

# Toxic Leadership and Followers' Work Motivation: An Angolan Study\*

## Liderazgo tóxico y motivación laboral de subordinados: Un estudio angoleño

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### ABSTRACT

Toxic leadership has detrimental effects on subordinates and has been associated with several negative outcomes in organizations. This research aims to study the effects of toxic leadership dimensions (abusive supervision, authoritarianism, narcissism, self-promotion and unpredictability) on followers' work motivation by using Self-Determination Theory to approach work motivation. Angola faces significant social development challenges that are dependent upon the quality of leadership. Two hundred and nineteen people, aged 30 and 65 years, participated in this research from Angolan organizations in different industry sectors. The Toxic Leadership Scale and Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale were used. Correlation and regression analyses were performed. The narcissism dimension of toxic leadership and the identified regulation of work motivation had the highest scores. Leaders' narcissism was positively correlated with external material and introjected motivation; self-promotion with introjected and intrinsic motivation. All dimensions of toxic leadership were positively correlated with amotivation. Finally, abusive supervision negatively predicts introjected regulation, and narcissism predicts positively material regulation of work motivation. These relationships were interpreted as the effect of toxic leadership dimensions on work motivation dimensions. Leadership development programs should focus on preventing toxic leadership in order to positively impact the followers' autonomous regulation.

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### Keywords

toxic leadership; work motivation; self-determination theory; toxic triangle of leadership.

### RESUMEN

El liderazgo tóxico tiene efectos perjudiciales sobre los subordinados y se ha asociado con varios resultados negativos en las organizaciones. Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo estudiar los efectos de las dimensiones del liderazgo tóxico (supervisión abusiva, autoritarismo, narcisismo, autopromoción e imprevisibilidad) en la motivación laboral

de los seguidores, utilizando la Teoría de la Autodeterminación. Angola enfrenta importantes desafíos de desarrollo social que dependen de la calidad del liderazgo. Participaron 219 personas (30 y 65 años), de organizaciones angoleñas de varios sectores de actividad. Se utilizaron la Escala de Liderazgo Tóxico y la Escala Multidimensional de Motivación Laboral. Se realizaron análisis de correlación y regresión. La dimensión narcisismo y la regulación identificada de la motivación laboral obtuvieron las puntuaciones más altas. El narcisismo de los líderes se correlacionó positivamente con el material externo y la motivación introyectada; autopromoción con motivación inyectada e intrínseca. Todas las dimensiones del liderazgo tóxico se correlacionaron positivamente con la desmotivación. La supervisión abusiva predice negativamente la motivación introyectada, y el narcisismo predice positivamente la regulación externa material de la motivación laboral. Estas relaciones se interpretaron como el efecto de las dimensiones tóxicas del liderazgo sobre las dimensiones de la motivación laboral. Los programas de desarrollo de liderazgo deben enfocarse en prevenir el liderazgo tóxico para lograr un impacto positivo en la regulación autónoma de los seguidores.

**Palabras clave**

liderazgo tóxico; motivación laboral; teoría de la autodeterminación; triángulo tóxico del liderazgo.

On his visit to Ghana in 2014, Barack Obama said that “Africa doesn’t need strong men, but strong institutions”, reminding us that people, *per se*, do not contribute to institutions’ success, but the kind of interaction between people within and between teams, departments, institutions/organizations, regions, countries and continents does so. In this context, enlightened leadership can bring people together in order to achieve goals for the common good. Strong institutions are those where common good interests (of a strong institution) prevail over individual interests (of a strong people).

Angola has noteworthy development challenges (Kamoche et al., 2004) that are cause and consequence of leadership issues. The country has been colonized by Portugal almost for five centuries and was one of the last African countries to gain its independence, in 1975. The country faced about 30 years of civil war that ended in 2002. After that, the country had a staggering economy growth based on oil production until 2016 when the oil crisis decreased it significantly. In 2005 its gross GDP growth was 14.9% and in 2016 was -3.6% according to the 2016

Angola Economic Report (Universidade Católica de Angola, 2017). After the Ukrainian war outbreak, Angolan oil production raised and the country became the biggest oil producer in Africa by July 2022. Its Human Development Index in 2021 was 0.586 (United Nations Development Programme, 2022; considered low and occupying the 148th position out of 188 countries evaluated by the United Nations). Finally, according to Transparency International (2016, quoted by UCAN, 2017), Angola has one of the highest Corruption Perception Index with 18 points (16th position out of 176 countries).

