Collegial Cooperation turns toxic: Its depth and breadth: What are the implications for higher education institutions (HEIs)?

Maria Kaguhangire-Barifaijo • James L. Nkata

Department of Education Leadership and Management, School of Management Science, Uganda Management Institute, P.O Box 20131, Jinja Road, Plot 45/52, Kampala, Uganda.

*Corresponding author. E-mail: mbkaguhangire@umi.ac.ug.

Abstract. Collegiality has been glorified as the strongest governance pillar for higher education institutions, especially in promoting independence of thought, impartial decisions on leadership, mutual respect, and providing peer support. However, the recent corporate culture recently adopted by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and a system that rewards individual accomplishments, together with decreased state funding had steadily weakened the collegial philosophy, while toxicity takes the center stage - thereby threatening unity, harmony and institutional visibility. As a result, institutions have turned toxic. Unfortunately, although easily identifiable, toxicity is a difficult phenomenon to deal with, especially in dynamic academia environment, performance-based pay and personal traits notwithstanding. The paper concludes that the lack of conclusive empirical research to establish the depth and breadth of toxicity has made it difficult for personnel to make defensible decisions. The paper recommends that institutions should prioritize institutional inquiry in order to address work related behavior – among others to negate unacceptable behavior that have persistently harmed individuals as well as the institutions. Finally, institutions should make collegiality part of all "Personnel decisions" that clearly stipulate flawless indicators and measures of toxic behavior, in order to enhance collegial, civil and harmonious work environment that promotes staff engagement, productivity and institutional stability.

Keywords: Civility, collegiality, competition, higher education institutions, teamwork, toxicity.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of collegiality started diminishing when universities adopted a corporate culture in the 1980s, to grapple with dwindling funding which led to increased competition for workload, and rising staff expectations (Dearlove, 1997). This kind of competition, led HEIs to operate like business entities through the promotion of performance-based pay (Cipriano, 2017; Rickless, 2011 and Sutton, 2007). Yet, whereas the corporate culture was highly applauded, it gradually diminished collegial cooperation because it was not in synch with the goals of HEIs, which are by nature social and activity systems that involve a number of interrelated variables that function within a larger dynamic environment (Saiti & Prokopiadou, 2004 and Trowler & Knight, 2010). Unlike business entities, HEIs are distinct nature which demand peculiar strategies to achieve institutional goals as well

as getting the best out of staff working in those institutions (Albatch, 2007). Barifaijo and Namara (2017), proposed a more collaborative and cooperative work relations for the benefit of the students that inevitably give prominence to institutions in various ways and the human capital that increase their competitive advantage. Cipriano (2011), finds this distinct nature of staff to coexist in uneasy balance which creates a more unique mix that instigates a multitude of human conflicts and intrigue among staff in these institutions (Birnbaum, 1991).

Similarly, Albatch (2005), maintains the unique leadership for universities given their multi-purpose nature of providing a public service to the community, as an extra function of which is exceptionally perplexing. In order to achieve the desired goals in such a complex

setting therefore, Thompson (2016), suggests absolute need for strong collegial cooperation, interpersonal relations and a harmonious work culture that is founded on strong principles. In fact, Cipriano (2011), reiterates how collegiality is influential in delivering remarkable experiences to the students' achievement and success in service delivery of academic programs. Cipriano further argues how collegial cooperation not only contributes to individual independence of thought, but also promotes mutual respect and unity – that facilitate decision- making processes. Consequently, insufficient research on the effect of toxicity in HEIs has made toxicity as a challenges less appreciated (Kezar and Eckel, 2004 & Altbach, 2005). Consequently, because of the lack of empirical studies, institutional leaders have had no basis of dealing with toxic individuals, which has paralyzed social and academic activities, career progression and retention of staff, institutional profiling, and overall, quality of students (Crookston, 2013).

Findings on the importance of collegial philosophy on university ratings among American Universities by Crookston (2013), institutional visibility by Bar-David (2018), collaboration and partnership by Christian *et al.* (2011); were also found by Barifaijo and Namara in their research on "democracy and institutional politics in higher education institutions (2017). Dissimilar to institutional politics, toxic individuals systematically prey on their co-workers that often times forces credible staff to disengage from active and meaningful participation to sinking into depression. On the other hand, Barifaijo and Namara (2016), found that representative politics had the potential to pave alleyway to toxicity thereby causing cliques and factions in the institutions.   To eliminate toxicity therefore, Farrington and Palfreyman, (2012) in their book of "the Bad Apples, Bad Barrels, and Broken Followers", caution leaders to always use institutional inquiry, to create a basis for resolved. Although scholars such as Cipriano, 2011; Chuan, 2014; and Gallagher, 2004; do not conceive lost collegiality to be a dimension of staff representation, it actually reflects and fosters mutual respect among all groups within the system that makes every actor a part of a collegial, positive, uplifting, edifying, engaged and exciting place.

