

Project Owner Toxic Leadership: Implications for a Dual Metro Project in UP, India

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Abstract

This study is focused on the opinions of PMC/Engineer staff of a dual metro in India in relation to the level, causes and implications for toxic leadership, utilised by the Employer of a multibillion dollar, dual metro project, in India. A qualitative/interpretive methodology was employed using grounded theory to enable an understanding of the views and practices concerning the Employer performance and project management capability. The research scope were authoritative opinions from PMC/Engineer staff - a major stakeholder entity contracted by the Employer to oversee the project construction. The population focus was made up of seventeen (17) key-personnel respondents, from a Project Management JV, located across two (dual) metro construction projects. The research outcomes comprised of five (5) main-themes - Employer Management, Technical Outcomes, Works Features, Contract Issues, and Public Stance; and the corresponding eighteen sub-themes (18) - with 327 discussion targets.

The research raised a variety of important issues associated with the toxic leadership and performance of the Employer and project management competence, where inadequate and biased Employer performance mechanisms, has forced dismissals, created incoherent performance outcomes, arrogation of the PMC contract through manipulation, harassment and bullying that formed the basis for inadequate decision-making by the Employer for personal gain - leading to unsafe underground works and stations used by members of the public.

Keywords: Employer performance, Toxic leadership, harassment and bullying, safety, quality

1. Introduction

In Asia, many complex metro projects suffer from the lack of appropriate Employer management - Leadership (Morris, 2002); Risk (Allen et al., 2015); and stakeholder management (Ndlela, 2018). International donors helping to finance such projects, often require international JVs to act as the Engineer, for such projects to reduce risk of failure (Chan, Tetteh and Nani, 2020) and where project governance compel both responsibility and accountability (Andersen, 2012). These projects are difficult to manage, and illustrate Employer ignorance of project risk (Kutsch and Hall, 2010) as being as a leading contributor to high cost (Dandage, et al., 2017), inadequate decision-making capability (Cox, 2021) and slippage in the project schedule. This has been connected to the challenges of a highly political environment (Lopez del Puerto and Shane, 2014), where a demonstrated lack of technical engagement, understanding and capability of managing complex projects, negatively affects the project progress and costs (Kermanshachi, Nipa and Dao, 2023) and any operational deliveries and its subsequent maintenance (Olsson and Berg-Johansen, 2016). Project owner cooperation are high on the project requirements (Salvato, Reuer and Battigalli, 2017), in order to manage across multiple independent JV's, contractors and government agencies through shared/joint pursuit of agreed goals (Gulati, Wohlgezogen and Zhelyazkov, 2012). This is enforced by the contract, and where failure can lead to internal project harm, when such cooperation is inhibited.

The “*value delivery system*” (PMI, 2021) for infrastructure projects, require management of change controls (Morris, 2013) and large data sets and analyses (Shen, et al., 2024) digital systems in the design and project implementation (Whyte and Levitt, 2011), in order to deliver a more efficient value proposition and sustainable infrastructure (Curtis and Low, 2012) and social and environmental undertakings (Li, et al. 2018). However, for complex projects, there are also drawbacks of “progress” resulting in negative effects on the social and environmental outcomes associated with the direct changes made by the project operation (Xiong, Beckmann and Rong, 2018).

Project success has been researched extensively (Hussein, Ahmad and Zidane, 2015) and where success linkages appear to be related to application of appropriate of good project practices (Munns and Bjeirmi, 1996), and coupled with appropriate management of cost, time and quality (Pinkerton 2003). However, due to a series of accidents in India relating to metro/road projects - for example - the collapse of a station slab at Gokalpuri Metro Station in New Delhi (Times of India, 2024), the inadequate management of cost, quality and safety have directly affected the efficacy of arrangements to effectively conduct the management of complex metro projects (Lin, et al., 2024).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Toxic Leadership in Project Management

Toxic leadership has been attributed to a “narcissistic” pathology (Yukl, 1999) and negative and internalised culture (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2017), which is dysfunctional in nature (Goldman, 2009) and epitomised by reinforced actions through destructive narcissistic behaviour

