

Interview Protocol

Introduction/Overview

My name is [researcher name] from [university name]. My research team and I are interested in learning more about your experiences with regards to toxic leaders. We want to know more about how these practices are experienced and sustained over time.

You should know that nothing you say in this interview will be identifiable to you. The information we collect in the interviews will be summarized by the research team and information will be reported in the aggregate. We will use quotes to explain phenomena, but any quotes will be general in nature (not identifiable to a person) and will be reported using a pseudonym (e.g., a “manager” said, an “employee” said). Your employer will not be informed as to who participated and who did not, so you may choose to not participate with no consequence.

Thus, we hope you will feel free to speak candidly with us. This was all explained in the consent form you received and signed. As was indicated in the consent form I will be taping this interview. Do you have any questions about that before we proceed?

Interview Questions¹

The purpose of our conversation today is to talk about your experiences with toxic leaders and how those leaders may shape organizational well-being.

Warm Up and General Job Information

Before we start on that, I would like to ask you a few questions about you, is that ok?

Would you please share with me information about your educational background?

What is your current role in your work?

How long have you been in the current job?

Main Questions

One of the main areas of interest for us is to understand what makes leaders toxic. I will start with few broad questions about your experiences and then move into specifics.

1. Could you share with me what toxic leadership means to you?
 - a. What do you see as key characteristics of toxic leadership?
 - i. Probe on each characteristic
 - b. Can you share an example involving toxic leadership?
2. What are the key behaviors that characterize this toxic leader?

Now I will ask you few more specific questions that inquire into your perceptions and experiences with regards to toxic leadership in this particular example.

3. Tell me a bit about the conditions that gave rise to toxic leadership.
 - a. What do you think facilitates toxic leadership?
 - b. What are other conditions that may impact existence of toxic leadership?
 - c. Can you tell me more about a particular example of this?
4. Can you share with me details of the particular encounter with this toxic leader?
 - a. You mentionedcan you tell me more about this?
 - b. Is there another example you are willing to share?
5. How do you see these practices impacting your work?
 - a. How do you see it reflected in your everyday work?
 - b. Is there another example you are willing to share?

That covers all my questions. Given our discussion today, is there anything you believe I should know in order to understand toxic leadership that I have not asked about?

Thank you so much for your time.

¹ When appropriate, interviewer deviated from the questions to capture richer insight.