The context and problem

Higher education institutions are grappling with numerous staff challenges - ranging from lessened commitment to engagement, to delivery as well as retention, which relapse was found by Barifaijo *et al.* (2016) to affect research output leading to staff stagnation. While peer reviews, joint publications and co-supervision were originally intended to enhance collegiality, collaboration as well as stepping up expertise of staff, students' supervision and quality of their publications, the reverse in Ugandan higher education has been true. Instead of offering support to the novice supervisors and researchers, saboteur, uncivil and toxicity have dominated the academia. While individuals have trashed their colleagues' research works, others have criticized them before their students, whereas others have eliminated them from their research clusters (Barifaijo and Namara, 2017). Such unbecoming mentality have depleted unity and harmony thereby obliterating staff motivation and engagement, which have affected academics' focus to research activities as well as the enthusiasm to publish despite the existing models that were established to govern academics' relationship.

There are various models of governance that effectively and efficiently facilitate HE operations to fulfill their functions of scholarship, teaching and community engagement (Duffy, 2014). Although models such as; political and administrative are useful in the governance and administration, 'collegiality' explains staff relationships and clearly enunciates issues of academic freedom, democracy and social cooperation (Barifaijo, and Namara, 2017). Similarly, Barifaijo *et al.* (2016) found that considering that most toxic persons were influential in their institutions, cases were treated in a "hush-hush" fashion, thereby straining the already existing conflicts between academic staff and administrators. Surprisingly, although it is acknowledged that universities, by their nature are considered 'sacred' since they exist for the good of the public and society, there should be no such magnitude of competition that not only affect individuals, but institutions as well (Crookston, 2013). This 'hush-hush' manner in which toxicity has been treated, it has penetrated and manifested in many ways and at various levels - thereby diminishing academic quality, institutional profiling and termination of some collaborations (Barifaijo & Karyeija, 2013). Similarly, the-would-be brilliant academic programs have been negated or hijacked and sent to limbo - leaving the 'architects' perplexed and frustrated.   Toxicity has further affected peer reviews intended for career growth (the "life-blood and heart-beat", of academics) (Barifaijo and Karyeija, 2013). Unless, collegiality is restored, reinvigorated, encouraged, promoted and evaluated as a performance indicator, the damage may be irreversible. The following questions guided the discussion; (i) what is the contribution of collegiality to the operations of HEIs? (ii) why is collegiality underappreciated in HEIs? (iii) what are the causes of toxic behavior in HEIs? And (iv) what are the implications of diminished collegiality to HEIs?

Literature Review

Academics' social and cooperative relations have existed since the medieval times, but has remained ambiguous, making its relevance obscure (Bart, 2008 & Vickers, 2018). This ambiguity, and perhaps, limited research has left the concept of 'collegiality' under-appreciated (Tarraf, 2012).   This under-appreciation has exposed unsuspecting academics to these creeps, jerks, weasels, tormentors, tyrants, serial slammers, despots, unconstrained egomaniacs – leaving HEIs in a state of

uncertainty (Barifaijo & Namara, 2016). Yet, even with it's under appreciation, collegiality ranked fourth, behind teaching, scholarship and service, and was found to be a critical factor in making staff decisions (Kusy and Holloway, 2009).   Hence, this finding supports the traditional role of collegiality that promotes academics' unity, togetherness and a degree of courtesy and professionalism (Hollis, 2012). Unfortunate, even with its importance, toxicity has remained on the increase with culprits preying on their most vulnerable co-workers - leaving them feeling humiliated, belittled, and demoralized (Cipriano, 2011; Chuan, 2014).