A major lack of scientific research in the domain of organizational psychology and human resources management, together with acknowledgment of the abovementioned challenges for organizational leadership, means it is urgent to study how leadership may be hindering organizational success, in general, and followers’ work motivation in particular. Therefore, this study aims to describe and characterize to what extent toxic leadership and its dimensions are associated with followers’ work motivation in Angolan organizations.

Around the world there has been a focus on studying the dark side of leadership and its effects (e.g., Burton et al., 2014; Elangovan & Xie, 2000; Gabriel, 2016; Mahlangu, 2014; Padilla et al., 2007; Tepper, 2000; 2007). Various conceptualizations have been formulated, such as the dark side of charisma (Conger, 1990; Hogan & Hogan, 2001), petty tyranny (Ashforth, 1997), abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000), destructive leadership (Einarsen et al., 2002), workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 2003), narcissistic leadership (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985) and authoritarian leadership (Cheng et al., 2004).

Several anecdotal accounts of the dark side of leadership portray examples of leaders who reprimand, belittle, ridicule and bully their subordinates, hold them accountable for roles that are not part of their job tasks/functions, do not respect their right to have a different opinion, and are intransigent in their expectations of subordinates’ behavior. Some leaders demand obedience and loyalty beyond what is reasonable, others use subordinates for self-enhancement,

use them for their personal interests and lack empathy and interpersonal sensitivity (Schmidt, 2008).

Conceptualization of toxic leadership gathers contributions from all these approaches. One of the most consensual definitions of toxic leadership has been introduced by Lipman-Blumen (2005), refers to the enactment of destructive behaviors and display of dysfunctional personal characteristics, which inflicts serious and enduring damages to followers and organizations.

Schmidt (2008) mentioned that leaders' behaviors, to be deemed as toxic 1) need to be intentional, destructive behaviors enacted upon subordinates, 2) include expressions of abusive supervision, narcissism and authoritarianism, and, 3) victimize (at least) a subset of subordinates. This author conceptualized toxic leadership in five dimensions: 1) abusive supervision: to what extent the leader enacts hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors; 2) authoritarian leadership: leader's behavior that claims large amount of authority and control and demands unquestionable obedience from subordinates; 3) narcissism: self-centered and selfish behaviors; 4) self-promotion: self-promoting behaviors designed to influence or flatter others, usually those in authority positions; and 5) unpredictability: mood and behavior instability.

Very few studies on toxic leadership have been made in Africa. There are very few examples in South Africa (e.g., Van Niekerk, 2014; Mahlangu, 2014) and Nigeria (Gabriel, 2016). Considering that Angola has a specific culture (including high power distance and high indulgence) and that to our knowledge no studies relating toxic leadership and work motivation were undertaken in this country so far, the research on this subject is particularly relevant.

Toxic leadership styles have been associated with organizational, group and individual negative outcomes. In the U.S. the estimated indirect financial effects of these styles cost \$23.8 billion annually (e.g., due to employee absenteeism, employee turnover and lowered effectiveness; Tepper et al., 2006). It has been

associated with lower levels of employees' health (e.g., Dyck, 2001), higher rates of absenteeism (Macklem, 2005), lower performance and groupthink (Wilson-Starks, 2003, quoted by Schmidt, 2008), higher turnover (Flynn, 1999; Macklem, 2005), lower job satisfaction (Tepper et al., 2004), lower commitment (Khan et al., 2021), lower levels of perception of interactional justice (Aryee et al., 2007) and organizational commitment (Tepper et al., 2008), levels of organizational citizenship behaviors (Gregory et al., 2009), and higher rates of counterproductive subordinate behaviors (Gabriel, 2016; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Tepper et al., 2008). A systematic meta-analysis of destructive leadership was provided by Schyns and Schilling (2013), in which they concluded on the existence of negative correlations between destructive leadership and negative attitudes towards the leader, well-being and individual performance, and positive correlations with counterproductive behaviors, turnover intention and resistance towards the leader.

Einarsen et al. (2007), in their conceptualization of destructive leadership, mention leaders' behaviors that have a negative impact on the organization and on followers. Behaviors against followers hinder organizational interests indirectly through the negative impact they have on followers' motivation, well-being and satisfaction.

