

## **Employee Silence as Mediator in the Relationship between Toxic Leadership Behavior and Organizational Learning**

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### **Abstract**

Most of the organizations are striving to implement organizational leaning philosophy to have a competitive advantage in complex, volatile and fierce market environment. Except few, organizations mostly fail and face immense problems to establish effective learning organization processes. In such scenario, leadership behaviors may derail the organizational success into failures. The study intends to examine the mediating effect of employee silence between toxic leadership and organizational learning relationship. In all 445 responses were collected from employees serving in Pakistani banking sector. The results revealed that there is a significant impact of toxic leadership on employee silence and organizational learning. Furthermore, the mediation analysis revealed significant mediation of employee silence from toxic leadership on organizational learning. While most of existing research has assessed positive leadership styles and its impact on individual and organizational behaviors the present study takes in to account negative leadership i.e. toxic leadership.

Keywords: Toxic Leadership; Employee Silence; Organizational Learning; Hayes Process Model 4.

Leaders are considered elemental for success or failure of an organization. As leaders, may become source of learning, innovation and organizational success (Berson, Da'as, & Waldman, 2015) or turn out to be barrier to learning and organizational failure by negatively influencing the emotions and behaviors of the individuals (Schilling & Kluge, 2009; Xu, Loi, & Lam, 2015). These contradicting leadership behaviors invite the attention of the researchers to understand both positive and negative aspects of leadership to fully understand the leadership phenomenon (Kaiser, LeBreton, & Hogan, 2015; Karakitapoğlu-Aygün & Gumusluoglu, 2013). Existing research has witnessed a number of leadership behaviors and styles that are facilitating to organizational learning (Vera & Crossan, 2004) like transformational leadership (García-Morales, Miménez-Barrionuevo, & Gutiérrez-Gutiérrez, 2012), ambidexterity leadership (Nemanich & Vera, 2009), transaction leadership (Jansen, Vera & Crossan, 2009)). However, toxic leadership behaviors in relationship to organizational learning is a missing link as emphasized by Berson et al. (2015) and Walumbwa, Hartnell, Misati (2017). The present study is an attempt to bridge this literature gap.

A growing interest of scholars has been observed on the toxic behaviors at workplace in general (Linstead, Maréchal, & Griffin, 2014). Especially, scholars view that toxic behaviors displayed by leaders have intense detrimental effects on organizational learning and performance

(Indradevi, 2016; Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014; Schilling & Kluge, 2009). In addition, mostly studies in toxic leadership literature have examined negative consequences of toxic leadership behaviors on individual level constructs (Fowlie & Wood, 2009; Kellerman, 2004), whereas, very few studies are available on organizational level factors (Leed, 2011; Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014; Temper, 2000). For example, literature identified toxic leadership as a potential antecedent of increased turnover intention, employee dissatisfaction, lack of commitment and psychological distress like anxiety, burnout, depression, disengagement, low level of self-esteem, emotional exhaustion, and employee Silence (Brinsfield, Edwards, & Greenberg, 2009; Webster, Beehr, & Love, 2011; Tepper, 2000; Xu, Loi, & Lam, 2015). The study has examined both, at individual level employee silence and at organizational level organizational learning in relation to toxic leadership.

An extensive literature review provoked that toxic behaviors results in to counter-productive work behaviors (Goldman 2006) and toxic climates prevailing in the organizations, the individuals hesitate to share their experiences, feeling uncomfortable to disclose the problems they face during their work. This is because the leaders may negatively perceive their capabilities or may negatively credit their contributions (Schilling & Kluge, 2009). Furthermore, Xu et al. (2015) identified that abusive supervision a dimension of toxic leadership behaviors causes employee silence through employee emotional exhaustion. Similarly, employee silence, a barrier to the upward communication, leaving organizational decision makers unaware about the ground realities and problems of the organization causing problems to valuable decision making, further leading to depleted organizational performance (Schilling & Kluge, 2009). Keeping in view the arguments, the current study aimed to provide more insight in to the impact of toxic leadership on organizational learning and to further evaluate the mediating role of employee silence between the toxic leadership and organizational learning.

