



## **TOXIC WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT EFFECT ON CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR AND ENGAGEMENT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** The study's primary objective was to investigate how toxic workplace environments affect employee engagement and citizen behaviour.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The study adopted a descriptive correlational research design. The targeted population was six hundred forty-three employees of selected multinational corporations in Ghana. Systematic sampling was a technique employed to select the respondents. A survey was conducted using a structured, validated questionnaire to solicit quantitative data. Data was analysed using SPSS (v. 26) and the PLS-SEM software (3.0).

**Findings:** The main findings demonstrated a statistically significant negative correlation between employee engagement, toxic work environment, and citizenship behaviour. However, a statistically significant relationship was found between servant leadership and good citizenship. A positive association was observed between servant leadership and employee engagement.

**Research Limitation:** The study adopted a cross-sectional data collection approach, which limited the opportunity for a longitudinal survey. Data collection was also limited to selected multinational companies in Ghana.

**Practical Implication:** A toxic workplace is characterised by negative interpersonal dynamics, which increase turnover, undermine employee engagement, exacerbate job burnout and demotivation, decrease total productivity, raise absenteeism and turnover

**Social Implication:** The toxic workplace environment may cause negative interpersonal dynamics such as stress and demotivation, lower their levels of Organisational citizenship behaviour

**Originality/Value:** The study on toxicity is novel in Ghana since relatively few studies seek to establish the relationship between a toxic workplace environment, employee engagement, citizenship behaviour, and the role of servant leadership.

**Keywords:** *Behaviour. citizenship. environment. toxic. workplace*



## INTRODUCTION

Human resources are the most valuable resource, and when appropriately managed through employee engagement, they can result in corporate citizenship behaviour (Specchia et al., 2021). However, a growing number of unethical workplace deviant behaviours—such as incivility, harassment, bullying, and interpersonal abuse—have been reported in recent academic research (Lythreathis & Mostafa, 2020; DeCieri et al., 2019; Dhanani & Lapalme, 2019). Substantial staff turnover, inadequate engagement at work, and a dearth of citizenship behaviour are the outcomes of such behaviour, as indicated by previous studies (Gile et al., 2022; Ekingen et al., 2023). To end these occurrences, a servant leadership component is required.

The popularity of servant leadership can be attributed to its emphasis on serving and assisting members of one's team or organisation (Agusta & Azmy, 2023; Lythreathis & Mostafa, 2020). According to earlier studies, servant leadership fosters affective commitment, reduces job burnout, improves citizenship behaviour, and keeps staff members on board. (Goestjahjanti et al., 2022; Ma et al., 2021). According to research, servant leadership improves organisational outcomes, including worker performance, inclinations to leave, loyalty, and discretionary effort (Huning et al., 2020). According to Katie Shonk's post from 2024, servant leadership is understudied despite its lofty ideals. Still, little research has been done on how servant leadership affects toxic workplace cultures and overconsumption of chemicals (OCB) (Eurofound, 2021).

According to the literature (Cannon, 2022; Hayden, 2019; Borah & Barua, 2018), there are not many studies of toxic studies in a cultural setting, which makes this study necessary. Most studies on employee engagement that are now available were carried out in Western countries, particularly the United States (Hyden, 2019; Kulat et al., 2008). Studies exploring employee engagement in many cultural settings—including non-Western countries—are necessary to understand how cultural influences influence engagement levels. Current toxic workplace research focuses on sectors or situations. According to Tastan (2017) and White & Schoonover-Shoffner (2016), there is insufficient cross-sector investigation to pinpoint commonalities and particular difficulties in various work contexts. According to Porter et al. (2024), there exists a necessity for more thorough, extended investigations to determine the causal connections between workplace variables and harmful consequences. Practical intervention effectiveness to address toxicity is not well supported by empirical research (Porter et al., 2024; White & Schoonover-Shoffner, 2016; Iddagada et al., 2022). There is a dearth of empirical research on the connection between employee engagement and leadership styles, such as authentic leadership. The direct effects of toxic work environments on employee engagement and organisational and civic behaviour have not received much attention from researchers.



Knowing this connection may help to shed light on how unfavourable work environments impact the general productivity of employees and the business's health. (Anuradha et al., 2022; Borah & Barua, 2018; Anuradha et al., 2016; Knotts, 2015 ). There is still much to learn about the systems by which toxic work environments affect employee engagement and citizenship behaviour. Conclusively, filling these gaps can improve knowledge about workplace toxicity, employee engagement, and citizenship behaviour, eventually enhancing worker welfare.

Studies by Chan et al. (2019) estimate that about one-third of employees will experience unpleasant work environments. Working in a toxic environment has several detrimental implications, including reduced efficiency (Anjum et al., 2018), stress at work (Wang et al., 2020), attrition and exhaustion problems (Rasool et al., 2021), and mental health problems (Greenwood & Anas, 2021; Enos, 2020). As reported by O'Reilly (2015), whose research Hüsrevşahi (2021) cited, 70% of the participants admitted to having experienced isolation at work. Again, 13% of the 5,000 workers surveyed by Hitlan et al. (2006) reported experiencing exclusion. Furthermore, a study by Harvey et al. (2018), which included 2000 participants in the USA, discovered that 67% of respondents did not interact with their coworkers, and 75% acknowledged that they had experienced ostracism.

Furthermore, 2001 research by the Irish government with 5,200 participants found that 35% had experienced exclusion and bullying at work (Hitlan et al., 2006). Luo's (2008) research on SMEs in China concluded that the hazardous atmosphere was worsening. The findings of all these studies support the idea that toxicity is widespread in various organisations. According to the Top Social Impact Education Pioneer (2019) research, harassment, discrimination, and bullying are examples of extreme and toxic behaviours that are common in today's workplaces. It revealed that 48% of organisations do not set aside money for workplace toxicity management, and 53% do not handle it. The Society for Human Resource Management's research revealed that 56% of workers lack engagement, which impacts their performance and job happiness. Employee engagement reduces absenteeism by 41%, enhances safety by 70%, and increases profit by 21% and productivity by 17%, according to Gallup surveys (Asmaa et al., 2022).