In this research, we approach work motivation through the Self-determination Theory (SDT). Ryan and Deci (2000) mention that 'motivation concerns energy, direction, persistence and equifinality all aspects of activation and intention' (p. 69). Work motivation is also the process or processes behind the worker's intention to put their personal resources into performing work tasks. A basic assumption of this theory is that human beings are motivated by three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Naturally, leadership plays a central role in providing the conditions that enable the fulfillment of these needs, especially through inspiration, support, positive role modeling and

empowerment, which is different from what toxic leadership generally fosters.

SDT focuses on how people manage their motivation towards self-determination from a state of amotivation and external regulation to internal regulation. The external regulation of motivation at work may be related to material (e.g., salary and benefits) and social dimensions (e.g., others' acknowledgment). Other intermediate levels of regulation include introjected (e.g., acting to avoid shame and guilt), identified (e.g., identification with the work is through an instrumental value) and integrated (e.g., feeling of congruence between the work and self). Finally, intrinsic motivation is related to flow and inner satisfaction (Gagné et al., 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000), which has been paralleled across cultures, namely in South Africa (Renard & Snelgar, 2016).

This research aims to contribute to understanding how the undermining effect of toxic leadership and its dimensions over followers' work motivation happens, specifically in an Angolan sample, and therefore, contribute to developing ways to prevent the emergence and the maintenance of this type of leadership. Specifically, this study aims to understand how the toxic leadership of Schmidt's (2008) model can predict work motivation in Angolan workers in private and public organizations regarding the several dimensions of the self-determination theory concerning work motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Our general hypothesis is that toxic leadership and its dimensions predict negatively work motivation (regarding external and internally regulated motivation).

Regarding the effect of toxic leadership on followers' motivation, little research has been carried out, but the study by Elangovan and Xie (2000) reported lower levels of followers' motivation when subject to the leader's use of coercive power. Deci et al. (1989) mentioned that when leaders supervise their followers' work extremely closely and do not give them enough support and autonomy, exclude them from decision-making, and pressurize them to think, feel and behave in a certain way, they lower followers' self-determination and therefore

their motivation, creativity and innovation. Both transformational and transactional leadership styles, but especially the former, have been associated with the fulfillment of basic needs (Hetland et al., 2011). On the opposite way, Sánchez-Cardona et al. (2018) have shown that the intellectual stimulation provided by leadership influences team learning and team positive affect, which has the potential to enhance team performance. An Indonesian study (Wolor et al., 2022) showed that hindered job satisfaction and work motivation. In a Portuguese study (Semedo et al., 2022) using Schindt's model and SDT, amotivation and extrinsic work motivation were more correlated with higher toxic leadership dimensions. Finally, a Turkish study (Koç et al., 2022) showed that toxic leadership generated emotional exhaustion, which is lessened by the moderating effect of intrinsic motivation.

This research can contribute to understand how the undermining effect of toxic leadership and its dimensions over followers' work motivation occurs, specifically in Angola and, therefore, can help to develop ways to prevent the emergence and the maintenance of this type of leadership.

## Method

### *Sample*

Two hundred and nineteen people participated in this study, aged between 30 and 65 years ( $M = 32.89$ ;  $SD = 9.52$ ), 52.50% were men. Of these 219 people, nine were not considered in the correlation and regression analysis, because they did not answer the whole work motivation questionnaire.

According to Table 1, most participants have a college degree ( $n = 95$ ; 43.4%) and 19.6% have a high school degree ( $n = 19$ ).

Table 1  
Participants' educational level

Educational level	N	%
Primary school	2	0.9
Middle school	3	1.4
Secondary school	26	11.9
University attendance	95	43.4
Bachelor's degree	43	19.6
Post-graduation	1	0.5
Master's degree	15	6.8
Doctorate degree	4	1.8
Missing	30	13.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>100</b>

As seen in Table 2, participants are mostly Angolan (n = 192; 87.7%).

Table 2  
Participants' citizenship

Nationality	N	%
Angolan	192	87.7
Sao Tome and Principe	1	0.5
Brazilian	11	5
Angolan and Portuguese	5	2.3
Mozambican and Portuguese	1	0.5
Missing	9	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>100</b>

The largest group of participants worked in education and science (n = 89; 40.6%), followed by miscellaneous (n = 59; 27.1%). This category includes 18.4% (n = 40) of participants working in construction, banking, real estate, services and management consultancy, electricity and water production and distribution, manufacturing industry, accommodation and catering, oil and derivate products, military and security, justice, public administration, mining, arts and creative industries, agriculture, livestock, and fishing, and

8.7% (n = 19) of participants who referred to miscellaneous in general.