The study has followed the theory of conservation of resources (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989; Xu et al., 2015) as the main source to find the relationship between the variables of the study. The study has assumed that the organizations having negativity in the environment tend to impact individual's performance negatively, because they reactively conserve there physical , psychological and knowledge related resources and utilize them for coping and dealing with the leader (Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007) one of the coping strategy that these abused individuals is to be silent and try to hide the facts from the bosses (Xu et al. 2015), which become a barrier to organizational learning (Kaiser & Craig, 2014; Morrison, 2014; Schilling & Kluge, 2009).

The study is based in Pakistani banking sector which is characterized of employee burnout, emotional exhaustion, high turnover rate, which causes loss of valuable knowledge, teamwork spirit, high

retention and recruitment problems (Hussain, 2012). The study view, ineffective leadership as the main cause of overall dissatisfaction and low-level performance. Therefore, the study focused on the leadership and employee behaviors like toxicity, and silence as an important input to solve the overall and individual problems related to learning and performance.

## **Literature Review**

### **Toxic Leadership Behaviors**

Toxic Leadership (TOXL) is considered as an array of destructive behaviors that drive the leaders to achieve personal goals and benefits by compromising the interests of individuals, teams and organizations (Schmidt, 2014). Goldman (2006) further explained that destructive behaviors of leaders have the capacity to trickle down to lower level employees at workplace.

Scholars view that constructive or destructive behaviors of leaders emerge from the interaction of leadership, followers, and working environment (Bagherith, 1994; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Padilla, Hogan & Kaiser, 2007; Steele, 2011). Zellars, Tepper and Duffy (2002) and Webster et al. (2011) found that toxic leadership behaviors cause turnover intention, dissatisfaction, lack of commitment and psychological distress like anxiety, depression, burnout and disengagement. In addition, emotional exhaustion and employee silence are observed due to abusive leadership behaviors (Xu, et al., 2015).

The Banking context of Pakistan seems relevant because Bartel (2004) has suggested the exploration of behaviors in banks. Further, the negative side of the leadership is under researched (Yukl, 2012), specifically in the collectivist cultures like Pakistan (Khilji, 2012). The study following Schmidt (2008) has identified five dimensions of toxic leadership, including self-promotion, abusive supervision, unpredictability, narcissism, and authoritarian leadership.

### **Organizational Learning (OL)**

The OL is considered as a process where organizations get knowledge through communication, utilize it for the solution of problems, managing the paradoxes and adapt to their institutional fields for success and innovation (Argyris, 1999; Crossan, Maurer & White, 2011; Huber, 1991). Huber (1991) explained that effective acquisition, sharing, analysis and memory of knowledge leads to successful organization.

The current literature based on the work of Vince (2004) and Lawrence, Mauws, Dyck and Kleysen, (2005) assumes that organizational learning is a socio-political process, where emotions and relationships between different actors in the organizations, result in to learning. Schelling and Kluge (2009) studied barriers to organizational learning and have advocated that leadership is one of the main reason of

the failure of organizational learning. Hence, due to significance of the topic in practice and literature. The study has focused on the examination of the linkage between toxic leadership and organizational learning in banking sector.

### **Employee Silence (ES)**

Employee silence is considered as employees deliberate hiding of important ideas information, queries, concerns or views about matters related to their job position and their organizations (Brinsfield et al. 2009; Dyne, Ang & Botero, 2003; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008). Ashford, Sutcliffe and Christianson (2009) noted that most of the key decision makers (leaders) remain unaware about the silence behaviors of employees and assume that employees are freely communicating upward without hesitation. Detert, Burris, and Harrison (2010) reported that there is an evidence that silence behavior exists in many organizations and employees are often hesitant to engage in voice, specially, when they have information that is against the leadership view point. This deprivation of valuable knowledge leads to negative consequences and wastage of valuable assets in the organizations (Morrison, 2014). Hence, organizations fail to learn due to employee silence behavior, which requires to be examined.

