# **Toxic workplaces and their effects on employee’s performance**

Abstract

Purpose

An extensive body of research has been conducted on the connection between project success, workplace stress, and a toxic work environment as a result of researchers' keen interest. In light of this research, the current study investigates the effects of toxic workplace environments (TWE) and workplace stress (WS) as project success factors in Pakistan's renewable energy projects. The study proposes and tests a model with organizational support as a moderating variable, which is based on the resource-based view (RBV) theory.

Research Methodology

Ten renewable energy project companies in the vicinity of Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad (Pakistan) were surveyed via a 30-item questionnaire. Senior managers, middle-level managers, and administrative staff were the intended audience. The model's predictive power was estimated using structural equation modeling.

Results

It was discovered that project success and workplace stress are negatively correlated with an unhealthy work environment. A project's success was aided by organizational support, which moderated the relationship between workplace stress and a toxic environment.

Conclusion

Project success is negatively impacted by toxic workplace conditions and workplace stress. There are strict deadlines for energy projects, which causes stress and a variety of mental and physical health issues. In the end, workers who face these issues may develop conditions like insomnia, anxiety, and depression. These issues lower resolve and, consequently, adversely influence efficiency. The negative effects can be mitigated through the provision of organizational support.

**Keywords:**toxic workplace environment, workplace stress, organizational support, project success

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Introduction

To meet energy and environmental needs and avoid a crisis in the energy sector, the world is focusing on renewable energy sources in response to ever-increasing demands for energy and decreasing reserves of fossil fuels. In order to guarantee energy availability, cut costs, and improve the environment, a growing number of renewable energy projects are being built. It is anticipated that this will exert even greater influence in the not-too-distant future. Pakistan is one example of a developing nation lacking in energy. The government of Pakistan has launched a number of renewable energy projects in the country to address the looming energy crisis.3 The success of these projects is directly or indirectly dependent on the working conditions of the companies involved's employees and the assistance they receive. Many of the people who work on renewable energy projects are subjected to stressful conditions because of the tight deadlines. The projects' success may then be affected by these high levels of employee stress.

The impact of workplace stress (WS) on project success has previously been the subject of research. WS is the significant wellspring of working environment psychological well-being issues internationally and influences the critical thinking skill of workers.4 The exhibition and efficiency of representatives who are ceaselessly under WS endures, which produces significant misfortunes for organizations.5 Eventually, WS influences the general effectiveness, execution, and outcome of a project.

Sustainable power projects are time-delicate and dependent upon an elevated degree of tension concerning time and budget.10 In such a high-pressure climate, representatives can deal with issues and experience different negative ways of behaving inside the association liable for the undertaking's a positive outcome. They frequently suffer from WS and may be subjected to workplace violence. There are two kinds of workplace environments: a TWE is directly linked to WS, as a highly toxic workplace generates a form of stress that affects an employee's mental and physical condition.11 A collaborative workplace environment (CWE) increases worker productivity, whereas the various dimensions of a TWE—harassment, bullying, ostracism, and incivility—reduce project success. A TWE is directly linked to WS. Organizational support is very important because it can moderate the toxicity of the workplace and alleviate WS, thereby increasing employee productivity and leading to more successful projects. Employees are unable to concentrate on their work as a result of workplace stress, which results in a reduction in productivity. Researchers should pay close attention to the sources of TWE and WS when examining the antecedents of project success. This is because the resource-based view (RBV) holds that an organization can exploit its resources by consolidating and assigning the duties of employees in a manner that can increase their productivity, resulting in project success.Employees' capacity to become productive in their work is reduced by TWE and WS, which has an impact on the success of projects. This study adds to this writing by analyzing TWE, WS, efficiency misfortune, unfortunate effectiveness among workers, and the capability of operating system to defeat these issues to expand the proficiency and efficiency of representatives for project achievement. This is, in particular, the first study to concentrate on the moderating role that organizational support plays in the connection between the success of a project and a toxic work environment and workplace stress.

The majority of similar studies have been conducted in developed nations, particularly Western nations and the United States of America. For emerging nations like Pakistan, pertinent research is scarce. The renewable energy sector has generally been the focus of the few studies conducted in developing nations, who believe that organizations involved in renewable energy play significant roles in socio-economic development.

