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### “School Toxic Leadership, Teachers’ Engagement, And Trust in Senior Secondary Schools Education District Vi of Lagos State, Nigeria”

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#### KEY WORDS

#### ABSTRACT

Toxic Leadership,  
Employees’  
Engagement,  
Employee Trust

*School leaders are of particular significance in that they impact teachers’ engagement and trust, and consequently the existence and survival of schools based on the leadership styles they adopt. Thus, this study examined the relationship between school toxic leadership, teachers’ engagement, and trust in Lagos State senior secondary schools Education District VI. Two hypotheses (tested at 0.05 level of significance) were set to serve as guides for the study, in which correlational and descriptive research designs were adopted, its population comprised 20,243 teachers in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State Education District VI. The sample sizes were 300 teachers, and thereafter selected through purposive sampling technique. Analysis was carried out using inferential statistics of Pearsons Correlation Analysis, using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24.0. Findings indicate that a negative and non-significant relationship exists between school toxic leadership and teachers’ engagement in Lagos State senior secondary schools; and also a negative and non-significant relationship existed between school toxic leadership and teachers’ trust in Lagos State senior secondary schools. It is concluded that toxic leadership is present in Lagos State senior secondary schools Education District VI, as evidenced in the study. Therefore, the study recommended that school teachers should be exposed to professional development training and opportunities particularly in leadership before placement for leadership positions, as leadership preparation and training are central to school effectiveness and improvement as this will improve teachers’ engagement in schools.*

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## **Introduction**

In recent years, the world has experienced some disastrous failures of significant organizations, including schools, some of which have caused economic and employee distress. Indeed, there has been a major leadership failure that has resulted in the death of major institutions. The question is whether these failures are the result of deliberate, self-willed transgressions of appropriate leadership practice or simply arrogant, dysfunctional leaders' incompetence. To boost the effectiveness and equity of education, effective school leadership is crucial. Leadership is, therefore, possibly the catalyst for the system's improvement and performance as an entity. The key log to target accomplishment and the deterioration of most secondary schools in most states in Nigeria was responsible for performance leadership.

Different leadership literature indicates that under the toxic leadership phenomenon, there are different activities rather than a mere absence of successful leadership. It is important to explore the dark side of leadership to understand the efficacy and growth of the leadership philosophy (Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007). Bad behaviors have greater effects on the actions of an individual compared to positive behaviors (Einarsen *et al.*, 2007; Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Leaders who indulge in intimidation, manipulation, corruption, lying and coercion of followers often place their self-interest first on the legitimate interest of the organization and demonstrate the negative

side of leadership conduct (Kellerman, 2004). Therefore, all workers and the organization are influenced by the toxic actions of leaders. Researchers have previously highlighted the detrimental effects on workers of the dark side of leadership (Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Naseer, Raja, Syed, Donia, & Darr, 2016), resulting in a decline in work satisfaction (Tepper, 2000; Tepper *et al.*, 2009), and a rise in employee tension (Tepper, 2000), turnover, absenteeism, inefficiency (Tepper, Henle, Lambert, Giacalone, & Duffy, 2008), mental fatigue, (Aryee, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007). Like positive leadership, because of its weighty meaning for organizations (Hoobler & Hu, 2013), the negative aspects of leadership and their impact on subordinates also require more study (Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Collins & Jackson, 2015), but this does not. In the field of dark/destructive/negative leadership, there are numerous titles given in the literature, such as coercive supervision (Tepper, 2000), disabled managers (Kellerman, 2004), tiny dictatorship (Collins & Jackson, 2015), toxic leadership (Collins & Jackson, 2015), derailed leadership (Collins & Jackson, 2015) (Einarsen *et al.*, 2007). Toxic leaders are morally dishonest and operate at the expense of organizational interests for personal interest, pursue their self-centeredness, self-promotion and manipulate their followers (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008), want their subordinates to receive unquestioned obedience (Schilling, 2009), exhibit dominant and authoritarian behavior (Schilling, 2009) (Naseer *et al.*, 2016). The research gap on toxic leadership (TL) on teachers'

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engagement and trust has been investigated and documented in this review.