### **Toxic Leadership and Organizational Learning**

Although, organizational learning is a source of innovation and competitive advantage (Akhtar, Khan & Mujtaba, 2013). Yet, scholars contend that the leadership specific behaviors create problems for organizational learning by halting communication (Lawrence et al. 2005). The research explains that leaders and followers cannot interact together at workplace without following their cultural values, political affiliations and emotional conditions (Lawrence et al. 2005; Vince, 2004; Vince & Saleem, 2004). Thus, resultant learning in the organizations is the outcome of their social and emotional interactions subject to personal interests, which impedes the organizational learning. Similarly, the cultures rich with the power distance between the subordinate and leader are more inclined towards the hoarding of information, creates a gap, where the subordinate feels uncomfortable to communicate with the boss (Hofstede, 1991). Based on the discussion, the study postulated that:

*H1: Toxic Leadership behaviors have significant negative impact on organizational learning.*

### **Toxic Leadership Behavior and Employee's Silence**

Toxic leadership behaviors are destructive to emotions, leading to emotional exhaustion and employee Silence with in work setting (Ng & Feldman, 2012). Tepper (2007) and Whitman et al. (2014) based on the theory of conservation of resources explained that when subordinates face negative behavior of their supervisors. They intend to adopt

avoidant or passive coping behaviors and hence try to remain away from the source of stress and exhaustion i.e. toxic leader. Based on these assumptions the study postulated that toxic leadership behaviors cause increase in employee silence.

**H2:** Toxic Leadership have significant negative impact on employees Silence.

### **Employee Silence and Organizational Learning.**

Literature provide evidence that employee silence behavior is a hurdle in the way to organizational learning (Morrison, 2014). Employees silence which is viewed as an individual choice involves a decision about whether to have a voice or to remain silent in the context of an organizational problem that affects the individual employee (Lewin & Mitchell, 1992; McCabe & Lewin, 1992; Withey & Cooper, 1989). Staying silent about organizational problems can result in a decision to leave the job or remain silent if the cost of voice is too high or if there is no upward communication mechanism (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). In addition, organizational silence can stifle organizational learning by restricting the amount and flow of information that could affect decisions, problem-solving and innovation processes. In result, the study postulated H3b, that

**H3:** Employee Silence has negative impact on Organizational Learning

### **Mediating Role of Employee Silence Between Toxic Leadership and Organizational Learning**

The study based on the theory of conservation of resources view that toxic leadership cause the employees in to conserve their physical, psychological and knowledge resources for coping strategies instead of contributing in the decision making and performance outcomes (Xu, et al. 2015). Hence the study based on the discussion in the previous sections and theory of conservation of resources postulated H4, that

