahn (1990) mentioned that there are three physical elements help the employee to be engaged with the work environment and these elements are availability, safety, and meaningfulness. The result of the study is not parallel with the results obtained by Rasool et al. (2021) that showed that there is direct negative relationship between toxic work environment and employee engagement in addition to many researchers including (Wu, Wei, & Hui, 2011; Kurtessis, 2017) who clarified that there is direct negative relationship between toxic work environment and employee engagement. Likewise, the study results of Rasool, Maqbool (2019) implemented in Chinese banking sector confirmed that toxic work environment negatively effects the employee engagement and decreases the productivity of employees.

The second hypothesis of the study is the relationship between toxic work environment and emotional exhaustion. The emotional exhaustion is considered as one of the critical constructs to explain the behavior and attitude of employees in various and different organizations especially in high-stress work environments (Babakus et al., 1999; Babin & Boles, 1996). It is considered a type of stress and frequently occurs between individuals who perform some works for people. Research of emotional exhaustion focus because it high occurs in human services environments. Vallen (1993) performed a study and showed that there is a strong relationship between organizational climate and emotional exhaustion.

Babakus et al. (1999) stated that employee who lacks the emotional energy is less satisfied with his jobs. Many studies (Stechmiller & Yarandi, 1993; Thomsen et al., 1999; Burish, 2002; Kalliath & Morris, 2002) have found that there is a relationship between burnout or emotional exhaustion and employee satisfaction and the results of all of these studies are parallel with the results of the study. Thus, emotional exhaustion is strongly associated with job satisfaction (Kalliath & Morrish, 2002). In addition, conversation of resource theory mention that dissatisfied employees with their job's present lower effective commitment with the organization and have higher intention to leave their job when they feel by emotional exhaustion.

The third hypothesis of the study is the relationship between toxic work environment and perceived stress. As clarified before that many studied indicated that there is a positive relationship between toxic work environment and perceived stress (Pinar et al., 2017; Friis, 2019; Gibbs et al., 2019). Toxic work environment threatens to fail in meeting the needs of employees and decrease the social unity between them which effect at the end of productivity of those employees (Yang & Treadway, 2018). It can be seen that the results of the study are parallel with the results obtained by (Wang et al., 2020) who found that there is a positive relationship between toxic workplace and workplace stress and also parallel with the study of (Kwan, 2018) who found that high level of toxicity in work environment increase workplace stress and this relationship was confirmed by other studies (e.g. Gardner, 2016; Anderson, & Pulich, 2001; Levin-Epstein, 2002).

6.1. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Organizations must provide psychological, financial and moral support to prevent the emergence of toxic environment and therefore maintain the psychological and mental balance between employees. This type of support provided by organizations to employees help them to maintain the level of productivity which is ultimately is beneficial for organizations in addition to employees. The current study provides many practical implications that may offer some assistance for organizations in Iraq. It can be noticed that toxic work environment is considered a great concern and actually only small attention has paid on this issue. The study provides important findings that toxic work environment will cause emotional exhaustion and perceived stress. By taking into account the managerial implications of our study, we not that directors

must examine carefully the situations when employee reports that they suffer from toxicity in workplace. By separating the actual behavior and its perception, directors can accurately identify the reasons behind workplace toxicity and can develop customized assistance for employees in order to help them cope with it. The study suggests that toxic work environment is a systematic problem and includes dynamic interactions to the work environment conditions. Basically, since organizations are a social system, any solution for toxicity will need to change the behavior of the members in the organization. In general, work colleagues are considered necessary to develop the toxicity not only because they may be the source of problems which may negatively effect on someone but also because they are as a set and considered an integral part on making destructive responses to issue a part of workplace culture. The behavior of employees in workplace which may neglect, permit, or stimulate harmful on workplace circumstances create a culture which perpetuates issues on workers as opposed to help them. The employees who suffer from workplace toxicity are may be the reason in the existence of high hierarchal levels in the organizations where they feel that they are emotionally exhausted and suffer from perceived stress because of toxicity and less importance given to them in meetings and important discussions.

