



The impact of toxic workplace on employee well-being and organizational outcomes in Lebanon

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ABSTRACT

A hostile workplace is measured by the encountered toxic environment employee has to deal with. Not only the managers, but also the co-workers play a crucial role in creating a safe community for others by their own behaviors. Toxic environment can significantly impact the employee's physical as well as mental well-being decreasing thus the employee engagement. This critical issue needs more worldwide awareness and even courage to be shared especially in the lack of organization support. The aim of this study is to evaluate the impact of toxicity at workplace on employee well-being and institutions outcomes among Lebanese public community. Over 204 adult Lebanese were recruited in a cross-sectional study that covers both genders residing in the five Lebanese governorates. The survey questionnaire was designed and carried out from May 2024 to April 2025 with 99.2% as responsive rate. The participants' characteristics were under study as well as their association with the institutions where they work in the purpose of shedding light on employees suffering that should lead to decisive acts against these companies. The study revealed that the hostile workplace had negatively affected 100% of all the participants. In addition, no matter was the socio-demographic status difference between the volunteers such as age, gender, profession experience...the toxicity at workplace is dominant. Moreover, the survey identified that not only one but multiple criteria of toxic environment such as bullying, narcissistic behavior, and discrimination...were well recorded with gossiping at highest rate of 15.5%. By consequence, increasing public awareness by awareness campaigns use in Lebanon emphasizes the importance of reporting toxic workplace thus leading to legal acts.

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INTRODUCTION

A toxic workplace environment is, by definition, described by the negative behaviors of both managers and co-workers (Shaji George, 2023). This environment can significantly impact both the employees' physical and mental well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). High level of anxiety, depression, burnout, and lack of motivation are some of the consequences of the harassment, bullying, lack of support, and narcissistic behaviors employee encounters at work (Mentor, 2014). Over time, this fact can lead to disengagement which can be costly for the organizations (Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2014). Feeling under evaluated, disrespected, and unsupported, employee in toxic workplace faces abusive supervision and discrimination (Tepper, 2000).

Moreover, worldwide studies showed that toxic work culture lack clear communication leading to conflict and sense of instability (Leger et al., 2021). Thus, these factors can contribute to feelings of isolation and frustration (Rasool et al., 2021). The level of commitment to a hostile company is enormously low by deduction (Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2014).

The emotional stress is not the only impact of toxic institution. Physical symptoms such as headaches, fatigue, gastrointestinal problems are present too (Leiter & Maslach, 2005). Furthermore, increased rates of cardiovascular diseases and impaired immune function are well recorded (Tastan, 2017). The direct result is the inability to perform work-related tasks effectively (Rasool et al., 2021). From a psychological perspective, employees may experience burnout, emotional exhaustion, and deception (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). These agents could have long-lasting effects on an individual's career (Atmajda, 2019).

On the other hand, the high turnover rates can cost the company time, effort, and money by the re-recruitment and re-training process of the new personnel, and the loss of the experienced ones (Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2014). Additionally, when negativity spreads across an organization, the institution reputation as well as the customer satisfaction is at stake (Duffy et al., 2006).

Lebanon is a small but vibrant country on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean sea that blends tradition with modernity (Romanos, 2022). Well known for its growing economy, Lebanon faces severe challenges concerning toxicity at workplace (Romanos, 2024). The high level of stress at some Lebanese organizations, presents a significant problematic (Hassanein et al., 2025). Till the present day, few studies dealt with this issue. Thus, the main aim of this study is to shed light on toxic work culture impact on Lebanese employee's well-being.

METHODS

Study Design and Sample Size

A cross sectional study was accomplished by recruiting 204 adult Lebanese individuals from both genders of different ages residing in the five Lebanese governorates (the capital Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Bekaa, North and South) from May 2024 to April 2025. Volunteers were randomly selected to participate in this study.

Data Gathering and Ethical Considerations

This research is based on an online survey consisted of a confidential anonymous questionnaire of 14 questions found through this following link:
(https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf554OOddFzQWllq5GR9cgv8krB3EI2L1yMuMCJsePyToG_fQ/vie_wform).