**H4:** Employee Silence mediates between Toxic Leadership and Organizational Learning relationship

### **Conceptual Framework**

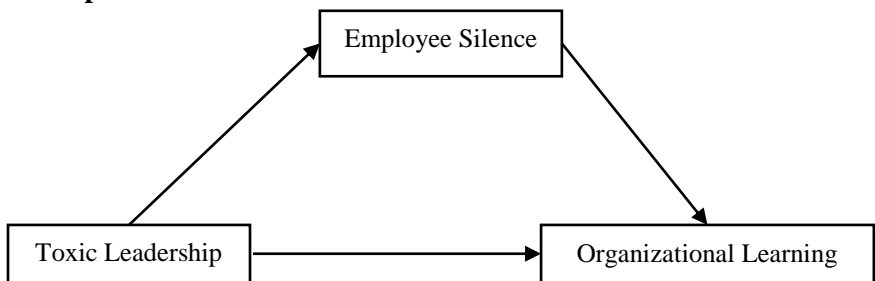


Figure 1: Mediating role of ES between TXLB and OL

## **Research Methodology**

### **Population and Sample**

Individuals working in 24 commercial banks, listed in Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSE) were selected with a total population of 2100 employees serving in different branches in one of the cities of Pakistan. Stratified random sampling helped in categorizing the banks into large (*Total assets greater than Rs. 500 billion*), medium (*total assets greater than or equal to 100 billion - Rs. 500 billion*) and small (*total assets less than or equal to Rs. 100 billion*) banks. A total of 715 questionnaires were distributed among the employees working in the three categories of the banks and retrieved back 445 (72%) sound responses, included in the data analysis. To measure main variables, the study adapted different scales from already established literature. To assess toxic leader (IV), Employee Silence (M) and Organizational learning the study adapted the scales developed by Schmidt (2008), Tangirala and Ramanujam (2008) and García-Morales, Lloréns-Montes and Verdú-Jover (2007) respectively. The five point Likert scale is maintained for all the variables.

### **Data Analysis and Results**

The data was analyzed using AMOS and SPSS for this study. The demographic information of the respondents revealed that an average age of the respondents is in the category from 20 to 29 years, consisting of 51.5% of the sample. Whereas, minimum number of respondents fall in a category of 60 and above consisting of only one employee. Gender distribution of the study illustrated that majority of the respondents were Male (84.4%). Whereas, female respondents were just 15.5% of the sample. Educational qualification depicted that majority of bankers i.e. 236 (53%) fall in post graduate level/ master's degree, following graduate level (B.A, B.Sc.) 152 (34.2%). Whereas, small number of respondents only 23 (5.2%) have research degrees (MS or PhD.). The descriptive statistic (mean and standard deviation) of the main variables for n=445 illustrated with Toxic leadership (M=2.68; SD=.73), Employee Silence (M=3.12; SD=.82) and organizational learning (M=3.56; SD=.83).

### **Reliability and Validity**

Cronbach alpha test has been used to test the reliability of the constructs (Wong, 2016). *In addition*, Convergent validity is established if an AVE of 0.5 or greater is achieved for the constructs. AVE is calculated, the results revealed that convergent validity for all constructs is established since the statistics for AVE for all the factors is approximately equal to or greater than .50. Furthermore, Ping (2004) and Wong (2016) explained that in case where AVE is lower than .5 value of convergent validity should be evaluated along with composite reliability.

Here the composite reliability for all constructs is well above .70 i.e. between .718 and .859.

**Table 1 Cronbach’s Alpha & AVE**

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha	AVE
Toxic Leadership	30	.940	
Abusive Supervision	7	.861	0.45
Authoritative	6	.759	0.47
Narcissism	5	.800	0.55
Self-Promotion	5	.800	0.40
Unpredictability	7	.843	0.50
Employee Silence	5	.771	0.54
Organizational Learning	4	.751	0.62

**Discriminant Validity**

Discriminant validity satisfy the condition that how much sufficiently distinct constructs are strongly non-correlated with each other. The discriminant validity condition is satisfied if the value of square root of AVE for individual construct is more than the Inter-correlation of all the distinct constructs. Malhotra and Dash (2011) further explained that AVE is the strict measure and we can use composite reliability along with the AVE while conferring reliability and validity. The composite reliability for all the constructs were between .718 and .859. Which is more than the cutoff value of .7, as shown in table 2.

**Table 2: Comparison of Square root of AVE and Inter-Construct Correlations**

	Self_Lack	Abusive	Authoritative	Narcissism	Unpredictable	ES	OL
Self_Lack	(0.76)						
Abusive	.77	(0.72)					
Authoritative	.64	.58	(0.67)				
Narcissism	.70	.58	.55	(0.74)			
Unpredictable	.75	.72	.67	.66	(0.74)		
ES	.11	.22	.16	.13	.21	(.68)	
OL	-.10	-.11	-.06	.02	-.06	.12	(.63)

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis and evaluation of Measurement Models**

The model of the present study proposed three different constructs namely TXLB (IV), OL (DV) and ES (M) and their direct and indirect effects. This section covers the confirmatory factor analysis to evaluate that whether the data fits the measurement and structural models or not.

