



The Effect of Toxic Workplace and Abuse of Power on Employee Performance at the Ministry X

Annisa Nur Wulandari¹, Ivan Yulivan², Jubaedah³

¹²³Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta, Indonesia

Correspondent acha.enwe@gmail.com¹

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ABSTRACT: This research was motivated by an increase in cases of employee complaints at the Ministry X regarding conflicts that occurred with leaders in work units. This research aims to determine and analyze the effect of toxic workplaces and abuse of power on employee performance through employee motivation. The method used in this research is a quantitative method where the data collection technique is by distributing questionnaires to 231 respondents with details of 220 civil servants and 11 government's contractual employee within the Ministry X. Data analysis and processing techniques using the Partial Least Square (PLS) method. The results showed that (1) Toxic Workplace affects Employee Performance; (2) Abuse of Power has no effect on Employee Performance; (3) Toxic Workplace has no effect on Employee Performance with the mediation of Work Motivation; (4) Abuse of Power affects Employee Performance with the mediation of Work Motivation.

Keywords: Toxic Workplace, Abuse of Power, Employee Performance, Employee Motivation, Civil Servant.



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INTRODUCTION

The performance of the Indonesian State Civil Apparatus (ASN) is often criticized by the public if it is not optimal. ASN is often labeled as unprofessional. According to (Nurullah et al., 2020) Human Resources are the most important part of an organization because they determine the success of the organization's performance. In government agencies, ASN is the main driver of organizational performance so that ASN must have dedication and optimal work output in carrying out the performance standards given so that the workload can be achieved properly.

According to (Darma Yanti et al., 2020) to be able to complete the work, employees need strong motivation so that organizations must understand the importance of maintaining employee work motivation which is a process of individual acceptance of encouragement from the work environment. According to (Fullan, 2006) motivation cannot be achieved in the short term but must be done gradually. There are several key aspects of motivation, namely: (1) moral purpose; (2) capacity; (3) resources; (4) peer support and leadership; and (5) identity and so on.

According to (Miller, 1992) organizations can be very efficient or very effective in performance if they have a close fit with the existing environment. Organizations that create new change programs too quickly or too often can constantly prevent the organization from being efficient because it is unable to respond well to changes in its environment. In the book by (Floyd & Wooldridge, 2000) states that in turbulent environments, strategic effectiveness depends on middle managers effectively monitoring, interpreting and communicating changing conditions to all employees, but this role can be weakened by the constant rotation of managers and the need to adapt to new work situations quickly.

Too frequent organizational changes caused by employee rotations within government agencies can cause changes in the work unit environment that are sometimes not conducive and lead to decreased employee motivation. In Ministry X, in the 8 years from 2015 to 2023, there have been 3 changes in organizational structure and 7 employee rotations within the organization. According to (Hubbart, 2023), organizations must invest in employees through quality work and a fair work environment to recruit employees to change, personnel development, professional achievement, and preparation for future recruitment amid inevitable moments of organizational change.

There are employees who cannot find fitness and comfort in the new work environment, which can also occur for old employees who are in the same work environment and have never experienced employee rotation. This can be caused by several factors, namely: (1) getting a new work unit leader, and (2) getting new coworkers. From the researcher's initial observation at Ministry X, these two things are often the reason for the decline in employee motivation. In addition, there are inconsistencies in the implementation of regulations regarding employee performance appraisal, which can increase the space for injustice for employees.

In the past few years, many employees have submitted individual rotations, mutations to other agencies and even some employees have submitted their resignations as civil servants because the employees concerned feel they are in a bad work environment where some of them also experience prolonged psychological impacts because their mental health is disturbed. Data obtained from the HR, Organization and Law Bureau of the Ministry X, throughout 2020 until 2023, there were several employment cases related to reports of conflicts between employees and the leadership of their work units, as follows:

No	Number of Report	Years	Subject
1	3 Reports	2020	Conflict with work unit leaders
2	2 Reports	2021	Conflict with work unit leaders
3	2 Reports	2022	Bullying in work units and abuse of power
4	3 Reports	2023	2 Cases of Bullying in the work unit 1 employee resignation

The researcher conducted initial interviews with 2 employees at the Deputy for Apparatus Human Resources who were involved in conflicts in their work units in 2022. From the results of the interviews, the respondents obtained information that the conflicts faced were (1) the problem of bullying that occurred in the work unit between fellow employees due to misunderstandings that

could not be resolved properly where the leadership of the work unit concerned turned a blind eye to the problem; and (2) the problem of abuse of power by the leadership who threatened employees who defended their work unit colleagues who were bullied in the work unit concerned by suppressing them by limiting and denying the rights of the employees concerned such as not being given their Work From Home rations and annual leave.