Table 3  
Participants' organizational sector

Sector of operation	N	%
Education and science	89	40.6
Miscellaneous	59	27.1
Human health and social support	15	6.8
Information technology and communications	14	6.4
Retail trade	13	5.9
Transport and storage	11	5
Missing	18	8.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>100</b>

### Instruments

In order to assess toxic leadership, we used the Toxic Leadership Scale (2008; TLS), which has been translated and validated in Portuguese (Portugal) by Mónico et al. (2019). The recommended international guidelines were considered in this translation. TLS has 30 items, using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 6 (totally agree). It assesses 5 dimensions, as follows: abusive supervision (7 items), authoritarian leadership (6 items), self-promotion (5 items) and unpredictability (7 items).

Motivation at work was assessed with the Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (Gagné et al., 2010; MWMS), which is based on the SDT of work motivation. It was validated in Portuguese by Dos Santos et al. (2022) having shown good psychometric properties and keeping the same factorial structure as the original. MWMS has 19 items, with a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Not true at all) to 7 (totally true). It encompasses the following dimensions: amotivation (3 items), external regulation (3 items), external regulation, social (3 items), introjected regulation (4 items),

identified regulation (3 items) and intrinsic motivation (3 items).

Socio-demographical data was collected regarding participants' age, gender, schooling and the organization's work sector/business.

*Questionnaires' psychometric properties*

TLS sub-scales have adequate internal consistency levels: abusive supervision  $\alpha = 0.884$ ; authoritarian leadership  $\alpha = 0.740$ ; narcissism  $\alpha = 0.831$ ; self-promotion  $\alpha = 0.823$  and unpredictability  $\alpha = 0.892$ . In Portugal's study (Mónico et al., 2019) Cronbach Alphas were: 0.87; 0.92; 0.91; 0.91 and 0.95, respectively.

Confirmatory Factorial Analysis (CFA) was performed on the TLS data. An initial model (Model 1) was tested using the original structure, which was revealed to be modest (as shown in Table 4). Considering that item 8 had a low loading ( $\lambda = 0.18$ ), using Model 2 (eliminating this item), adjustment indices improved: Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.899), Parsimony Comparative Fit Index (PCFI = 0.758), Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.065) and Akaike Information Criterion (AIC = 913.092). Using Marôco's (2011) recommendations, we considered the following values that indicate a good fit: CFI above 0.90; PCFI above 0.60;  $\chi^2/gl < 2$  and RMSEA under 0.06;  $p$  [RMSEA  $\leq$  0.05]. Lastly, the model was adjusted using modification indices by Lagrange Multipliers (LM), considering that trajectories and/or correlations with LM  $> 11$  ( $p < 0.001$ ) are indicative of a significant variation in the model's quality.

**Table 4**  
*Adjustment indices of Confirmatory Factorial Analysis of Toxic Leadership Scale*

<b>Model</b>	<b><math>\chi^2/gl</math></b>	<b>CFI</b>	<b>PCFI</b>	<b>RMSEA</b>	<b>AIC</b>
Model 1	1939	0.893	0.758	0.066	967.827
Model 2	1948	0.899	0.758	0.065	913.092

MWMS sub-scales also have adequate internal consistency: amotivation  $\alpha = 0.839$ , external material regulation  $\alpha = 0.762$ , external social regulation  $\alpha = 0.833$ , introjected regulation  $\alpha = 0.784$ , identified regulation  $\alpha = 0.850$  and intrinsic motivation  $\alpha = 0.850$ . In a Portuguese sample (Dos Santos et al., 2022) Cronbach Alphas were: 0.913; 0.885; 0.843; 0.843; 0.806; 0.856 and 0.917, respectively; and in a Brazilian sample: 0.856; 0.801; 0.801; 0.874; 0.825; 0.870 and 0.902, respectively (Dos Santos et al., 2022).

A CFA was also performed on the MWMS data. An initial model (Model 1) was tested using the original structure, which proved to be modest. Considering modification indices above 11, some adjustments were made to the original model: external social and material regulation factors were correlated; introjected, identified, and intrinsic motivation factors were correlated; errors 12 and 19, as well as 10 and 11 were also correlated. Model fit indices improved in Model 2 (Table 5).

