American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Business
2026, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 119–128
https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtab.20261204.13

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Research Article

Varying Perceptions of the Toxic Leader Considering Gender, Age, Ethnicity, and Education Level

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Abstract

Leadership research often tends to focus on the various positive approaches to organizational leadership. However, there remains a relative paucity of research focused on the negative approaches to organizational leadership such as what occurs with the toxic leader. Further, there is very little extant research which considers how people may perceive a toxic leader differently based on demographic factors. These gaps in the leadership literature are important to the overall understanding of the leadership process and how the differences among individuals may influence their perceptions of toxic leaders. This research study focused on exploring the potential differences between specific groups of people (gender, age, ethnicity, and education level) and their perception of toxic leadership. Data were collected from 283 participants and four hypotheses were tested. The important findings of the study are that statistically significant differences in toxic leadership scores exist between the following groups: (1) Ages 18-34 and Ages 45-54 (p = .014), (2) Asians and Caucasians (p = .022), (3) African Americans and Caucasians (p =. 029), (4) Some College/College Graduate and Some Graduate/Graduate Degree (p = .010), and (5) Some College/College Graduate and Post Graduate/Doctoral Degree (p = .000). Implications of the hypotheses testing results and future research possibilities are discussed.

Keywords

Toxic Leadership, Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Education Level

1. Introduction

Although still a relatively under-studied aspect of the leadership process, the literature on toxic leadership continues to increase. Much of the existing information about toxic leadership tends to focus on the relationship between toxic leadership and some other variable such as job satisfaction, turnover intention, organizational cynicism, etc.–just to name a very few. However, very little information seems to exist concerning the potential differences between categorical groups regarding toxic leader perception. This present work will contribute to resolving the current limitation in the toxic leadership literature. The study is organized as follows. First, a brief explanation of the research objective is presented. Second, an overview of the literature related to toxic leadership and the four groups of interest in this study: gender, age, ethnicity, and education level is provided. Third, the research methods and analysis are described including the study's hypotheses, the data collection process, and the

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Received: 8 October 2026; **Accepted:** 4 November 2026; **Published:** 19 November 2026

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data analysis and results. Finally, a section details the researchers' views on the implications of the results of the hypotheses testing and future research possibilities.

2. Research Objective

The researchers' objective in the present study was to address the lack of substantive information concerning whether differences in groups have any bearing on how individuals within the groups perceive a toxic leader. As such, the present study is designed around one overarching question: What differences exist in toxic leadership perception based on gender, or age, or ethnicity, or education level? In order to address this research goal, the researchers collected and analyzed data from four groups: gender, age, ethnicity, and education level on their perceptions of their leader's toxicity. To build a foundational framework to support the research objective, several areas of existing research must be briefly considered. As such, the following review of literature is focused on the primary variables of interest in this study–toxic leadership, gender, age, ethnicity, and education level.

3. Toxic Leadership

The first variable of interest in the present study was toxic leadership. As such, toxic leadership is briefly defined and described in the following sections. Additionally, a brief sampling of the current research trends related to toxic leadership is provided. Finally, the relative paucity of toxic leadership research in categorical groupings is noted.

3.1. Defining Toxic Leadership

Toxic leadership has been described as a primarily malevolent leadership style [1]. The style is characterized by the leader's detrimental behaviors creating organizational conditions that are harmful, aggressive, and distressing to employees [2-4]. The harmful practices of toxic leadership are often categorized into five dimensions including abusive supervision, authoritarian leadership, narcissism, self-promotion, and unpredictability [5-7]. Toxic leadership's destructive behaviors are also described as undermining the well-being of subordinates and negatively impacting organizational effectiveness [8]. Toxic leadership is linked to suboptimal employee work performance, reduced job productivity, and heightened intentions to quit–all of which are detrimental to organizational success [9]. Toxic leadership can have a profoundly negative impact on individual employees ultimately leading to various organizational challenges [1]. Employees seek healthy and productive work environments, and organizations experiencing toxic leadership tend to experience high employee attrition rates [8]. A toxic leader can significantly impact an organization's culture leading to negative changes in employee job satisfaction, productivity, and morale [6]. A toxic leader's desire to intimidate may involve the use of outgroups and scapegoats demonstrating a lack of concern for the emotional safety and stability of individual employees [4].