To the best of the author's knowledge, this study is one of the first to look at the role of organizational support as a moderating variable and the impact of toxic workplace environments and workplace stress on project success in the Pakistani organizational context. This study addresses the RBV's research gaps based on comprehension of the preceding literature regarding project success, TWE, WS, and OS. Additionally, it emphasizes OS's moderating effect on the accomplishment of renewable energy projects. The following are suggested research questions:

RQ1. What impact do toxic work environments and stress in the workplace have on project success?

RQ2. How does organizational support lessen the link between workplace stress and a toxic environment?

The structure of this article is as follows: A review of the relevant literature is presented in the following section. The study's theoretical framework and hypotheses development are framed in Hypotheses Development. Research Techniques portrays the examination strategies. The study's analysis and results are presented in Results and Analysis, which are then discussed in more detail in Discussion. The conclusion and limitations and practical implications provide some of the study's practical implications and limitations.

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Literature Review

Toxic Workplace Environment

The relationship between employees at a workplace is referred to as the "workplace environment."16 Previous research has identified two types of workplace environments: a toxic work environment and a collaborative work environment (CWE). A CWE is described by pleasantry, work environment joy, and a feeling of inclusion, incorporates sensations of sympathy, and hierarchical

citizenship conduct (OCB) wins among the specialists. Narcissistic behavior, leadership that is offensive and insulting, threatening behavior, harassment, humiliation, mobbing, ostracism, incivility, and bullying among employees are all features of a TWE. A TWE is a wellspring of physical and mental irregular characteristics that cause elevated degrees of stress and burnout, and affect representatives' wellbeing. At the workplace, there is a lot of pressure to work, which causes counterproductive work behavior (CWB). Because it affects an organization's reputation and productivity, CWB is not in its favor.

Workplace Stress

WS is a condition that occurs when a person works in an environment where they are faced with a thousand tasks that seem impossible to complete. The incidence of WS has increased by 10% since 2001. Numerous stressors have become noticeable in this period, for example, the need to adjust to the fast changes in work spaces coming about because of mechanical turns of events. While some people find it easy to adjust to these shifts, others see them as a challenge that threatens their well-being. Firm managers are aware that work-related stress (WS) is a critical issue because having employees with high levels of work stress from a variety of stressors ultimately results in ineffective workers, increased staff turnover, decreased quality and quantity of work practices, increased costs for health care, decreased employee satisfaction, and lower productivity.

Associations need to foster techniques to manage the unsafe and exorbitant stressors, and those that don't do so will find their workers searching for better open doors somewhere else. Due to WS, excessive overtime work and high work intensity are causing harm in developing nations. WS is brought on by both internal and external factors of an organization. Creating a peaceful work environment ought to reduce conflict, but no organization has eliminated WS. WS can be caused by things that are related to both a person and their situation. This ultimately leads to self-degradation, low self-efficacy, and self-doubt, which in turn leads to poor work.

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Hypotheses Development

Toxic Workplace Environment and Workplace Stress

Stress in the workplace has been linked positively to a toxic work environment. Various examinations show that savagery at work increments word related pressure among representatives. The demands that a toxic workplace places on the physiological resources of its employees make it more difficult for them to achieve their goals and reduce social cohesiveness among peers. Anxiety, hypertension, and WS have been linked to a TWE. In the workplace, a high level of toxicity raises WS, while a low level of toxicity lowers it; furthermore, this relationship has been affirmed by the ILO and in experimental examinations. The following hypothesis was derived from the preceding literature:

Hypothesis : Higher levels of workplace stress will result from a more toxic work environment.

Workplace Stress and Project Success

A negative relationship has been found among WS and task achievement. Past examinations demonstrate that WS builds truancy and brings down productivity.54,55 Representatives experiencing WS are probably going to participate in conduct that is poor for their wellbeing, for example, smoking, drinking, eating less, and halting physical exercise.56,57 Representatives who experience the ill effects of WS show terrible showing and a lower nature of work and life, which diminishes the outcome of tasks that they add to. Studies have shown that WS has a negative impact on project success.58 A high WS indicates low project success, while a low WS indicates higher project success. The following hypothesis reflects this negative relationship between WS and project success:

Hypothesis 2: Project success will suffer as a result of higher levels of workplace stress.

