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**Is Collegial Cooperation Turning Toxic:
Implications for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)**

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Abstract

Collegiality has been glorified as the strongest governance pillar for higher education institutions (HEIs), especially in promoting independence of thought, impartial decisions on leadership, mutual respect, and providing peer support. Nonetheless, the recent corporate culture recently adopted by HEIs and a system that rewards individual accomplishments, coupled with decreased state funding, were steadily weakening the collegial philosophy. While the philosophy of collegial cooperation is steadily giving way, toxicity seems to take the center stage - thereby crumbling HEIs. State's budgetary constraints, institutional and structural dynamics, leadership behavior, performance-based pay, personal traits among others, were found responsible for the toxic work environment. Yet, toxic behavior – although easily identifiable, can be a difficult phenomenon to deal with, because of its enigmatic manifestation, unclear actors' intentions, unclear benchmarks and lack of empirical research. Hence, lack of conclusive empirical research to establish the depth and breadth of toxicity has made it difficult to make personnel decisions because of lack of defensible evidence. This situation therefore calls institutions to prioritize institutional inquiry in order to address work related behavior – among others to negate unacceptable behavior that seem to harm not only individual academics and students they supervise, but also institutional image. In the event that the leaders are the culprits of toxic behavior, institutions need to develop control mechanisms to protect targeted individuals, to discern the magnitude of toxicity and its implications for all stakeholders. 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 academic work environment, in order to promote staff engagement, quality of graduates, increased productivity and overall - institutional goals.

Keywords: civility, collegiality, competition, higher education institutions, teamwork, toxicity

Introduction

The phenomenon of collegiality started diminishing when universities adopted a corporate culture in the late 1990s to grapple with dwindling state funding and increased students' enrolment, thereby leading to excessive competition for scarce resources, increased workloads and rising staff expectations, among others (Dearlove, 1997). Consequently, universities began to operate like business entities through the promotion of performance-based pay, and first-come-first-served phenomenon - which have all influenced the way institutions are operated and managed (Cipriano, 2017; Rickless, 2011 and Sutton, 2007). The corporate culture – although was highly applauded for its ability to close funding gaps, it gradually diminished collegial cooperation (Barifaijo and Namara, 2017), yet, the incorporation of the adopted culture was not in synch with the goals of higher education institutions (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). Considering their dynamic and distinct nature, HEIs demand peculiar strategies not only for achieving institutional goals, but also getting the best out their human capital (Albatch, 2007). In recognition of the human capital that work in HEIs, there is need to work collaboratively and cooperatively for the benefit of the students who give prominence to these institutions in various ways. Therefore, HE leaders should be cognizant of the distinct nature of the human capital who are highly specialized, and whose functions of research, teaching and service to community are analyzed using various measures. In fact, this distinction coexists in an uneasy balance, which creates a unique mix – that inevitably arouses a multitude of human conflicts and sometimes resistance (Birnbaum, 1991).

Unlike other organizations, universities are governed and managed differently, because they are multi-purpose - with an extra function of providing a public service to the community which Cipriano, 2011 and Zajkowski, 2003, found exceptionally perplexing. Hence, in order to achieve the desired goals in such a complex setting, there is absolute need for strong collegial cooperation, interpersonal relations, a harmonious work culture and teamwork that is founded on strong principles (Thompson, 2016). He found collegiality to be influential not only in delivering remarkable experiences to the students' achievement but also, maintaining staff engagement and strengthening continuity and reliable succession plans. Similarly, scholars (e.g Kezar and Eckel, 2004 & Altbach, 2005), found that collegial cooperation was actually not only beneficial to individual independence of thought, but also for strengthening mutual respect and unity - which facilitates decision- making processes. Yet, there hasn't been sufficient research on the significance of collegiality in developing countries, especially in Africa which has made it less appreciated in most HEIs. Consequently, unavailability of empirical studies on the contribution of collegiality – has led to excessive competition, thereby paralyzing social and academic activities, career progression of staff, institutional operations and growth, retention of staff and quality of students (Bar-David, 2018 and Barifaijo and Namara, 2017).

In fact, Crookston (2013), explains how the dangers of non-collegial work culture had not only diminished harmony among staff, but has also affected university ratings among American universities, as well as institutional visibility, collaboration and partnerships especially with its potential of diminishing collegial philosophy. Crookston explains how toxic individuals use systematic preys on their co-workers – ultimately converting the-would-be collegial environment - into total venom, forcing credible staff to disengage from active and meaningful participation and oftentimes sinking them into depression (Farrington and Palfreyman, 2012).