The Toxic Leaders (TLs) act as a social stressor using the Conservative of Resources theory as a basis and under the oppressive, self-serving, exploitative and immoral (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Naseer *et al.*, 2016) actions of TL, workers lose support in exchange relationships from leaders. Dark leadership is more evident, according to Luthans, Peterson, & Ibrayeva, (1998), collectivist and power-distant societies, since it is assumed that subordinates in such culture would display unquestioned obedience and embrace inequality in power. The loss of resources resulting from lower employee participation and confidence results in decreased productivity levels for teachers. They spend their energy and focus to deal with these stressors as people face certain hostile circumstances, such as destructive actions of leaders, and thus suffer a lack of energy resources. In addition, resource losses are more apparent relative to resource gains, and any loss of energy resources will cause further loss of resources (Nauman, Fatima, & Haq, 2018). Therefore, people whose main energy resources have been drained at work, particularly because of leaders' unethical and self-serving actions, may not be able to display high engagement and trust, resulting in a reduction in productivity. Work engagement conceptualizations, one of which can be found in the work of Kahn, Mahmood, Saeed, & Qureshi (2013). "In addition, he defined personal engagement as "the harnessing of organization members' self to their work roles," explaining that "in work engagement, individuals employ and

express themselves during role performances physically, cognitively and emotionally" (Kahn, *et al.*, 2013: 694). Work engagement is a motivational idea focused on this principle, as workers devote personal resources to their job duties (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011). Work engagement implies that workers are (1) physically engaged, (2) cognitively attentive, and (3) empathically related on the work floor to other individuals, according to Kahn, *et al.*, (2013).

The idea of trust in schools is of recent times; Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) indicated that the trust of teachers towards their school leaders was a factor influencing their willingness to collaborate. Hoy and Smith (2007) presented the reason that trust would extend the approval zone for teachers to comply with the decisions of their school leaders. MacNeil, Spuck, & Ceyanes (1998) noted that trust is an important ability that should be exhibited by successful leaders regardless of their leadership exposure. While they were all philosophical rather than analytical, these deliberations maintained that if the teachers had trust in their principals, teachers would be more driven to work. One of the few studies providing empirical support to complement philosophical deliberations is the work of Bryk and Schneider (2002). Two forms of trust exist and they are, contractual and relational. They believed that the former type of trust is built between the school leaders and the teachers on a transactional basis, which makes it shaky and unsubstantial in the absence of exchangeable benefits. They asserted that for school operations, relational trust, described as the

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interpersonal social exchanges that take place in a school setting, is of vital importance. They maintained that it is possible to represent relational trust in schools in four fields, namely respect (recognizing the role played by the other party), competence (belief that the other party has the ability), personal respect for others (caring for others' feelings and share their feelings) and dignity or integrity (consistency between what the other party says and does).

**Statement of the Problem**

Through their engagement and trust, teachers in school organizations are the primary element of school performance and productivity. For improved quality education and competitiveness in senior secondary schools, school leadership and subordinates are important. The leadership role of the principal in the school system and the question of leadership is therefore vital to the achievement of the school's priorities, goals and objectives. School leadership has therefore become a priority on the global education policy agenda and plays a key role in improving school outcomes by affecting teacher motivation and productivity. It then becomes essential to examine the context of leadership and examine the meaning and practice of teachers' engagement and trust; especially that leadership and followership are two sides of the same coin. Meanwhile, leadership research has not been balanced with poor and good leaders; most studies have concentrated more on the positive aspects of education leadership than the negative ones. Although it is vital to develop education managers to understand

positive leadership, it is equally important to identify the behaviors of educational leaders who deliberately or unknowingly inflict lasting harm on their teachers and school organizations. Research on necessary leadership behaviors could be observed to allow leaders in public senior secondary school environments to try to adapt and align their behavior to reflect frequently accepted leadership qualities.

**Literature Review**

**Concept of Toxic Leadership**

Toxic leadership, also referred to as abusive supervision and downward bullying (Lillemor, Hallberg, Margaretha, & Strandmark, 2010), is a pattern of bullying behavior in the workplace involving shaming and blaming, passive hostility, team sabotage, indifference and lack of compassion, a negative and corrosive interpersonal style, and exploitation or the appearance of using others for personal gain (Kusy & Holloway, 2009 as cited in Orunbon, 2020), each of which is described with examples in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Criteria, Description and Examples of Toxic Behavior

<b>Element</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Observable Behaviours</b>
Shaming	Humiliation, sarcasm, put-downs, jabs, blaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persistently pointing out mistakes intending to reduce another's self-worth</li> <li>• Public embarrassment</li> </ul>