Toxic Workplace Environment and Project Success

TWE and project success have been found to have a negative relationship. Various dimensions of TWE (harassment, bullying, ostracism, mobbing, and incivility in the workplace) have been linked to physical and mental illness, high blood pressure, problems with appetite, insufficient sleep, less involvement in the workplace, lower productivity, depression, anxiety, and de-motivation, all of which have an impact on a project's success. In an organization, these kinds of threats, harms, and bad work habits prevent employees from doing their everyday jobs, which hurts their performance and productivity and, ultimately, the project's success. The fact that organizations with a high TWE achieve low levels of project success and vice versa has been confirmed by previous research that has shown a negative relationship between a TWE and project performance. The following hypothesis was put forth in light of this body of research:

Hypothesis 3: A less successful project will result from a more toxic work environment.

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Research Methods

Instrument Development

Data were collected using a questionnaire survey method72,73. This method starts with the design of a questionnaire to collect data based on the constructed hypothesis, followed by the calculation of descriptive statistics74. The questionnaire contained 30 items, all of which were scored on a 5-point Likert scale—one for strongly disagreeing and five for strongly agreeing. In order to verify the instrument's reliability and validity, a pilot study was carried out in which thirty draft questionnaires were distributed to experts and personnel with knowledge of the research topic and experience in the field of project management: Appendix -A displays the specifics of each item of the research questionnaire. specifically, ten professionals, ten students pursuing doctoral degrees, and ten academic professors. The respondents to the pilot study suggested a few modifications, which were incorporated into the instrument before it was distributed to the study's target population for data collection.

Data Collection and Sampling

Ten renewable energy project-based businesses in the vicinity of Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad (Pakistan) provided the data. Senior managers, middle-level managers, and administrative staff working on Pakistani renewable energy construction projects made up the target audience. Respondents were informed that the information they provided would be kept confidential and used only for the study's purposes, which is required by ethical research. There were 500 questionnaires distributed, and 453 responses were received, for an 81% response rate. The final sample included 403 responses after 50 incorrectly completed questionnaires were discarded.

Demographics

[Table 1](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7423346/table/T0001/) exposes the participant demographics of the study. The respondents included 75% guys and 25% females. 36.2% of respondents had less than five years of work experience, 44.4% had five to ten years, and 19.4% had more than ten years. 51% of respondents belonged to the administrative staff, 38% to middle management, and 11% to senior management. 6.1% of the sample were under 25 years old, 42.2 percent were between 35 and 44 years old, 31.7 percent were between 35 and 44 years old, and the remaining 20% were over 44 years old. In terms of education, 25,3 percent had completed junior high school or less, 24,1 percent had matriculated, 23,3 percent had attended higher secondary school/technical school/FA, 20,1 percent had attended college, and 7,2 percent had attended graduate school.

Table 1

Demographics

| **Measures** | **Items** | **Absolute Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Gender | Male | 302 | 75 |
| Female | 101 | 25 |
| Working experience | Less than five years | 146 | 36.2 |
| 5–10 years | 179 | 44.4 |
| Above ten years | 78 | 19.4 |
| Position | Senior managers | 45 | 11 |
| Middle managers | 153 | 38 |
| Administrative staff | 205 | 51 |
| Respondent age | Less than 25 years | 24 | 6.1 |
| 25–34 years | 170 | 42.2 |
| 35–44 years | 128 | 31.7 |
| Above 44 years | 81 | 20 |
| Education | Junior High School and below | 102 | 25.3 |
| Matriculation/Secondary School | 97 | 24.1 |
| Higher Secondary School/Technical School/FA | 94 | 23.3 |
| Undergraduate | 81 | 20.1 |
| Post-Graduate | 29 | 7.2 |

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Results and Analysis

Data Analysis

The demographics, reliability, descriptive statistics, and correlations of the respondents were all analyzed with the assistance of SPSS-20. Using AMOS-18, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used for regression and moderation analyses. Because the structural model is complex and contains a series of dependent relationships, we chose AMOS SEM over partial least squares SEM.