Toxic workplace aspects consist of workplace harassment or harassment that occurs in the workplace, workplace bullying or intimidation that occurs in the workplace, and workplace ostracism or exclusion carried out in the workplace (Rasool et al., 2021). Furthermore, abuse of power is an act of abuse of authority owned and carried out by a leader for his own interests, the interests of others, or the organization. The results of research (Ronen & Donia, 2020), state that abuse of power has a significant negative effect on performance and work motivation.

The hypotheses built based on the theoretical framework are:

1. Toxic Workplace has a negative effect on employee performance based on research (Haeruddin et al., 2022) states that Toxic Workplace has a negative effect on employee performance (H1)
2. Abuse of Power has a negative effect on employee performance based on research (Li et al., 2022) states that Abuse of Power has a negative effect on employee performance (H2)
3. Toxic Workplace has a negative effect on employee performance with mediation of employee work motivation based on research (Al-Soqair & Al-Gharib, 2023) states that Toxic Workplace has a negative effect on employee performance due to loss of work motivation and employee engagement (H3).
4. Abuse of Power has a negative effect on employee performance through mediation of work motivation based on research (Ronen & Donia, 2020) showing that Abuse of Power has a negative effect on employee performance and employee work motivation (H4).

METHOD

The method used in this research is a quantitative method that uses primary data collected through questionnaires, where are the answers to each question item which is measured based on a Likert scale, there is a gradation of values from very negative to very positive (Sugiyono, 2017). Previously, the questionnaire that had been prepared tested validity and reliability using the IBM SPSS Statistica Version 25.

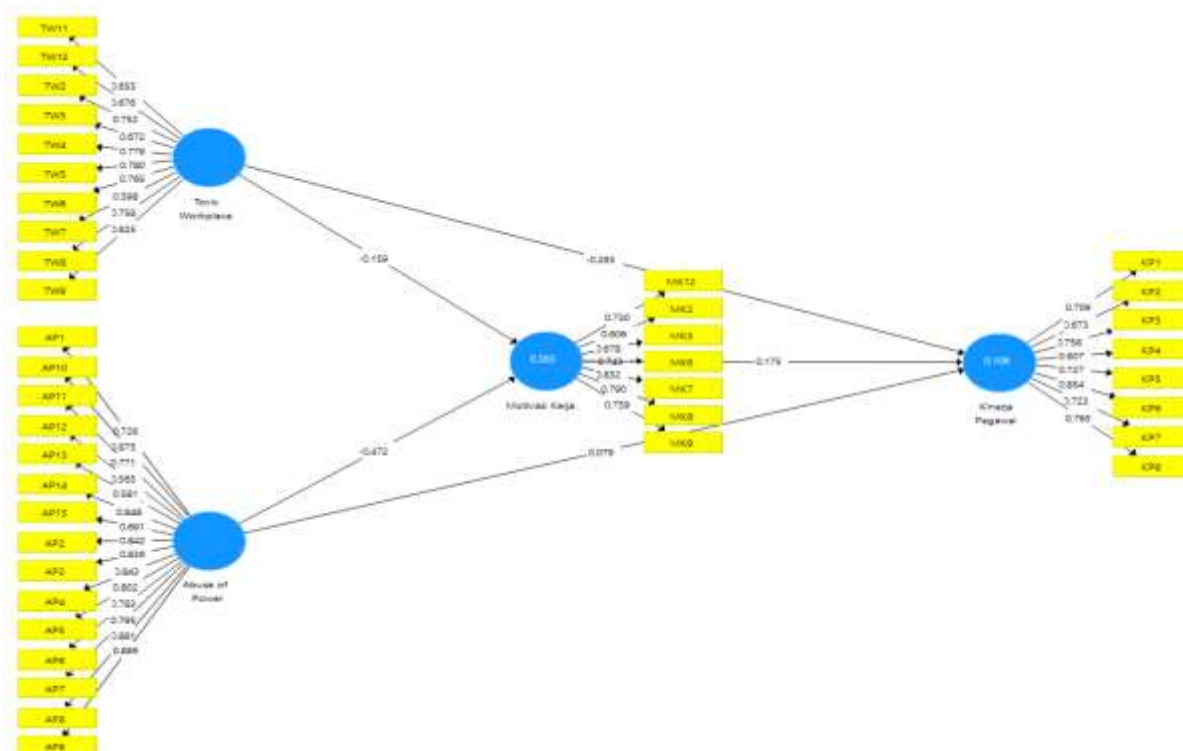
The research population is all ASN, both civil servants and government contractual workers at the Ministry X. The sample selection technique uses simple and probability sampling random sampling where the sample calculation uses the Slovin formula. Total samples are 231 respondents with details of 220 civil servants and 11 government's contractual employee. Data analysis in this research uses the SEM-PLS method with SmartPLS application version 3.0. The SEM-PLS method uses three stages of analysis: analysis on the outer model, analysis of the inner model, and hypothesis testing.