3.2. Current Research Trends

One current research stream has focused on the relationship of toxic leadership behaviors and employee job satisfaction. The toxic leadership dimension of abusive supervision has been shown to negatively impact employee motivation, productivity, and job satisfaction [10]. The bullying behavior of the toxic leader may reduce the psychological safety of a work group leading to reduced job satisfaction [9]. As a result of the destructive behaviors of toxic leadership, employees may experience helplessness, psychosomatic problems, and reduced efficiency possibly culminating in significantly reduced job satisfaction [11].

Another contemporary trend in toxic leadership research is focused on the influence of toxic leadership on employee turnover intentions. The impact of a toxic leader has been directly linked to the intention to leave one's job [6]. Toxic leadership behaviors tend to control and manipulate employees often leading to increased employee turnover intention [7]. Employees who have experienced a toxic leader may begin to feel the organization is not vested in or caring for them as individuals, potentially leading those employees to seek employment elsewhere [7]. The destructive behaviors of a toxic leader can be associated with absenteeism, decreased performance, and poor worker commitment often culminating in increased turnover rates [12]. Toxic leadership is correlated with employee turnover intention often based on employee stress, poor job satisfaction, and weak organizational commitment [13].

One additional example of the current research trends related to the toxic leader focuses on the connection between toxic leadership and organizational cynicism. Organizational cynicism refers to an employee's consistently skeptical response to a specific person such as the toxic leader [5]. Organizational cynicism involves employee feelings of pessimism, irritation, and reduced loyalty to the organization often due to the presence of a toxic leader [14]. Organizational cynicism is associated with the frustration and distrust employees experience particularly when they perceive a lack of organizational integrity potentially resulting from the existence of toxic leadership in the organization [15]. The self-promotion of a toxic leader can contribute to organizational cynicism when the leader is observed making false claims about personal accomplishments [5]. Toxic leadership behaviors such as those perceived as manipulative or insincere tend to erode employee trust [14]. The erosion of trust can lead to increases in organizational cynicism among employees [5].

3.3. Paucity of Toxic Leadership Research in Categorical Groupings

Research on the employee responses to toxic leadership has

been conducted across multiple industries and specific environments including nursing settings, academia, and the military [9, 11, 15-18]. The reported demographic identifiers across those industries include ethnicity, geographic location, gender, age, and education, but those demographics do not tend to be part of the data analysis. For example, one study shares the demographics of the respondents in their academia-based study including "age, race, marital status, staff category, educational level, and supervisor's details" (p. 4) but without substantive analysis of all those demographic categories in relation to a toxic leader [17]. In another example, a hospital-based nursing environment identified the staff categories including age, gender, marital status, education, job status, type of hospital, hospital level, hospital facility size, and hospital location, but the primary point of the study was focused on the association of toxic leadership with work satisfaction and psychological distress [9]. Those two examples are typical as most studies related to toxic leadership report demographic categories, but the study's analysis is not focused on how perceptions of toxic leadership might vary among the categorical groupings.

4. Groups of Interest

The present study was focused on the potentially varying perceptions of toxic leadership among four specific groups of interest. The four specific groups of interest included gender, age, ethnicity, and education level. Each of those four groups is briefly discussed in the subsequent sections.

4.1. Gender

Employee demographics may vary by industry, type of work to be performed, and role within the organization, but the team or group size may be specifically influenced by gender [19]. Long-held social beliefs have supported differential treatment of men and women in the workplace such as ascribing stereotypical beliefs to gender roles for men and women [20]. However, gender groups may respond to toxic leadership differently irrespective of work setting [5]. Women may perceive toxic behaviors such as abusive supervision and bullying more severely than their male counterparts [21]. Gender dynamics and gender-based variations between how males and females process information occur in how each group interacts with a toxic leader [22]. Gender differences in individual employees and groups may indicate males, more than females, are aligned with toxic leadership practices and behaviors such as over-controlling and bullying [21].