Validity and Reliability

[Table 2](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7423346/table/T0002/) demonstrates Cronbach's alpha values that are higher than the standard 0.7 threshold. Exploratory factor analysis was used to calculate each variable's KMO and contribution to overall variance.[Table 2](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7423346/table/T0002/) shows that all builds returned values more prominent than the acknowledged limits for unwavering quality. The Bartlett test yielded p 0.001, indicating suitability for factor analysis, and the KMO values were greater than 0.6. As a result, the average of the scale items could be used to calculate composites.[Table 2](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7423346/table/T0002/) also demonstrates that all factor loadings were above the 0.70 or 0.50 limits. The factor loadings for the seven TWE items ranged from 0.86 to 0.89; for WS (7 items) ranging from 0.80 to 0.86; for OS (seven items) ranging from 0.80 to 0.89; and between 0.73 and 0.89 for the dependent variable PS (eight items).

Table 2

Validity and Reliability

| **Variables** | **Coding** | **Factor Loading** | **KMO** | **Alpha** | **Variance Explained** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | TWE-1 | 0.87 |  |  |  |
|  | TWE-2 | 0.88 |  |  |  |
|  | TWE-3 | 0.86 |  |  |  |
| Toxic workplace environment | TWE-4 | 0.87 | 0.96 | 0.96 | 79. |
|  | TWE-5 | 0.88 |  |  |  |
|  | TWE-6 | 0.87 |  |  |  |
|  | TWE-7 | 0.89 |  |  |  |
|  | WS-1 | 0.80 |  |  |  |
|  | WS-2 | 0.81 |  |  |  |
|  | WS-3 | 0.82 |  |  |  |
| Workplace stress | WS-4 | 0.83 | 0.92 | 0.94 | 77.8 |
|  | WS-5 | 0.80 |  |  |  |
|  | WS-6 | 0.86 |  |  |  |
|  | WS-7 | 0.85 |  |  |  |
|  | OS-1 | 0.82 |  |  |  |
|  | OS-2 | 0.84 |  |  |  |
|  | OS-3 | 0.89 |  |  |  |
| Organizational support | OS-4 | 0.82 | 0.93 | 0.94 | 78.8 |
|  | OS-5 | 0.89 |  |  |  |
|  | OS-6 | 0.87 |  |  |  |
|  | OS-7 | 0.80 |  |  |  |
|  | PS-1 | 0.82 |  |  |  |
|  | PS-2 | 0.84 |  |  |  |
|  | PS-3 | 0.83 |  |  |  |
|  | PS-4 | 0.86 |  |  |  |
| Project success | PS-5 | 0.87 | 0.93 | 0.95 | 82.0 |
|  | PS-6 | 0.89 |  |  |  |
|  | PS-7 | 0.72 |  |  |  |
|  | PS-8 | 0.73 |  |  |  |

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**Abbreviations:** TWE, an unhealthy work environment; WS, stress at work; OS, support for the organization; PS, project achievement; Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin, or KMO.

The reliability of each of the items and constructs was evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). To test convergence validity, average variance extracted (AVE) scores and composite reliability (CR) scores for each latent variable were calculated for each construct. [Table 3](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7423346/table/T0003/) shows the goodness-of-fit represented by the CFA results. All wellness markers surpassed the acknowledged edge values, and the normalized coefficients were all over the base OK worth of 0.7. The AVE values for each inert variable were above 0.5, showing great combination legitimacy. Good measurement and construct reliability were demonstrated by the fact that the CR values for each latent variable were greater than 0.6. The aftereffects of legitimacy and unwavering quality testing demonstrated that SEM was fitting for testing the model.