The relationship that exists between variables and research indicators is shown by Outer Model, while the Inner Model shows the relationship between latent variables, namely relationship

between exogenous (independent) and endogenous (dependent) variables (Ghozali, 2018). Outer Model testing was carried out to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaire by testing 3 things: (1) convergent validity test; (2) discriminant validity test; And (3) construct reliability test. After that testing continues with Inner Testing Model by carrying out structural model analysis which aims to find relationships between constructs, R-square value and significance value of the research model. Finally, hypothesis testing is carried out in 2 ways: direct hypothesis testing and hypothesis testing for indirect effects.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Outer Model Test



The test of convergent validity uses the calculation of the loading factor for each construct on each latent variable indicator and continues with the test of the AVE value.

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Abuse of Power	0,622
Employee Performance	0,533
Work Motivation	0,543
Toxic Workplace	0,502

All variables have an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value > 0.50 so that it can be declared valid. The next testing stage is testing the discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker Criterium with the following results:

	Abuse of Power	Employee Performance	Work Motivation	Toxic Workplace
Abuse of Power	0,789			
Employee Performance	-0,226	0,730		
Work Motivation	-0,594	0,265	0,737	
Toxic Workplace	0,765	-0,294	-0,520	0,709

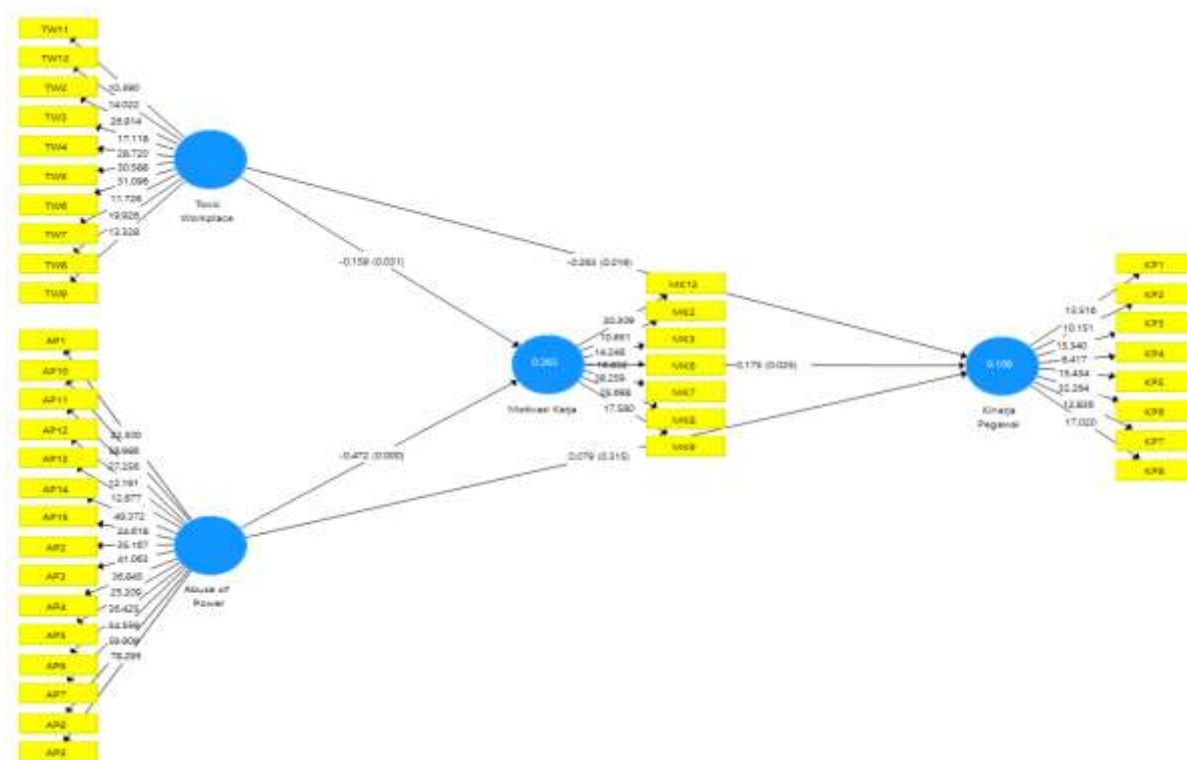
This test is carried out by comparing the value of the square root of each AVE value on each variable where the value must be > 0.50 . It can be seen that from these data it can be said that the measurements have met the criteria for discriminant validity and are declared valid. because all of them have values above 0.50

The next stage is to conduct a reliability test on each construct based on 2 (two) assessment criteria, namely by using the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values. The recommended value limit in these two assessments is > 0.70 for each construct.

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Reliability
Abuse of Power	0,955	0,960	Reliable
Employee Performance	0,879	0,900	
Work Motivation	0,860	0,892	
Toxic Workplace	0,889	0,909	

Based on the data in table, all constructs have a value of > 0.70 . Thus, the assessment results obtained on each variable can be declared reliable.

Inner Model Test