Theoretical exploration

Two theories were adopted to explain the rise and implications of toxicity in HEIs; The Acquired Needs theory by David McClelland (1960) and The Theory of Organizational Justice, by Greenberg (1987).   The 'Acquired Needs' theory' therefore explains that individuals possessed three specific 'needs' that are acquired over time and shaped by life' experiences; 'the need for Power', 'the need for Achievement' and 'the need for Affiliation' - which everyone possessed, but, in varying enormities.   Accordingly, all needs, affected individual's comportment that ultimately influenced their style and work-related behavior, and can drive them into unacceptable work-related comportment (Joshua, 2014). The theory explains that 'the 'Power' driven individuals strove to influence and control and dominate others – which often makes them "silver bullets" and will do anything to access and retain power (Jeremy, 2011). On the other hand, 'Achievement' driven individuals will strive to outshine everyone at all costs - to remain outstanding, whether it involves mudslinging colleagues and grabbing their opportunities. Similarly, those who desired strong 'Affiliation' become 'people pleasers' and always take on more than what they can chew.   They often employ deceptive ways in order to remain more trusted and loved, and often act heinously - ending up brooding acrimony (Zellner, 2012). The 'Theory of Organizational Justice' by Greenberg (1987), on the other hand, explains how individuals react to organization injustices such as; procedural, distributive, relational and communication - that convey feelings of inequity. The theory assumes that such judgements influence individuals' behaviour and can lead to workplace deviance (Zellner, 2012; Reino and Maaja, 2010). Therefore, whereas the 'Needs' Theory explained personality of individuals, the theory of 'Organizational Justice', explains issues of equities. Applied logically and intelligibly, the two theories have the potential of eliminating toxicity to restore and promote collegiality in academic work environments.

Related literature

Universities are democratic institutions, governed through central bodies - principally, the Council which is the supreme governing body, the Senate which is the supreme academic board, and the general boards of colleges and faculties or schools - who are advised and supported by an extensive network of committees, boards and consortiums (Donohoo, 2017). Nonetheless, the governance arrangements have traditionally been entrenched in collegial model specifically to promote individual independence of thought and mutual respect among others (Eearman, 2014).   For a long time, collegiality has been embraced for recognizing the unique, complex and pluralistic nature of the concept of shared decision-making, given the universities' loose, ambiguous, and constantly changing nature (Dearlove, 1997). The uniqueness of university governance therefore, faculty are granted greater authority and responsibility than most employees in private industry or government services (Birnbaum, 1991 & Heller, 2001).

Along greater authority and responsibility, academics elect their leaders, with a strong emphasis on academic freedom and academic duty, as the means to produce output and control quality in research and education but also to make independent judgements on who should lead them (Leadership and Governance in Higher Education, 2011). The responsibility of decision-making entrusted in these academics therefore, rests on principles of collegiality and meritocracy (Bart, 2014), but also demands certain behavior and attitudes that should ideally commit individuals to regard members of the various constituencies as responsible for the success of the entire academic enterprise (Cipriano, 2017). Ideally, collegiality represents a reciprocal relationship among colleagues with a commitment to sustaining a positive and productive environment as critical for the progress and success of the university community – and, as a multi-dimensional construct that permeates the successful execution of all parts of the tripartite endeavors – of scholarship, learning, and service, where academics are obliged to promote each other (Norman, Ambrose, & Huston, 2006). Conceivably, the decision-making process of university leaders and peer-related responsibilities, are a prerequisite of collegial cooperation and recognized as significant, especially in activities that require input of colleagues such as; peer reviews, performance appraisals, contract renewals as well as program development (Mirza, 2017). According to (Cipriano, 2011), collegial cooperation has the potential to increase faculty engagement, as well as institutional stability. Considering the proportion of time academics spend at their places of work, there is greater need for collegiality to increase harmony and social relationships (Rosman *et al.*, 2013; Fiset and Robinson, 2018).

Exploring the rise and development of toxicity

The term 'toxicity' is used to denote 'extremely dreadful atmosphere' or 'intolerable circumstances' that threaten the survival of individuals, teams as well as institutions

(Herr *et al.*, 2017). Surprisingly, HEIs are not familiar with the phrase 'toxic' in relation to climate of a workplace - since it is often in referent to open vats of chemicals with poisonous vapors rising above them and employees laboring over or around them (Wright, 2009). Toxicity is often interchanged with terms such as 'weasel, negativity, difficult employees, intrigue, office politics, conspiracy, hazardous, vindictive, cynicism', etc. - but it can also be a combination of all those terms and many more (Housman and Minor, 2015). The word "toxic" comes from the Greek word, "toxikon" which means "arrow poison" – which in literal sense, means to kill (poison) in a targeted way using an arrow (Jeremy, 2011). Unfortunately, toxins may not be easily identified by those in positions of power, yet the effects can be detrimental.

