Destructive Leadership: What is it and how do we cope?
Laura Smith, MS Psychology
Agenda

- Introduction to Destructive Leadership
- Defining Destructive Leadership
- Measuring Destructive Leadership
- Consequences of Destructive Leadership
- Examining the Coping Experience
- Theoretical Implications
- Practical Implications
- Questions?
Introduction to Destructive Leadership

Questions to Consider:

• What comes to mind when you think of the term “destructive leadership”?

• Have you worked for a destructive leader? Do you know any destructive leaders?

• Is “leadership” only positive?

• Are there examples of leaders who have accomplished goals through destructive means?
  – Hitler? Castro? Stalin?
Introduction to Destructive Leadership

Relevance:

• Affects anywhere from 13-36% of U.S. employees
• **75% of working adults** rate their manager as the most stressful aspect of their job
• Estimated **24 billion** in lost revenue, production, innovation
• Potentially costs organizations **$500 thousand to $2.7 million** per failed leader
• Employees often feel “**Skunked**” where the effects linger beyond the destructive experience
Defining Destructive Leadership

- **Tepper (2000):** Hostility, conformity, and indifference with “the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact”.

- **Shaw, Erikson, and Harvey (2011):** “systematic and repeated set of behaviours by a leader that have significant negative impact on organization and/or employee outcomes”.

- **Rose et al. (2015):** taxonomy of behaviors from low (setting unrealistic expectations, engaging in rude behavior, taking credit for other’s work) to high dysfunction (public denigration, social isolation, threats, intimidation)
Defining Destructive Leadership

Measuring Destructive Leadership

- **Keller Hansbrough and Jones (2014):** Leaders may be predisposed to abusive behaviors; some behaviors are normalized by followers/organizations.

- **Hogan Development Survey (HDS):** Measures 11 personality subscales to measure tendencies toward destructive behaviors.
  - Using HDS, Leary et al. (2013) found traits associated with intimidation and avoiding others had a negative relationship to employee engagement, job satisfaction, and burnout.

- **Destructive Leadership Questionnaire:** Identified 7 different cluster types of destructive leaders indicating levels of dysfunction.
Consequences of Destructive Leadership

- **Organizational**
  - Financial
  - Job Performance
  - Engagement

- **Individual**
  - Compared to PTSD
  - Destructive coping habits (retaliation, distancing, turnover)
  - Health complaints, job strain, increased aggression
Examining the Coping Experience

- Research on followers has been limited and far from systematic.
- **Rose et al. (2015):** Follower experiences have been unaddressed or misunderstood.
- **Li, Qian, Han, Jin (2016):** perceptions of org support and political skills decreased burnout under destructive leaders.
- **May et al. (2014):** Follower reactions can predict leader perceptions and future destructive behaviors.
- Subjective experience of followers to replicate coping successes/minimize leadership failures.
Theoretical Implications

- Qualitative research using grounded theory can identify sources of dysfunction and define framework of leaders/followers.

- McGregor’s Theory of X (lazy worker) & Y (self-directed worker)


![Diagram showing Theory X and Theory Y relationships.](Diagram)

- "My employee is lazy"
- "My employee needs to be watched"
- "Why should I work hard for this mgr?"
- "Self-Perpetuating Process"
Practical Implications

Leader Selection & Development
- Learn how perceptions perpetuate behaviors
- Understand factors that escalate/deescalate situations

Follower Empowerment
- Assertive behaviors could mitigate destructive outcomes
- Encourage successful coping strategies

Organizational Improvement
- Proactively train employees on recognizing and reporting destructive leadership
- Helping leaders become more self-aware
Questions?

Contact Information

Email: LauraAnn.Smith@phoenix.edu
LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/lauraannsmith1
References


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