The under appreciation of collegiality in many institutions that paved alleyway to toxic work environments was also affirmed by Thoroughgood, et al (2011) - in his endeavor to unravel “the Bad Apples, Bad Barrels, and Broken Followers”. Remarkably, in an attempt to unravel the original purpose of collegiality in HEIs, the causes of toxic behavior are assessed, the breadth and depth of toxicity explored; and implications of diminished collegial philosophy - analyzed and discussed in order to provide mechanisms of mitigating employee as well as leader rage situations found to breed toxicity.

The Problem

There are various models of governance that effectively and efficiently facilitate HE operations to fulfill their functions of scholarship, teaching and service to community (Duffy, 2014). The models include political, administrative and collegiality, but for the purposes of this discussion, we opt for collegiality, because it clearly articulates issues of academic freedom, democracy and social cooperation which have become a nightmare for HEIs in the recent past, especially in the processes of staff representation and career growth (Barifaijo, and Namara (2017). Although scholars such as Cipriano, 2011; Chuan, 2014; and Gallagher, 2004; do not conceive 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. Therefore, the authors and majority of scholars, agree that collegiality is critical in staff representation because of its significance in decision making processes, especially in the election and appointment of university leadership, which promotes quality through peer participation as well as program development that requires the input of colleagues in order to be accredited (Barifaijo and Namara, 2016; Gallagher, 2004). Yet, despite the fact that collegiality is intended to influence strategic decisions for strategic direction in HEIs, the lack of its appreciation has distorted its purpose (Chung, 2018). Yet the under appreciation of collegiality has been treated hush-hush – allowing toxic environments to penetrate and infect unsuspecting academics and wilting institutional structures (Lease, 2006) - which has instigated dysfunctional conflicts that have eventually turned toxic.

Yet, universities, by their nature are considered ‘sacred’ because of their functions that are intended purely for the good of the public and society (Crookston, 2013), which was also supported by Cipriano, 2011; and Chung, 2018, affirming how universities were a public good and recommend all concerned to work towards a common goal. Yet, most systems have – permitted (deliberately or otherwise) toxicity to penetrate the HE Systems, and manifested in many ways and at various levels, which has impaired institutional images – diminished collegial relationships, affected academic quality, tarnished networks and collaborations and; impaired institutional profiling. Diminished collegiality has further negatively affected the-would-be brilliant academic programs, frustrated international projects, stifled innovations, terminated partnerships prematurely; financial support withdrawn, and co-operations negated (Chung, 2018; Barifaijo and Namara, 2012 and Thoroughgood, et al, 2011). The lack of collegiality has seen academic programs negated with no justification or hijacked and sent to limbo – leaving their ‘architects’ perplexed and frustrated. The lack of collegiality has also stifled institutional research proposals and left graduate students frustrated. Career growth – which is the “life-blood and heart-beat”, of academics - even with its potential to leverage competitive advantage for institutions and academics. This strange work culture has left the systems paralyzed which has led to faculty and staff disengage from active participation (Barifaijo and Namara, 2013; Daniels,

et, 2017). Unless, collegiality is restored, reinvigorated, encouraged, promoted and evaluated as a performance indicator, the damage may be irreversible. In an attempt to address the many unanswered questions, the following questions were posed;

1. What is the contribution of collegiality to the operations of HEIs?
2. Why is collegiality underappreciated in HEIs?
3. What are the causes of toxic behavior in HEIs?
4. 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 (Bart, 2008 & Vickers, 2018), thereby making its relevance obscure. It has not only remained ambiguous, leaving scholars to only access information from the internet. This mayhem, has left collegiality under-appreciated, perhaps because it has attracted minimal attention in terms of research by higher education scholars (Tarraf, 2012). He explains how lack of appreciation of the role of collegiality had exposed unsuspecting academics to these creeps, jerks, weasels, tormentors, tyrants, serial slammers, despots, unconstrained egomaniacs – leaving HEIs in a state of uncertainty. Nonetheless, despite the its 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). This is in support of the traditional role of collegiality that promote academics' unity, togetherness and living with some degree of courtesy and professionalism. Instead, universities have become toxic with culprits preying on their most vulnerable co-workers - leaving them feeling humiliated, belittled, and demoralized (Cipriano, 2011; Chuan, 2014, and Hollis, 2012). In order to extrapolate causes and implications of diminished collegiality, 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 Organizational Justice* by Greenberg (1987).