The test is continued by testing the inner model which aims to see whether the model is in accordance with the empirical data owned and is able to describe the actual condition of the object being studied. For testing the inner model, it is done by looking at the R-Square value and the Q-Square value.

	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Employee Performance	0.106	0.094
Work Motivation	0.363	0.357

Based on the table above, the adjusted R-Square value on the Employee Performance variable has a value of 0.094, which means that Toxic Workplace and Abuse of Power have an influence on Employee Performance only 9.4%. This shows that there are other variables that have an influence of 90.6% on employee performance. Meanwhile, the Work Motivation variable has a value of 0.357, which means that Toxic Workplace and Abuse of Power have an influence on Work Motivation by 35.7% or in other words, there are other variables of 64.3% that have an influence on Work Motivation.

	Q-Square
Employee Performance	0.035
Work Motivation	0.179

Based on these data, the Q-Square value of the Employee Work Motivation variable is 0.179, which means that the predictive relevance value is moderate, and the Q-Square value of the Employee Performance variable is 0.035, which means that it has a small predictive relevance value. This is in line with what is conveyed (Chin, 1998.), if the Q-Square value has a value of 0.02-0.15 then the predictive relevance of the model is considered small, a value of 0.15-0.35 then the predictive relevance of the model is considered moderate, and a value of > 0.35 then the predictive relevance of the model is considered large.

Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis testing using SmartPLS is carried out through the bootstrapping method to determine the direct effect and indirect effect. The test results are as follows:

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values
Abuse of Power → Employee Performance	0,079	0,493	0,311
Toxic Workplace → Employee Performance	-0,263	2,210	0,014

Based on the data above, it can be explained that:

1. Abuse of Power does not have a significant effect on employee performance. This is evidenced by the p-value of 0.311 or > 0.05 and the t-statistic value of 0.493 or < 1.97 and the path coefficient value of 0.079 which means that the higher the Abuse of Power, the higher the Employee Performance.
2. Toxic Workplace has a negative and significant effect on employee performance as evidenced by a p-value of 0.014 or < 0.05 and a t-statistic value of 2.210 or > 1.97 and a path coefficient

value of -0.263 which indicates that the higher the Toxic Workplace, the lower the Employee Performance or vice versa.