**Table 5**  
*Adjustment indices of Confirmatory Factorial Analysis of MWMS*

<b>Model</b>	<b><math>\chi^2/gl</math></b>	<b>CFI</b>	<b>PCFI</b>	<b>RMSEA</b>	<b>AIC</b>
Model 1	3.778	0.773	0.687	0.115	652.259
Model 2	1.988	0.923	0.783	0.069	380.304

Both questionnaires used in this study have adequate psychometric characteristics in our Angolan sample, which forms a contribution to research in the domain of management-related sciences, considering the great lack of local research that can theoretically and practically inform academics and practitioners.

Considering the TLS psychometric results, regarding item 8, it seems plausible that it has low psychometric properties due to translation issues, because the word "controla" (to control) is used in Angola with a different semantic perspective than in Portugal. In Angola, it is regularly used as a synonym of "ver" (to see), while in Portugal it is used as a synonym of strict monitoring. This

problem did not arise in the previous phases when the Portuguese translation was checked.

*Procedure*

In order to fulfill ethical procedures, before the study was conducted, authorization was obtained from the Ethical Board of an Angolan university. Before data collection, a pilot study was conducted in order to assess the Portuguese translation's suitability to the Portuguese of Angola. Firstly, the translation was analyzed by two Angolan senior researchers in Work and Organizational Psychology (WOP). Then, the questionnaires were applied to 43 Angolan undergraduate students of WOP. No major difficulties regarding the suitability of the Portuguese translation were found.

Considering that significant difficulty to have an Angolan organization to authorize us to collect data related to our study, we used a snowball sampling. Data collection was carried out by undergraduate students of WOP in their network (n = 166; 76.1%). Students received appropriate training concerning both ethical and technical procedures. In parallel, data was collected on-line using www.surveymonkey.com platform (n = 52; 23.9%) and possible participants were invited to fill in the instruments after being appropriately informed. In all the data collection process, informed consent was obtained and participants were informed about data confidentiality and anonymity.

Data was analyzed with SPSS 24.0 for descriptive statistics, correlations and regression analysis and AMOS 24.0 for confirmatory factor analysis. A conference was held in the University to disclose the results to the academic community, and to those participants who showed interest in receiving information about the results of the study.

**Results**

*Descriptive results*

According to the data shown in Table 6, regarding toxic leadership, the narcissism dimension had the highest score (M = 3.23; SD = 1.31) and abusive supervision the lowest (M = 2.5; SD = 1.31). The remaining sub-scales had values below the median point of the scale (ranging from 1 to 6). Regarding MWMS dimensions, the amotivation sub-scale had the lowest score (M = 1.43; SD = 0.92) and identified regulation the highest (M = 5.56; SD = 1.48).

**Table 6**  
*Descriptive statistics of TLS and MWMS*

	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>
<b>TLS</b>	Abusive supervision	2.5	1.19	1	6
	Authoritarian leadership	2.87	1.05	1	6
	Narcissism	3.23	1.31	1	6
	Self-promotion	2.77	1.25	1	6
	Unpredictability	2.89	1.29	0	6
	Global Toxic Leadership	2.86	1.05	1.17	5.77
<b>MWMS</b>	Amotivation	1.43	0.92	0.67	7
	External regulation, social	2.4	1.51	1	7
	External regulation, material	3.56	1.71	1	7
	Introjected regulation	4.64	1.59	1	7
	Identified regulation	5.56	1.48	1	7
	Intrinsic	5.02	1.63	1	7

*Correlations between toxic leadership and followers' work motivation*

Considering the aim to analyze the contribution of toxic leadership dimensions to followers' work motivation, firstly, we performed a Pearson's correlation analysis and then a multivariate regression analysis. The correlation matrix between variables is displayed in Table 7.

Amotivation is positive and significantly correlated with all dimensions of toxic leadership: general toxic leadership (r = 0.317; p < 0.001), abusive supervision (r = 0.302; p < 0.001); authoritarian leadership (r = 0.246; p < 0.001),

narcissism ( $r = 0.239; p < 0.001$ ), self-promotion ( $r = 0.317; p < 0.001$ ) and unpredictability ( $r = 0.277; p < 0.001$ ). It seems clear that toxic leadership has a general negative effect on work motivation.