Theoretical Exploration

In an attempt to explain reasons for diminished collegiality and the rise of toxicity, two theories were adopted to avert further damage, especially when the two concepts appear guileless, while their enigmatic nature may harm HEIs irreversibly. Hence, the '*Acquired Needs theory*' by David McClelland (1960) and '*The Theory Organizational Justice*' by Greenberg (1987), were premised useful for the discussion. In this attempt to understand human behavior in organizations, McClelland explained how individuals possessed three specific needs that are acquired over time and are shaped by life' experiences. According to Kreitner (2012), the acquired needs include; '*the need for Power*', '*the need for Achievement*' and '*the need for Affiliation*' - which people possess in varying enormities. McClelland found that all the needs, affected individual's comportment and style of work (Krook, 2014), that ultimately influence their work-related behavior. He expounds that if these needs are present in excess, each of the three aspects has the potential to drive an individual into unacceptable work-related comportment. Taken from that angle, McClelland found that '*Power*' driven individuals strove to

influence and control others and often pushed their views to dominate others, which turns them “*silver bullets*” (White, 2011). On the hand, *Achievement driven individuals* always want to shine against all odds, and even grab others’ opportunities by mudslinging or even sidelining them to remain outstanding (Zellner, 2012). Contrary to the first two, the *Affiliation-driven individuals had a strong sense of belonging*, and desired strong relationships – not only with peers but with supervisors as well - and will strive to remain the favorite one – especially with the most influential and powerful colleagues. The three dimensions of acquired needs were found by Mirza (2017) to potentially drive affiliation-driven individuals to heinous acts – including deceptive ways in order to bring others down and remain the trusted and loved ones – thus, brooding acrimony.

The ‘*Theory of Organizational Justice*’ by Greenberg (1987), was adopted to explain individuals’ reactions to injustices caused by – sometimes management or even their peers. Such injustices include; procedural, distributive, relational and communication injustices - which all convey feelings of inequity (Stancy, 1965). 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 has a lot to do with personality, the theory of ‘Organizational Justice, explores issues of equitability. Applied logically and intelligibly, the two theories have the potential of eliminating toxicity and instead 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 of a university, 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. These and other Ad hoc committees make the university's decision-making processes complex and unique (Donohoo, 2017). These governance arrangements have traditionally been entrenched in collegial model specifically to promote individual independence of thought and mutual respect among others (Dearlove, 1997 & Earman, 2014). Collegiality therefore, has for long been embraced for recognizing the unique, complex and pluralistic nature of the concept of shared decision-making, given universities’ loose, ambiguous, and constantly changing nature (Dearlove, 19 97). Given this 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, these professionals 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 (Leadership and Governance in Higher Education (2011). Hence, the responsibility of decision-making entrusted in these of academics rests on principles of collegiality and meritocracy (Bart, 2014), but also demands certain behavior and attitudes that should ideally cause individuals to regard the 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 recognize as significant especially in such as peer reviews, performance appraisals, contract renewals as well as program development (Mirza, 2017).

The embracement of collegial cooperation, as the law stipulates, and as supported by Mirza, should be an important predictor of faculty retention and overall productivity (Fiset and Robinson, 2018). The need was affirmed by Cipriano (2011), of how the adoption of a collegial culture by the majority of staff leads to institutional stability. Hence, the purpose of collegiality should be seen to increase harmony and social relationships, which Daniel et al (2017), doubts - given such visible current work-related behavior in most HEIs. Yet, considering the proportion of time academics spend, (on average 75%) interacting with colleagues, students and other members of staff, individuals need strong and an uninterrupted social connectivity with those they work with for increased engagement, quality and productivity (Rosman, et al 2013). Yet, despite much talk about collegiality, there is a lack of principle discussions on what collegiality is, how it can be upheld and why it should play an important part in university governance which demand activities and procedures directed at upholding a collegial culture (Hall and Symes, 2005 and Heller, 2001). Conversely, scholars (e.g. Chung, 2018; Crookston, 2013 & Felps, etc.2006), have attributed diminishing harmony to governance structures which are highly differentiated, which Kusy and Holloway (2009), contrast, arguing that differentiation does not necessarily affect harmony, since the structures served the same purpose of; scholarship, teaching and service and also share common heritage. Hence, the absence of a harmonious work culture has seen HEIs grapple with a strange and destructive ‘virus-like’ culture – Toxicity, which actually spreads like a bush fire that is not put out judiciously.