In addition to testing the direct effect, indirect testing was also carried out with the following results:

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values
Abuse of Power → Work Motivation → Employee Performance	-0,083	1,863	0,032
Toxic Workplace → Work Motivation → Employee Performance	-0,028	1,292	0,099

Based on the data in the table above, we can conclude as follows:

1. The test results on Abuse of Power on Employee Performance through mediation of Work Motivation, show that Abuse of Power affects Employee Performance through mediation of Work Motivation. This explains that Work Motivation has a role in mediating the effect of Abuse of Power on Employee Performance.
2. The test results of Toxic Workplace on Employee Performance through mediation of Work Motivation, show that Toxic Workplace has no effect on Employee Performance through mediation of Work Motivation. This explains that Work Motivation has no role in mediating the influence of Toxic Workplace on Employee Performance.

Based on the results of analysis of research data using the application SmartPLS version 3.0, shows that:

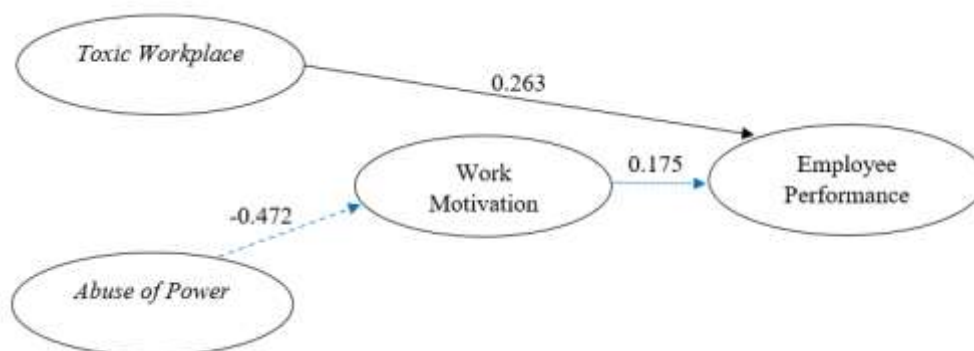
No	Hypothesis	Regression Coefficient	Conclusion
1	Toxic Workplace → Employee Performance	Path coefficient = -0.263 t = 2.210 p-value = 0.014	Accepted
2	Abuse of Power → Employee Performance	Path coefficient = 0.079 t = 0.493 p-value = 0.311	Rejected
3	Toxic Workplace → Work Motivation → Employee Performance	Path coefficient = -0.028 t = 1.292 p-value = 0.099	Rejected
4	Abuse of Power → Work Motivation → Employee Performance	Path coefficient = -0.083 t = 1.863 p-value = 0.032	Accepted

Based on the results of data processing as stated in the table above, the results of the hypothesis test are:

1. Hypothesis 1 (H1) show that Toxic Workplace has negative and significant effect on employee performance, which means hypothesis 1 is accepted.
2. Hypothesis 2 (H2) show that Abuse of Power has no effect on employee performance, so hypothesis 2 is rejected.
3. Hypothesis 3 (H3) show that Toxic Workplace has no effect on Employee Performance through the mediation of Work Motivation, so hypothesis 3 is rejected.

- Hypothesis 4 (H4) show that Abuse of Power has negative and significant effect on employee performance through mediation of Work Motivation which means hypothesis 4 is accepted.

The research model can be described according to the results of hypothesis testing as follows:



Description:

- : Dirrect Effect
- : Indirrect Effect

Based on the results of data tests, the following can be explained:

- Effect of Toxic Workplace on Employee Performance

The results of this study indicate that the higher the level of Toxic Workplace, the lower the Employee Performance. Vice versa, the lower the level of Toxic Workplace, the higher the Employee Performance. Based on this. This is in line with research ([Haeruddin et. al, 2022](#)) which states that Toxic Workplace has a negative effect on employee performance. Related to this, Ministry X must be able to reduce the level of Toxic Workplace to be able to improve Employee Performance. From observations during the research, employees tend to experience a decrease in performance when they are in a work environment with a high level of Toxic Workplace. With the Toxic Workplace phenomenon in Ministry X, there is an inconsistency in the implementation of the Core Values.