In fact, toxicity manifests as a hidden stricture, but can potentially disable, frustrate and disengage the would-be promising staff (Cipriano, 2011). Although literature on causes of toxic environment was conflicting, Jeremy (2011), found excessive competition and scarcity of resources to be among the causes in most organisations. Ironically, toxicity has not left leaders untouched, yet it can get nasty with toxic individuals colluding with toxic leaders which results into toxic environments (Felps, Mitchell and Byington (2006). Lastly, although toxicity is real, there is a lack of empirical research (Hughes and Durand, 2014). Housman and Minor (2015), further recommend institutions to regularly conduct research so as to document the rates, nature and prevalence of toxic behaviours, while providing education and guidelines designed to reinstate collegial cooperation among the academia.

METHODOLOGY

The paper was anchored in a qualitative paradigm, where, an integrative synthesis was the most useful approach for such a controversial discussion. Scholars such as; Kothari, 2006; Creswell, 2012 and Gall, 1996 recommend an integrative approach to summarize literature as well as observing human behavior and provides vivid evidence that makes comparison and collaboration of findings and literature possible. Notably, this investigation did not employ a quantitative approach because of its sensitivity and nature of subjects. Review summaries were adopted for their usefulness in the analysis of documents, and also ensure internal and external validity of the various research findings (Ball, 1994; Bryman, 2004 and Kothari, 2006). Given its strengths, integrative synthesis was also employed to enable the researchers fully engage the texts and make critical judgement regarding the question at hand. Data was collected using documentary analyses of published scientific articles on the topic, and; interview guides to solicit information from key informants. Data were analyzed by use of thematic, content and narrative

techniques which are highly recommended by Creswell (2013).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A debate on collegiality has been championed by Cohen and March (2005), who articulated universities as 'organized anarchy' and used a 'garbage can model' to describe it. They and many other organizational theorists have extensively explicated the unique nature of universities, among others; 'an organizational body with competing interests' (Rosman *et al.*, 2013), 'objectives and outcomes that make it inappropriate - even disastrous, to foist cultures, values and practices from other organizations (Shattock, 2008). The garbage can model therefore, had earlier on been espoused by Birnbaum (1991), who explained how collegial forms of governance interact with other models of governance. Distinctly, the role of collegiality did not only stand out in establishing trust, independent thinking and shared roles, among colleagues (Dearlove, 1997, and King, 2004), but also encourages both autonomy and mutual respect with a purpose of increasing organizational efficacy, effectiveness and productivity.

The key question in this paper was to establish whether collegiality made useful contribution in HEIs and, results were overwhelmingly confirmatory considering that collegiality makes up a collegial decision making system concerning academic leaders and how they are appointed. In support of the above finding Tapper & Palfreyman (2010), found that the collegiate organizing principle, was critical in the election of leaders for nonpermanent position of service to the academic and research community. The significance of collegiality is also entrenched in the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (UOTIA) (2006) and the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) guidelines which highly recommend collegial governance in the operations of HEIs, especially human related decisions. Areas that require collegiality include; the appointment of a vice-chancellor done by the government, although the colleagues handle the preliminary part of nomination and election. This is in line with the formal structure making up a collegial decision-making system concerns academic leadership and how they are appointed. Collegiality was found to promote confidence of their colleagues elected by them (Leadership and Governance in Higher Education, 2011). The process covered the election of Directors, Principals, Deans, and Head of departments into their positions through collegiate endeavors. Hence, collegial decision making becomes significant given its essence of processes of forming, scrutinizing and arguing for the evidence base of decisions to be taken. Leadership on university organs, such as council, senate, academic board, staff development committee, finance committee, etc. also goes

through the collegial decision-making processes. Hence, the significance of collegiality cannot be overemphasized (Cipriano, 2017). We found that collegiality not only strengthens social relationship, but also promotes student's scholarship. Both the appointment of external and internal reviewers plus peer reviews, in the evaluation of faculty's scholarly works are all possible through collegial decision-making processes.