4.2. Age

Employee experiences may also differ when interacting with a toxic leader in consideration of the person's age. The view of supervisor and supervisee relationships varies with the leadership model, but younger employees tend to be more transactional [7, 23]. In contrast to some older employees, some younger employees who are focused on maintaining employment seek to gain skills with the potential to further advance their career [7, 23]. Age specific groups participating in social support for their collective success may be more effective as those employees seek to manage their career under a toxic leader [23]. Toxic leadership's impact exists consistently across age groups among a variety of professions [9]. However, particular age groups may be impacted differently by an abusive supervisor given the age group's tolerance for toxic leadership behaviors [9].

4.3. Ethnicity

Toxic leadership is prevalent in many contexts and countries in all sectors and industries [1]. In some countries, cultural and ethnic domains may impact toxic leadership assumptions and contexts through the customary role expectations of supervisors and supervisees [8, 24]. The toxic leadership perception variation in the ethnicity context may also be prevalent in industries or job types considered traditionally performed by certain ethnic groups and not other groups [25]. Specific scales or survey instruments used for studies are often developed in the Western world and are reflective of the primary ethnicities present there, but different ethnic groups may perceive survey questions differently [26]. One study did find that non-Caucasians could rate toxic leaders more harshly for destructive leadership practices than other ethnic groups [25]. Understanding the impact of toxic leadership on diverse ethnic groups within organizations could help mitigate its negative influence [8].

4.4. Education Level

The education level of employee groups within an organization may indicate different perceptions concerning direct engagement with a toxic leader [10]. Toxic leadership strategies may impact employees differently based on their level of education [17]. For example, lower-educated employees may work directly on the job in front-line roles and engage more regularly with toxic leaders as a result [17]. The perception of the toxic leader from more highly educated groups could have less negative impact on individuals within those groups because of increased employment potential [9]. However, personnel of all education levels who have sustained an ongoing direct engagement with toxic leadership may perceive the level of toxicity in a similar fashion [10].

5. Research Methods and Analysis Results

In order to accomplish the research goals of the present study, a specific research methodology was pursued. A quantitative approach focused on the potential differences in four distinct groups concerning toxic leader perception was imple-

mented. The following sections will describe (1) the hypotheses tested in the study, (2) the data collection process (sample size, instrument, etc), (3) the data analysis process (testing of proposed hypotheses), and (4) the results of the data analysis.

5.1. Hypotheses: Toxic Leadership and Groups of Interest

The potential relationships between toxic leader perceptions and gender, age, ethnicity, and education level are not well documented in the literature associated with toxic leadership. The present study will contribute to filling this gap of knowledge in leadership studies. As previously stated, this study is designed to address one fundamental question: What differences exist in toxic leadership perception based on gender, or age, or ethnicity, or education level? The following hypotheses were used to address each aspect of the research question.

1) Hypothesis 1: *There is a difference in toxic leadership perception within the gender group.*
2) Hypothesis 2: *There is a difference in toxic leadership perception within the age group.*
3) Hypothesis 3: *There is a difference in toxic leadership perception within the ethnicity group.*
4) Hypothesis 4: *There is a difference in toxic leadership perception within the education level group.*

5.1.1. Hypothesis 1

The results of hypothesis 1 showed there were no statistically significant differences in toxic leadership scores between males (n = 192) (Mdn = 4.08) and females (n = 91) (Mdn = 4.0), U = 7712, z= -1.66, p-value = .097 (Table 1). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is not supported.

Table 1. *Mann-Whitney U Test Results Comparing Toxic Leadership and Gender.*

Group	n	Median	U	z	p-value	Effect Size (r)
Male	192	4.08				
Female	91	4.00	7712	-1.663	.097	.10

Note. n = number of participants. p values are two-tailed. Effect size r calculated as z/√N.

5.1.2. Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 stated there are differences between toxic leadership scores and age groups, including ages 18-34 (n = 40), 35-44 (n = 127), 45-54 (n = 82), and 55 and over (n = 35) (Table 2). Median toxic leadership scores were statistically significantly different between age groups, X2(3) =12.589, p= .006 (Table 2). Therefore, hypothesis 2 is supported. This post hoc analysis revealed statistically significant differences in toxic leadership scores between ages 18-34 (Mdn = 3.92) and 45-54 (Mdn = 4.27) (p = .014) (Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2. *Kruskal-Wallis H Results Comparing Toxic Leadership and Age.*

Age Groups	n	Median	Test Statistic	df	p-value
18-34	40	3.92			
35-44	127	4.00			
45-54	82	4.27			
55 and over	32	3.92	12.598	3	.006

Note. The test statistic is adjusted for ties.

