

Exploring toxic personalities in resorts: a managerial perspective

CHOMITZ, Judith and ALI, Alisha <<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7667-4293>>

Available from Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

<https://shura.shu.ac.uk/28047/>

This document is the Accepted Version [AM]

Citation:

CHOMITZ, Judith and ALI, Alisha (2022). Exploring toxic personalities in resorts: a managerial perspective. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality and Tourism*, 21 (2). [Article]

Copyright and re-use policy

See <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/information.html>

Judith Chomitz MSc.^a and Alisha Ali Ph.D.*

^aTourism Management, Thompson Rivers University, BC, Canada; ^bService Sector Management, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK

City Campus, Howard Street, Sheffield, S1 1WB, UK

Alisha.Ali@shu.ac.uk

Judith Chomitz is an Associate Teaching Professor at Thompson Rivers University, BC, Canada. She teaches Hospitality and Event Management in the department of Tourism Management. Before joining academia, she had a career of over twenty-five years with various executive management positions in hotel management. Judith has an MSc in International Hospitality Management from Sheffield Hallam University and her research is focuses on toxic behavior, specifically in resorts.

Alisha Ali is a social scientist researching in the areas of sustainable development, information and communication technologies, innovation, corporate social responsibility, destination management and emotional labour. Her doctoral research defined a new research domain of Information and Communication Technologies for Sustainable Tourism and her textbook on this has been described as a ‘landmark publication’. She has experience in research design, which led to her involvement in several contract research projects working with government offices, destination management organisations (DMOs) and international, national and local businesses.

Exploring toxic personalities in resorts: A managerial perspective

This paper investigates how managers deal with toxic personalities in resort environments. The hospitality literature has addressed deviant behavior, however, this is usually from the employee perspective and the focus is on those overt behaviors, which can be addressed by human resources policies, or the law. The findings revealed that toxicity is a well-recognised and pervasive type of deviant behavior. Managers, however, did not address the challenges of toxic personalities directly. Our findings offer a contribution to the literature by shedding light on a key type of hospitality worker whose impacts must be better understood and addressed.

Keywords: toxic personalities; deviant behavior; incivility; resorts; hospitality

Introduction

The study of destructive workplace behaviors has become an important area of research over the last two decades, because it affects the overall performance and well-being of organizations (Cortina et al., 2017; Cortina et al., 2001; Yildiz & Alpkın, 2015). Such impacts disrupts the normal functioning of businesses leading to negative consequences on staff well-being, reputation, productivity, customer experience and value (cf. Appelbaum et al., 2012; Gurses et al., 2017; Harvey et al., 2017). Deviant behavior in the workplace is defined as “voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and, in so doing, threatens the well-being of the organization or its members or both” (Robinson & Bennett, 1995, p. 556). Such behaviors can range from bullying, sexual harassment, incivility, undermining, workplace exclusion and aggression (Cortina et al., 2001; Herscovis & Barling, 2010).

These impacts of deviant behavior translate into a monetary cost, which is staggering. Globally 1.15 trillion US dollars is attributed to depressive and anxiety conditions associated with deviant employees (Michalak & Ashkanasy, 2018). Over two thirds of employees' experience incivility (c.f. Cortina et al., 2001; Pearson, et al., 2000; Pearson & Porath, 2005). Kusy and Holloway (2009) describe the costs of toxic behavior within an organization like an iceberg. A small percentage is immediately apparent in the toxic person's behaviors, represented by the tip of the iceberg. The ripple effect leads to lost productivity, low morale, stress induced illness, and employee turnover is personified by most of the iceberg hidden under water.

The focus of toxicity is on undermining, backstabbing, demeaning, marginalising, intimidating, demoralising, condescension, and terrorising (Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Lipman-Blueman, 2005). These behaviors are repeated, inappropriate, and unprofessional (Omari & Paull, 2014) to the extent that they can undermine other workers job performance and mental wellbeing. There is a slightly more subtle element to this type of workplace harassment that can be difficult for the people on the receiving end of toxic behavior to articulate (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina, 2008) as it is more than rude behaviors (Nitzsche et al., 2018). Kusy and Holloway (2009) define a toxic personality as "anyone who demonstrates a pattern of counterproductive work behaviors that debilitate individuals, teams and even organizations in the long term" (p. 3-4).

This research contributes to our knowledge and understanding, by researching a specific type of deviant worker category who is prevalent in the hospitality industry but has been insufficiently addressed in the literature. The hospitality research has concentrated on the more adverse impacts of deviancy in the workplace such as alcoholism, sexual harassment, violence, and bullying (Meloury & Signal, 2014; Tresidder & Martin, 2018) from the employee's perspective (cf Karatepe et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2014; Torres et al., 2017). Pearson and Porath

(2005) states that management's approach to workplace incivility is "spotty" (p. 9) and they do not take into consideration the issue of toxic personalities (Sguera et al., 2016). Estimates show that 75% of employees who experienced workplace incivility decided not to pursue a formal complaint based on management's response (Pearson et al., 2000). The behaviors of toxic personalities give the impression of being mild and do not appear to have clear intentions of causing harm, and hence management may have overlooked them (Cortina, 2008; Pearson et al., 2001). However, it is becoming a more pervasive form of negative behavior in organizations (Porath & Pearson, 2013) and the understated nature of toxic personalities cannot be underestimated as it can lead to more violent workplace behaviors, when left unchecked (Nitzsche et al., 2018).