According to Han et al. (2022), organisational behaviour has been disregarded, particularly the more common form of incivility. Once more, according to a study conducted by Gallup (2014), 70% of the 147,615 million US employees (U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics) reported having low levels of employee engagement. According to Adkins' (2015) research, disengaged employees cost the US economy \$300 billion in lost revenue. The Adkins (2016) poll found that of 150,614 million Americans, 76,512 (50.8%) felt disengaged, 25,906 (17.2%) felt highly disengaged, and 48,196 (32.0%) felt engaged. The survey was based on the American Bureau of Labour Statistics data in 2016. According to earlier research, workplace rudeness frequently



results in aggressive conduct as retaliation, which can have disastrous effects on OCB (Liu et al., 2019). Previous studies have shown that rudeness at work frequently leads to aggressive behaviour as payback, which can have catastrophic consequences for OCB (Liu et al., 2019). There are still gaps in the present literature despite the development in workplace incivility research (Nur Farzana et al., 2023). There is evidence that bullying occurs often in a variety of industries and workplace sizes. Empirical research indicates that toxic work environments negatively impact employee and company well-being (Rasool et al., 2021; Anjum et al., 2018), and millennials are particularly susceptible to problems related to their well-being at work (Yap et al., 2022). Therefore, studies on positive workplace environments are imperative. Servant leadership may seem natural, but researchers have characterised it as somewhat obscure (Russell, 2016) and lacking theoretical support and technique (McQuade et al., 2020). The literature assessment revealed that no academic research has been done to determine how servant leadership influences employee engagement and citizenship conduct in a toxic work environment in developing countries. Additionally, the study fills the void left by the overconcentration of research in industrialised nations.

## **THEORIES UNDERPINNING THE STUDY**

### **Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX)**

Graen and Scandura (1987) created the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory. It describes the actions of a leader and how they communicate with their followers. The foundation of the LMX theory is the notion that leaders form special bonds with each follower and that these bonds can have the capacity to shape a range of attitudes and actions (Illies et al., 2007). Good LMX partnerships typically require a high level of mutual respect, trust, and duty between the two sides (Stepanek & Paul, 2022). In the workplace, follower attitudes and behaviours are favourably correlated with high LMX quality. According to previous research (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Eisenberger et al., 2019; Martin et al., 2016), Prior studies (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Eisenberger et al., 2019; Martin et al., 2016) have found that LMX is partially connected to enhanced employees to performance their job, boost satisfaction, commitment, and citizenship behaviours (i.e., extracurricular activities like kindness, politeness, and job dedication). A great friendship serves as a tool for the organisation. Involvement in the workplace boosts engagement and satisfaction among employees (Kahn, 1990); social support and citizenship behaviour are improved (Sherony & Green, 2002); and open communication is encouraged (Yrle et al., 2002). These factors increase psychological safety and commitment among employees (Spreitzer, 2007).



## **Toxic Workplace Environment**

An atmosphere of extreme negativity, animosity, unjust treatment, and verbal, physical, and emotional abuse are all maintained in toxic workplaces. either by coworkers or management (Al-Somaidae et al., 2023; Haeruddin et al., 2022; Rusdiyanto, 2022). According to Rasool et al. (2019), employees' organisational citizenship behaviour is adversely affected by their micro-level experiences of increased stress, anxiety, burnout, demoralisation, decreased job satisfaction and productivity, mental health, physical well-being, and overall quality of life. Leadership, corporate politics, work design, unfair treatment, and organisational culture can all be sources of workplace toxicity. (Budak & Erdal, 2022; Eva et al., 2019) and therefore establish a new culture (Al Khoury, 2022).

Numerous investigations have illuminated the detrimental consequences of poisonous work settings. Studies conducted in Singapore by Duta (2017) suggest that workplace toxicity might lead to rudeness and poor communication. According to Mazzetti et al. (2022), harsh and discourteous behaviour, including verbal abuse, sarcasm, and angry facial expressions, are examples of incivility and interpersonal disrespect. Several adverse outcomes have been linked to incivility, such as decreased job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and increased intentions to leave (Purwanto et al., 2021). According to research on nurses by Namadi, Shahbaz, and Jasemi (2023), a toxic work environment hinders the development of moral boldness, organisational culture, and ethical behaviour.

In an unfriendly and resentful work environment, individuals exhibit unacceptable conduct, such as bullying, harassment, threats, and narcissistic conduct, and are subjected to bodily, psychological, or psychological assault from coworkers or management (Haeruddin et al., 2022; Rusdiyanto, 2022). A toxic work environment encompasses detrimental conduct and any covert action that works against the employee's interests. According to Daniel & Harrison (2020) and Rasool et al. (2020), employees who get cruel treatment are likely to experience stress, anxiety, weariness, decreased productivity, trouble communicating, reduced efficiency, occupational disputes, and decreased commitment, all of which could potentially jeopardise their well-being and health. According to Anjum et al. (2018) and Rasool et al. (2021), workplace toxicity is brought on by coworker conduct, organisational politics, organisational culture, and inadequate leadership. Research indicates that ostracism, harassment, and bullying are the three primary components of a toxic work environment (Rasool et al., 2021).

## **Harassment**

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) became aware of workplace harassment when the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) was adopted and implemented in 2021. It said that every employee has a right to be free from harassment and violence. Any



behaviour that is unwelcome, insulting, threatening, offensive, humiliating, intimidating, or that fosters a hostile environment is considered harassment. Unwelcome verbal (slander, rumours, bullying), visual (social media, emails, posters), and physical (threatening assault, grabbing, and punching) behaviours are examples of how it manifests itself. Therefore, inappropriate or unwanted behaviour by a manager or coworkers in the form of sexually suggestive statements or gestures, threats of violence, sexual innuendo, provocative touching, or physical acts that could create a hostile work environment is referred to as workplace harassment (Neall & Tuckey, 2014; Shetty & B V, 2017).

### **Workplace Bullying**

Bullying is defined as repeated, unjustified, hostile, critical, demeaning, threatening, and gossiping behaviour that is not welcome in the workplace and has the potential to cause an employee's bodily or emotional harm (Rai & Agarwal, 2016). The target may feel humiliated, intimidated, scared, or punished. Bullying has been shown in literature to have an impact on the victim as well as the organisation (Cullinan et al., 2019). Employee health and well-being, job efficacy, turnover, and employee engagement are among the consequences (Cullinan et al., 2019; MacMahon et al., 2018).