The questionnaire was designed to collect the participants data subdivided into two categories. First category consisted of nine questions covering the socio-demographic status of the participants: age, gender, marital status, residency, education level, profession sector, profession position, working hours/day, and working experience. While

the second category consisted of five questions illustrating criteria of Toxic Environment (TE), Behavioral Toxics (BT), Employee Engagement (EE), Employee Well-being (EW), and Organizational Support (OS) the employees are dealing with in the organization where they work.

The data collector in charge was always available for participant's queries; in addition, the data collector offered any needed help for the volunteers or anyone the volunteers know suffering from an abusive job, encouraging them to report any toxic workplace.

"Charter of ethics and guiding principles of scientific research in Lebanon" designed by the national council for scientific research was implemented in this study (Hamze et al., 2016).

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics is shown in this study. The frequency and the percentage are presented in this test.

RESULTS

Participants Socio-Demographic Responses

A total of 207 surveys were initially shared. After excluding 3 individuals due to the fact that one participant claimed having a freelancing job, and the two others claimed that there is no toxicity in their workplaces, 204 volunteers successfully completed the survey. The survey responsive rate is 99.2%.

Concerning the volunteer's residency, they were distributed over the five Lebanese governorates as following: the largest distribution was detected in Mount Lebanon (45.1%), and the lowest distribution was detected in South (7.3%), in between distribution was detected in the capital Beirut (25.2%), North (13.1%), and Bekaa (9.2%).

As for the gender, an approximately equal sex distribution was obtained with men comprising 51% of the sample.

Regarding their age, the majority of the participants were in their 30's (42.9%) followed by the 20's (36.1%) and 40's (16.1%) then the 50's and 60's (both 4.9%).

Slightly more than the half of the participants was single (55.4%), while (43.1%) were married and (1.5%) divorced.

While dealing with the education, almost similar percentage was obtained for the graduates and the post-graduates; slightly less than the half of the participants (45.4%) were graduates, the post-graduates consisted (43.5%) and the under graduates of 11.1%.

Concerning the profession sector, the private sector showed higher percentage versus the public one with 68.3% of the participants involved.

Regarding the profession position, 74% of the participants are employees unlike the remaining only 26.0% managers.

As for the working hours/day, 55.8% spend more than 7 working hours.

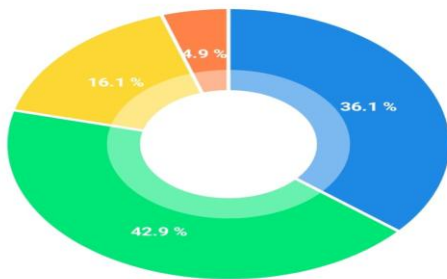
For the working experience, the highest percentage was obtained for those with 5-15 years (41.3%) followed by almost similar percentages for those with less than 5 years (29.1%) and those with more than 15 years (29.6%).

Fig. 1 (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I) represents the participants detailed characteristics.