**Evaluations of Measurement Models:**

Exploratory factor analysis revealed a five factors solution for toxic leadership where, the model extracted comprised of 23 items. The model was then exposed to confirmatory factor analysis. The results showed a good fit to a five-factor model: ( $\chi^2/df = 467.9/217$  (CMIN = 2.156), SRMR = .04; CFI = .94, TLI = .93, RMSEA = .05. None of the items were removed as part of CFA. Standardized regressions weights and CR values are reported in table 4.

Exploratory factor analysis revealed a single factor solution for employee silence. The model consisted of five items. The model was then estimated through confirmatory factor analysis. The results revealed a relatively good fit to the model: ( $\chi^2/df = 2.944/3$  (CMIN = 2.944), SRMR = .02; CFI = .98, TLI = .98, RMSEA = .08. None of the items were removed as part of CFA. Standardized regressions weights and CR values are reported in table 4.

Exploratory factor analysis revealed a single factor solution for organizational learning. The model consisted of overall five items. The model was then subjected to confirmatory factor analysis. The measurement model estimation showed a relatively good fit to the model: ( $\chi^2/df = 12.616/3$  (CMIN = 1.633), SRMR = .02; CFI = .98, TLI = .96, RMSEA = .08. None of the items were removed as part of CFA. Standardized regressions weights and CR values are reported in table 4.

*Table 4: Toxic Leadership, Employee Silence and OL Regression Weights & CR Values*

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.
TSP1_19	Self-Promotion and Lack of Concern	.643	-	-
TSP3_21	Self-Promotion and Lack of Concern	.633	.087	11.409
TSP4_22	Self-Promotion and Lack of Concern	.642	.090	11.542
TSP5_23	Self-Promotion and Lack of Concern	.711	.096	12.517
TUP1_24	Self-Promotion and Lack of Concern	.687	.096	12.179
TUP2_25	Self-Promotion and Lack of Concern	.637	.087	11.465
TUP3_26	Self-Promotion and Lack of Concern	.675	.100	11.043
TXAS1_1	Abusive	.737	-	-
TXAS2_2	Abusive	.607	.069	12.103
TXAS3_3	Abusive	.745	.066	14.877
TXAS4_4	Abusive	.712	.069	14.144
TXAS5_5	Abusive	.676	.069	13.401
TXAS7_7	Abusive	.692	.067	13.831
TAUT3_10	Authoritative	.603	-	-
TAUT4_11	Authoritative	.729	.111	11.063
TAUT5_12	Authoritative	.685	.111	10.673
TAUT6_13	Authoritative	.644	.106	10.252
TNAR2_15	Narcissism	.628	-	-
TNAR3_16	Narcissism	.831	.107	12.689



		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.
TNAR4_17	Narcissism	.758	.100	12.223
TUP5_28	Unpredictability	.608	-	-
TUP6_29	Unpredictability	.664	.085	12.357
TUP7_30	Unpredictability	.759	.122	11.080
OL01	Organizational Learning	1	-	-
OL02	Organizational Learning	.853	.091	9.381
OL03	Organizational Learning	.957	.098	9.797
OL04	Organizational Learning	.878	.092	9.539
ES_5	Employee Silence	.711	-	-
ES_4	Employee Silence	.393	.065	8.217
ES_3	Employee Silence	.667	.052	12.207
ES_2	Employee Silence	.852	.066	13.857
ES_1	Employee Silence	.689	.091	10.570