Resorts are the focus of this research as they are usually situated in isolated locations, which are highly seasonal, providing accommodations as well as recreational activities, social, and meeting space, plus food and beverage outlets within a self-contained area (Brey, 2011). Torres et al. (2017) commented that "the hotel industry presents a unique scenario where attention to uncivil acts becomes even more critical" (p. 49). Given the unique operations of resorts, higher levels of stressful relationships can develop at work caused by the conflict of meeting both client, peer, and organizational demands (Carnero et al., 2010) with the resulting increase of stress upon both individuals and work teams. The nature of resorts creates an environment for the generation and exacerbation of toxic personalities. There already exists within the literature a strong correlation between workplace toxicity and high staff turnover rates, but further research into the impact of the toxic worker in resorts and management response is needed (Gumbus & Lyons, 2011). Moreover, there is limited literature on workplace incivility in hotels (Nitzsche et al., 2018).

This research extends the current scholarship by focusing on the human resource (HR) perspective. This is critical to taking positive action in managing toxic personalities. Understanding toxic personalities may also help to address the long-standing challenge of high turnover in the hospitality industry (Chen, 2006; Hom, & Kinicki, 2001) as these employees have the potential to do more harm than those who portray more blatant forms of deviant workplace behaviors. Management plays a critical role in shaping the organizational climate and may be contributing to the ubiquity of these toxic personalities (Megerihi, et al., 2020; Schilpzand et al., 2016), because the intentions of incivility is difficult to understand (Schilpzand et al., 2016). Therefore, it is important to appreciate the managerial perspective. Toxic personalities are no longer a trivial issue due to the challenges and attendant costs they present to any organization (Chen & Wang, 2019). The purpose of this study was to assess toxic personalities in resort environments and specifically explore how managers deal with toxic personalities. This research addresses the following objectives:

1. Investigate the meaning of toxic personalities for resort managers.
2. Determine how toxic personalities are managed in resort environments.
3. Examine the costs of toxic personalities for resorts.

Literature Review

Toxic personalities

The behaviors of toxic personalities are performed voluntarily, with the main aim of harming the organization, its members, or stakeholders (Yildiz & Alpkan, 2015). Robinson & Bennet (1995) separated workplace deviance into two main categories of (1) organizational deviance which is targeted towards the business; sabotage, computer fraud, embezzlement and theft are examples,

and (2) interpersonal deviance where the target is an individual or group of co-workers; rumour spreading, verbal, physical, or sexual abuse are all instances of this.

Kusy and Holloway (2009) recognised that whilst the literature on deviant behavior was proliferating, this was confusing rather than helping professionals seeking answers to dealing with issues of mistreatment of people within the workplace. To gain a better understanding of the implications of toxic personality, they conducted research of industry leaders over a two-year period, with the intent of building successful strategies for dealing with this type of negative behavior. Perception was the key to understanding this issue. The organizational culture of a kitchen for example, might allow for such behavior as yelling, that would not be tolerated in other less intense work settings, such as a hotel front desk.

Kusy and Holloway (2009) identified three main types of toxic behaviors. These are firstly shaming, for example, humiliation, sarcasm, pot shots and mistake pointing. As an illustration, they use arrogant/condescending language and behavior towards peers and at times to a boss. Secondly, passive hostility, such as passive aggression, distrust of other opinions, territorial behavior, verbal attacks when receiving negative feedback and being clueless of their own toxicity. For example, they are very friendly, agreeable, and collaborative one on one, but then do not do what is expected of them. Thirdly team sabotage, including, surveillance of the team, teamwork meddling, and abuse of one's authority to punish. For example, they undermine the authority of the team leader and other important contributors by not sharing information.

The literature has also identified four primary causes of workplace incivility. Firstly, the instigator is careless, fails to notice the impacts of their behavior and this can be coupled with misunderstanding by the recipient or being judged as being overly sensitive (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Sliter et al., 2015). Secondly, acceptable behavior in the workplace based on cultural norms

and formal and informal rules (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) such as the aggression in kitchens (Giousmpasoglou et al., 2018). Thirdly, cultural misunderstandings based on what is acceptable in one culture compared to another (Pearson & Porath, 2005). Lastly, a rapid changing society leading to an environment of more informality in organizations and different communication methods creating misunderstandings and careless and disrespectful treatment (Schilpzand et al., 2016).

The features of toxic personalities clearly distinguish it from the aggressive behavior with physical harming intentions (Chen & Wang, 2019). The evidence is clear that toxic personalities can have deep personal impacts on employees such as depression, loneliness, sadness, fear, confusion and anxiety and to the organization such as reduced performance, productivity and service quality leading to increase turnover (Chen & Wang, 2019; Ghosh et al., 2013; Miner-Rubino & Reed, 2010; Pearson & Porath, 2005). Employees may perceive such behaviors to be acceptable if they are not addressed leading to an infectious work culture of toxic personalities (Abubakar et al., 2018; Foulk et al., 2016; Houseman & Minor, 2015; Kusy & Holloway, 2009).

Toxic personalities in hospitality

Toxic personalities are a recent addition to the hospitality and tourism literature. Research which focuses on supervisor incivility (Abubakar et al., 2017; Cho et al., 2016), co-worker incivility (Chen & Wang 2019; Cho et al., 2016; Rhee et al., 2016; Torres et al., 2017) and the resultant consequences such as emotional exhaustion, job performance, and burnout (Cho et al., 2016, Rhee et al., 2016, Nitezche et al., 2018). More recent papers have focused on the relationship between workplace incivility and job search behavior (Abubakar et al., 2018; Megheri et al., 2020).

The success of the hospitality industry requires management to find an effective balance between operational efficiency and the customisation of individual guest experiences (Ogaard et

al., 2008). Many organizations have an expectation that members of staff will not only perform their assigned duties, but also help colleagues complete theirs (Yen & Teng, 2013). To remain competitive in today's financial and pandemic climate, the hospitality industry needs to have dedicated, professional employees that provide excellent quality service to develop a loyal and satisfied customer base. The extremely stressful environment of the hospitality industry, one in which customers must be treated with care coupled with increased demands in productivity, provides a rich environment for eliciting these uncivil behaviors. Research shows that the factors that contribute towards the potential of such negative behaviors are multifaceted (Applebaum & Shapiro, 2006), even if the negative consequences resulting in significant social and economic costs are typical (Schyns & Schilling, 2013).