### **Ostracism**

According to Gamian-Wilk & Madeja-Bien (2018) and Chang et al. (2021) employee ostracism happens when coworkers or management purposely exclude, isolate, neglect, or deny employees' involvement in important work-related tasks, social events, or planning. Both employees and organisations are likely to be impacted by racism. Research has demonstrated that being shunned results in anguish and suffering as well as the denial of a feeling of purpose, self-worth, and belonging, as well as resource scarcity and depression (Balliet & Ferris, 2013; Williams, 2009). The impact of this issue on the organisation has been documented by Duffy et al. (2002), Hitlan et al. (2006), Tepper & Henle (2011), O'Reilly et al. (2015), Bedi (2021), and others. It also affects performance behaviour, lower group commitment, frequent staff turnover, poor psychological well-being, isolation, and incivility. Evidence in the literature shows that rude behaviour towards employees lowers their intention to quit, demotivates them, decreases their commitment, and makes them less satisfied with their jobs (Parray et al., 2022; Han et al., 2022).

### **Incivility**

It is the deliberate transgression of an organisational norm done out of self-interest. Both spoken and nonverbal behaviours might demonstrate it. (Chinitz et al., 2017). Among them are foul language, humiliation in public, disdain, and rudeness. Its manifestation at work has a



detrimental impact on workers' productivity, sense of self-worth, respect, job satisfaction, loneliness, and depression (Bar-David, 2018; Hershcovis, Cameron et al., 2018; Shi et al., 2018).

### **Servant Leadership**

Greenleaf (1970) created the concept of servant leadership. "The servant as leader" is the definition of servant leadership. It is a morally grounded, all-encompassing style of leadership that emphasises an individual's interests and needs, a welcoming workplace, moral behaviour, empathy for subordinates, and support given at the expense of one's own needs. Through employee engagement, career development, and empowerment, it focuses on serving, mentoring, and achieving the well-being of employees (Qiu, Dooley, & Xie, 2020). Collaboration, trust, understanding, listening, and the exercise of authority are all encouraged by servant leadership (Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2021; Zia et al., 2021). According to Mcquade and Harrison (2020), servant leadership encourages listening, open communication, empathy, stewardship, empowerment, and trust. Organisational success, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, organisational citizenship conduct, engagement, and psychological safety are just a few outcomes linked to servant leadership (Mcquade & Harrison, 2020; Eva et al., 2019).

### **Organisational Citizenship Behaviour**

According to Nosheen (2023), organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) is the term used to describe employees' discretionary and voluntary acts that support the company's smooth operation but are not specifically acknowledged by official incentive systems. According to George and Raghavendra (2022), OCB is defined as behaviour that goes above and beyond what is expected, is optional, and is not recognised by the organization's official structure. It is an example of pro-social conduct that doesn't fall under an employee's official job description but has a beneficial effect on coworkers and the company (Jnaneswar & Ranjit, 2021). A person's readiness to actively and consciously work for the organisation is a sign of OCB (Purwanto et al., 2022; Ismael et al., 2022). Behaviours that are beneficial to the organisation without anticipating anything more than formal role ligations are referred to be organisational citizenship conduct. (Çetin, 2020). OCB includes deeds like lending a hand voluntarily to others, keeping a cheerful disposition, defending the organisation to outsiders, following organisational policies, exhibiting self-initiative, and exhibiting civic virtue (Omar, 2021). It is crucial for developing employee engagement, strengthening commitment, and creating a positive organisational atmosphere (Vasudevan & Aslan, 2022). It has been discovered that elements like organisational democracy and work happiness affect how employees express OCB (Çavuş & BİÇER, 2021). Despite much research, OCB is still not fully understood (Shukla, 2019).



Altruism, conscientiousness, civic virtue, civility, and sportsmanship are among the five qualities of OCB that Organ (1988) described and are frequently utilised in literature (Özduran & Tanova, 2017). Altruism is the capacity to minimise conflict by lending a helpful hand, supporting a colleague in carrying out work or finding a solution, and so on (Law, Wong, and Chen, 2005). According to Özduran and Tanova (2017), conscientiousness is the capacity of an employee to go above and beyond the requirements of their position. Involvement and participation in social and significant events are a civic virtue. According to Chiun et al. (2009), courtesy raises awareness of potential hazards in the workplace and encourages appropriate gestures to avoid them.

However, Podaskoff et al. (2000) divided citizenship behaviour into seven (7) categories: sportsmanship, helping behaviours, civic virtue, organisational loyalty, individual initiative, organisational compliance, sportsmanship, civic virtue, and self-development. The success of OCB is dependent on some factors, including institutional backing (Kaur & Randhawa, 2021); organisational justice (Aguiar-Quintana et al., 2020; Khaola & Rambe, 2020); worker empowerment and high-performing work environments (Singh et al., 2020).

### **Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement impacts customer satisfaction, retention, productivity, and performance. Employee engagement is significantly influenced by and encouraged by the deployment of internal communication tactics (Kimani, 2024). Engagement is acknowledged as a three-dimensional construct with emotional, cognitive, and bodily aspects. It improves organisational citizenship behaviour, performance management, training and development, and emotional commitment and dedication to work (Kumi, 2024; Barman, 2024; Niraula, 2023).

Employee engagement is linked to commitment, focus, and enthusiasm, according to Khan (1990). Kahn (1990) identifies meaningfulness, safety, and availability as the three psychological prerequisites for involvement. Businesses that emphasise employee engagement often see improvements in customer happiness, productivity, and overall performance (Novrianto, 2024); they also strengthen their brand and gain a competitive edge (Afolabi, 2023; Chu, 2023). According to Orujaliyev and Sabila (2024), fostering an engaged culture and implementing effective staff retention strategies depend on high levels of employee engagement. Other benefits of employee engagement include higher customer satisfaction, less absenteeism, and increased performance (Banhwa et al., 2014). When companies do not cultivate a good and encouraging work environment, they risk losing their skilled personnel to disgruntled and dejection.

### **Toxic Workplace Environment and Citizenship behaviour**

People's behaviour suffers; disagreements among coworkers arise more frequently, and workers' unpredictable behaviour typically has detrimental effects (Garg et al., 2021). The likelihood of workers participating in good citizenship is reduced in toxic work situations.