The narcissism dimension of toxic leadership is positively related to material external regulation ( $r = 0.194; p < 0.05$ ) and introjected regulation of work motivation ( $r = 0.192; p < 0.05$ ). In practice, the higher the perception of leaders' narcissistic behaviors, the higher the levels of valorization of material and introjected (acting motivated by shame and guilt) motivators by followers.

The self-promotion dimension has a positive correlation with introjected regulation ( $r = 0.190; p < 0.01$ ) and intrinsic motivation ( $r = 0.149, p < 0.05$ ). The more workers perceive their leader's behaviors as a way to enhance themselves, the more followers' work motivation is introjected and/or intrinsic.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, unpredictability is positive and significantly correlated with amotivation. The more followers perceive their leaders as unpredictable, the more they feel amotivated to work.

**Table 7**  
Pearson correlation matrix between toxic leadership and work motivation

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Total toxic leadership	<i>r</i> 1											
2. Abusive supervision	<i>r</i> 0.884**	1										
3. Authoritarian leadership	<i>r</i> 0.846**	0.713**	1									
4. Narcissism	<i>r</i> 0.826**	0.627**	0.661**	1								
5. Self-promotion	<i>r</i> 0.861**	0.669**	0.659**	0.724**	1							
6. Unpredictability	<i>r</i> 0.882**	0.742**	0.658**	0.611**	0.703**	1						
7. Amotivation	<i>r</i> 0.317**	0.302**	0.246**	0.239**	0.295**	0.277**	1					
8. External regulation-social	<i>r</i> 0.086	0.028	0.015	0.131	0.09	0.104	0.335**	1				
9. External regulation-material	<i>r</i> 0.132	0.102	0.092	0.194**	0.078	0.107	0.072	0.435**	1			
10. Introjected regulation	<i>r</i> 0.131	0.023	0.095	0.192**	0.190**	0.097	-0.052	0.13	0.365**	1		
11. Identified regulation	<i>r</i> 0.059	0.736	0.169	0.005	0.006	0.159	0.45	0.061	0	0.568**	1	
12. Intrinsic motivation	<i>r</i> 0.119	0.056	0.133	0.092	0.149*	0.102	-0.075	0.067	0.191**	0.476**	0.582**	1
	<i>p</i> 0.084	0.422	0.054	0.186	0.03	0.139	0.281	0.334	0.006	0.000	0	0

*Regression Analyses: Examining toxic leadership as a predictor of followers' work motivation*

Separate multiple regression analyses were performed for each of the work motivation dimensions as dependent variables (see Table 8). The regression of amotivation on the model yielded significant effects for the final model,  $F(5,209) = 4.935; p < 0.01; R^2 = 0.108$ , but no specific significant relations with toxic leadership dimensions were found.

All the other regression models were not significant. External social regulation:  $F(5,209) = 1.579; p = 0.168; R^2 = 0.037$ . Material regulation:  $F(5,209) = 2.068; p = 0.071; R^2 = 0.048$ . Introjected regulation:  $F(5,209) = 3.104; p = 0.010; R^2 = 0.071$ . Identified regulation  $F(5,209) = 0.741; p = 0.594; R^2 = 0.018$ . Intrinsic motivation:  $F(5,209) = 1.464; p = 0.203; R^2 = 0.035$ .

Among the results there are two significant models: narcissism predicted material regulation of work motivation ( $\beta = 0.294; p = 0.006$ ) and abusive supervision predicted negatively introjected regulation of work motivation ( $\beta = -.246; p = 0.033$ ).

**Table 8**  
Standardized regression coefficients to predict followers' work motivation

Variable	Amotivation	Social regulation	Material regulation	Introjected regulation	Identified regulation	Intrinsic motivation
Abusive Supervision	0.17	-0.119	0.009	-0.246*	-0.09	-0.152
Authoritarian Leadership	-0.005	-0.138	-0.048	-0.003	-0.003	0.139
Narcissism	-0.007	0.194	0.294**	0.183	0.007	-0.05
Self-promotion	0.156	0.01	-0.151	0.207	0.178	0.173
Unpredictability	0.049	0.158	0.058	0.025	-0.012	0.033

Regression analyses partially confirmed the correlation analyses. Major effects are seen of narcissism on material regulation of work motivation, and also of abusive supervision on introjected regulation (negatively).