Table 3. *Pairwise Comparisons of Age Groups.*

Age Groups	Adjusted p-values
18-34 & 55 and above	1.00

Age Groups	Adjusted p-values
18-34 & 35-44	.980
18-34 & 45-54	.014*
35-44 & 55 and above	1.00
45-54 & 55 and above	.059
35-44 & 45-54	1.06

Note.* Significance level is .05. Significance values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests.

5.1.3. Hypothesis 3

A Krushkal-Wallis H test was conducted to determine if there were differences in toxic leadership scores between ethnicity groups including American Indian (n = 4), Asian (n = 20), African American (n = 11), Hispanic (n = 15), Caucasian (n = 232), and Multiple ethnicity (n = 2) (Table 4). Median toxic leadership scores were statistically significantly different between the ethnicity groups, X2(5) =23.714, p< .001 (Table 4). Thus, hypothesis 3 is supported. The post hoc analysis revealed statistically significant differences in toxic leadership scores between the ethnicity groups Asians (Mdn = 3.77) and Caucasians (Mdn = 4.15) (p= .022), and African Americans (Mdn = 3.69) and Caucasians (p = .029) (Tables 4 and 5).

Table 4. *Kruskal-Wallis H Results Comparing Toxic Leadership and Ethnicity.*

Ethnicity Groups	n	Median	Test Statistic	df	p-value
American Indian	4	4.85			
Asian	20	3.77			
African American	11	3.69			
Hispanic	15	3.69			
Caucasian	232	4.15			
Multi Ethnicity	2	3.73	23.414	5	<.001

Note. The test statistic is adjusted for ties.

Table 5. *Pairwise Comparisons of Ethnicity Groups.*

Ethnicity Groups	Adjusted p-values
African American – Asian	1.00
African American - Hispanic	1.00
African American – Multi Ethnicity	1.00
African American - Caucasian	.029*
African American – American Indian	.234
Asian - Hispanic	1.00
Asian – Multi Ethnicity	1.00
Asian - Caucasian	.022*
Asian – American Indian	.429
Hispanic – Multi Ethnicity	1.00

Ethnicity Groups	Adjusted p-values
Hispanic - Caucasian	.400
Hispanic – American Indian	.943
Multi Ethnicity - Caucasian	1.00
Multi Ethnicity – American Indian	1.00
Caucasian – American Indian	1.00

Note.* Significance level is .05. Significance values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests.

5.1.4. Hypothesis 4

A Krushkal-Wallis H test was conducted to determine if there were differences in toxic leadership scores between education level groups including some high school/high school (n = 29), some college/college degree (n = 92), some graduate/graduate (n = 118), and post graduate/doctorate (n = 45) (Table 6). Median toxic leadership scores were statistically significantly different between the education level groups, X2(3) =19.098, p< .001 (Table 6). Therefore, hypothesis 4 is supported. The post hoc analysis revealed statistically significant differences in toxic leadership scores between the education level groups some college/college graduate (Mdn = 3.885) and some graduate/graduate degree (Mdn = 4.15) (p = .010) and some college/college graduate and post graduate/doctoral degree (Mdn = 4.31) (p = .000) (Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6. *Kruskal-Wallis H Results Comparing Toxic Leadership and Education Level.*

Education Level dGroups	n	Median	Test Statistic	df	p-value
Some HS/HS Graduate	29	4.00			
Some College/College Graduate	92	3.885			
Some Graduate/Graduate	118	4.15			
Post Graduate/Doctorate	45	4.31	19.098	3	<.001

Note. The test statistic is adjusted for ties.

Table 7. *Pairwise Comparisons of Education Groups.*

Education Level Groups	Adjusted p-values
Some College/College Degree – Some HS/HS Degree	.908
Some College/College Degree – Some Graduate/Graduate Degree	.010*
Some College/College Degree – Post Graduate/Doctorate Degree	.000*
Some HS/HS Degree – Some Graduate/Graduate Degree	1.00
Some HS/HS Degree – Post Graduate/Doctorate Degree	.395
Some Graduate/Graduate Degree - Post Graduate/Doctorate Degree	.483

Note.* Significance level is .05. Significance values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests.