1. 1- Age

PIE CHART

18-30 - 74
31-40 - 88
41-50 - 33
51-64 - 10

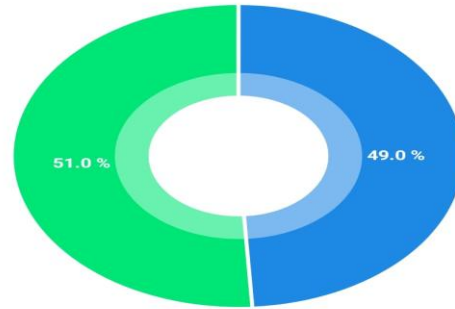


A

2. 2- Gender

PIE CHART

Female - 100
Male - 104

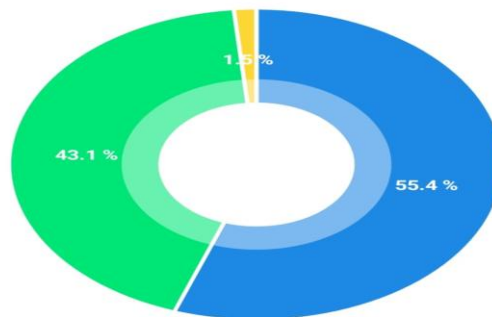


B

3. 3- Marital Status

PIE CHART

Single - 113
Married - 88
Divorced - 3



C

4. 4- Residency

PIE CHART

Beirut - 52
Mount Lebanon - 93
South - 15
North - 27
Bekaa - 19

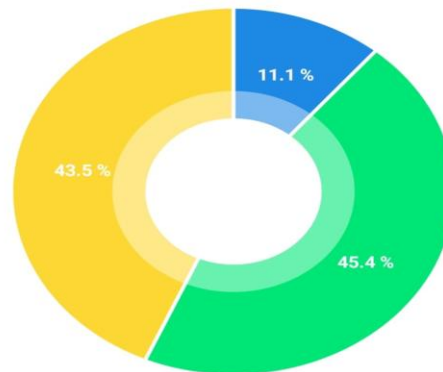


D

5. 5- Education Level

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Undergraduate - 23
Graduate - 94
Postgraduate - 90

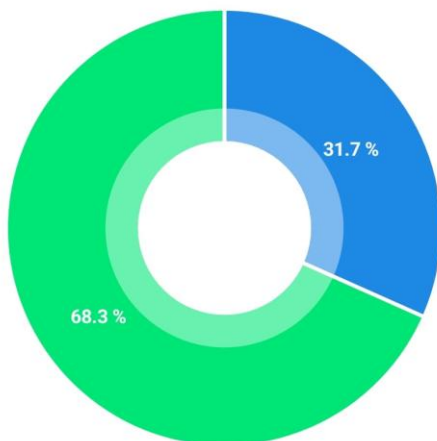


E

6. 6- Profession Sector

PIE CHART

Public - 69
Private - 149

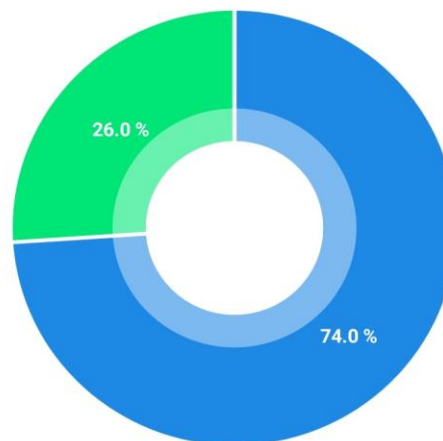


F

7. 7- Profession Position

PIE CHART

Employee - 159
Manager - 56



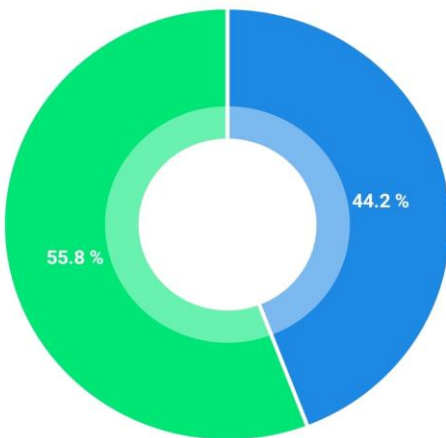
G

8. 8- Working hours/day

9. 9- Working Experience

PIE CHART

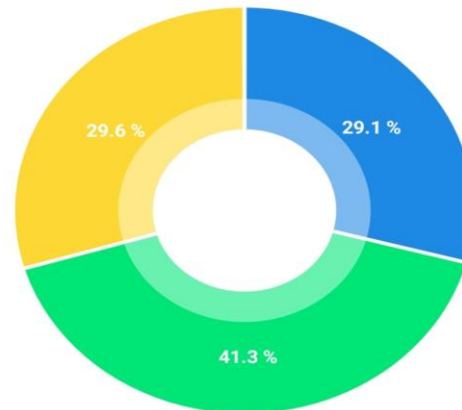
■ 1-7 hours - 91
■ > 7 hours - 115



H

PIE CHART

■ < 5 years - 60
■ 5-15 years - 85
■ > 15 years - 61



I

Fig. 1. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I

Fig 1. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I shows respectively the participants answers concerning age, gender, marital status, residency, education level, profession sector, profession position, working hours/day, and working experience, represented in numbers as well as pie charts percentages.