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, literature commonly use this term, HEIs are not familiar with the phrase ‘toxic’ in relation to climate of a workplace - since the term often refers to open vats of chemicals with poisonous vapors rising above them and employees laboring over or around them (Wright, 2009). Oftentimes, the term is confused with weasel, negativity, difficult employees, intrigue, office politics, conspiracy, hazardous, vindictive, cynicism, etc - although it can also be a combination of all those terms and many more (Housman and Minor, 2015). The word “toxic” comes from the Greek “toxikon” which means “arrow poison” – which in literal sense, means to kill (poison) in a targeted way using an arrow (White, 2011). Remarkably, even ‘toxins’ may not know, they are - since a typical ‘toxic worker’ does not recognize a duty to the organization for which they work or their co-workers in terms of ethics or professional conduct toward others, because they often define relationships with co-workers they favour or those they dislike, not by organizational structure, (Jackson and Suomi, 2004 and Housman, 2015).

Toxicity manifests as a hidden stricture which has not only maladjusted but also disabled the would-be promising staff - frustrated and disengaged (Cipriano, 2011). Often, toxicity has been attributed to excessive competition and scarcity of resources, although available literature is inconclusive and sometimes conflicting. 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). Toxicity is real, a lack of empirical research, exacerbates the world of academia, which is feared to facilitate greater levels of toxicity (Hughes and Durand, 2014). Scholars (e.g) cautions universities to step up institutional research so as to document the rates of toxicity and the nature and prevalence of toxic behaviours, while providing education and guidelines designed to reinstate the more collegial culture that academia may have lost (Housman and Minor, 2015).

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. This is useful in providing vivid evidence that makes comparison and collaboration of findings and literature possible. As Borg, (1994) recommends, this investigation did not employ quantitative because of its sensitivity. Hence, in-depth interviews with key informants and academics were conducted; relevant policies, reports, performance appraisals etc. were identified and analyzed. Information gathered was analyzed using content, thematic and narrative techniques. The researchers observed high levels of confidentiality as requested by their respondents to mention the institutions in question. According to Borg (1994), this decision is recommended for a “critical-analytical” investigation, where the findings may be fresh or respondents may again become fresh victims.

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 (Annesi, 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 scarce 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; white, 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). There 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. White, 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 (2011), 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, which affects their interpersonal skills in relationships and in society (Kusy and Holloway (2009). These learned behaviors 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 (White, 2011). Yet, there were those who ‘camouflage’, and surprisingly some of the supervisors are incapable of recognizing that they have a self-esteem problem. White (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 display too much confidence are 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 display confidence in their abilities but in reality, they lack true skills or required competence which is the reason they often want to sabotage others (McLeod, 2012; & Steele, 2011).

Due to excessive toxic behavior, institutions have lost productivity because toxicity has distracted academics' levels of engagement and positively motivated staff has drifted away. Sutton (2007), found that toxicity has caused high levels of stress because of fear of being the next target (Steele, 2011) – considering that excessive stress has many times developed into a clinical depression requiring treatment (Tarraf, 2012). Effects of toxicity were not limited to stress, but overall employees' health - instigating lethal fatigue, stress; depression, and even more serious ailments such hypertension, high blood pressure, diabetes - leading staff to degenerate into clinical depression (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 has 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 has 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 (White, 2011).

Productivity was also affected by toxicity 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.

Strangely, even leaders in these institutions were found to exhibit toxic behavior instead of encouraging unity among staff. For example, some leaders provided different information, use different procedures and even changed 'goal posts' or policies when their targets were involved. For example, during program development in these universities, the source of compensation would change with specific individuals, as espoused by the Theory of Organization Justice. This finding is in line with Goldman (2009), who also found that toxic leaders were actually were to fuel more conflicts – leading to less cohesion and trust, which led to their ability to resolve conflicts among staff and also solve institutional problems regarding team performance. Sadly, some leaders got engrossed in cliques that targeted specific victims. In fact, (Mirza, 2017) shared experience where during a controversial meeting, a leader (chairing a meeting) openly supported a members of staff who attempted to sabotage a colleague's initiative mean to fetch financial resources for the institution. This level of disruption by toxic leaders was found difficult to

resolve. Actually, the situation can even be worse if the negativity is prolonged or is not addressed. Such major ripple effects from toxic leaders include; disengagement, turnover, reduced motivation, intentions to leave and sometimes quitting (Lencionin, 2002). Ironically, whereas physical disengagement can be easy to address – for example by replacements, emotional and psychological disengagement can pause a complex situation – because while it is easy to replace those who quit, it can be disastrous to deal with who emotionally disengage but state with the institution.