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According to Wang and Chen (2020), employees who are exposed to toxic behaviours and unfavourable work conditions may be less inclined to participate willingly, which might have a detrimental effect on overall company culture (OCB). Neglect and rudeness in the workplace can result in a decline in commitment and motivation, a rise in stress, and a reduction in task completion. It can also result in a decline in customer satisfaction, employee loyalty, and trust, as well as a decline in organisational effectiveness. Furthermore, it might result in a decline in extracurricular activities or civic engagement that benefits the business (Lata & Chaudhary, 2021). Coworkers' or superiors' rudeness can foster a hostile, fearful, and intimidating atmosphere that can cause citizens to behave less civilly. This may include declining the desire to help coworkers, going above and beyond the call of duty, or participating in organisational efforts (Jehanzeb, 2020). It is a hypothesis that:

*H1: Toxic workplace environment hurts organisational citizenship behaviour*

### **Relationship between Employee Engagement and Toxic Workplace Environment**

Employee engagement and a toxic work environment have a close negative association. Research has demonstrated that an adverse work environment can negatively impact employee engagement, leading to lower output and negative employee attitudes (Rasool et al., 2021; Iqbal et al., 2022; Khoury, 2022). Negativity spreads easily in toxic work environments, making it difficult for staff members to interact productively with one another and the company (Rusdiyanto, 2022; Rasool et al., 2020). Workers in toxic workplaces are more likely to feel stressed and anxious and to have a lower quality of life, all of which lower employee engagement (Bany, 2024). Furthermore, toxic work environments can result in psychological fatigue, lower employee engagement, bullying, and harassment (Hamel et al., 2023) (Bany, 2024). In a high-quality work atmosphere, employees thrive. Organisations must address toxic work environments to foster employee engagement, productivity, and well-being. Organisations may increase employee engagement by creating a positive and encouraging work environment, boosting output and contributing to overall success. It can, therefore be hypothesised as:

*H2: Toxic workplace environment correlates negatively with employee engagement*

### **Servant Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour**

An employee's extra function is called organisational citizenship (Katz, 1964). Altruism, civic virtue, sportsmanship, conscientiousness, and civility are characteristics of OCB, according to Organ (1988). According to certain researchers' findings, OCB and servant leadership have a statistically significant association (Amir & Santoso, 2019; Aziz et al., 2018; Setyaningrum, 2017). Employee trust, respect, and a feeling of purpose are all fostered by servant leadership,



which promotes OCB. Helping coworkers, offering to take on more responsibilities, and supporting organisational goals are examples of OCB that engaged employees more frequently display.

*H3: Servant leadership relates positively with citizenship behaviour*

### **Servant Leadership and Employee Engagement**

Su et al. (2020) define servant leadership as a leadership style that puts the needs of others first. Organisational performance, productivity, and effectiveness rely on employee engagement (Eva et al., 2019). Servant leadership establishes a framework of support for staff members and assists with attitude modification and personal growth. When their bosses are servant leaders, their staff members feel appreciated, encouraged, and in control of their work. This ultimately results in increased dedication to the business, willingness to go above and beyond for the organisation, and job satisfaction.

Academic studies suggest that employee engagement and servant leadership are positively correlated (Coetzer et al., 2017; Ling et al., 2017; Dierendonck, 2010). By prioritising well-being and development, servant leadership has a good effect on employee engagement by fostering a climate at work that values people's needs and growth, encourages trust and collaboration, and appreciates open communication. People who work in a favourable environment with servant leaders feel inspired, appreciated, and a part of the company (Peterson et al., 2021). In conclusion, servant leadership raises employee engagement by putting employees' needs and development first, fostering a climate of trust and cooperation and encouraging candid communication.

*H4: Servant leadership correlates positively with employee engagement*

### **Employee Engagement and Citizenship Behaviour**

Several studies have demonstrated a substantial beneficial connection between employee engagement and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), showing that engaged employees are more inclined to demonstrate OCB, which is advantageous to the organisation and its staff. Certain aspects of employee engagement, like vigour, dedication, and absorption, have been discovered to be particularly influential in predicting OCB. A study of 522 employees from four large Thai organisations found positive relationships between employee engagement and all components of OCB, with the most substantial relationship seen for the civic virtue component (Rurkkhum & Bartlett, 2012). Similarly, a study conducted in Indonesia found a significant positive relationship between OCB and employee engagement (Ariani, 2013). In a survey of Chinese telecom workers, work engagement was also discovered to mediate the relationship between employee affective well-being and OCB (Xu et al., 2019). For example,



OCB is positively impacted by perceived organisational support, which is strongly mediated by employee engagement (Alshaabani et al., 2021). Additionally, inclusive management has been demonstrated to encourage challenge-oriented OCB, partially mediated by work engagement (Chen et al., 2020). However, a study conducted in Bangladesh identified that work engagement mediated the relationship between procedural justice and OCB dimensions but not the relationship between procedural justice and OCB dimensions (Rahman & Karim, 2022). In conclusion, the significance of encouraging involvement in the workplace is highlighted by the consistently positive correlation between OCB and employee engagement across cultural contexts. Businesses can use this link to increase citizenship practices, boosting employee happiness and organisational performance. Future studies should examine other moderating variables and targeted tactics to improve the engagement-OCB relationship in diverse cultural contexts and sectors. It's interesting to note that lower levels of unproductive job behaviour are also associated with increased employee engagement. This implies that motivated workers abstain from actions that could endanger the company in addition to making constructive contributions through OCB (Ariani, 2013).

*H5: Employee engagement correlates positively with citizenship behaviour.*

## **Workplace Toxicity and Servant Leadership**

According to research by Haq et al. (2021), bullying, nepotism, and exclusion from the workplace are all negatively correlated with servant leadership. This implies that organisations led by servant leaders would experience a decline in abuse, which could contribute to a reduction in workplace toxicity—furthermore, studies conducted by Ahmad et al. Ahmad, Ahmed, Yang, Hussain, & Nazim, 2022 and Iqbal, Ahmad, & Nazir, (2023) highlight the significance of servant leadership in managing hostile work environments and bullying. This implies that organisations led by servant leaders might witness a decline in abuse, potentially reducing employment toxicity. Furthermore, studies by Ahmad et al. (2021) and Iqbal et al. (2022) highlight the significance of servant leadership in managing hostile work environments and bullying.

Furthermore, the research conducted by Miralles (2024) highlights how servant leaders can foster an organisational culture that supports mindfulness by demonstrating compassion towards their employees' suffering. This shows that by promoting a helpful and understanding environment, servant leadership techniques centred on compassion and empathy may help mitigate the detrimental impacts of workplace toxicity. Servant leaders can mitigate the harmful impacts of toxicity in the workplace by focussing on compassion and understanding, encouraging supportive connections, and encouraging constructive behaviours.