6.2. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In future, similar types of studies can be implemented in another country or in other sectors including information technology, bank, automobile, and construction. So, this can be fixed in future research by conducting more comprehensive examinations of different work environments to fully explore the toxicity of workplace. Moreover, taking samples from different distinctive organizations will allow to evaluate the consistency in the descriptions of toxicity of workplaces. Similar studies must include larger samples than 155 participants which this study used to increase the reliability of the results for further generalizations Also, in the future, researchers may use resource-based view (RBV) or knowledge-based view (KBV) in the present framework. Consequently, researchers would be exploratory towards the relationship between these factors and work environment violence and sustainable organizational performance using job anxiety or job burnout as a mediating variable. It is possible for future research to employ any other methods such as action research to gain a sense about the differences in workplace environments. Taken together, there are many methods of future research about the toxicity of work

environment. From the results of this study, it seems that it may be possible to make progress by accurate examination of individual cases of workplace toxicity and then it is possible to compare the samples. Such curriculums require a comprehensive and widely applicable framework.

6.3. LIMITATIONS

The study has certain limitations. First, the sample size of the study was small. So, larger sample respondents will provide more diversified sample which should be used in order to examine the proposed model in future work to obtain further explanations for the validity of the results. Secondly, all the respondents belong to a single country (Iraq) that may include a cultural bias and limit the generalizability of the conclusion. To make further validation to the results, there is a need to have empirical evidence in other cultural settings. Also, most of the practical data of this study has been collected from doctors, nurses and paramedical staff that may cause a popular method bias. Since there are differences in job to the targeted populations, further studies could focus on employees from different occupational groups.

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Similarly, a large-scale survey was conducted by Rasool, Maqbool [67] that was related to China's banking sector. The results of their study confirmed that a toxic workplace environment has a negative connection with employee engagement, which reduces the individual worker's productivity.

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APPENDIX A

EFFECT OF TOXIC WORK ENVIRONMENT ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT, EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION AND PERCEIVED STRESS

Gender

☐ Male Female ☐

Working experience

☐ 5–10 years

☐ 10–15 years

☐ Above 15 years

Positions

☐ Senior manager

☐ Middle manager

☐ Administrative staff

Education

☐ Post-graduate

☐ Undergraduate

☐ Others

No.	Toxic work environment	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Others ignore you in the work					
2	Others leave the area when you enter.					
3	Your greetings have gone unanswered in the work.					
4	You unhappily sat alone in a crowded lunchroom at work.					
5	Others avoid you in the work.					
6	You noticed others would not look at you in the work.					
7	Others in the work shut you out of the conversations.					
8	Others refuse to talk to you in the work.					
9	Others in the work treat you as if you aren't there.					
10	Others at work did not invite you or ask you if you wanted anything when they went out for a coffee break.					
Employee engagement						
11	You really throw yourself into my job and organization engagement.					
12	You fulfil all responsibilities required by your job.					

13	You willingly give your time to help others who have work-related problems.					
14	You always complete the duties specified in your job description.					
Emotional Exhaustion						
15	There are days when you feel tired before you arrive at work.					
16	After work, you tend to need more time than in the past in order to relax and feel better.					
17	You can tolerate the pressure of your work very well.					
18	During your work, you feel emotionally drained.					
19	After working, you have enough energy for your leisure activities.					
20	After your work, you feel worn out and weary.					
21	You can manage the amount of your work well.					
22	When you work, you feel energized.					
Perceived Stress						
23	You have been upset due to something which happened unexpectedly.					
24	You have felt that you are unable to control the significant issues in your life.					

25	You have felt nervous and stressed.					
26	You have felt confident about the ability to handle your personal issues.					
27	You have felt that things were going your way.					
28	You have found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do.					
29	You are able to control annoyances in your life.					
30	You feel that you were on the top of things.					
31	You have been upset due to things which are outside your control.					
32	You feel by difficulties were piling up so high which you cannot overcome them.					