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Passive hostility	Passive-aggressive behaviour redirecting one's anger inappropriately on a target person or persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resenting requests, deliberate procrastination, and intentional mistakes to serve self and avoid serving others</li> <li>• Complaints of injustice and lack of appreciation</li> <li>• Compliments that veil criticism,</li> <li>• Always the last word (punch)</li> <li>• Spreading rumours about subordinates</li> </ul>
Team sabotage	Meddling to establish one's power base resulting in decreased cohesion and performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistency – unclear, constantly changing expectations and unpredictable policies, procedures and behaviours</li> <li>• Dysfunctional communication – To maintain power and control, withholding key information, sharing incomplete information, or sharing partial items of information resulting in each team member having incomplete data</li> </ul>
Indifference	An apparent lack of regard for the welfare of others, especially subordinates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of compassion and empathy</li> <li>• Excluding certain people</li> <li>• Disinterest in the successes and unsympathetic to the suffering of others</li> </ul>

Negatively	A corrosive interpersonal style that harms individual and collective morale and motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malice – cruelty and degradation is more prevalent than kindness</li> <li>• Narcissism – uncaring abuse of others for personal gain</li> </ul>
Exploitation	The perception of getting ahead at the expense of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inequality – tolerating toxic people, who are often highly skilled but punishing others</li> <li>• Favouritism – special treatment for a select few</li> <li>• Nepotism – the hiring of unqualified friends or family</li> </ul>

Source: Williams (n.d)

### **The Role of Employee Engagement**

For the first time in the 1990s, engagement was entered into the academic wordlist through Khan's social-psychological work. In his seminal article, Khan introduced the idea of "personal participation". Since that time, the interest of researchers in engagement has mushroomed and numerous studies on conceptualization, meaning, hypotheses and engagement measures have been carried out (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Personal Role Engagement in the opinion of Khan et al., (2013), engagement involves "the harnessing of organizational member's selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances". Work or Job Engagement: The second stream of engagement research takes it as,

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“A positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption” (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002, 74). Schaufeli *et al.* (2002) used the term “work engagement” (WE) rather than “personal engagement”. Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) also defined employee engagement as “the degree of the cognitive, physical and emotional connection of employees to their work roles”.

### **Work Engagement Components**

**Vigour:** This refers to mental resilience, great energy, desire to capitalize on effort, determination in tough times, enthusiasm and commitment to put time and effort into work. The experience of workers at work plays a significant role here.

**Dedication:** The dedication aspect refers to having an experience of participation, pride, value, challenge, passion, motivation, and meaningful pursuit at work.

**Absorption:** This is defined by being concentrated and active in the workplace (Bakker & Dermouti, 2007; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007).

**Absorption:** Happily immersed in one's work means being completely focused on working. One finds it hard to distinguish him/her from work and time easily passes for him/her during work (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008).

In the opinion of Schaufeli *et al.* (2002), “engagement refers to a persistent and omnipresent affective-cognitive state that does focus on any specific object, event,

person, or behavior;” (p. 295). Kahn (1990) and Bakker (2011) also emphasize that it is more state-like as commitment is based on employee expectations about the work atmosphere and it alters over time. Bakker and Demerouti (2008) showed in a study among teachers that job resources, including supervisor support, significantly boost employee engagement, particularly at a time of high job strain. Adequate supervisor incentives and appreciation (Laschinger & Finegan, 2005); personal effort and innovation; enthusiasm for work motivation (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004); bottom-line results such as work success (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Bakker & Bal, 2010), monetary benefits (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009). The beneficial role of EE in enhancing personnel and organizational efficiency has been identified in several studies.

Research demonstrates that having dedicated and motivated workers can lead to many beneficial outcomes for an organization, such as lower turnover intentions and improved organizational efficiency.

According to Leary *et al.* (2013), dysfunctional leadership distract subordinate's obsession from work to self-preservation and ultimately limit engagement. They spend more energy and effort to deal with the situation and suffer a lack of energy resources when people encounter certain hostile circumstances, such as destructive behavior of leaders. In addition, resource losses are more apparent relative to resource gains, and any loss of energy resources will cause further loss of resources (Nauman *et al.*, 2018).