Participants-Organizations Association Responses

As for the Toxic Environment answers, this study showed that 15.5% of participants were suffering from “Gossiping” marked by the highest percentage. While 13.3% chose the answer “Unreasonable Job Tasks”, 10.6% chose the “Narcissistic Behavior” as an answer. In addition, this test revealed that 9.7% of participants were affected by “Micromanagement”. Equal percentage of 9.3% was detected for both “Bullying” and “Discrimination” choices. “Abusive Treatment”, “Humiliation”, “Tolerance Management”, and in the lowest selected answer “Sexual Harassment” were recorded in the following respective percentages of 6.5%, 6.1%, 5.5%, 3.8%.

Concerning the Behavior Toxics answers, the results elucidated that 55.0% of participants reported a “Toxic Behavior of Co-Workers” against 45.0% “Toxic Behavior of Manager”.

Regarding the Employee Engagement answers, 27.0% of volunteers answered by “Demotivation” marked as the highest percentage while the lowest 9.4% was linked to “More Absence”. Furthermore, 22.1% chose “Lack of Trust”, 21.7% chose “Lack of Productivity”, and 19.8% chose “Low Sense of Belonging” as answers.

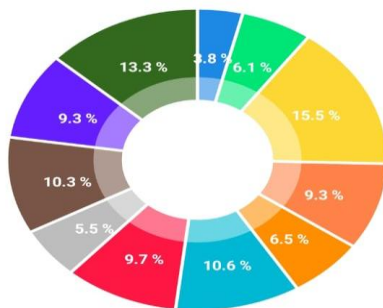
Answers about Employee Well-being were reported as following from the highest to the lowest percentage: 16.7% for “Depression”, 15.7% for “Headache”, 15.2% for “Burnout”, 15.0% for “Back Pain”, 12.5% for “Neck Pain”, 8.4% equally for both “Insomnia” and “Eye Itching”, 7.9% for “Leg pain”.

Finally, answers concerning Organizational Support revealed that “The Company is Not Following Up the Mental and Physical Employee Situations” choice was chosen from 36.1% of the participants, followed by 33.7% for “The Company is Not Acting Decisively Using Preventive and Corrective plans”, and 30.1% for “The Company is Not Taking Complaints Seriously”.

The participants-organizations association link answers are shown in **Fig. 2. A, B, C, D, E**

10. 10- Toxic Environment (TE)

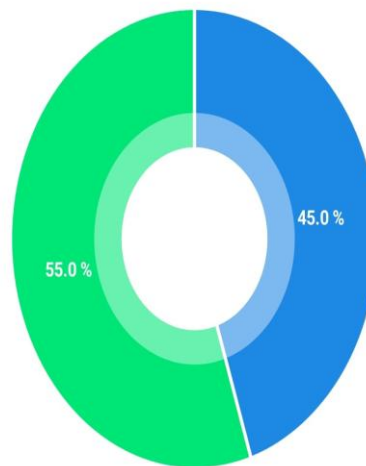
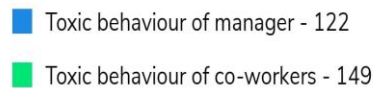
PIE CHART



A

11. 11- Behavioural Toxics (BT)

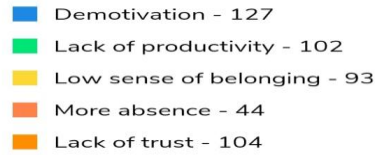
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B

12. 12- Employee Engagement (EE)