H<sub>6</sub>: Toxic workplace environment correlates positively with servant leadership

Based on the literature, the following framework was formulated as the basis of hypothesis building.

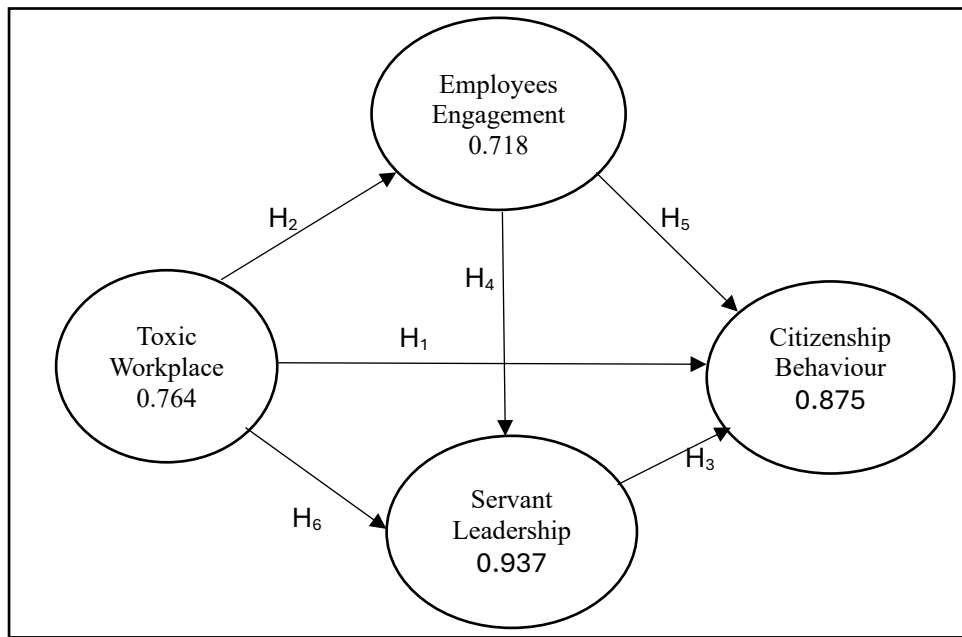


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Researcher’s construct, 2024)

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

A descriptive correlational research design is used in this study. According to Ariola (2006), a descriptive correlation study aims to characterise the association between variables without attempting to determine a cause-and-effect link. Descriptive research is used to characterise a population's traits, profiles, and frequency distribution and merely describe a population, scenario, or phenomenon. It briefly provides a solution to the questions of what, when, how, and where—rather than why (McCombes, 2020). The survey is used in this study's quantitative methodology to gather data.



### Population of the study

Multinational corporations based in Ghana, such as Alliance Motors Ghana Limited, MTN Ghana Limited, and Tata Holdings Ghana Limited, were included in the research population. The target population was six hundred and eight employees (N = 643). (Thornhills, Lewis, Saunders, 2023)

Table 1: Population of the study

No.	Name of company	Population (N)	Sample Size (n)	Actual Total Retrieved
1.	Tata Holdings (Ghana) Limited	115	88	
2.	Alliance Motors (Ghana) Limited	150	108	<b>365</b>
3.	MTN Ghana Limited	63	54	<b>(86.28%)</b>
4.	Twifo Oil Palm Plantation Limited	315	173	
<b>Total</b>		<b>643</b>	<b>423</b>	

The response rate was as high as 86.28% as the sample size of 423,365 was retrieved from respondents (see Table 1).

### Sample Size Determination

The sample size was determined using Murray and Larry's (2005) formula.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 Q^2 N}{e^2 (N-1) + Z^2 Q^2}$$

Were

N = the population (N=110)

n = sample size

Q = standard deviation (0.5)

Z = confidence levels 95% that is 1.96)

e = sampling error (0.05).



$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5^2 \times 115}{0.05^2 (115 - 1) + 1.96^2 \times 0.5^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3.8416 \times 0,25 \times 115}{0.0025(114) + 3.8416 \times 0.25}$$

$$n = \frac{110.446}{0.285 + 0.9604}$$

$$n = \frac{110.446}{1.2454} = 88.68$$

This procedure was replicated in all the organisations to determine the sample size to be selected.

### **Sampling Technique**

The study employed the systematic random sampling technique. An alphabetised sample frame was created, and participants were chosen regularly. The sampling interval (k) was established by dividing the targeted population by sample size ( $k=N/n$ ). Therefore,  $k=N/n$  ( $k = 115/88 = 1.30$ ). The first respondent was selected randomly by choosing 1, which means the next respondent was 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, etc., until 88 respondents were selected.

### **Measurement Scale**

The scales created by Rasool et al. (2021) and Ambreen Anjum et al. (2019) were used to measure the toxic workplace environment (harassment, bullying, incivility, and ostracism). Podsakoff ET AL. (1990) employed a scale to measure citizenship behaviour. The primary factors included altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, civility, and civic virtue. The validated Soane et al. (2012) scale was used to measure the three aspects of employee engagement: cognitive, emotional, and physical engagement. The scale created by Hussain and Ali (2012) and Liden et al. (2015) was used to measure servant leadership. The indications of this approach include stewardship, accountability, empowerment, humility, and accountability. A 5-point Likert scale was used in the construction of the questionnaire.

### **Data Analysis**

The data was analysed using the PLS-SEM software because of its robustness, statistical strength, and predictive ability (Sarstedt et al., 2017a; Hair et al., 2019). PLS-SEM is primarily assumed to be appropriate for non-parametric scaling methods (nominal, scale, interval, and

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ordinal data), small sample sizes, and aberrant data (Ghasemy et al., 2020; Sarstedt et al., 2017). Additionally, it has been extensively utilised in current business research (Hair et al., 2021; Hair et al., 2020). The reflecting model was used for the study because it allows elements with low coefficient loading below 0.5 to be removed, but the outer loadings should be above 0.708 (Henseler et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2017). The reflective mode is made up of the measurement and the structural model. The measuring model includes the assessment of internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2017). The structural model includes path coefficients, R<sup>2</sup> values, f<sup>2</sup> effect size, predictive relevance (Q<sup>2</sup>), and collinearity assessment. (Shmueli et al. 2019).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographics Characteristics

The targeted workers were from three multinational firms in Ghana. The sample size was 423, but 365 were retrieved, constituting an 86% return rate. According to Table 2, men comprised 72.3% of the total respondents, while women comprised 27.7%. This sample had a high level of education since 205 (56%) had first degrees, master's, and professional certificates. The population ages were 21 – 60; 23%, 51%, and 22% were from the ages of 21 to 30, 31 to 40, and 41 to 50 years, respectively. (see Table 2).