Collegiality is also significant peer reviews for purposes of personnel decisions, such as; promotions, contract renewal, research funding etc. (Lamont, 2009). There is no question therefore on the contribution of collegial cooperation. Ironically however, although there is unmatched compliance, in practice, these functions are marred with unequaled pomposity, which the authors found disheartening. Disappointingly, collegiality in this aspect was found distorted as there was increased sabotage, with many individuals acting deceptively, and with ulterior motives. Using an integrative synthesis, numerous fights, squabbles, backstabbing and vengeance during the process of leadership campaigns were also confirmed (Hall, Symes, 2005 & Barifaijo and Namara; 2016). Although, not widely researched, the area of 'co-supervision of graduate students' required collegial cooperation, yet, graduate students fell victims of toxic behaviour as a way of fighting their disliked colleagues. Hollis, (2012a) confirmed that co-supervision was often employed as a strategy to promote cooperation and synergy among staff, and also enable knowledge sharing to the advantage of both supervisors and supervisees as well as students. However, Gallagher (2004) found that the intention had been abused by toxins. Yet, ideally co-supervision promotes knowledge sharing and enhances quality of graduate because of its synergy – but instead, students have remained victims of toxins (Barifaijo and Namara, 2016; & Heller, 2001; Hollis, 2012). We found excessive conflicts among the supervisors, leaving the students in total confusion – with supervisors not only disagreeing but wrecking their colleagues' personas.

All these have gone unabated leaving students in total confusion (Heller, 2001). Curriculum development' is another aspect of collegiality that involves universities' which is central to the operations of any HEI and the principal concern of the faculty (Sahlin, 2012). Although academic programs were determined within the framework of established educational goals, faculty members have a professional responsibility to define and offer a curriculum of the highest academic quality (Shattock, 2008), as well as the primary responsibility for developing and making curricular recommendations to Senate. Notably, whereas curricula are initiated and developed by user departments (in collaboration) with colleagues, the finished curriculum becomes the 'product of the institution'. However, there were indications that the processes were often jeopardized by haters and saboteurs – citing rudimentary minutiae technical issues

– which was found to be a sigh of toxicity. Wolf, Perhats, Delao and Clark, 2016) too, found that whereas this activity was extremely critical institutional performance, indicators of sabotage had been visible - causing a lot of financial losses and frustration, as institutions looked on.

Findings indicated that competition for scares resources, unreasonable workloads, and performance based pay, which Crookston (2013), contests, citing personality as a source of toxic behavior. Although toxicity can be tolerated in business, it can be disastrous in higher education institutions because inputs, through-puts and outputs in these institutions are human. Donohoo (2017), calls for urgent so these institutions to not get trapped in a kind of magical thinking which fetishes competition in order to protect equity, enhance quality and protect institutions against risk. Scholars such as; Bar-David, 2018; Chung, 2018; & Thoroughgood et al., 2011, found various types of toxic personalities in these universities - which include; 'the impostors', ostracism, incivility, saboteurs and the rock stars. In Ugandan universities, indicators of toxic behaviour include; withholding critical information, shooting down colleagues' ideas in meetings, spreading unfounded rumors about others, refusing to help or give advice, or making others look bad in front of the supervisors.

Scholars such as; Nielsen and Knardahl, 2015; Jeremy, 2011 also found mysterious behavior during meetings such as, rejection of a colleague's submission or contribution, murmuring in a friend's ear to backbite a colleague or sometimes, passing chits to friends for purposes of discrediting a colleague. This was also found by Fiset and Robinson (2018), regarding destructive actions - physical, psychosocial or even spiritual which actually Housman and Minor (2015) found to diminish a colleague's meaning and purpose. Such behavior was found to originate from mean and vindictive group of employees who feed on each other's negativity and covertly bad mouth most change initiatives – filled with a nest of negativities (Bar-David 2018). The authors found grumbling and complaining to be commonplace, where – no effort by the institution made sense or satisfied them. Other forms of toxicity included sarcasm and cynicism which had become the order of the day. Such toxic behavior was ballooning distrust among colleagues – making them to avoid interactions with others and eventually withdrawing their labour. Like Felps et al. (2006), we found that gossipers derived pleasure from other people's misfortunes, and specifically targeted individuals - making them feel gross, which eventually hurts the entire team (Fiset and Robinson, 2018).

Research has found a myriad of causes of toxic behavior - which includes; a star system that widens inequities between the haves and have-nots and equates academic success with a reduction in teaching loads, service commitments, and other work on behalf of the institution (Twale & De Luca, 2008). The is also greater reliance on part-time faculty with little connection to the

departments that hire them who spend most of their time spreading rumors (Wright, 2009).   Other aspects will originate from tension between administrators and faculty often exacerbated by top-down methods of management and increased demands for narrowly defined measures of accountability and finally, inadequate salaries and benefits at many universities, deepening resentment, stoking competition for increasingly scarce material rewards, and adding new urgency to often longstanding rivalries and feuds (Wolf *et al.*, 2016).