The existence of a Toxic Workplace will also make it difficult to implement the Collaborative value in ASN Core Values where conflicts between employees can occur at any time due to communication barriers and poor cooperation. The leader in the work unit must be neutral, proactive and must be able to intervene early to prevent greater conflict. Failure to do so will only make the work unit environment worse and make it difficult to achieve the performance targets that have been set. Ministry X must establish firm and clear policies, promote a positive work culture, encourage open communication, support employee welfare, and continue to monitor the work environment which is expected to reduce the impact of Toxic Workplace. These efforts will not only improve employee performance but also improve the quality of public services.

Organizational support for employees' mental and emotional well-being is also very important by facilitating mental health programs for employees, for example by implementing counseling sessions with professionals such as psychologists and psychiatrists with high confidentiality standards so that employees feel comfortable when counseling. The implementation of work systems and work patterns that implement Work-Life Balance for employees will also help reduce the level of stress experienced and restore the mental condition of employees.

2. Effect of Abuse of Power on Employee Performance

Based on the research results, Abuse of Power does not directly affect employee performance, but if through the mediation of Work Motivation, Abuse of Power is proven to have an effect on Employee Performance. Even so, Ministry X must continue to carry out strict supervision to be able to control and prevent Abuse of Power which is very likely to be carried out by leaders against subordinates in their work environment. The Staff Supervisory Official, as the highest leader of the organization must be able to take decisive action to provide a deterrent effect on a work unit leader who is proven to have committed Abuse of Power to subordinates. Based on observations, abuse of power by leaders is often related to employee performance. There are several employees who have experienced threats from the leadership of their work unit to be given a bad performance assessment only because of the subjectivity of the leadership towards their subordinates where the work of employees is ignored and not used as a basis for objective assessment. Like-dislike leadership that still often occurs makes employees finally forced to work harder to prove their performance to the leadership in order not to get a bad performance appraisal and potentially hamper their careers in the future. The quality of work produced by employees is also not guaranteed because it does not go through an objective assessment process. The quality of work produced by employees is also not guaranteed because it does not go through an objective assessment process from the leadership. The implementation of a strong performance management system can foster a culture of transparency and accountability in overcoming the challenges posed by abuse of power.

3. Effect of Toxic Workplace on Employee Performance with Mediation of Work Motivation

This study reveals that Toxic Workplace has no effect on Employee Performance through the mediation of Work Motivation, which means that Employee Work Motivation does not play a role in mediating the relationship between Toxic Workplace and Employee Performance. This shows that even employees who have high work motivation are vulnerable to the detrimental effects of Toxic Workplace. No matter how much the organization tries to increase employee motivation, if the person concerned is still in a bad work environment, it will not make employee performance improve. The only way is to transfer or rotate the employee concerned to another work unit that is in accordance with the qualifications and competencies of the employee concerned. Before that, it is also necessary to carry out a competency assessment process or psychological assessment for employees, which is usually routinely carried out every 2 years. This way the organization can simultaneously see the suitability of employee placement in each work unit. The Ministry X should look for other factors that may have more influence in mediating the impact of Toxic Workplace, especially to improve Employee Performance, for example, Employee Welfare, Loyalty, etc. Ministry X as a public sector organization must be able to create a healthier work environment that is in line with its Core Value.

4. Effect of Abuse of Power on Employee Performance with Work Motivation Mediation

The results showed that Abuse of Power has a negative and significant effect on employee performance through work motivation, which means that work motivation has been identified as an important mediating factor that can reduce the negative impact of Abuse of Power. This is in line with research ([Ronen & Donia, 2020](#)) which states that Abuse of Power has a negative effect on employee performance and employee work motivation. The existence of Abuse of Power that occurs proves that there is a violation of the ASN BerAKHLAK Core Values, especially the value of Accountability where in the behavior guide there is a prohibition for ASN

in abusing the authority of the position. A phenomenological study shows that unethical managerial behavior and abuse of power in the workplace vertically downward can result in serious damage to organizational structure and employee morale (Medina et al., 2020).