(Chatterjee and Hambrick, 2007) by major stakeholders - normally the Client/Employer - seeking continuous reinforcement for self-views (Campbell, Goodie and Foster, 2004). Further, toxic leadership underpinned by narcissism (Paulhus and Williams, 2002) can also be viewed in the context of a social cognitive process and the negative hold such followers show, that hinder project performance from “within” (Frost, 2003) through shared narcissistic supervision (Tiwari and Jha, 2022). This is due primarily as the project owner shows the need to dominate every stakeholder, and every person on the project (Chatterjee and Pollock, 2017), through the implementation of negative micromanagement (Wolor, et al., 2022). Thus, project stakeholders who embraces overt and explicit harmful intentions (Mitchell and Ambrose, 2007; Conger, 1990) have, in many projects, become the operational “norm” (Sankowski, 1995) through defensive behaviour (Pelletier and Bligh, 2008). A silent, but driven, feature of the effects of toxic leadership is that its destructive consequences continues uncontested or unacknowledged (Goldman, 2009), powered by narcissistic abuse of power (Tiwari and Jha, 2022) and unmitigated “self-entitlement” (Mao, et al., 2023).

Toxic leadership often reflects managerial/technical incapability and inadequacy to manage people effectively (Lipman-Blumen, 2006) resulting in aggressive outbursts, that damage relationships and trust, through overt collusive and destructive actions (Locatelli, et al., 2017). These destructive focus and protectionist predispositions (Thoroughgood, 2021) - especially of the project owner - are also raised, with hidden fraud (Pelletier and Bligh, 2008) or with project performance lapses affecting public safety or project public knowledge (Harris, Kacmar and Zivnuska, 2007). This development, creates work environments, where workers become vulnerable to harassment and abuse (Bowling and Beehr, 2006), intimidation and fear (Whicker, 1996; Hogan, Hogan and Kaiser, 2003), caused by toxic leadership behaviour (Singh, Sengupta and Dev, 2018). Further, unethical leadership (Brown, Trevino and Harrison, 2005), corresponding with inadequate and brutal communication that transforms good working environments into fearful work zones resulting from orchestrated bullying (Garvey and Mackenzie, 2023). This leads to the project work situation becoming more difficult and spiralling out of control (Kurtulmuş, 2020) caused by toxic and abusive supervision (Chu, 2013) and where negative responses increase the tension in the work environment, resulting in higher cost and the application of lost quality and safety through reduction in personnel performance (Snow, et al., 2021). In complex projects, toxic leadership has occasioned deliberate ineffective management of the project operations (Vidal and Marle, 2008). The outcomes include creating project overruns (Lehmann, 2017) through unnecessary delays, often by the project owners ignoring their responsibilities under the contract (James, 2022).

2.2 Context for the Research

The research focuses on a dual metro construction project, where two metro projects (in separate cities) are being constructed by one employer entity who wants to manage the project, despite the donor signing a loan deal where the contract states the PMC is the Engineer. The construction includes both elevated sections, tunnelling and underground/surface stations.

Within the operating context of complex infrastructure projects in Asia, there has been little research conducted specifically on toxic leadership behaviours and negative effects of toxic

leaders (Goldman, 2009). Consequently, this research focuses on exploring the effects of toxic leadership within complex projects “dark leadership” consequences (Harms, Spain and Hannah, 2011). This creates the context for the research question, *In what ways do Toxic Leadership affect the management, personnel and performance of a Dual Metro Project in UP, India?*

3. Methodology

Exploring toxic leadership and personal experiences of its effects requires a qualitative inquiry to assist in examining the various issues (Walsh, White and Young, 2008). Given the lack of data on the project, a qualitative method would be a superior methodology to assess personnel opinion and experiences. Subsequently, this research targets “authoritative opinion” from individuals of the PMC/Engineer staff - a major stakeholder entity contracted by the Employer to oversee the project construction on the project - as an informed ‘knowledge agent’ (Benn, Buckingham, Domingue and Mancini, 2008; Sbaraini, Carter, Evans, and Blinkhorn, 2011) in relation to pertinent experiences (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The research used a semi-structured interview design that exploited a subjective knowledge view (Kvale, 1996), conforming with an inductive approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Constructing appropriate contextual data outcomes (Qu and Dumay, 2011) about the toxic leadership issues is underpinned by focused theory development (Cayla and Eckhardt, 2007) through reflexivity (Malterud, 2001).