## **Hypothesis Testing**

### **Toxic Leadership and Organizational Learning**

For hypothesis 1, structural model was developed. The model when subjected to confirmatory factor analysis showed a good fit: ( $\chi^2/df = 601.911/312$  (CMIN = 1.929), SRMR = .04; CFI = .94, TLI = .93, RMSEA = .04. Overall the results indicate the 8% change in organizational learning can be attributed through toxic leadership behaviors. The results of analysis revealed that toxic leadership has insignificantly negative impact on organizational learning (Std. Est. = -.082, C.R = -1.155  $p > .05$ ) Hence, H1 is not Supported. Although as per Baron and Kenny (1986) first condition of direct relationship between IV and DV is not satisfied. Yet Preacher & Hayes (2008) argued that the process can be proceeded and mediation can be established without the condition of significant total effect i.e. relationship between IV and DV. Consequently, following Preacher and Hayes (2008) the study tested mediation.

### **Employee Silence as Mediator**

During the analysis, the study estimated three models. i.e. (1) the model that estimated the path “a”, (2) the path b and c’ and (3) the direct impact of the iv on the dv, path c. The table 8. illustrates the model fitness summary.

The study revealed that toxic leadership significantly predict the mediator “employee silence” “a path” ( $b = .20$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $t = 3.82$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Secondly, the test showed that mediator “employee silence” has significant impact on organizational learning (DV) “b path” ( $b = .12$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $t = 2.45$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In addition to path a and b, the study estimated the direct effect of TOXL on OL i.e. “c’ path” ( $b = -.11$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $t = -2.16$ ,  $p < .05$ ) by controlling mediator. and finally, total effect of toxic

leadership on organizational learning was estimated “c path” ( $b=-.09$ ,  $SE=.05$ ,  $t=-1.69$ ,  $p=.09$ ), which indicated that direct effects is non-significant.

The study analyzed the mediation effect by assessing the significance of the indirect effect i.e. ( $a * b$ ). Where, the estimation indirect effect ( $a * b$ ) test is considered the best among all the available methods for mediation testing (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West & Sheets, 2002; MacKinnon, Lockwood & Williams, 2004). To estimate the effect size of the mediator the study utilized the Preacher and Hayes (2004) suggestion for effect size. The test revealed that  $a*b$  or indirect effect size is significant at 95%, confidence interval (CI), as CI (.01, .05) does not consist zero between the upper and lower limit of CI, therefore the indirect effect is significant. To further confirm indirect effect size the study estimated the standardized indirect effect size which was also significant at 95% CI, with  $b=.02$ , Boot  $SE=.01$  and CI (.01, .05) as CI upper and lower does not consist zero. Similarly, SOBEL test result revealed significance of effect size with  $z=2.16$  and  $p<.05$ . Hence following Hayes (2013) the study has revealed that the relationship between toxic leadership and organizational learning is mediated by employee silence. Hence it proves our hypothesis 4. The table 9 depict the summarized estimates.

Table 9. *Bootstrapped point estimate and confidence intervals of the mediating effect of employee silence between toxic leadership and organizational learning*

Mediation path vis Employee Silence	X-M	M(X)-Y	X-Y	X(M)-Y	Mediation effect	Bootstrapping (95%) CI		
	a path	b path	c path	c' path		SE	Lower limit	Upper Limit
TOXL → OL	0.20***	0.12*	0.20 n.s.	-.11*	0.02	0.0 1	0.01	0.05

Note. N = 445. bootstrap sample size = 5000. CI = confidence interval; n.s.= insignificant.

\*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ , \* $p \leq 0.05$ .

### Discussion

The study aimed to examine the mediating role of employee silence between toxic leadership behaviors and organizational learning.

The findings of the study revealed that toxic leadership has non-significant impact on organizational learning in banking sector of Pakistan, which is against the main understanding that toxic leadership is a barrier to organizational learning (Aygyris, 1997). In response, the

study based on the work of Schilling and Kluge (2009), view that preventing the acquisition, processing, and distribution of information is a micro-political activity that is supported by Lawrence et al (2005) who consider that the episodic power is exercised by the leaders and organizations benefitting the self-interested actors, instead of contributing truly to the organizational learning.