Table 3

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

| **Variables** | **CMIN/DF** | **RMSEA** | **GFI** | **AGFI** | **NFI** | **IFI** | **CR** | **AVE** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Toxic workplace environment | 3.634 | 0.095 | 0.964 | 0.915 | 0.979 | 0.985 | 0.96 | 0.77 |
| Workplace stress | 1.349 | 0.034 | 0.976 | 0.956 | 0.989 | 0.997 | 0.94 | 0.73 |
| Organizational support | 1.744 | 0.045 | 0.993 | 0.983 | 0.996 | 0.901 | 0.95 | 0.74 |
| Project success | 1.926 | 0.056 | 0.981 | 0.955 | 0.990 | 0.995 | 0.96 | 0.78 |

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**Abbreviations:** Root mean square error of approximation, or RMSEA; Goodness-of-Fit Index, or GFI; Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index, or AGFI; Normed Fit Index, or NFI; Incremental Fit Index, or IFI; Composite reliability, or CR; The extracted average variance is AVE.

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Discussion

Numerous researchers are interested in the workplace environment. While a TWE causes depression, anxiety, and WS, a collaborative work environment keeps employees confident and relaxed, allowing them to produce at their highest level. An organization with a TWE is a major cause of employee stress. This study demonstrates a direct link between a TWE and a WAS: WS will rise in response to an increase in workplace toxicity. This backs up Hypothesis 1, which states that higher levels of WE are accompanied by higher levels of TWE. Employees, businesses, and all other stakeholders ought to work together based on trust and honesty, but a TWE and WS frequently cause relationships to break down. Employees experience anxiety, stress, and insomnia as a result of a TWE.

Organizations that are attempting to complete major projects within short deadlines and tight budgets run the risk of prioritizing profitability over the well-being of their employees—their most valuable assets. Any organization's employees will ultimately determine whether a project succeeds or fails, and this must be taken into account. Employees can experience excessive mental stress as a result of projects being completed in a hurry to meet deadlines and budgets in order to please all stakeholders. This stress can lead to a variety of physical and mental health issues. However, the project's success is also affected by these mental and physical stressors. This study's findings demonstrate a negative correlation between WS and project success. An elevated degree of stress among representatives at work is probably going to deliver a less effective undertaking. This backs up Hypothesis 2, which states that more WS equals less project success. This is in line with the findings of a previous study that demonstrated a negative correlation between the success of IT-related projects and WS.

Because there is a negative correlation between TWE and PS, a toxic work environment can result in serious issues for a project that could have been avoided with a CWE. This study's findings demonstrate a strong relationship and confirm that higher levels of TWE are associated with lower levels of project success. According to the findings of this study, having a toxic work environment has a significant negative impact.

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Conclusion

We looked into the connection between project success, workplace stress, and a TWE in this study. Besides, hierarchical help was found to direct between a poisonous work environment climate and work environment stress. The findings demonstrate a negative correlation between project success and workplace stress as well as a toxic work environment. Employees of organizations participating in the renewable energy projects face a variety of mental and physical health issues because the majority of the projects chosen for this study are time-sensitive. A TWE and WS exacerbate these issues, which can ultimately result in insomnia, depression, and anxiety disorders. Employee morale suffers as a result of these issues, which in turn affects productivity. A demoralized workforce will not be productive at work, which will ultimately lead to less successful projects.

Organizational support, which is viewed as a moderator between a TWE and WS in this study, plays a significant role in resolving issues, according to the findings. An organization that cares more about its employees will intervene and provide assistance to maintain productivity and well-being. Employees of an organization feel more accountable for their responsibilities as a result of organizational support, which boosts productivity. As a result, the chances of the project succeeding are increased, which is ultimately beneficial for the employees as well as the organization. In conclusion, this study's model suggests that project success is influenced by a toxic work environment and workplace stress, with organizational support acting as a moderator. In the context of Pakistani projects for renewable energy, the study makes a novel contribution.

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Ethics Statement

This study looked at organizations in Pakistan that were working on renewable energy projects. Before collecting data, the authors obtained permission from project directors. Second, a cover letter informing them of the confidentiality of their responses and soliciting their willingness to participate was distributed to the participants. Written informed consent was provided by the participants and their organizations for all participants to participate in the questionnaire survey. Thirdly, the study was approved by the research ethics committees of Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Guangzhou University, and Guangxi University because it was carried out under the direction of a Chinese professor.

Disclosure

The creators report no irreconcilable situations in this work.

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