### **The Role of Employee Trust**

Employee trust has been recognized as a dynamic research factor in literature, especially in the workplace, which contributes to organizational success with positive inferences on the overall performance of the employee (Laschinger & Finegan, 2005), leading to organizational performance acceleration (Gould-Williams, 2003). One of the most critical aspects of organizational success is confidence (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Trust has been understood as "the degree to which individuals are willing to rely on those who are vulnerable to others" (Frost, Stimpson & Maughan, 1978 as cited by Jabeen & Rahim, 2020). This definition presents trust as a psychological condition of employees including positive expectations regarding the intent or behaviour of the leader in risk situations (Premeaux & Bedeian, 2003) (Premeaux & Bedeian, 2003). Although the trust aspect is relevant in the organization at all levels, the trust emphasis is often between the supporters and their leader. A leader with positive behavior (represented by confidence, assurance, effectiveness, and compliance) is considered by others to be more capable and reliable, as these attributes have been shown to provide a greater level of performance (Avolio, 2007). It makes the leader more valuable and comprehensible if the leader practices accountability in his daily job. Such intuition is expressed in the qualities, principles and the degree of confidence that will be established (Avolio, 2007) and vice versa. On the other hand, employees' actions and willingness to participate concerning how much effort they put into performing the task can affect the

level of performance of the organization. The trust of employees in their leader will decide the individual's productivity level and indirectly affect the output of the organization (Gwinner, Bitner, Brown, & Kumar, 2005). Particularly in terms of the treatment of leaders towards their subordinates, the degree to which workers estimate the fairness and trustworthiness of their leader and this interpretation affects their engagement or vice versa. This degree of employee faith in their leaders potentially affects the performance of workers and job satisfaction. Knoll and Gill (2010) argued, on the other hand, that an atmosphere of mistrust causes an employee to feel anxious and worried, resulting in low job satisfaction. In addition, literature on trust indicated that the character of the leader also influences the degree of trust of employees in their leaders (Reychav & Sharkie, 2010). By reducing conflict (Ristig, 2009), the aspect of confidence increases in employee performance is useful for decision-making because trust lets workers share their ideas and knowledge and will directly impact efficiency (Laschinger & Finegan, 2005). Dysfunctional leadership, according to Leary *et al.* (2013), distracts the attention of subordinates from work to self-preservation and eventually limits their commitment. Employee confidence is known as a psychological condition that requires optimistic assumptions about the leader's purpose or actions concerning himself in dangerous situations (Premeaux & Bedeian, 2003). Scholars suggested that the performance of the employee is less likely to be negative when a manager provides help to his/her subordinates and

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therefore can maintain performance levels. Based on the member's experiences, communications, and the community on which the relationship is based, the trust may be stronger or weaker.

### **Relationship between Toxic Leadership and Employees Engagement**

Engagement is a positive activity that ignites excitement and drives positive workers and performance for the organization. Engaged workers have a deep sense of indebtedness to the company and make additional efforts to improve work efficiency in job roles (Shantz, Alfes, Truss, & Soane, 2013). Pervious literature shows that participation positively drives individual success (Rich, LePine & Crawford, 2010; Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011), intra-individual (Bakker & Bal, 2010) and group level (May *et al.*, 2004); increases profitability of organizations and decreases absenteeism (Morgan, 2004). "Engaged staff experience positive emotions that expand the 'thinking action repertoire' of people, leading them to become more attentive and absorbed in their work and engagement made them top performers" (Fredrickson, 2001).

### **Relationship between Toxic Leadership and Employees Trust**

Employees' positive attitudes demonstrate their ability to contribute to organizational success by performing their job performance efforts. Employees trust their boss to assess their level of efficiency directly and their organizational success indirectly (Gwinner *et al.*, 2005). As the opinion of employees about the fairness (confidence) and trustworthiness of leaders influences their participation, their level of trust affects their

performance in the same direction. Employee trust has been identified in literature as a vibrant element that leads to organizational success with optimistic assumptions about the overall performance of employees.