*Table 2: Employees Biodata*

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cum. %</b>
<b>Gender:</b>			
Male	264	72.3	72.3
Female	101	27.7	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Education Qualification:</b>			
HND/Diploma	160	44.0	44.0
Bachelor	124	34.0	78.0
Master	28	8.0	86.0
Professionals	53	14.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Age:</b>			
21 – 30	84	23.0	23.0
31 – 40	187	51.0	74.0
41 – 50	79	22.0	96.0
51 – 60	15	4.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.0</b>	



<b>Departments:</b>			
HR	18	5.0	5.0
Administration	32	9.0	14.0
Account & Finance	20	5,0	19.0
Production	109	30.0	49.0
Procurement & Supplies	34	9.0	58.0
Marketing & Sales	84	23.0	81.0
Maintenance	30	8.0	89.0
Security	38	11.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

*Source: Field Data, 2023*

### **Measurement Model (Outer Model Test)**

The reflective measurement model evaluates the validity (convergent and discriminant) and internal consistency of the constructs and indicators. Reliability is indicated when the outer loadings are greater than 0.708; the cutoff point for convergent validity and internal consistency criteria is 0.50 (Hair et al., 2017a). For internal consistency to be established, Cronbach's alpha composite reliability value must be more than 0.7 (Ali et al., 2018). The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) with a threshold of 0.85 and 0.9 is used to evaluate the discriminant validity; the average variance extracted (AVE), which should be larger than 0.5, is used to determine the convergent validity (Franke & Sarstedt, 2018; Hair et al., 2017b).

### **Convergent Validity**

Convergent measures the validity of the construct's indicators using the outer loading. The indicators are valid if the outer loading is between 0.50 and 0.60.





*Table 3: Construct Reliability and Validity*

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Cross Loading s</b>	<b>Cronb . alpha</b>	<b>rho_A</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>
<b>Toxic workplace Environment</b>	Ostracism	TWO 7	0.925	0.935	0.940	0.954	0.837
		TWO 8	0.891				
		TWO 9	0.953				
		TWO 10	0.889				
	Incivility	TWI 4	0.879	0.525	0.608	0.774	0.559
		TWI 5	0.872				
	Bullying	TWB 3	0.891	0.849	0.856	0.898	0.689
		TWB 4	0.818				
	Harassment	TWH 4	0.909	0.859	0.867	0.909	0.717
		TWH 5	0.923				
TWH 6		0.892					
TWH 7		0.629					
<b>Servant Leadership</b>	Empowerment	EMP 1	0.791	0.770	0.794	0.851	0.588
		EMP 2	0.816				
		EMP 3	0.739				
		EMP 4	0.717				
	Accountability	ACC 1	0.714	0.750	0.765	0.858	0.670
		ACC 2	0.878				
		ACC 3	0.855				
	Servitude	SER 2	0.959	0.912	0.912	0.958	0.919
		SER 3	0.959				
	Courage	COU 1	0.881	0.567	0.594	0.819	0.695
		COU 2	0.783				
	Humility	STEP 1	0.820	0.673	0.692	0.801	0.505
		STEP 2	0.877				
STEP 3		0.796					
<b>Employee Engagement</b>	Cognitive	CE 2	0.830	0.775	0.787	0.855	0.597
		CE 3	0.835				
		CE 4	0.729				
		CE 5	0.685				
	Emotional	EE 2	0.791	0.810	0.808	0.876	0.640



		EE 3	0.863				
		EE 4	0.834				
		EE 5	0.704				
	Physical	PE 2	0.882	0.793	0.820	0.879	0.709
		PE 3	0.901				
		PE 4	0.734				
<b>Citizenship Behaviour</b>	Altruism	CAL 2	0.766	0.594	0.598	0.772	0.531
		CAL 4	0.730				
		CAL 5	0.687				
	Conscientiousness	CCON 1	0.920	0.926	0.928	0.948	0.819
		CCON 2	0.912				
		CCON 3	0.894				
		CCON 5	0.894				
	Courtesy	CCOU 1	0.692	0.861	0.864	0.901	0.648
		CCOU 2	0.849				
		CCOU 3	0.884				
		CCOU 4	0.857				
		CCOU 5	0.725				
	Civic	CV 1	0.842	0.845	0.845	0.906	0.763
		CV 2	0.904				
		CV 3	0.874				

Composite reliability assesses the degree of dependability among the constructions' indicators. The composite reliability values are good when they exceed 0.70. It is concluded that because the result is more than 0.70, the five evaluated variables have the reliability of a good composite. To assess the inner model, the investigation can thus be continued by looking at the goodness-of-fit model

### **Discriminant Validity**

The discriminant validity test aims to compare the indicator's correlation coefficient to its construct. The indicator's correlation coefficient value needs to be higher than the values of other constructs. From Table 3, all the cross loadings were above 0,70, meeting the threshold. The discriminant validity was also checked using the HTMT.