Lipman-Blumen (2005), confirms how such conditions often send victims into panic for fear of being targets – ultimately losing jobs. He argues that although academics may tolerate cynicism and hate by their colleagues, the situation can become tense and unbearable if it comes from above. Findings further indicate that - gradually, victims lose trust, become angry and withhold their time, energy and talent, not forgetting deep and pervasive unhappiness. Fiset and Robinson, (2018), found that such situations can even become more disastrous if the toxic leader makes the victims' space so tight that they have no hope of profession, personal, and overall growth so long as the toxins are in charge. In support of this finding, Goldman (2009) found that actually these leaders will go out of their way to sabotage anything their victims try to get done or even put obstacles in their way – including spreading malicious and unfounded rumors just to discredit or tarnish their names. Similarly, Lipman-Blumen, (2005), found that toxic leaders often concealed critical information from their victims. Their vendetta did not stop at only hiding information, but also ensuring that their victims get too frustrated and leave the institutions. In fact, Hollis (2012), laments how the situation can become eviler with the toxic leader conniving with a toxic to make their victim a 'living hell'. Sharing his lived experience, Lease (2006) explained how not only was his promotion obstructed, but also often denied an opportunity to share his view during meetings where such decisions were made. Another devastating finding was found in the universities under investigation, of how the leader hid calls for his staff and when he interdicted after some aggravating evidence, yet it had gone on for over five (5yrs). Herr et al (2017) shares a similar experience with a leader who had the audacity to his dissertations and theses for his victims' candidates. All this was discovered when his luck finally fell out and was pushed out of the office and actually even discovered cheques that he claimed he had not received.

Ironically, White (2011) found that toxic leaders were often in support of visible toxins who often believed that they were more deserving and actually got out to make others miserable by spinning negative campaigns against their colleagues (Lease, 2006). Yet, this kind of behavior can pass in business without seriously harming the company, but can overturn every endeavour in a university because such behavior will not only destroy the reputation of a university, but also the quality of teaching, quality of supervision, quality of research outputs, quality and sustainability of collaborations and sustainable partnerships and networking. This is line with the finding in one of the institutions, where the toxic leader had fortuitously blocked a \$2 million funding project in his obstinacy to frustrate the initiator of the project and his entire team. His compartment did not only affect the host department of the project, but the entire college, because of lost trust and solemnity. Lastly – perhaps this may actually seem fictitious hearing it for the first time, but it is true – when in the eight years a leader who had had two terms of (4years each), had found no faculty that deserved promotion (in those 8years), neither did any faculty qualify for funding to attend an international conference, unless it was externally funded. Although Chung (2018), had a similar finding, but was perplexed at the level of selfishness

where, unlike those leaders with favorite friends, some did not give a “hoot” about others’ growth and development as they strive to stay in the race singly.

Conclusion

Collegiality works well when the goal of work is recognized as more important than the personal ambitions of staff. That way, collegiality has the potential to facilitate the honest sharing of weaknesses, as well as strengths because individuals benefit from each other, and through sharing responsibility for decisions. Notably, the contributions of ‘collegiality’ cannot be over amplified, although collegiality is not something that can be imposed; instead, institutions should motivate staff using appropriate rewards to embrace it. Ironically, toxicity is present in all institutions although its interpretation has remained a puzzle and manipulated HE Systems in various ways. Unfortunately, toxins are blissfully unaware of the negative impact that they have on those around them, yet others derive satisfaction from creating chaos and pushing other people’s buttons.

Sadly, most toxins exhibit two faces; one to the ones they haunt, and the ones they love. The culture had been sustained by unsuspecting leaders while others fueled by some leaders. Yet, there is lack of empirical research findings on the magnitude of toxic work environments, which has aggravated its existence in academia. Similarly, the competitive and hierarchical nature of HEIs have facilitates greater levels of toxicity, yet, without documenting the rates of toxicity in academic contexts it may be difficult to discern whether the problem is reducing or 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, the “publish or perish” dictum, excessive workloads, perverse targets and inherent role conflict. Such demands therefore, inhibit academics from coping with the spiral of work pressure that seem to increase day by day. Hence, toxic behavior – although easily identifiable, is a difficult phenomenon to deal with, because of its enigma’s manifestation and the actors’ intentions as well as the ‘hard-to-measure’ indicators. Hence, the inconclusive empirical research and interpretation has made personnel decisions difficult. Irrefutably therefore, if collegiality is upheld, HEIs would not only achieve unequalled quality and productivity, but enthusiastic staff, sustainable and quality of academic programs, but also institutional stability.

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