Thompson (2008), hence recommended that universities should adopt a code of conduct for academics and avoid a corporate culture.   For this reason, Sutton (2007), argues that even in the extremely unlikely event that the bully is a genius, he still does more harm than good. Making exceptions for seemingly special cases can be damaging, not only in spawning imitators but in depressing the initiative of others. Seppälä *et al.* (2012) discourages negative interactions that could have five times the effect on mood than positive interactions because, a few demeaning creeps can overwhelm the warm feelings generated by hordes of civilized people - weeding out the gadflies, critics, and malcontents. Similarly, Harder *et al.* (2014), found that a toxic work environment negatively impacts the 'institution image" and makes it appear ineffective as well as destructive to its employees (Friedman, 2015). In fact, Lubit, 2004; and Lease, 2006; also found that when the environment becomes toxic, leaders and employees equally deliberately destroy the fabric of the institution. Unfortunately, without realizing its impact, toxicity will have spread like "Ebola" ultimately becoming contagious through the entire institution. Jeremy, 2011 & Rickless, 2011, found that it was difficult to point out the actual aspects of toxicity (Mirza, 2017) which has led to ad hoc treatment of 'symptoms' - instead of addressing real problems.

Culture clash, although not usually deliberate, was found to be a mismatch on the same team or a mismatch with the institutional culture.   Goldman (2006) found that although 'Stalin' is a metaphor, 'Stalin-like' figure is common in many institutions. He argues that although, they might not have a senior role, they wield power and influence through years of service and competence. Such individuals were found present in the Ugandan institutions. Sadly, often management trusts that Stalin has the institution's best interests at heart, oblivious to the harm being caused (Hollis, 2012), because many toxins receive positive performance evaluations from supervisors and achieve high levels of career success. It was found that such individuals succeeded because they charm supervisors and manipulated others to get ahead, even while they abuse co-workers and subordinates. This was exacerbated by internal struggles between individuals' unmet needs and compensatory methods to meet those needs get incorporated into their behavior – leading to toxicity. Similarly, White (Jeremy), found that

individuals who were mistreated become toxic unconsciously, in order to meet the needs from previous developmental stages and correct the pain and internal conflict of a previous experience (Posner, 2010). Gradually, this learned behavior becomes a coping mechanism to meet the immediate needs of their internal conflict, that effects their interpersonal skills in relationships and in society (Kusy and Holloway (2009). These learned behavior was found to be derived from observing and integrating from other role models at an impressionable age that attempts to repair their injured selves from their own experiences or under developmental stage(s) (Levine and Sibary, 2001 & Stark, 2003).

Self-Inflation or a swollen sense of self" with their loud and pushy acting behavior which make them behave unrealistically with a sense of their own self-importance was found to lead to toxic behavior because such individuals continuously seek praise and the good judgment of others, yet they too, lack these qualities (Hollis, 2012). Such behavior often backfires because it was not easy to fool others and make them believe that they are not especially without visible accomplishments and success (Jeremy, 2011). Yet, there were those who 'camouflage', and surprisingly some of the supervisors are incapable of recognizing that they have a self-esteem problem. Jeremy (2011), argues that such individual's social relationships will inevitably become very toxic**,** as others distance themselves– thereby exacerbating toxin's low self-esteem.

We found that reactions and responses to a toxic environment varies from individual to individual, and from institution to institution, because the wrinkle of gauging individual' level of self-deception about their abilities (Yang and Treadway, 2018). Like Yang and Treadway, institutions rewarded more-deceived than accomplished individuals (Krook, 2014), hence, deceptive and incompetent people were more likely to access promotion over their more competent peers, because, leaders are very easily swayed by others' confidence even when that confidence is unjustified (Lubit, 2004). Similarly, Nielsen and Knardahl (2015), found that individuals who constantly displayed too much confidence were often given an inordinate amount of weight, than the accomplished ones with humility. Consequently, Reino and Maaja (2010), recommend that institutions take individuals' confidence with a grain of salt. Notably, sometimes, confidence can be a sign of a person's actual abilities, although it is often not a very good sign. This is because some individuals displayed confidence in their abilities but in reality, they lacked true skills or required competence which is the reason they wanted to sabotage others (McLeod, 2012; & Steele, 2011).