Tolerance of the toxic personality

This research is based on the concept of organizational tolerance. Tolerance refers to an organization allowing behaviors to occur and/or perpetuate despite knowing that such behavior is contributing to harming employees and the business (Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Perez-Larrazabal et al., 2019). Tolerance has been identified as a predictor of harassment (Cortina et al., 2017). It is part of the organizational culture which cultivates unfairness (Abubakar et al., 2018; Loi et al., 2015) because little attempt is made to resolve employee conflict (Megeirhi et al., 2018). This may be the reason why such personalities are rarely reported (Coritna, 2008). In the literature, tolerance is noted as a factor for managing toxic personalities (Megerihi et al., 2020) as there has been calls for a zero-tolerance policy for toxic personalities (cf Cortina et al., 2017).

Managerial interventions can create a civility climate (Walsh & Magley, 2018). Moreover, employees become emotionally and physically exhausted dealing with toxic personalities, (Miner-

Rubino & Reed, 2010). There are gaps existing in the literature regarding what workplace incivility is and if the hospitality industry recognises both the emotional and economic impacts of this type of deviant behavior in the workplace. The existing research shows that tolerance of this type of employee behavior is detrimental (Gumbus & Lyons, 2011). However, there is no analysis that shows if tolerance of toxic behavior is a concern within hospitality and what tools management may use to address the issue if it is recognised to be a concern. Our study answers Schlipzand et al. (2016) research call by addressing how workplace incivility can be addressed. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to investigate managerial approaches to toxic personality in the hospitality industry.

Methodology

Participants

The intention of this research was to investigate how resort managers dealt with toxic personalities. Using a qualitative approach, 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior managers in full-time employment in resorts as seen in Table 1. The senior managers selected were either general managers or department heads because they dealt with human resource issues as part of their duties and had line management responsibilities. It is also common practice in hotels, for managers to move up within the hierarchy from front-line positions during their careers, giving them the ability to have an understanding of the behaviors and attitudes of both management and non-management staff. Managers will also have a holistic view of some of the issues inherent with resort operations.

Participants were selected from three resorts which were all remote Alpine towns, situated in the Western provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, in Canada. All three also have a large

target market within a four-hour driving distance, with good transportation links and are not so remote that they are boat or fly-in access only. They all provide a four-season resort experience, with the main season being winter for two of them, and have extensive staff accommodations, meaning most staff both worked and lived together.

Table1: Profile of Interviewees

Participant code	Gender	Position	Type of Interview
W1	Female	Hotel Controller	Face-to-face
W2	Female	Sales Manager	Telephone
W3	Female	General Manager	Skype
SP1	Male	General Manager	Face-to-face
SP2	Male	Director of Operations	Telephone
SP3	Male	General Manager	Telephone
SP4	Female	Food and Beverage Manager	Face-to-face
SP5	Male	Executive Chef	Face-to-face
SP6	Male	Sous Chef	Face-to-face
J1	Male	Regional Events Manager	Telephone
J2	Female	Housekeeping Manager	Telephone

Snowball sampling through hospitality business networks was used to recruit participants to ensure the right people for this research were being interviewed. Fifteen participants were contacted with thirteen agreeing to participate. However, the principle of theoretical saturation informed this sample size as no new themes were emerging in the data (Galser, 1965, Saunders, et

al., 2018) after the eleventh interview. The sample size also corresponds to Braun and Clarke (2013) recommended guidelines of 6-10 participants for small-scale projects.

Procedures and Data Analysis

The questions for the interviews were underpinned by the theoretical knowledge on toxic personalities (Houseman & Minor, 2015; Kusy & Holloway, 2009) and issues appearing in the literature on workplace incivility in the hospitality industry (Hsieh et al., 2004; Kim & Jogaratnam, 2010; Torres et al., 2017). The interview guide comprised of eleven questions with a subset of probing questions. The questions focused on participant's understanding of toxic personalities and their behaviours, the impact, and consequences of these people on the business, and the strategies they employ as managers to deal with this type of behaviour. Ethical approval was obtained from the institution where the researchers were based prior to any data collection occurring.

Participants were contacted by telephone. If there was no response to this call, an e-mail was then sent. As a precursor to the interview, all participants were all sent an information package a week prior with an explanation of the study was provided with guarantees that any information gathered would be completely confidential with anonymous. Based on the preference of the participant, the interviews were conducted either face to face, by Skype, or by telephone. The face-to-face interviews were conducted at the respondent place of work. All the interviews were undertaken by the same interviewer and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Each interview lasted on average for 60 minutes.

Thematic analysis applying the six-step procedure recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to support the data analysis process. This involved becoming familiar with the data to obtain a comprehensive overview and then initial coding and searching for themes (Altinay

& Paraskevas, 2008). This was followed by the iterative process of integrating codes into themes whilst embracing the literature. The final themes produced are discussed in the next section.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of the data identified three key themes. These were: (1) Definition of toxic personalities (2) Impact on the business and employees and (3) Management of toxic behaviors. These are discussed in depth below.

Defining toxicity in resorts

Respondents had a well-defined understanding of toxic personality, supporting the definition used in the literature. They identified these individuals as being negative and creating an undesirable environment for co-workers as described by (J2) below. Descriptors such as “creating a negative environment”, “difficult to get along with”, “disruptive”, “bringing morale down”, “energy draining”, “manipulative”, “spreading negativity”, “reduces productivity”, and “sabotages others” were used by respondents to describe these toxic personalities. These words used by the interviewees correlate to the language used to describe the behaviors expressed in the literature (Houseman & Minor, 2015; Kusy & Holloway, 2009).