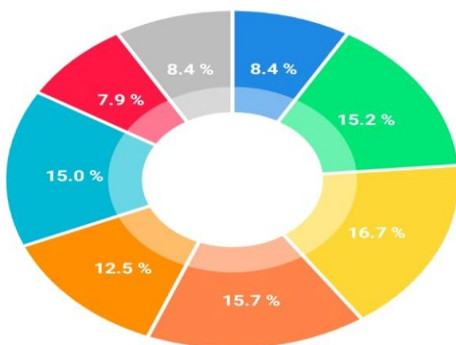
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C

13. 13- Employee Well-Being (EW)

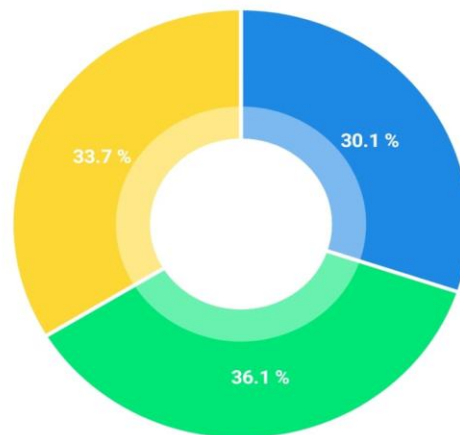
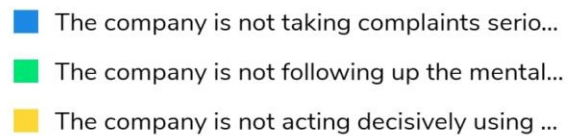
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D

14. 14- Organizational Support (OS)

PIE CHART



E

Fig. 2. A, B, C, D, E

Fig 2. A, B, C, D, E shows respectively the participants answers concerning TE, BT, EE, EW, and OS, represented in numbers as well as pie charts percentages.

DISCUSSION

A toxic workplace can have devastating effects on employees (Larrazabal et al., 2019). Psychological and physical abuses can lead to burnout and health problems (Wang et al., 2020). The toxic environment can result in a poor productivity damaging by consequence the organization reputation (Anjum et al., 2018).

To eliminate the harmful effects of toxic workplace, organization must take both preventive and corrective actions to protect its employees. These measures involve first addressing clearly these issues and second communicate about it (Hakanen et al., 2011). In addition, creating leaders not followers within the company will play a crucial role in shaping the work environment. Leader's role is to engage all the teamwork in supportive, transparent, and respected behaviors. As for more important measure, organization must implement clear anti toxic policies that all employees understand and apply. However, by recognizing the signs of toxicity and implementing supportive policies, organizations can transform their workplace culture into healthy place ensuring better well-being for their employees and more positive outcomes for the company as a whole (Turner & Muller, 2007).

The objective of this present study is to shed light on how toxic workplace could affect negatively the Lebanese employee's life; a dilemma handled only by few previous studies ((Daoud et al., 2025; Hassanein et al., 2025). This test covered criteria of Lebanese participants with different ages, genders, marital status, residencies, education levels, profession sectors, profession positions, working hours/day, and working experiences. Thus, the link between the Lebanese volunteers and their appropriate organizations would be elucidated on a wider range.

In Lebanon, this survey outcomes indicate that no matter is the socio-demographic status of the participant, toxic workplace status is dominant. This research aims to investigate the high toxicity level participants are suffering of. By consequence, the results showed that toxic environment factors such micromanagement, narcissistic behavior, bullying and many more are present in Lebanese institutions at high rate. By deduction, Lebanese employees with physical abuse such as headache and much more and psychological abuse such as insomnia and many more are well reported; leading to a negative impact on the employee engagement such as lack of trust and many more. Although the recoded toxicity was derived from both managers and co-workers, organization support in Lebanon seems to be absent.

Although one of the study limitations is the lack of analytic statistics that could be the scope of the next research, this survey fulfilled its mission by raising awareness about toxicity in workplace in Lebanon; emphasizing thus the importance of reporting toxic workplace leading if needed to take legal actions against both abusive managers and co-workers.

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