Consequently, institutions have lost productivity due to toxicity and have continued to distract academics' levels of engagement and positively motivated staff have drifted away. In other instances, some professionals have

developed stress and other related clinical depression requiring treatment, which others fear of being the next target (Steele, 2011; Sutton, 2007; Tarraf, 2012). The danger of toxicity had heightened and even impacted overall employees' health - instigating lethal fatigue, depression, and even more serious ailments such hypertension, high blood pressure and even diabetes (Steele, 2011). According to Wright (2009), weeks of stress can cause reversible damage to brain cells, and months of stress can permanently destroy them. Employees might suffer from some physiological effects like changes in blood pressure or cholesterol levels, increases in muscle tension, and heightened awareness of the environment (Housman and Minor, 2015). Similarly, excessive stress was found by Tarraf (2012) to lead to psychological effects, such as; impaired judgment, irritability, anxiety, anger, an inability to concentrate and memory loss.

The initial reactions of toxicity have been found to be disbelief, bewilderment, self-doubt, confusion - which might be followed by a wide array of coping mechanisms, but which responses might take a toll on individual academics as well as their close associates, and can really bring activities to a standstill in various ways (Sutton, 2007). In fact, we found that institutions had failed to attract students because of excessive bickering, disputes, injustices and disrespect for one another, but also affected effectiveness, efficiency, quality, staff commitment. Scholars such as Colbert *et al.* (2004), shared similar views and add that although institution may not shut down because of toxicity, the repercussions could be more disastrous than if it were closed, and then re-opened with new strategies. Conversely, Lencionin (2002), found that 'anarchism' did not only demoralize current or discourage new staff, but it definitely had become a threat to potential students, parents, partnerships as well as service providers. Because of such culture, staff have withdrawn their labor. Although physical disengagement was easy to deal with, emotional or psychological disengagement could be catastrophic, because, the aggrieved persons may be physically present in the institution, but emotionally absent (Twale & De Luca, 2008). Such trends, even with one or two staff can seriously damage the reputation of an institution. Consequently, whether it's negativity, cruelty, 'victim syndrome', or just plain craziness, toxic people were found to drive rational brains into stressed-out states that must be avoided at all costs, as Sergio *et al.* (2013) argued, stress can have a lasting negative impact not only on individual brains, but on the entire employee and the stability of the company. Findings indicate that while toxic employees are one part of the equation, leadership plays a larger role in addressing the issue. When leaders refuse to do anything about the employee, it places a large tax on organizational morale, team engagement and productivity (Qian *et al.,* 2017). Yet, leaders remain reluctant in addressing such mayhem. Pickering *et al.*

(2017), found three big reasons why some leaders choose not to address the issue. First and foremost, leaders empathize with the employee and believe they are honoring the "unique" skills they bring to the table. Secondly, employee is highly regarded for their intellectual skills and is a high performer or is regarded highly for their specific expertise and thirdly, leaders fail to recognize that clear mindsets and cultural behaviors are violated by toxic behavior in favor of short-term gain in performance. He argues that the three variables of morale, engagement and productivity are essential for university leaders. These skills are critical to avert excessive stress.

In fact, exposure to even a few days of stress compromises the effectiveness of neurons in the hippocampus, an important brain area responsible for reasoning and memory. Consequently, toxic people don't just make you miserable - they're really hard on ones' brain and actually defy logic (Nielsen and Knardahl, 2015). The caution institutions to take heed to avoid losing money as exemplary staff resign – requiring institutions to hire and train new ones. This is because, negative working relationships will ultimately affect retention of high-quality staff – leaving behind only toxic ones who will keep terrorizing new comers with their toxic behaviour.

Job burnout was also found to be one outcome of a toxic workplace environment and is characterized by emotional exhaustion, low motivation, and commitment that ultimately leads towards low productivity (Mikkelsen *et al.*, 2017). Inevitably, job burnout refers to the emotional detachment of an employee from his/her task, which creates dissatisfaction with personal and professional life, achievements and work-life conflicts (Lubit, 2004). A burned-out employee manifests withdrawal behavior through absenteeism, increased leave and constantly being late. This will ultimately affect turnover. Employees who experience job burnout, usually suffer from mental and health problems, including depression, anxiety, tension, stress, work overload, sleeping problems, and muscle pain. This substantially reduces their ability to function in life. Job burnout is basically a syndrome that can be created due to situational and individual factors. This syndrome causes depersonalization, poor self-assessment, self-underestimation, high stress, and negative job outcomes (Jeremy, 2011).