Seventeen (17) key-personnel (respondents), from specific and discrete unit project disciplines, were targeted, through a specific e-mail call (Denzin and Giardina, 2016) where the total population was signified through the HR department. This represented a closed integrated sample, as a focused research frame (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Fink, 2000) justifying empirical fitness (Spanos, 1990).

A pilot study was conducted with three (3) random respondents from the identified population and excluded from the main interview process (Maxwell, 2013). This assisted the improvement and respondent understanding of the language and question logic (Kim, 2011) underpinning the development to a more efficiently structured and streamlined interview arrangement (James and James, 2011).

Each of the 14 interviews were conducted in English and took approximately 60 minutes following Sbaraini et al. (2011), where each was audio-recorded with written permission (Orb, Eisenhower and Wynaden, 2001) during Feb-Apr 2024. The same set of open questions (Gray and Wilcox, 1995), were raised with each respondent, and rationalised to allow structured probing questions (Punch, 2014). Each respondent’s verbatim interview transcription was returned for review and appraisal and reissue (Bailey, 2008; Harris and Brown, 2010). Methodological logic (Altheide and Johnson, 1998) along with the application of process “validity” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998) connected the research question to the data outcomes and subsequent analysis (Stenbacka, 2001).

For data analysis process, the interviews were transcribed and manually interrogated for discernible codes (Dey, 2005) after initially applying the auto-coding scheme in NVivo 14 (Woolf and Silver, 2018) underpinning the thematic analysis outcome (Glaser, 1992; Walsh, White and Young, 2008). No conversation phrase or fragment was left uncoded (Rubin and

Rubin, 2005; James and James, 2011) and the complete outcome fully characterised the respondent's opinion, through cyclic-progressive coding-sequences (Seale and Silverman, 1997). This was also further analysed to create dynamic rigour (James and James, 2011). Themes were solidified out of the data interrogation, where "validity" was increased using triangulation (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007) associated with documentation trails from independent sources (Harwood and Garry, 2003). Employing 'credibility' (Johnson, 1997) and 'dependability' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) in place of 'reliability' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) assisted in the increase of robustness of the applied method (James and James, 2011).

Table 1. Research question, themes and discussion targets

Research Question			
<i>In what ways do Toxic Leadership affect the management, personnel and performance of a Dual Metro Project in UP, India?</i>			
<u>Main-Themes</u>	<u>Sub-Themes</u>	<u>Respondent Citations</u>	<u>Discussion Targets</u>
Employer Management	Management Culture	14	28
	Technical Performance	11	25
	Meetings/Consultations	10	17
	Policy	6	12
	Culture of Removal	13	16
Total		54	98
Technical Outcomes	Safety	12	23
	Technical	14	18
	Risk	5	7
Total		31	48
Works Features	EIB Issues	7	16
	Project Finance	12	29
	Safety	13	21
	Quality		
Total		32	66
Contract Issues	Arrogation issues	10	16
	Contract conditions	6	20
		16	36
Public Stance	Employer Management Orientation	11	22
	Financial Performance	9	21
	Architectural Visualisation	6	17
	Public Safety	14	19
Total		40	89
		173	327

4. Results

The resulting outcomes are presented below (Gonzalez, 2008), using distinct, selective and explicit opinion stratum (Cassell and Symon 2004). Subsequently, by considering the research question - *In what ways do Toxic Leadership affect the management, personnel and performance of a Dual Metro Project in UP, India?* - the results depict Five Main-themes (5) - Employer Management, Technical Outcomes, Works Features, Contract Issues, and Public Stance; with Seventeen sub-themes (18) - with 327 discussion targets - as indicated in Table 1 above. Each sub-theme theme, is located and examined, within each respective associated Main-theme.