*Table 4: Discriminant Validity HTMT*

	Acc	Alt	Bull	CB	Civ	Cog	Cou	Cur	Emo	EE	Emp	Har	Hum	Inc	Ost	Pe	SL
Acc																	
Alt	0.281																
Bul	0.055	0.167															
CB	0.378	0.827	0.101														
Civ	0.434	0.768	0.068	0.871													
Cog	0.092	0.163	0.048	0.134	0.162												
Cou	0.898	0.160	0.064	0.209	0.244	0.147											
Cur	0.323	0.592	0.066	0.849	0.708	0.169	0.162										
Emo	0.130	0.171	0.059	0.107	0.138	0.189	0.122	0.204									
EE	0.056	0.124	0.076	0.063	0.076	0.485	0.008	0.076	0.707								
Emp	0.095	0.110	0.129	0.152	0.111	0.129	0.100	0.217	0.187	0.127							
Har	0.381	0.621	0.089	0.766	0.700	0.275	0.218	0.647	0.153	0.024	0.108						
Hum	0.124	0.231	0.096	0.223	0.222	0.147	0.129	0.253	0.251	0.141	0.169	0.303					
Inc	0.105	0.138	0.174	0.142	0.107	0.142	0.118	0.157	0.141	0.124	0.157	0.092	0.128				
Ost	0.047	0.081	0.062	0.009	0.039	0.061	0.059	0.049	0.101	0.056	0.093	0.021	0.060	0.087			
PE	0.058	0.114	0.072	0.061	0.118	0.123	0.095	0.060	0.118	0.384	0.106	0.092	0.117	0.064	0.030		
SL	0.703	0.094	0.034	0.140	0.134	0.054	0.833	0.139	0.121	0.042	0.315	0.104	0.516	0.069	0.020	0.069	
Ser	0.283	0.041	0.071	0.021	0.025	0.098	0.015	0.050	0.061	0.029	0.119	0.033	0.219	0.056	0.078	0.118	0.480
Ste	0.104	0.097	0.088	0.112	0.132	0.149	0.064	0.094	0.131	0.022	0.172	0.075	0.240	0.080	0.060	0.092	0.468
TW	0.109	0.137	0.487	0.209	0.154	0.112	0.055	0.213	0.067	0.106	0.081	0.294	0.128	0.928	0.261	0.041	0.076
Con	0.324	0.617	0.098	0.756	0.630	0.275	0.199	0.536	0.109	0.026	0.102	0.906	0.234	0.039	0.048	0.085	0.091

Since all the values in Table 4 were less than 0.90, there are no problems with discriminant validity (Franke & Sarstedt, 2018).

### **Evaluating R<sup>2</sup> Value**

According to Sarstedt, Ringle, and Hair (2017), it measures the variation explained by each of the endogenous factors and is hence suggestive of the model's predictive accuracy. It is rated as follows: 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 for strong, moderate, and weak, respectively. As can be seen in Table 4, the R<sup>2</sup> values were greater than 0.67, demonstrating their strength and predictive relevance.



**Table 5: R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>2</sup> Adjusted**

	<b>R Square</b>	<b>R Square Adjusted</b>
Citizenship Behaviour	0.875	0.874
Employees Employment	0.718	0.715
Servant Leadership	0.937	0.936
Toxic Workplace	0.764	0.762

### F<sup>2</sup> Effect

The magnitude of a size-independent effect is measured by the f<sup>2</sup> coefficient. As defined by Cohen (1992) and Kock (2014b), the corresponding f<sup>2</sup> values for small, medium, and large are 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, respectively.

*Table 6: f<sup>2</sup> coefficient*

	Toxic Workplace	Servant Leadership	Employees Engagement	Citizenship Behaviour
TW			0.001	0.005
SL	0.003		0.013	0.055
EE		0.013		0.002

### Hypothesis Testing

The t-value, p-values, and confidence interval were used to examine the hypotheses. An acceptable criterion is a t-value larger than 1.96 and a p-value less than 0.05.

*Table 7: Hypothesis Testing*

		<b>Original Sample (O)</b>	<b>Sample Mean (M)</b>	<b>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</b>	<b>T Statistics ( O/STDEV )</b>	<b>P Values</b>	<b>Decision</b>
H <sub>1</sub> :	TW -> CB	0.025	0.025	0.021	1.181	0.238	Rejected
H <sub>2</sub> :	TW -> EE	-0.013	-0.013	0.024	0.533	0.594	Rejected
H <sub>3</sub> :	SL-> CB	-0.065	-0.065	0.016	4.189	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Accepted</b>
H <sub>4</sub> :	SL-> EE	-0.030	-0.029	0.014	2.172	<b>0.030</b>	<b>Accepted</b>
H <sub>5</sub> :	EE -> CB	0.016	0.016	0.019	0.828	0.408	Rejected
H <sub>6</sub> :	TW -> SL	-0.014	-0.015	0.013	1.132	0.258	Rejected

The stated hypothesis was H<sub>1</sub>: Toxic workplace environment correlates negatively with organisational citizenship behaviour. Since the t-value is less than 1.96 and the p value is



greater than 0.05 ( $t$ -value = 1.181,  $p > 0.05$ ), the hypothesis is rejected. H<sub>2</sub> stated that the toxic workplace environment correlates negatively with employee engagement. The result indicates that ( $t$ -value = 0,533,  $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. The H<sub>3</sub> stated that servant leadership relates positively to citizenship behaviour. The results revealed that ( $t$ -value = 4.189,  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. H<sub>4</sub>: the hypothesis was a favourable correlation between employee engagement and servant leadership. The outcome shows that ( $t$ -value = 2.172,  $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, the hypothesis is accepted. Hypothesis H<sub>5</sub> stated that citizenship behaviour and employee engagement are positively correlated. The findings showed that ( $t$ -value = 0.828;  $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, the theory is rejected. Ultimately, H<sub>6</sub> showed a positive correlation between toxic workplace environments and servant leadership. According to the outcome,  $t$ -value = 1.132,  $p > 0.05$ . Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. (see Table 5).

### **Path Coefficient**

The path coefficient represents the hypothesised relationship and ranges between -1 and +1. The threshold is that +1 indicates a strong positive relationship. The bootstrapping result indicates the empirical  $t$ -value,  $p$ -value, or beta value. According to Hair et al. (2010), the  $p$ -value ( $\beta$ ) should be less than 0.05 (5%), and the  $t$ -value should be above 1.96.

### **DISCUSSION**

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a negative correlation between toxic office environments and organisational citizenship behaviours. According to the findings, ( $\beta = 0.757$ ,  $M = 0.025$ ,  $SD = 0.021$ ,  $t = 1.181$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). The hypothesis is not supported since the  $t$ -value is less than 1.96 and the  $p$ -value is higher than 0.05. This suggests a poisonous work environment might not impact employees' civic engagement. According to studies by Garg et al. (2021), Wang and Chen (2020), Lata & Chaudhary (2021), and Jehanzeb (2020), workplace toxicity has a negative relationship with employees' citizenship behaviour. It also causes disagreements among coworkers, a decline in engagement, fosters hostilities, an atmosphere of intimidation, and a lack of involvement and participation in decision-making. These findings contradicted each other.