5.2. Data Collection

The population involved in this study included persons over the age of 18 located in the United States who were employed full time and who had experience with bad leadership. Data from a sample size of 283 participants were obtained through an online survey platform. Participants granted consent to take

part in the study prior to completing the survey. The survey included two primary sections. First, the demographic questions related to gender (male and female), age (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+), ethnicity (American Indian, Asian, African American, Hispanic, Caucasian, and Multiple Ethnicity), and education level (Some High School/High School Graduate, Some College/College Graduate, Some Graduate/Graduate, and Post Graduate/Doctorate) were presented. Second, the instrument used to measure toxic leadership was presented. Bell's (2020) Toxic Leadership Scale (TSL-1) measured toxic leadership with 13 questions (Appendix A). The TSL-1 is a modified version of Schmidt's Toxic Leadership Scale [27, 28]. The TSL-1's alpha reliability is (a = .94) [27]. According to Hair et al. (2009), alpha reliabilities of (a = .70) and higher are considered reliable [29].

5.3. Data Analysis and Results

The data analysis procedures for the present study were focused on tests to compare independent groups. Initially, the determination of whether to use parametric or nonparametric tests to compare the groups of interest needed to be established. The Shapiro-Wilk tests indicated the assumption of normality was violated for all hypothesized variables. Therefore, two different nonparametric techniques (i.e., Mann-Whitney U test and Krushkal-Wallis H test) were chosen to test the research hypotheses. Given how gender only has two groups, the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test was used to test if there was a difference in toxic leadership scores and gender in hypothesis 1. The nonparametric Krushkal-Wallis H test was used to test hypotheses 2-4 to determine if there were differences in toxic leadership scores between age groups, ethnicity, and education level. The analysis for each hypothesized relationship used the adjusted p-values to determine significance. For each significant relationship a post hoc test was performed to determine where the differences lay. The pairwise comparisons using Dunn's procedure with a Bonferroni correlation for multiple comparisons was utilized [30]. Partial support for the research hypotheses was found, with three of the four hypotheses showing statistical significance.

Important limitations exist with the data analysis conducted in this study and should be noted. First, the effect size was only available for Hypothesis 1. Reporting effect sizes for Hypotheses 2-4 would have strengthened the empirical contribution. Second, an ideal balance of subgroups was not found in the reality of the collected data. Subgroup imbalances exist in each category of collected data, but the imbalances existing in Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3 worthy of specific note. For Hypothesis, 1 (Gender) the number of male respondents (n=192) is slightly more than double the number of female respondents (n=91). For Hypothesis, 3 (Ethnicity) the groups sizes are significantly imbalanced (Native American n=4, Asian n=20, African American n=11, Hispanic n= 15, Caucasian n=232, and Multi Ethnicity n=2). An imbalance in the ratio of group size can have the general effect of reducing statistical power. The statistical power in this situation is more heavily influenced by the smaller group which could potentially lead to a Type 2 error. Additionally, small group sizes (i.e. Native American n=4 and Multi Ethnicity n=2) could bias post-hoc pairwise comparisons with a Kruskal-Wallis H test.

6. Implications of Results

The first hypothesis demonstrated no statistically significant differences in toxic leadership scores between males and females. This finding indicates both males and females perceive a toxic leader in a similar way. The finding contrasts with other previous studies which indicated a potential difference between male and female toxic leadership perception [20-22]. As such, even though the hypothesis was not supported, the finding is significant as it may indicate a new trend related to gender dynamics and leadership in the workplace.

The second hypothesis found statistically significant differences in toxic leadership scores between persons 18-34 and persons 45-54. This finding indicates people in a younger age group may perceive toxic leadership differently than people in an older age group. This finding somewhat correlates with other findings that indicated different age groups may approach toxic leadership and leadership in general with distinct perceptions and approaches [7, 23]. This specific finding is important because it pinpoints the specific age ranges where toxic leadership perception may vary.