The present findings illustrated that toxic leadership behaviors have significant positive impact on the employee silence. Which is in line with the previous studies (See, Xu, 2015; Tepper, 2007; Schilling & Kluge, 2009; Goldman, 2012). These scholars have identified that the toxic leadership behaviors have the capacity to tickle down and negatively affect employees causing emotional exhaustion and silence.

The third finding revealed interesting research finding that employee silence increases when the toxic leadership behaviors increases, but these employees has also shown that their silence contribute positively to the organizational learning. Which as per the concept of proactive silence phenomenon the employees remain silent to bring prosperity in the organization and allow the organization to work for the benefit of the organizations at large (Huang, Vliert, & Vegt, 2005).

The main finding that employee silence mediates between toxic leadership and organizational learning is supported and is in line with the assumptions of (Schilling and Kluge, 2009; Xu et al, 2015). This is because the trickling down effect of the toxic leadership that leads to the employee silence and then ultimately to organizational learning (Goldman, 2012). Furthermore, the theory of conservation of resources theory the employees hid their resources information and knowledge, as a coping strategy (Xu, et al. 2015).

Furthermore, Hofstede (1991) pointed out that people from cultures with a large power distance are less likely to voice their concerns. One possible explanation could be the conflict avoidance and acceptance of the norms and values of the system as they feel that these policies are broader and employees are unable to amend them, so they communicate with filtered information without considering broader outcomes (See. Argyris, 1999).

The study has contributed in knowledge, research and practice. Where the study has explained toxic leadership, employee silence and organizational performance relationship using conservation of resources theory. The study revealed that even though the toxic leadership is not directly related to the organizational learning, there are evidences that toxic leadership influences employee silence behavior and that contribute in to the organizational learning process indirectly.

The study is first in its type, as per researcher's knowledge, that has collectively considered TOXL behaviors (namely narcissism, self-promotion, abusive supervision, unpredictability, and authoritarian leadership), employees silence and organizational learning in a single

model. Most of the TOXL studies are conducted in the individualistic cultures whereas the collectivist culture like Pakistan is neglected (See. Khilji, 2012). Methodologically, the study has utilized process model developed by Hayes (2013) to assess the mediating effect, instead of Barron and Kenny (1986) logic and secondly, the research has employed probability sampling “Stratified Random Sampling” technique that helped to minimize the sampling biases.

The study findings hold several important managerial implications. Firstly, it is suggested that the organizations should set up such channels that provide leverage to the employees to voice out against their leaders’ behaviors. Human resource developmental and employee assistance programs should be initiated to make their employees capable to effectively cope up toxic leadership through planned behaviors. The study suggests the adoption of different organizational learning processes that can motivate individuals to share information. In addition, the employees should be equipped with knowledge, skills and mindsets that enable them to cope up with the adverse behaviors of their leaders. In this continuation, the OD interventions like appreciation inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) and development of positive psychological capitals (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007) would be of worth.

### **Conclusion**

The study intended to examine mediating role of employee silence between toxic leadership and organizational learning. The results revealed that the employee silence mediates the relationship between toxic leadership and organizational performance. Consequently, it is the responsibility of the organizations to take necessary actions for the curtailment of the toxic leadership behaviors by establishing diagnostics procedures for the identification of toxic leadership behaviors and developmental programs for leadership should be introduced. On the other side, the organizations should formulate policies and procedures preemptive to the exposure of employees to toxic behaviors. This research suggests the development of organizational interventions to increase levels of employee coping and well-being so that leaders and employees together work for organizational learning and success of the organizations.

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

The study is cross-sectional, the data was collected from a single city of Pakistan, therefore it is subject to generalizability issue. The study suggests the addition of more potential variables that might mediate between the toxic leadership and organizational learning like leader member exchange quality, organizational politics and mechanisms (Schilling & Kluge, 2009). The future studies should validate these results in other sectors and geographical areas.

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