“From my understanding it’s someone in the workplace who has a personality or a way of working and being in which they create a negative environment for others, whether that’s bringing people down, or making it harder for other people to get their work done and it really affects the entire workplace. Someone who has a toxic personality is someone who...it doesn’t just affect their own work or sabotages themselves but find they sabotage other people and make it harder for them to do their job.”(J2)

This research also confirms that toxic personalities is a distinct category of workplace deviance (Kusy & Holloway, 2009). Adding to this distinctiveness, respondents agreed that toxic behavior rarely resulted in physical aggression between the perpetrator and the target (Chirila & Constantin, 2013). This demonstrates one of the major differentials within the literature between toxic behavior and other more blatant forms of deviance (Cortina et al., 2001).

Impacts of toxic behaviors in resorts

These interviewees clearly understood the negative impacts towards other workers and the organization and emphasised that toxicity spreads amongst the workforce (Abubakar et al., 2018; Houseman & Minor, 2015; Nitzsche et al., 2018). The resort environment further exacerbated this. The lack of separation between work, social, and living space, all issues specific to the resort environment (Brey, 2011), is instrumental in causing toxicity to grow as workers do not have the flexibility to remove themselves from the perpetrator of their distress at the end of the workday (Kim & Jogaratnam, 2010).

“I think the resort environment sometimes has a huge play on why these toxic personalities even infest more because you can’t get away from it, you have to sit and have lunch with that person and then dinner and they could be your roommate.” (J2)

All respondents stated that there was a negative financial impact to resorts because toxic employees resulted in high turnover rates, recruitment and training costs, and organizational costs of lower productivity and quality control issues.

“I would say that they were financially quite devastating. Because...in a resort environment ...it’s all service based. Everybody there is spending a lot of money and they expect a certain level of service and they need to be wowed every single day...and if you have that toxic environment, it’s not happening. Those people don’t come back and nobody else does as well, because you get a really bad reputation. Quality of service goes down. Quality of product goes down...and your business fails miserably. I’ve watched that happen first hand.” (SP5)

These findings emphasize the importance of employee attributes as an essential part of creating business specific advantages and the critical role of staff in generating customer satisfaction, loyalty, service quality, and consequently key business competitive advantages (Kusluvan et al., 2010). The ripple effect within an organization of low morale, lost productivity, absenteeism, and stress induced illness are all precursors to high staff turnover. While harder to measure, they certainly have a considerable negative economic impact upon the bottom line (Gumbus & Lyons, 2011; Kusy & Holloway, 2009). This resulted in some high performing employees leaving the organization and the industry and they were difficult to replace.

“I know people that have left and some of them are mid to high level managers. So they, they wouldn’t be Directors but they might be a Regional Manager, so it’s a decent paying job. They’re making, probably six figures and if somebody with 15 to 25 years of experience, and they are good at their job and I can remember in numerous situations, people just saying I am ready to leave right now. I cannot deal with that any longer. So to get that calibre of person back, it’s a crapshoot at best” (J1).

This clearly shows an existing and potentially serious HR issue that can be attributed to toxic behavior, in resort hotels. What our research has highlighted, however, is how toxic workers can undermine the best efforts of resort hotels to create a culture of friendliness and inclusivity, where staff and management feel supported, appreciated and an integral part of a teams.

Surprisingly, the research found that there were benefits to working with toxic people. All respondents agreed that working with a toxic person led to experiential learning and development of their management and supervisory skills in communication, conflict resolution, and recognising toxic behaviors in its early stages. They felt such practical hands-on experience could not be replicated. It also allowed them to have a very clear vision of how not to behave as a manager. Deviant behaviors in hospitality may have positive action for organizations (Lugosi, 2019; Yu et al., 2020).

Managing toxic personalities

As expected, the study did not find any innovative approaches to dealing with toxic personalities. Due to staff shortages, toxic personalities were tolerated so there was someone to get the job done. The remote location, low population density, and inadequate availability of services, results in an insufficient number of prospective employees (Mill, 2008). Hiring practices in resorts focused less on staff quality and more upon staff availability, resulting in these toxic behaviors being tolerated.

The majority of respondents observed that the low numbers of staff available within their labour pool, had led to employees either being kept on, or hired in the first place, even though it was clear that they were not a good fit for either the position, or the culture of the company. There was a constant awareness that there remained very limited choice regarding the hiring and firing of staff, that anyone was better than no-one, also known as warm body syndrome (Simons &

Hinkin, 2001). These observations were made even though all the participants also had a very clear understanding that these types of HR practices were extremely detrimental to the overall quality and consistency of guest service, staff morale, and the general work environment (Kusluvan et al., 2010; Tuzun & Kalemci, 2018).

The results from the respondents, showed there were three clear ways they dealt with toxic behaviors: (1) they believe the issue is just a personality conflict and will resolve itself, (2) they rationalise complaints as innocent actions and, (3) they believe that time/attrition will take care of the conflict, and they do not need to get involved as staff turnover is so high. When toxic behaviors persisted and were reported, respondents revealed that they were not dealt with immediately. Rather, managers used the ‘pass the buck’ approach so they became someone else’s problem as addressed below.

“So, I found that there were occasions where people would become aware of the toxicity of that individual, and there was two choices: you either promoted them to another property and made them someone else’s problem. Or, you found a creative way to have them not want to be there, but not fire them. And it depends on whether or not that upper level, recognizes the toxicity that existed, or not.” (SP4)

The findings also revealed that management used staff turnover associated with seasonal work in resorts to address toxic behaviors as these individuals will be gone when their season ended. Management waited the problem out, leading to the perception that there were no immediate consequences for deviant behaviors. This lack of response to the issue of a toxic worker within a workforce does not take into consideration of the long-term debilitating effects (Gumbus

& Lyons, 2011; Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Mehta & Maheshwari, 2013). It undermines any attempts to create a positive workplace culture, while also not taking into consideration the extremely negative impact to the bottom line of the company. The recognition in the resort industry that retention is an issue, with competition for scarcer labour resources becoming more frequent and the associated costs of these issues are only one part of the equation.