4.1 Main Themes

4.1.1 Main Theme - Employer Management

In terms of Management Culture as typified one respondent (8) suggested that, *“...They don’t like it, because we see what they are doing. It is unfair that when they are caught, they order and remove people because they are so bad. They blame everyone for their failures...”*. Another respondent (14) articulated that, *“...mmm they are so dangerous. One wrong word (to them) and they go ballistic and your history. They expect everything now. If not, you are targeted by the MD, DWI or even much lower staff. No one is safe here...”*.

In terms of Technical Performance as typified one respondent (2) advised that, *“...How is it possible for the MD to know nothing about underground works and then slags everyone off because he is “right” and no one else is. He shows utter contempt for everyone. He is callous and excitable, easily engrossed in ranting and rage. I am ashamed of his attitude. He is not an engineer, and he’s in charge. What a laugh...”*. Another respondent (6) expressed that, *“...When the MD or the DWI are on site, they are like maniacs. Everything must change. Nothing goes through any drawings. And this has caused so many problems - the CMRS for example, where the MD made our staff sign so many drawings that were “As-Built” and then we find out ..out... that so many of them had so many problems that affected the safety of the work. He is a dangerous man for this project...”*

In terms of Meetings/Consultations as typified one respondent (13), that, *“...The DWI just shouts orders. You do this! You do that! You can argue with them because he is such an arrogant man. His attitude to us, is as if we are his slaves. He knows nothing, no one likes him. He is a disaster for the project...”*. Another respondent (4) advocated that, *“...meetings are where the MD or DWI just berate us for doing our job. They are violent ****. It is not right that they are so aggressive publicly. Someone needs to stop them doing this. It is no good for us...”*. Another respondent (12) signified that, *“...It is known that meetings are just places where the Employer shouts instructions and won’t listen to anyone who says any different. If you do, the MD or DWI attacks our staff and often bullies us into submission or tells them their off the project...”*.

In terms of Policy as typified one respondent (9) suggested that, *“...It is difficult to understand the policy adopted by the Employer to manage the project. Is it? It makes you wonder why we are here at all...”*. Another respondent (3) denoted that, *“...This policy to take-over everything*

to harass and threaten GCS as a whole, nor can be to penalise some GCS staff for doing their job. This can't be right.”. Another respondent (10) denoted that, “...I don't see how, as a policy, that they can show that Indian's are better than European's at metro construction, when the project shows such huge failures. This is down to the MD and no one else.”.

In terms of Culture of Removal as typified one respondent (6) suggested that, “...many GCS persons have been “ordered” to be removed from the Project without any justification, is symbolic of the Employer's operating toxic working. The top two Employer staff also have engaged in behaviour that is symptomatic of aggression and abuse and this follows through to ALL Employer staff...”. Another respondent (8) denoted that, “...Getting rid of the PD for the GCS has legitimised the current toxic culture that was reported by the PD as not only toxic to the workforce, but also has irreparably created huge tracks of unsafe tunnelling and underground stations that affect the safety of members of the public...”.

4.1.2 Main Theme - Technical Outcomes

In terms of Safety as typified one respondent (13) suggested that, “...The Employers stance, is not right, as the underground is not safe for people to use. We know that...”. Another respondent (8) denoted that, “...none of the underground stations are as designed, and they are death traps...”.

In terms of Technical as typified one respondent (7) suggested that, “...The Employer staff know nothing about metro construction or to direct the contractor, who then is directed by someone else on the Employer staff, and he goes round in circles. This is so dumb...”. Another respondent (9) denoted that, “...They are blind to good project processes. They do things without documentation or without drawings, and cut corners all the time. It is dangerous...”. Another respondent (2) denoted that, “...If you see what they do when they want something done quickly, no matter the quality, they just want it finished. The Taj station is an example of a design that was fit for Agra, now it is nothing to look at and unsafe, with only one exit/entrance to the underground. How is that possible?...”.