The third hypothesis found statistically significant differences in toxic leadership scores between the two sets of ethnicity groups: 1) Asians and Caucasians and 2) African Americans and Caucasians. This finding indicates Caucasian perception of toxic leadership may vary significantly from other ethnic groups such as Asians and African Americans. This finding would also correlate somewhat to other studies' findings which note perceptions of leadership in general and toxic leadership specifically may vary based on differentiating ethnicities [8, 24, 25]. This finding is important because it denotes what specific groups may have the varying perception of a toxic leader.

The fourth hypothesis found statistically significant differences in toxic leadership scores between the two sets of educational level groups: 1) Some College/College Graduate and Some Graduate/Graduate Degree and 2) Some College/College Graduate and Post Graduate/Doctoral Degree. This result suggests stair-step differences in toxic leadership perception as related to education level since the difference exists between those with undergraduate level experience and those with graduate level experience while also existing between those with graduate level experience and those with doctoral experience. This finding matches up well to previous findings that all indicated perceptions of and strategies related to dealing with toxic leadership could vary based on one's level of education [9, 10, 17]. As with previous findings in this study,

the significance of this particular finding is in the identification of the specific grouping and also the upward trajectory of variations in toxic leader perception based on education level.

7. Conclusion and Future Research Possibilities

Several future research possibilities always exist when a study is completed. Authors seem to enjoy providing their input into future research related to the topic, and other researchers enjoy having a specific reason to pursue a particular research endeavor. As such, the authors of this study also have many ideas for subsequent research but will limit the exposition of those ideas to three items as an overall conclusion to this work.

The first and most obvious future research work needed as related to the present study is to conduct a replication study where the same groups are isolated but with more equivalent numbers within the groups. For example, in the gender group there were more than twice as many male as female participants. Additionally, in the ethnicity category the vast majority of participants were Caucasian. A replication of the present study could be designed to ensure data collection continues until equivalent group sizes for each category are achieved. Unfortunately, replication studies appear to be somewhat unpopular in academic circles, often leading researchers to avoid such an endeavor.

The second future research possibility involves an attempt to understand more specifically what the differences are between the groups. For example, this study found significant differences in toxic leadership scores between persons 18-34 and persons 45-54. However, the present study cannot determine what those differences are–how do younger people perceive toxic leadership differently than older people? Do younger people dislike or tolerate the toxic leader more than older people and vice-versa? This same logic holds for the other groups where differences were found such as the ethnicity category and the education level category. This suggested study lends itself well to a qualitative approach where the researcher can spend time interviewing persons within the groups in order to ascertain what specific differences are there.

The third future research possibility involves attempting to gain a better understanding of the categorical variables related to the targeted negative leader. In other words, the participant is asked to think about the worst leader he/she has experienced. That worst leader or targeted negative leader falls into the same categories as do the organizational members rating them. What is unknown is how the categorical variables of the targeted negative leader might influence the organizational member's perception of the toxicity of that person. For example, is the perception of toxic leadership by a male participant different when he has male toxic leader in mind versus a female toxic leader. The same approach would apply to all the various groups. Such a research study would take substantive amounts of strategically acquired data and an intense analytical approach. However, if undertaken the results would be very valuable to all those interested in toxic leadership and toxic leader perceptions.

Abbreviations

TSL-1 Bell's (2020) Toxic Leadership Scale

Author Contributions

Mark Bell: Conceptualization, Methodology, Project administration

Eric Gurley: Conceptualization, Data curation, Investigation

Samantha Murray: Formal Analysis, Validation, Visualization

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the outcome of this research work has been reported in this manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Appendix

Bell's (2020) TLS-1: Modified Version of Schmidt's (2014) Toxic Leadership Scale (a = .94)

All items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale response format, with answers ranging between 1= "Strongly Disagree" to 5 = "Strongly Agree."

All items begin with the phrase "My current supervisor…"

1) Will only offer assistance to people who can help him/her get ahead
2) Accepts credit for successes that do not belong to him/her
3) Publicly belittles subordinates
4) Reminds subordinates of their past mistakes and failures
5) Allows his/her current mood to define the climate of the workplace
6) Expresses anger at subordinates for unknown reasons
7) Varies in his/her degree of approachability
8) Has a sense of personal entitlement
9) Thinks that he/she is more capable than others
10) Believes that he/she is an extraordinary person
11) Controls how subordinates complete their tasks
12) Does not permit subordinates to approach goals in new ways
13) Determines all decisions in the unit whether they are important or not

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