However, when these managers did address these toxic personalities, they agreed that one-on-one communication while attempting to coach or mentor an individual towards better work was the most efficient approach. All the interviewees mentioned that some people just had to be dismissed as their behavior was just too entrenched and there was no willingness on the employee's part to change, example below.

"I think one of the most effective things is to have a direct chat. But there are certain people who will just not change and that's when you just shake their hand and say hey I've done my bit and it's not going to work out so you go and find something else". (SP1).

Written warnings were used as the management tool. This is a standard method of instituting disciplinary action within HR and has the benefit of documenting any transgressions. Putting into writing the negative consequences of the toxic behavior on workmates, supervisors, and the business was found to be an effective method of eliciting positive behavior changes in some cases. Dismissal was used either during the 12-week probationary period, at the end of the season, or after strong enough documentation was collected to ensure a charge of dismissal without due cause, could not be brought against the hotel. The first two methods involved a lot less paperwork,

time, and effort, so it is understandable why the third method is not entered into lightly and may even be neglected in favour of waiting for the season to end.

Participants agreed that the company culture was a key component in managing toxic personalities (Kusy & Holloway, 2009). For the elimination of toxicity to be successful, it was felt that it is important to create the right environment, where expectations around acceptable workplace behaviors are set and are consistently managed (Applebaum & Shapiro, 2006). In addition, all managers need to be on the same page regarding the disciplining of staff who do not conform to the required standards. It was felt that there was influence in having consistency across the management structure regarding what is looked upon as unacceptable workplace behaviors. Kusy & Holloway (2009) discuss this strategy in some detail and according to their research; it is one of the most successful techniques in the long term for dealing with toxic people.

Conclusion

This study provided a critical analysis into an area of hospitality research that has previously been ignored and should be viewed as a starting point for further investigation. The first objective of this study was to investigate the meaning of toxic personalities for resort managers. The findings of this research revealed that toxic personalities are a significant cause for concern in the hospitality workplace (Abubakar et al., 2018; Cortina et al., 2001), given the high level of tolerance by managers. This research was able to conclude that in the resort setting, managers clearly understand the meaning of this type of behavior, do not deny its existence and identify it as a distinct form of workplace deviance, supporting the definition present in the literature. The findings also revealed that toxic workers could provide constructive learning experiences for managers, as it allows for the development of people management skills.

The second objective of this study was to determine how toxic personalities are managed in resort environments. The findings clearly demonstrate that managers have an extremely high tolerance of toxic personalities. Rather than dealing directly with these colleagues, they use the seasonality of the resort environment to manage these workers. Such tolerance perpetuates an unequal organization culture because those employees on the receiving end feel they have received little justice and are unimportant (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). This drives away talented employees (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006) leaving the industry with a skill deficit. The employees who are the first to leave the business have higher levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2005) leaving behind a less capable and talented workforce (Abubakar et al., 2018) further exacerbating the turnover and productivity gaps in hospitality.

This paper contributes to the research on deviant behavior in hospitality by clearly articulating that the HR function is not supporting the management of this type of behavior, which may be exacerbating the working conditions in the industry. The perennial challenges of the hospitality industry such as labour mobility, generating profit, and market pressures, continue to exacerbate deviant behaviors (Lugiosi, 2019). This in turn leads to a cyclical train of problems, which is difficult for the industry to recover from. The study identified a research gap between theory and practice, in how managers in the hospitality industry deal with people exhibiting toxic behaviors in the workplace.

The third objective of this study was to examine the costs of toxic personalities for resorts. From the respondents interviewed, the resorts, are clearly operating as if psychological aggression in the form of toxic behavior does not have the same unbearable outcomes as physical aggression for the company, and those exposed to it. This finding contradicts the evidence presented in the literature that psychological aggression is just as, if not more, harmful as physical aggression

(Bowling et al., 2010). Management's inaction towards toxic personalities demonstrates that they are not accounting for the longer-term devastating impacts (Gumbus & Lyons, 2011; Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Mehta & Maheshwari, 2013). This also undermines any attempts to create a positive workplace culture.

Physical aggression in the form of bullying and sexual harassment are well-recognised concepts in HR management and would not be tolerated in a workplace because the legal and financial consequences are severe. This study clearly shows that it is time to acknowledge that psychological aggression in the workplace, in the form of toxic personalities, needs to be treated with the same level of concern. Toxic personalities are contributing to the high turnover rates in the industry. Employee retention is already a significant issue specific to resorts (Sims, 2007). This is particularly alarming in an industry that does not have a strong reputation as an excellent career choice. The results show that a strong argument could be made that the current significant expenditures spent on attracting and retaining staff is wasted, if toxic behaviors continue to be accepted by resort management.

Moreover, the tolerance of such personalities lead to the creation of a different kind of organizational culture as no consequences is a signal that such behaviors are legitimate (Hsieh et al., 2004). It indicates to other employees that such behaviors are acceptable, proliferating an unhealthy work climate. Emann and Lundman (1978) reasoned that organizations should be held responsible for deviancy in the workplace. Tolerating of toxic personalities adds clout to this argument as they are fostering a poor work culture which can have long term impacts on employee health and well-being and in turn the wider society. There is indeed a connection between the negative impacts of organizational justice and organizational norms (Hsieh et al., 2004).