Organizations need to increase the importance of work motivation as something that can intervene in Abuse of Power (Wang & Zhang, 2022). Ministry X needs to focus on increasing work motivation as a strategy to mitigate the negative impact of Abuse of Power that occurs. There are several ways that might be done to increase employee work motivation, for example: providing competency development opportunities so that employees feel motivated to continue to provide their best performance, paying attention to employee welfare by providing appropriate incentives to employees, making it easy for employees to obtain their rights, for example: ease of filing for employee annual leave.

The mediating role of Work Motivation is in the form of psychological forces that drive an individual to achieve organizational goals. It includes intrinsic factors (such as personal growth, job satisfaction, and a sense of accomplishment) and extrinsic factors (such as rewards, recognition, and career advancement). Intrinsic motivation has a greater influence on the psychological aspects of employee engagement, while extrinsic motivation is also important although in a different context (Engidaw, 2021). Meanwhile, (Zubair et al., 2021) stated that there is a relationship between public service motivation and organizational performance. This shows the importance of contextual factors in motivating public sector employees to achieve better performance. When employees are motivated, they tend to stay motivated. Research shows that good leadership practices, integrity, and strong internal control systems have a positive effect on accountability in the public sector. For this reason, it is necessary to have a strong oversight system and accountability mechanisms in the public sector that include clear procedures for reporting and handling cases of abuse of power (Brenya Bonsu et al., 2023).

To address and prevent abuse of power, the Ministry X can take several steps, such as: (1) Include materials on ethics and integrity in the leadership training program; (2) Strengthen the safe and highly confidential reporting mechanism for victims of abuse of power cases; (3) Adopt a “zero tolerance” policy towards unethical behavior and abuse of power within the Ministry; and (4) Conduct regular audits and inspections to ensure leadership compliance with rules and regulations.

Research Limitations

The limitations of the research are as follows:

1. There are concerns from respondents regarding the confidentiality of highly sensitive data that are considered to affect the career and work assessment of respondents so that many respondents in filling out the questionnaire chose answers that were considered safe and there were respondents who then did not dare to fill out the questionnaire so that the number of responses did not match the initial target.
2. There were several respondents who had experienced rotation of work unit placement, where the conditions that were stated in each variable of this study were very different in the previous work unit and the new work unit.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions obtained from the results of this research are as follows:

1. There is a negative and significant effect on Toxic Workplace on Employee Performance directly. This shows that the higher the Toxic Level in a work unit, the lower the employee performance will be. So, if the organization wants to improve the performance of its employees, then one of the things that needs to be considered is the situation and condition of the work environment in the organization whether it is healthy or not.
2. There is no effect between Abuse of Power on Employee Performance. This shows that the increase or decrease in employee performance is not directly related to the existence of Abuse of Power but may come from other factors.
3. There is no effect between Toxic Workplace on Employee Performance through the mediation of work motivation. This shows that work motivation cannot mediate the relationship between Toxic Workplace and employee performance.
4. There is a negative effect on Abuse of Power on Employee Performance through the mediation of work motivation. This shows that work motivation is proven to have a role in mediating the relationship between Abuse of Power on employee performance.

Based on the conclusion, The Ministry of X must create a healthy and conducive work environment for its employees. Organizations need to focus on improving a positive work culture to create a work environment that supports employees to feel safe and comfortable at work so that employee productivity can be improved. One of the things that the organization can do in handling this is to rotate employees, especially for employees who feel uncomfortable with the situation and conditions in their current work environment, so that they can still perform well. Meanwhile, to increase employee motivation, the organization can implement a fair and objective payroll and performance appraisal system for all employees, especially in the future the payroll system will be based on the results of employee performance appraisals per month. A fair payroll system based on performance appraisal can help motivate employees to work better without worrying about getting a bad performance appraisal from the leadership because of abuse of power. In addition, the organization can also open a dialog forum and complaint channel for employees who experience Abuse of Power in their work environment so that employees do not experience demotivation due to mental and emotional pressure.

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