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory hinges on this research work. In the 1970s, the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) principle first appeared. It conceptualizes leadership as an engagement mechanism between leaders and followers and reflects on the dyadic relationships of exchange between both. It is an approach to leadership focused on relationships that reflects on the two-way (dyadic) relationship between leaders and followers. It implies that leaders create an exchange with each of their subordinates and that the nature of these exchange relationships between leaders affects subordinate engagement, trust, decisions and access to resources and results (Tayla & Berrin, 2015). Confidence and respect are founded on relationships and are often relational relationships that reach beyond the scope of work. In work groups, the leader-follower relationships are divided into a collection of working relationships between a leader and the various members of the work team, as it is presumed that different relationships grow between the leader and each individual follower. The leader may also have various types of transactions and different types of relationships with different followers (Van Breukelen, Schyns & Le Blanc, 2006). The goal of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory is to explain the effect of leadership on members, teams, and organizations. According to the theory



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leaders form strong trust, emotional and respect based relationships with some members of a team, but not with others (David and Darja, 2016). Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory claims that leaders do not treat each subordinate the same. The work-related attitudes and behaviors of those subordinates depend on how they are treated by their leader (Rockstuhl, Dulebohn, Augustine and Shore, 2012).

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested in this study:

**Ho1:** There is no significant relationship between school toxic leadership and teachers' engagement in Lagos State senior secondary schools.

**Ho2:** There is no significant relationship between school toxic leadership and teachers' trust in Lagos State senior secondary schools.

### **Methodology**

The research designs employed for this study were correlational and descriptive. Reason being that the study examined the relationship between school toxic leadership, teachers' engagement and trust in senior secondary schools in Education District VI of Lagos State. And, the study also described the prevailing situation regarding the school toxic leadership, teachers' engagement and trust in senior secondary schools in Education District VI of Lagos State.

The population of this study comprised 3,240 teachers of the 56 public senior secondary schools in Lagos Education District VI which include Ikeja, Oshodi Isolo, and Mushin

The sample consisted of 30% of the study population to form the sample of this study which was randomly selected from the population. Therefore, the sample consisted of 300 teachers from 20 public senior secondary schools in Education District VI of Lagos State.

To select the sample, ten schools from each Local Government under the Education District were selected through disproportionate stratified sampling technique and, in each selected school, a sample of 10 teachers were randomly selected from each of the sampled schools. Summing it up, the sample of this study was 300 senior secondary teachers in Education District VI of Lagos State, Nigeria.

To collect data for this study, a self-developed questionnaire was developed and used. The questionnaire titled "Toxic Leadership, Teachers' Engagement and Trust Questionnaire' (TLTEATQ)" was designed by the researcher. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A consists of items on teachers' personal information while Section B consists of twelve items which measured the Toxic Leadership, Teachers' Engagement and Trust. The questionnaire was used to elicit information from the teachers. A Four-point Likert-scale response mode type was used. The following corresponding scores were adopted as rating scale for the responses: Strongly Agree (SA) – 4; Agree (A) – 3; Disagree (D) – 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) - 1.

In ensuring the face and construct validity of the questionnaire, the TLTEATQ was subjected to a reliability test using the test-retest reliability method. The questionnaire

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was administered to 36 teachers in other schools who were part of the population of the study but not part of the sample. Test-retest reliability method was used to determine the reliability of the Toxic Leadership, Teachers' Engagement and Trust Questionnaire. The coefficient obtained was 0.860. Thus, the questionnaire was found to be significantly reliable.

Data collected were analysed using inferential statistics of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient to test the hypotheses since it is stated to predict the relationship between the variables. The hypothesis formulated was tested at 0.05 level of significance through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20.0 version.

**Results**

**Table 1:**

**Correlation showing relationship between school toxic leadership and teachers' engagement in senior secondary schools Education District VI of Lagos State**

		Toxic Leaders hip	Teachers' engagemen t
Toxic Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	0.067
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.282
	N	262	262
Teachers' engagement	Pearson Correlation	0.067	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.282	
	N	262	262

The result in Table 1 shows that there is a negative and non-significant relationship between school toxic leadership and teachers' engagement in Lagos State senior secondary schools Education District VI ( $r = 0.282, \rho > 0.05$ ). This implies that the higher

the school toxic leadership, the lower the teachers' engagement. The result suggests that school toxic leadership does not significantly influence teachers' engagement in Lagos State senior secondary schools Education District VI. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between school toxic leadership and teachers' engagement in Lagos State senior secondary schools Education District VI is hereby not rejected.