## Discussion

Altogether, considering the correlation and regression analysis, this showed that some dimensions of toxic leadership had a greater relationship and/or effects on work motivation. Narcissism and self-promotion dimensions of toxic leadership had the most consistent association with work motivation (material, and introjected). Abusive supervision (with introjected regulation of work motivation) showed more inconsistent results. On the other hand, abusive supervision had a significant negative regression but null correlation with introjected regulation of work motivation. Amotivation was correlated negatively with all dimensions of toxic leadership, as significantly predicted by general regression models, but with no specific model being significant.

In our sample, the highest score was found in narcissism, which is related to leaders' behavior attempting to show they are more special than others. Toxic leadership scores, in general and in all its dimensions, in our Angolan sample have lower levels than those of the original US military sample (Schmidt), in which all dimensions have higher scores than ours (Angola:  $M = 2.86$ ;  $SD = 1.05$ ; US military:  $M = 3.42$ ;  $SD = 1.20$ ; Schmidt, 2008). Compared to a hospital sample from Nigeria, our results are also lower in general (Angola:  $M = 2.86$ ;  $SD = 1.05$ ; Nigeria:  $M = 3.89$ ;  $SD = 0.70$ ; Gabriel, 2016). These results are somewhat different from and lower than our expectations based on informal observation of the general organizational dynamics in Angola. Even though participants were informed about confidentiality and anonymity, their answers may have been influenced by social desirability, considering that some participants were worried about what the research team could do with their answers, fearing they could suffer negative consequences if giving their real opinion about their leaders (retaliation).

Considering work motivation, our sample had the highest results in identified and intrinsic regulation. On the other hand, amotivation and external social regulation showed the lowest scores. Those scores might be obtained because

the most represented work sector is education and sciences (Table 3).

The relation between toxic leadership and amotivation is straightforward, because it has a positive and significant correlation with all the dimensions of the former. As found by Elangoven & Xie (2000), coercive use of power by leaders is associated with lower levels of follower motivation. Similarly, Deci et al. (1989) reported that very close supervision of followers' work is associated with lower levels of work motivation. This reminds us about not fulfilling workers' basic needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Regarding the correlation between authoritarian leadership and intrinsic work motivation, it is non-significant. Previous research has revealed that people in organizations with a collectivistic orientation culture may not feel motivated by participative leadership, as shown by Francesco & Chen (2000) who found that in Hong Kong, empowering leaders tend to be seen as weak and less competent. Therefore, in Angola we could expect authoritarian leadership to have less undermining effect on intrinsic motivation than in individualistic cultures.

In another study by Cunha et al. (2019), some leadership paradoxes have been mentioned as a critical point to consider in leadership and organizational effectiveness. Specifically, one paradox is related to the balance between empowerment and participation, according to which some leaders tend to be seen as weak when they empower their subordinates. It is possible that the high power distance of Angolan culture explains that as we explain below.

In an exploratory study by Adrónico (2017) in Angola, using the GLOBE framework (House et al., 2004), participating organizations were shown to have a high level of in-group collectivism and a moderate-to-low level of societal collectivism. Adrónico (2017) study found that both types of collectivism are positively correlated with general levels of motivation and identified regulation of motivation. Moreover, Angola has a high level of power distance (83/100 points; Hofstede

Insights, undated). This cultural dimension “generates on followers a set of reactions of submission and dependence, but also of conformity, subservience and adulation” (Cunha et al., 2016, p. 684).

Narcissism in toxic leadership is associated with material and introjected regulation of work motivation, which may be due to a focus on the external manifestation of personal value, instead of the intrinsic value. The behavior of showing off may be a strategy narcissistic people use to show that value, needing an external validation, which may be related to indulgence. According to Hofstede’s dimensions (Hofstede Insights, undated) Angola has high levels of indulgence (83/100 points) and a low future orientation (Adrónico, 2017)

Similarly, self-promotion is positively associated with introjected regulation, because self-promotion is frequently at the expense of others, and so followers may see it as an instrumental strategy also useful for themselves. In this regard, it is relevant to consider Padilla et al. (2007), according to whom toxic leadership emerges and is maintained due to the leader’s toxic characteristics, but also by followers’ characteristics and a conducive environment. Regarding followers’ characteristics, they referred to colluding members who have ambition, a similar world view of values lacking ethics. On the other hand, conforming members have unmet needs, low self-perception and low maturity. This result directs us to the possibility of colluders seeing toxic leaders as role models, and because their drivers of motivation are based on external regulation directed by social emotions. In this line, Wilson-Starks mentions that “in a toxic leadership environment, ‘yes’ people are rewarded and promoted to leadership roles, while people who more fully engage their mental resources, critical thinking, and questioning skills are shut out from decision-making and positions of influence” (2003, p. 2, quoted by Schmidt, 2008).