H<sub>2</sub> There is a negative correlation between toxic office settings and employee engagement ( $\beta = -0.013$ ,  $M = -0.013$ ,  $SD = 0.024$ ,  $t = 0.533$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) is the outcome that is displayed. The hypothesis is rejected since the  $p$ -value is larger than 0.05 and the  $t$ -value is less than 1.96. This indicates that a hazardous work environment probably causes low employee engagement. The results do not validate the research conducted by Tanwar (2019) and Arnetz et al. (2018), which



determined a negative correlation between toxicity and engagement. Additionally, the toxicity lowers involvement, creates stress, and has an impact on job satisfaction.

H<sub>3</sub>: Citizenship behaviour and servant leadership have a positive relationship. ( $\beta = -0.065$ ,  $M = -0.065$ ,  $SD = 0.016$ ,  $t = 4.189$ ,  $p \sim 0.05$ ) was the outcome that was found. The outcome shows that the p-value is less than 0.05 and the t-value is more than 1.96. Consequently, the hypothesis is upheld. This indicates that organisational citizenship behaviour is statistically significant when implemented by servant leadership. This validates the research conducted by Aziz et al. (2018), Setyaningrum (2017), and Amir and Santoso (2019). They concluded that there is a statistically significant correlation between civic behaviour and servant leadership. Employee respect, trust, and meaningful work are all increased by this.

H<sub>4</sub>: Employee engagement and servant leadership are favourably correlated. The study's findings indicate that ( $\beta = -0.030$ ,  $M = -0.029$ ,  $SD = 0.014$ ,  $t = 2.172$ ,  $p \sim 0.05$ ). Since the p-value was less than 0.05 and the t-value was 2.172, H<sub>4</sub> is deemed acceptable. It follows from this that staff engagement is boosted by servant leadership. The research of Coetzer et al. (2017), Ling et al. (2017), and Dierendonck (2010) are confirmed by this. According to Peterson et al. (2021), servant leadership encourages participation, strengthening trust, collaboration, and open communication inside the company.

H<sub>5</sub>: Employee engagement correlates positively with citizenship behaviour. Citizenship behaviour and employee engagement are positively correlated. The outcome shows:  $\beta = -0.014$ ,  $M = -0.015$ ,  $SD = 0.013$ ,  $t = 1.132$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . H<sub>5</sub> is rejected since the t-value is less than 1.96 and the p-value is higher than 0.05. This suggests that the companies under study were too toxic for servant leadership to reduce. The results of Jin et al. (2022) and Rasool et al. (2021) claimed that leadership or servant leadership can lessen the effects of workplace toxicity conflict with this.

H<sub>6</sub>: Servant leadership is positively correlated with toxic workplaces. The study's results show that ( $\beta = -0.014$ ,  $M = -0.015$ ,  $SD = 0.013$ ,  $t = 1.132$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Since the t-value is less than 1.96 and the p-value is greater than 0.05, H<sub>6</sub> is rejected, meaning that even implementing servant leadership will not yield the desired positive outcomes in a toxic workplace. This contrasts with the findings of Rasool et al. (2021), who concluded that servant leadership reduces toxicity. According to Jin et al. (2022), servant leadership promotes a positive and healthy work environment.



## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The study demonstrated that servant leadership, corporate citizenship behaviour, and employee engagement had a favourable, statistically significant link. It is implied that employee's organisational behaviour and engagement will increase if management supports servant leadership, which is characterised by a leader who empathises with staff, gives them authority, shows interest in their career growth and well-being, and maintains open lines of communication. It was evidence that some people may behave toxically in the workplace even when a boss is displaying the traits of a servant leader. Management should put policies regarding bullying, harassment, ostracism, and incivility in the workplace in place. These policies should include a list of "dos and don'ts" and describe the consequences that will follow any infractions.

### **Theoretical Implication**

The social exchange theory illustrates the reciprocity of incentive and production linkages, while the leader-member exchange theory maintains a bond between leaders and employees. Narcissistic behaviour, aggressive leadership, threatening behaviour, harassment, bullying, and exclusion are characteristics of toxic work environments. They lead to burnout, imbalances in the body and mind, and detrimental psychological repercussions on the workforce's health. Theoretical ramifications emphasise how toxic work conditions negatively impact employee involvement and civic behaviour. The idea that servant leadership and the leader-member exchange paradigm can reduce toxicity and motivate staff to promote civic behaviour is reinforced by this study.

### **Practical Implication**

A hostile work environment significantly and multifacetedly impacts employee engagement and civic conduct. A toxic workplace is characterised by negative interpersonal dynamics, which increase turnover, undermine employee engagement, exacerbate job burnout and demotivation, and affect workers' performance. Additionally, negative interpersonal dynamics cause stress and demotivation in employees, which lowers their organisational citizenship behaviour. Employee engagement helps to lessen the detrimental impacts of workplace toxicity. The overall effectiveness of an enterprise is compromised by toxicity. causes a decrease in total productivity, a rise in absenteeism, and a rise in turnover. Employee cooperation and trust are undermined by a toxic workplace culture, which is detrimental to the development of OCB. Harmful effects can be lessened by using effective HR strategies, such as encouraging a



respectful and supportive culture. Supervisors need to be aware of the warning indicators of a poisonous work environment and take action to create a culture of positivity. This entails offering tools for workers' well-being, promoting candid dialogue, and making a concerted effort to eliminate harmful behaviours. Organisations can improve worker well-being and productivity when management tackles the underlying causes of toxicity and cultivates an engaged culture.

### **Contribution of the study**

This study has partially filled the need for more empirical academic research on the effects of toxic office settings on employee engagement and citizenship behaviour. The study is unique since no other studies have incorporated the same variables in the Ghanaian setting. It has provided a starting point for additional research in human resource management.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were highly relevant considering the findings:

- i Since servant leadership could not avert toxicity, management should implement a holistic approach to ameliorate a toxic workplace environment by instituting punitive actions against employees who engage in harassment, bullying, ostracism, and incivility
- ii Management should have a code of conduct as well as policies on harassment, bullying, ostracism, and incivility
- iii Since citizenship behaviour and employee engagement are positively associated, management should strengthen them in the organisation

### **Limitations and future research**

Three multinational firms in Ghana were studied using a cross-sectional approach (data collected at one instance). To provide an all-encompassing picture of workplace toxicity, data should be gathered longitudinally and include other local, national, and international businesses.





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