Toxic behavior is well recognised by resort managers as detrimental to operational efficiencies. Whilst a zero-tolerance approach may exist in principle, the findings clearly demonstrate that this is not translated into practice. This study shows an existing gap in the hospitality recruitment, selection, on-boarding, and training processes (Chen & Wang, 2019). This points therefore, to a need to re-assess current industry practice in training on appropriate workplace behaviors, as well as how to recognise and counter toxicity in a timely and effective manner (Abubakar et al., 2018; Reio and Ghosh, 2009). From a pragmatic perspective, HR managers should include training on workplace deviancy as part of on-boarding for new staff and make explicit the zero-tolerance approach. This training should include the different forms of deviancy, how to identify these behaviours, how it can be addressed and the outcomes on employees and the business. This conversation should be continued as part of a rolling induction. Line managers also need to feel supported and they should be provided with a toolkit of approaches they can use to investigate and deal with toxic behaviours and support colleagues on the receiving end. There is a requirement for a formal management process to ensure the zero-tolerance approach is maintained and line managers must model the property expected behaviors through leading by example. This safeguards that the appropriate training is being implemented and employees are clear about the organizational culture.

Hospitality organizations need to keep assessing how deviancy is performed in their businesses to address the underlying causes. To enable this, HR managers needs to create an inclusive and safe work environment where employees feel comfortable reporting if they experienced deviancy or if they are experiencing difficulties which is leading them to be deviant. This can be achieved by soliciting anonymous employee feedback through staff pulse surveys and having signage throughout the workplace emphasizing a safe and supportive work culture.

Additionally, these organizations should have clear processes and comprehensive outcomes for workplace deviancy which are enforced. This should be included as part of the employee handbook and form part of the hiring/on-boarding process so new staff members are fully aware of the zero-tolerance policy for toxic behaviors.

It is not easy for resorts to break the cycle of recruiting toxic workers due to the small labor pool and remote locations. However, this must be carefully considered against the long-term impacts of hiring these types of personalities. Resorts can prevent toxic personalities entering their workforce through reviewing their community outreach activities as part of their recruitment drive. Hospitality should be promoted as a career of choice rather than seasonal employment and these marketing campaigns should reach out to local areas, schools, colleges and universities. This helps to target those who want a career in hospitality and reach a wider labor market. The training and enforcement of the policies discussed above can also support in negating the behaviours of toxic workers.

As recruitment becomes more difficult this will increase the focus on retention even more. Resorts should therefore review their compensation package for staff to ensure they are competitive with the labour market. The quality of the work environment is one of the key elements that will influence staff to stay, and are now putting into place management practices, policies, and procedures that allow the company culture to become one where staff become part of an extended family that works, lives and socializes together (Vaugeois, et al., 2013).

The ongoing ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic will result in an inevitable restructure of the hospitality industry. Resorts will not be able to rely on the ability to attract staff from other countries to work on a seasonal basis (Taylor & Finley, 2009), as travel continues to be severely curtailed in the short and perhaps longer term. The employment of Australian workers to

staff Canadian winter resorts is one example of this industry practise. With the strong possibility of staff shortages, it makes the recommendation of having clear policies regarding the recognition and management of toxic behavior more pertinent, as the need to retain existing workers through several seasons becomes a matter of survival for existing resort properties. Therefore, a change in the underlying culture in hospitality of tolerating toxic behavior, as found in this study, could become a bigger priority for management to address. The other side to the equation presented by the particular circumstances of the present pandemic is the opportunity to eliminate existing toxic people within a property as the drop in occupancy warrants a reduction in staffing levels, to reflect the new reality of low revenues. This research has shown that seasonality of resort operations has been used as a mechanism to resolve toxic behaviors. If this practice were to be continued as a natural consequence of present circumstances, then it can also be used as part of a restructuring process to build a more collegial and supportive workforce.

Limitations and future research

The data is limited by the exploration of one type of resort environment. It would be of interest to examine the consistency of the results with a larger sample and using different resort types in other regions. Hospitality studies have failed to consider the positive results of managing toxic workers. Most studies focus on the negative impacts (Yu et al., 2020). There is latitude here to examine how norm-breaking can drive positive HR learning and promote innovation in HR practices. Additionally, the awareness of place was touched upon in the data collected to be a significant part of the resort environment and the spread of toxicity. Examination into the concept of place-based identity as described in social learning theory, and its impact on the spread of toxicity within the resort environment, is an area that needs to be developed further.

Further research can strengthen the understanding of the complex relationship between the work environment, management styles, and toxic behaviors in the hospitality industry. The literature has identified what constitutes toxic behavior as opposed to other types of deviance. Scholars can design a definitive list to show what constitutes toxic behavior, separate from other types of workplace deviance. This could potentially clear up some of the ambiguity present around toxic behaviors, as currently the characterisations are not always clear-cut. This research has given some much-needed initial exploration into how resort hotel managers deal with toxic personalities in the workplace.

References

- Abubakar, A.M., Megeirhi, A.H., & Shneikat, B. (2018). Tolerance for workplace incivility, employee cynicism and job search behavior. *The Service Industries Journal*, 38, 629-643.
- Abubakar, A.M., Namin, B.H., Harazneh, I., Arasli, H., & Tunç, T. (2017). Does gender moderates the relationship between favoritism/nepotism, supervisor incivility, cynicism and workplace withdrawal: A neural network and SEM approach. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 23, 129-139.
- Andersson, L.M., & Pearson, C.M. (1999). Tit for tat? The spiraling effect of incivility in the workplace. *Academy of Management Review*, 24, 452–471.
- Applebaum, S., & Shapiro, B. (2006). Diagnosis and remedies for deviant workplace behaviors. *Journal of American Academy of Business*, 9, 14-20.
- Appelbaum, S.H., Semerjian, G., & Mohan, K. (2012). Workplace bullying: Consequences, causes and controls (part one). *Industrial & Commercial Training*, 44, 203–210.
- Altinay, L., & Paraskevas, A. (2008). *Planning Research in Hospitality and Tourism*. Oxford, UK: Elsevier
- Bowling, N.A., & Beehr, T.A. (2006). Workplace harassment from the victim's perspective: A theoretical model and meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91, 998–1012.
- Bowling, N.A., Beehr, T.A., Bennett, M., & Watson, C. (2010). Target personality and workplace victimization. *Work & Stress*, 24, 140-150.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 33, 77-101.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. London:

Sage.