Self-promotion’s positive correlation with intrinsic work motivation may be due to the fact that the leader is seen as a powerful person, who gives followers the sense of predictability,

making the work more interesting. Furthermore, within a culture of high power distance (Hofstede Insights, undated) and high levels of corruption (UCAN, 2017) the self-promotion can be seen as normal, decreasing the detrimental effect of that dimension. Another interesting interpretation is that the self-promotion of the leader can be compensated by intrinsic motivation, where the tasks of the job position are exciting and pay for the detrimental effect of the leader’s self-promotion.

In terms of management consequences, the results reinforce the importance of considering the complexity of culture and the need to be careful in transferring the knowledge from a cultural context to another. The results also highlight the challenge that leaders have to face in deciding which aspects of the context should be kept as legitimate cultural characteristics, and which ones should be changed since they are either ineffective or illegitimate. Since high work motivation is a target that human resources managers to pursue, they shouldn’t ignore the basic principles and values as those present in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that were translated in the labor field as the concept of decent work (Ferraro et al., 2016). Future studies are required to address those aspects.

## Conclusion

This study sought to understand how the manifestation of a toxic leadership style influenced followers’ work motivation using the SDT framework. This style of leadership has been associated with individual and organizational outcomes, among them followers’ work motivation.

From the results, our main conclusions are as follows:

1. The leader’s narcissism and self-promotion behavior is most closely related to external types of regulation (mainly introjected), generating positive correlations. We see this pattern of a positive effect on external regulation as a manifestation of effort as an instrumental

way to achieve the benefits leadership has over followers, in light of the toxic triangle model of Padilla et al. (2007), where colluding members see collaboration with a toxic leader as a way to achieve that.

2. Intrinsic motivation may have a protective effect on followers' work motivation from toxic leadership, considering the positive relationship. However, another hypothesis is plausible: some conforming members may have intrinsic motivation and do nothing against toxic leaders to keep their jobs. That may be due to the environment where these organizations operate, which is characterized by high instability, unpredictability, perceived threat, and a lack of transparency and control (Padilla et al., 2007).
3. The general effects of toxic leadership on amotivation are not consistent (when comparing correlation and regression analyses), even though they are present. A solid positive significant correlation between all the toxic leadership dimensions and amotivation makes the association of these constructs evident.

### Contributions of this study

Regarding theoretical contributions, this study adapts and validates organizational assessment instruments for Angola (Toxic Leadership Scale and Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale), which have good psychometric properties. This has a relevant impact on research in the domain of WOP in Angola, considering the lack of previous research and the fact that this domain of Psychology is now starting to expand in the country (Saveia, 2015).

To our knowledge, this theme has never been systematically studied in Angola, and it is urgent to do so considering leadership's impact on effectiveness and the country's human development, especially considering the low levels of development and high levels of

corruption (UCAN, 2017). It also gives insights into human resource management (HRM) in Africa, in general, and in Angola which must go beyond a western vision.

From the practical point of view, some recommendations for HRM can be drawn from our study, such as the importance of empowering followers without being afraid of seeming weak; promoting cooperation between team members, teams and organizations; developing a servant leadership orientation through psychological coaching; promoting decent work and justice for followers and leaders; fostering an organizational culture of ethics and accountability; implementing practices of recruitment and selection and career management (preventing the selection and promotion of future toxic leaders), etc.

Despite our study does not focus on the legitimacy and effectiveness of culture, it can contribute to the reflection on those topics. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be expressed, among others, in the labour field. The way leaders perform their roles even where rooted in cultural traits deserve to be checked and studied. Moreover, cultures evolve over time and the results of our study can help in that reflection.

### Limitations and future studies

This study has some limitations, namely the sample size, which is small and restricted to the urban context. Angola has significant ethnic and cultural diversity, which may impact on results. As we used a single measure of toxic leadership that may be biased by social desirability, results based on TLS must be complemented with a multi-rater and multi-source study and qualitative methodology with in-depth interviews. The sampling procedure did not allow reaching a representative sample. In future studies more robust sampling techniques can be applied.

## Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

## Disclaimer

We all declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the views expressed in this article, which are our own and not an official position of our institutions.

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## Notes

\* Research article.