**Table 2:**

**Correlation showing relationship between school toxic leadership and teachers' trust in senior secondary schools Education District VI of Lagos State**

		Toxic Leadership	Teachers' trust
Toxic Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	0.031
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.616
	N	262	262
Teachers' trust	Pearson Correlation	0.031	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.616	
	N	262	262

The result illustrated in Table 2 shows that school toxic leadership behavior is negatively and non-significantly related with the teachers' trust in Lagos State senior secondary schools Education District VI ( $r = 0.616, \rho > 0.05$ ). This implies that as the school toxic leadership practices increases, there is non-significant reduction in teachers' trust. This suggests that school toxic leadership does not significantly influence teachers' trust in Lagos State senior secondary schools Education District VI. Therefore, the hypothesis which states

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that there is no significant relationship between school toxic leadership and teachers' trust in Lagos State senior secondary schools Education District VI is hereby not rejected. This finding indicates that toxic leaders in school settings do not lack trust from the teachers, despite the negative behavior of the school leader. It is not clear whether this suggests a lack of comprehension and purpose for being in school leadership in line with the aim of a school in society. A sense of entrenched abnormality allows such toxicity to occur without any enervated feeling of hurt towards subordinates.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The relationship between toxic school leadership and the teachers' engagement is negative. Previous literature, on the other hand, offers evidence that employees' engagement positively drives individual success (Rich, LePine & Crawford, 2010; Christian *et al.*, 2011), intra-individual (Bakker & Bal, 2010) and group level (May *et al.*, 2004); increasing organizational profitability and decreasing absenteeism (Morgan, 2004). "Committed staff experience positive emotions that expand the 'thinking action repertoire' of people, leading them to become more attentive and absorbed in their work" (Fredrickson, 2001). Engaged workers have a deep sense of indebtedness to the organization and make additional efforts to improve work efficiency in job roles (Shantz, *et al.*, 2013). The relationship between toxic school leadership and the teachers' trust is negative. This is in contrast with this study, in that healthy relationships between employees

and leaders minimize stress and speed up job performance (Hudson & Zeffane, 2013), whereas employees working under toxic leaders must function in an atmosphere of stress (Nauman *et al.*, 2018). The level of trust influences the job efficiency of the employee. Joseph and Winston (2005) found, for instance, that servant leadership has a positive association with trust in leaders and trust in organizations and can impact the productivity of employees. Employees must function with toxic bosses in an atmosphere of tension. Toxic leaders are low on ethical and moral values, self-serving, corrupt, aggrandizing, and demanding obedience. Such activities decrease the level of trust of their employees in them and eventually reduce the productivity of their employees because of lower morale and high stress environment. Teachers lose trust in school management under toxic school leadership and their engagement in work decreases as well.

### **Conclusion**

The emphasis of this study is primarily on toxic leadership in school as it affects the teachers' engagement and trust. This is not to suggest that those who replace these school administrators in positions are not in a position to potentially inflict serious harm on the organization of the school. If this power is used to implement dysfunctional habits, the higher the person is in the school organization, the more power they have at their hands, the effects could spread through the school organization because of the legitimate or role power that the person has from his/her position within the school organization. School toxic leaders

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undermine teachers' ability to do what they know is in the best interest of the students they teach. When teachers' engagement and trust are eroded because of school leaders' toxic behavior, teachers will be leaving the field of education and avoiding leadership roles at alarming rates due to negative school climates and toxic leadership. As [Ross, Matteson, and Exposito \(2014\)](#) indicated, toxic leadership takes a toll on employees' mental and physical health, in addition to an increase in counterproductive work behavior, coming to work late resigning or transfers. School toxic leadership is apparent when leaders exhibit assaultiveness towards their school teachers' abilities and personalities, negatively affecting their school engagement with the students and trust towards the school leaders. Therefore, toxic school leaders erode the trust and desirable effect of the learning that takes place.

To some extent the study findings submit that the working conditions are what prompt leaders towards toxicity. It is obvious to emphasize that the first place to begin investigating the toxicity of schools is school leadership. In the same way, toxic leadership in every school system undermines the teachers' engagement and erodes their trust in school leaders and the organization and that inevitably stagnates the progress of the school.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. School teachers should be exposed to professional development training and opportunities particularly in

leadership before placement for leadership positions, as leadership preparation and training are central to school effectiveness and school improvement as this will improve teachers' engagement in schools.

2. Ministry of Education, Tutor Generals/Permanent Secretaries in Education Districts and other administrators who assist in the screening of candidates for the school leadership positions need more knowledge of the research behind effective leadership in schools and methods developed by organizational psychologists for identifying and recommending persons with leadership potential and not those with toxins, as this will help in ensuring teachers' trust at work.

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