- Brey, E.T. (2011). A taxonomy for resorts. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 52, 283 - 290.
- Carnero, A., Martinez, B., & Sanchez-Mangas, R. (2010). Mobbing and its determinants: the case of Spain. *Applied Economics*, 42, 3777 – 3787.
- Chen, C.F. (2006). Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and flight attendants' turnover intentions: A note. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 12, 274-276.
- Chen, H.T., & Wang, C.H. (2019). Incivility, satisfaction and turnover intention of tourist hotel chefs: Moderating effects of emotional intelligence. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 31, 2034-2053.
- Chirila, T., & Constantin, T. (2013). Understanding workplace bullying phenomenon through its concepts: A literature review. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 84, 1175-1179.
- Cho, M., Bonn, M.A., & Han, S.J. (2016). Workplace incivility and its effect upon restaurant frontline service employee emotions and service performance. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 28, 2888-2912.
- Cortina, L.M. (2008). Unseen injustice: Incivility as modern discrimination in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 33, 55-75.
- Cortina, L.M., Kabat-Farr, D., Magley, V.J., & Nelson, K. (2017). Researching rudeness: The past, present, and future of the science of incivility. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22, 299–313.
- Cortina, L.M., & Magley, V.J. (2009). Patterns and profiles of response to incivility in the workplace. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 14, 272-288.
- Cortina, L.M., Magley, V.J., Williams J., & Langhout, R. (2001). Incivility in the workplace: Incidence and Impact. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 6, 64–80.
- Ermann, M.D., & Lundman, R.J. (1978). Deviant acts by complex organizations: Deviance and social control at the organizational level of analysis. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 19, 55–67.
- Estes, B., & Wang, J. (2008). Integrative literature review: Workplace incivility: Impacts on individual and organizational performance. *Human Resource Development Review*, 7, 218–240.
- Fouk, T., Woolum, A., & Erez, A. (2016). Catching rudeness is like catching a cold: The contagion effects of low-intensity negative behaviors. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 101, 50-67.
- Ghosh, R., Reio, T., & Bang, H. (2013). Reducing turnover intent: Supervisor and co-worker incivility and socialization-related learning. *Human Resource Development International*, 16, 169–185.
- Giousmpasoglou, C., Marinakou, E., & Cooper, J. (2018). Banter bollockings and beatings: The occupational socialisation process in Michelin-starred kitchen brigades in Great Britain and Ireland. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 30, 1882-1902.
- Glaser, B. (1965). The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. *Social Problems*, 12, 436–445.

- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18, 59–82.
- Gumbus, A., & Lyons, B. (2011). Workplace harassment: the social costs of bullying. *Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics*, 8, 72 - 90.
- Gursoy, D., Cai, R., & Anaya, G.J. (2017). Developing a typology of disruptive customer behaviors: Influence of customer misbehavior on service experience of by-standing customers. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 29, 2341–2360.
- Harvey, P., Martinko, M.J., & Borkowski, N. (2017). Justifying deviant behavior: The role of attributions and moral emotions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 141, 79–795.
- Hershcovis, M.S., & Barling, J. (2010) Towards a multi-foci approach to workplace aggression: A meta-analytic review of outcomes from different perpetrators. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 31, 24–44.
- Hom, P.W., & Kinicki, A.J. (2001). Toward a greater understanding of how dissatisfaction drives employee turnover. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44, 975-987.
- Houseman, M., & Minor, D. (2015). *Toxic Workers*. Evanston, Illinois.: Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University.
- Hsieh, A., Liang, S., & Hsieh, T. (2004). Workplace deviant behavior and its demographic relationship among Taiwan's flight attendants. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 3, 19-32.
- Karatepe, O.M., Yorganci, I., & Haktanir, M. (2009). Outcomes of customer verbal aggression among hotel employees. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 21, 713–733.
- Kim, G., Ro, H., Hutchinson, J., & Kwun, D.J. (2014). The effect of jay-customer behaviors on employee job stress and job satisfaction. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, 15, 394–416.
- Kim, K., & Jogaratnam, G. (2010). Effects of individual and organizational factors on job satisfaction and intent to stay in the hotel and restaurant industry. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 9, 318-339.
- Kusluvan, S., Kusluvan, Z., Ilhan, I., & Buyruk, L. (2010). The human dimension: A review of human resources management issues in the tourism & hospitality industry. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 51, 171 - 214.
- Kusy, M., & Holloway, E. (2009). *Toxic Workplace - Managing Toxic Personalities & Their Systems of Power 1st ed.* San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lipman-Blumen, J. (2005). *The Allure of Toxic Leaders. Why we Follow Destructive Bosses and Corrupt Politicians and How We Can Survive Them.* 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Loi, N.M., Loh, J.M.I., & Hine, D.W. (2015). Don't rock the boat: The moderating role of gender in the relationship between workplace incivility and work withdrawal. *Journal of Management Development*, 34, 169–186.
- Lugosi, P. (2019). Deviance, deviant behavior and hospitality management: Sources, forms and drivers. *Tourism Management*, 74, 81-98.
- Lutgen-Sandvik, P. (2005). Water smoothing stones: Subordinate resistance to workplace bullying, Doctoral dissertation. Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University.
- Lutgen-Sandvik, P. (2006). Take this job and quitting and other forms of resistance to workplace bullying. *Communication Monographs*, 73, 406–433.
- Meloury, J., & Signal, T. (2014). When the plate is full: aggression among chefs. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 41, 97-103.
- Megeirhi, H.A., Kilic, H., Avci, T., Afsar, B., & Abubakar, A.M. (2018). Does team psychological capital moderate the relationship between authentic leadership and negative outcomes: An investigation in the hospitality industry. *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istrazivanja*, 31, 927–945.
- Megeirhi, A.H., Ribiero, A.M., & Woosnam, M.K. (2020). Job search behavior explained through perceived tolerance for workplace incivility, cynicism and income level: A moderated mediation model. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 44, 88-97.
- Mehta, S., & Maheshwari, G.C. (2013). Consequence of toxic leadership on employee job satisfaction & organizational commitment. *Journal of Contemporary Management Research*, 8, 1 - 23.
- Michalak, R.T., & Ashkanasy, N.M. (2018). Working with monsters: Counting the costs of workplace psychopaths and other toxic employees. *Accounting and Finance*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/acfi.12369>
- Mill, R.C. (2008). *Resorts Management & Operation* 2nd ed. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.
- Miner-Rubino, K., & Reed, W. (2010). Testing a moderated mediational model of workgroup incivility: The roles of organizational trust and group regard. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 40, 3148–3168.
- Nitzsche, M., Ribeiro, L., & Laneiro, T. (2018). workplace incivility among Portuguese hotel employees: is lack of respect burning them out? *Journal of Spatial and Organizational Dynamics*, VI, 52-71.
- Ogaard, T., Marnburg, E., & Larsen, S. (2008). Perceptions of organizational structure in the hospitality industry: Consequences for commitment, job satisfaction and perceived performance. *Tourism Management*, 29, 661- 671.
- Omari, M., & Paull, M. (2014) 'Shut up and bill': Workplace bullying challenges for the legal profession. *International Journal of the Legal Profession*, 20, 141- 160.
- Pearson, C.M., Andersson, L.M., & Porath, C.L. (2000). Assessing and attacking workplace incivility.