Finally, toxicity was found to affect 'productivity' because employees who enjoy their work environments are more engaged, more productive, happier, and healthier (Housman and Minor, 2015). Therefore, it makes perfect sense to generate a workplace that is conducive to the well-being of the workforce and organizations should make efforts to provide a better environment for employees so that they may feel comfortable and committed to their jobs in order to increase productivity (Hollis, 2012). Although productivity

can be dealt with, quality may be tricky once it gets lost.

Hence, quality was found to be another aspect where toxicity plays dirty (Hughes and Durand, 2014). This is because, for an institution, it takes a long time to build a positive perception among others, and this is true of an individual as well (Herr *et al.*, 2017). Amazingly, even though it takes time to build a reputation, it doesn't take long to lose it, therefore, institutions may not need very many people who are bad-mouthing a program before everybody begins to doubt the institution (Goldman, 2009). On the other hand, our society cannot afford to lose or squander or squelch the intellectual capital that resides in colleges and universities. Entire societies are poorer if we have toxicity that exists in a lab, classroom, department, or program.

As a result of such conditions send them into panic for fear of cynical and toxic people, lose trust, become angry and withhold time, energy and talent, not forgetting deep and pervasive unhappiness (Fiset and Robinson, 2018). The situation can even become more disastrous if you share space with this toxic co-worker, because they will go out of their way to sabotage anything you're trying to get done or even put obstacles in your way, and spread rumors (Goldman, 2009), including harboring personal vendetta which erupt with time. Sometimes these toxins block their colleagues' promotions because toxins usually think that they are more deserving and they are out to make others miserable through spinning negative campaign against their colleagues (Lease, 2006). Although this kind of behavior can be dealt with in business, it can overturn every endeavour in a university where, not only repetition of a university, but also the quality of teaching, quality of supervision, quality of research outputs, quality and sustainability of collaborations etc. are all at stake (Mirza, 2017). Goldman (2009) found that toxicity leads to more conflict among each other, less cohesion and trust, which decreases the ability to solve problems and overall team performance. This level of disruption can be difficult to resolve if the negativity is prolonged or is not addressed. Such major ripple effects from toxic employees include; turnover, reduced motivation, intentions to leave (Lencionin, 2002).

CONCLUSION

Collegiality works when the goal of work is recognized as more important than the personal ambitions of staff, because it helps to facilitate the honest sharing of weaknesses, as well as strengths, to develop the trust needed so that staff know the limits within which they can act for each other. Individuals benefit by learning from each other, and sharing responsibility for decisions. However, collegiality cannot be imposed, but that staff at all levels can be motivated by appropriate rewards. Irrefutably therefore, if collegiality is upheld, HEIs would not only achieve unequalled quality and productivity, but

acknowledged that toxicity is present in all institutions. Although its interpretation remains a puzzle and that the contributions of 'collegiality' cannot be over amplified, because it has been manipulated in various ways. Unfortunately, toxins are blissfully unaware of the negative impact that they have on those around them, but also - others seem to derive satisfaction from creating chaos and pushing other people's buttons. Most toxins exhibit two faces; one to the ones they haunt, and the ones they love but also the unsuspecting leaders. Unavailability of research on the magnitude of implications of a toxic work environment, especially in higher education, it is unclear whether toxicity is getting worse in academia. It has been noted that higher education has become more competitive and hierarchical which also facilitates greater levels of toxicity. Yet, without documenting the rates of toxicity in academic contexts we may not discern whether the problem is getting worse. While competition for limited research resources may lead to displays of power and hidden agendas that can make the wider academic context even more toxic. Furthermore, the "publish or perish" mentality, combined with teaching students and grant submission targets contribute to inherent role conflict. Such daily demands inhibit the ability of some academics to cope with bullying, and demands cause stress which may lead otherwise rational people to engage in bullying as the spiral of work pressure increases. Hence, toxic behavior – although easily identifiable, is a difficult phenomenon to deal with, because of its enigmas manifestation and the actors' intentions as well as the 'hard-to-measure' indicators. Further, there was inconclusive empirical research to establish the magnitude of toxicity, which made personnel decisions difficult.

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