- Organizational Dynamics*, 29, 123–137.
- Pearson, C.M., Andersson, L.M., & Wegner, J. (2001). When workers flout convention: A study of workplace incivility. *Human Relations*, 54, 1387–1419.
- Pearson, C.M., & Porath, C. L. (2005). On the nature, consequences and remedies of workplace incivility: No time for “nice”? Think again. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 19, 7–18.
- Perez-Larrazabal, J., Lopezdelallave, A., & Topa, G. (2019). Organizational Tolerance for Workplace Harassment: Development and Validation of the POT Scale. *Sustainability*, 11, 4078, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11154078>
- Porath, C., & Pearson, C. (2013). The price of incivility: Lack of respect hurts morale- and the bottom line. *Harvard Business Review*, 91, 114-121.
- Reio, T.G., & Ghosh, R. (2009). Antecedents and outcomes of workplace incivility: Implications for human resource development research and practice. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 20, 237–264.
- Rhee, S.Y., Hur, W.M., & Kim, M. (2016). The relationship of co-worker incivility to Job performance and the moderating role of self-efficacy and compassion at work: The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) approach. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 32, 711-726.
- Robinson, S., & Bennett, R. (1995). A typology of deviant workplace behaviors: A multi-dimensional scaling study. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38, 555-572.
- Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity*, 52, 1893–1907.
- Schilpzand, P., de Pater, I.E., & Erez, A. (2016). Workplace incivility: A review of the literature and agenda for future research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 37, 57-88.
- Schyns, B., & Schilling, J. (2013). How bad are the effects of bad leaders? A metanalysis of destructive leadership and it's outcomes. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 24, 138 – 158.
- Sguera, F., Bagozzi, R.P., Huy, Q.N., Bosssd, R.W., David, S., & Boss, D.S. (2016). Curtailing the harmful effects of workplace incivility: The role of structural demands and organization-provided resources. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 95–96, 115–127.
- Simons, T., & Hinkin, T. (2001). The effect of employee turnover on hotel profits. *Cornell Hotel & Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 4, 65-69.
- Sims, W.J. (2007). Antecedents of labour turnover in Australian alpine resorts. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 6, 1 - 26.
- Sliter, M., Withrow, S., & Jex, S.M. (2015). It happened, or you thought it happened? Examining the

- perception of workplace incivility based on personality characteristics. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 22, 24-45.
- Taylor, M., & Finley, D. (2009). Strategic human resource management in US luxury resorts - A case study. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 8, 82 – 95.
- Torres, E.N., van Niekerk, M., & Orlowski, M. (2017). Customer and employee incivility and its causal effects in the hospitality industry. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 26, 48–66.
- Tresidder, R., & Martin, E. (2018). Deviant behavior in the hospitality industry: A problem of space and time. *Hospitality & Society*, 8, 3–22.
- Tuzun, K.I., & Kalemci, A.R. (2018). Workplace deviance and human resource management relations: A case study of Turkish hotel employees. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 17, 137-153.
- Walsh, B. M., & Magley, V. J. (2018). Workplace civility training: Understanding drivers of motivation to learn. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2018.1441164>
- Yen, C.H., & Teng, H.Y. (2013). The effect of centralization on organizational citizenship behavior and deviant workplace behavior in the hospitality industry. *Tourism Management*, 36, 401-410.
- Yildiz, B., & Alpan, L. (2015). A theoretical model on the proposed predictors of destructive deviant workplace behaviors and the mediator role of alienation. *Procedia - Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 210, 330 - 338.
- Yu, Y., Xu, S., Li, G., & Kong, H. (2020). A systematic review of research on abusive supervision in hospitality and tourism. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 32, 2473-2496.