In terms of Risk as typified one respondent (4) suggested that, “...People are silenced by threats and expulsion if you stand-up to them, file a complaint, or if you argue as part of your job they get rid of you...”. Another respondent (9) signified that, “...The Employer does not do any risk management. They just bark, - do this, do that - without attempting to understand what the risks are about what they are saying. They just do stupid things...”.

4.1.3 Main Theme - Works Features

In terms of EIB Issues as typified one respondent (3) suggested that, “...How is it possible for the EIB to continue to ignore what is going here. After 4 years, you would think they would have seen the state of the project. We live on this project, the same as the locals. Another respondent (9) denoted that, “...We should also have a voice with the EIB as major stakeholder, but the Employer has blocked this...”.

In terms of Project Finance as typified one respondent (6) suggested that, “...For us [GCS] our staffing has been reduced from 320 to 180 at a time when there are 8 packages/contracts and

increasing with another 5 over the next 3 months. They haven't paid us and they owe us so much money, it begs the question as to where the allocated project money has gone?...". Another respondent (2) denoted that, "...There is an issue as to why our [GCS] cost person signs off on money for the contractor, but does little to follow-up on why we aren't getting paid. There is a huge problem about this. He is very biased against the GCS...".

In terms of Safety as typified one respondent (11) suggested that, "...While site issues are dealt with constantly according to legal, ILO and safety standards, the Employer completely ignores any safety outcomes as irrelevant. Many safety issues are just not reported or completely ignored, such as fire tests for the tunnelling or even ventilation requirements during construction...". Another respondent (4) denoted that, "...If something falls down or breaks, it is the Employers fault, no one else. But we know from experience that they will not take the responsibility...".

In terms of Quality as typified one respondent (6) suggested that, "...There is no quality. Many slabs are non-specification where the concrete used was not to the strength required, and with the Employers staff balling and shouting, the next part of the slab was poured despite the lack of test results and the lack of finishing the steel according to the approved drawings...". Another respondent (3) denoted that, "...The quality manager would say hold the concrete, and sign the RFI as defective process/concrete. The Employer staff would see this and force him to sign a different form already filled-in. This was the reality on site...". Another respondent (12) denoted that, "...With so much defective slabs and concrete failures, due to the contractor rushing because of the Employer's Expedite! idea..."

4.1.4 Main Theme - Contract Issues

In terms of Arrogation issues as typified one respondent (10) suggested that, "...The Employer has taken our contract. They have not paid us, and owe us more than 1 million Euros. They are arrogant and should never be here...". Another respondent (2) denoted that, "...I do not see how they think they can get away with it, unless there is political help. It is clear that the Employer has not followed the Contract, and we suffer as a consequence, because we work upto 15 hours a day for what, to be shouted at, and threatened by the MD..." Another respondent (11) signified that, "...The Employer has completely ignored our Engineer's Contract and has deliberately ignored any aspect that makes the Employer take responsibility. The Employer is acting against any good project management practices deliberately..."

In terms of Contract conditions as typified one respondent (6) suggested that, "...The MD and his staff work to undermine the GCS by paying some of the staff to slow or even ignore our instructions designed to provide outcomes that show the Employer is negligent. This is how the MD works, and it is dangerous and unacceptable...". Another respondent (14) signified that, "...The MD will accept nothing in terms of delays caused by the Employer. Nothing. It is difficult to understand, when it is clear that they are the ones responsible. They are just playing games with the project and us..." Another respondent (12) signified that, "...They issued a delegation of authority letter to us. That is not right. We are already the engineer, and don't need to be delegated to do our job under the contract..."

In terms of Employer Incapability as typified one respondent (6) suggested that, “...*The Employer has contract managers, but they ask for us to do illegal things outside of our contract. They obviously have an agenda, that is not for the good of the project...*”.

4.1.5 Main Theme - Public Stance

In terms of Management Orientation as typified one respondent (4) suggested that, “...*The Employer has no transparency and no accountability, no documentation and no trust...*”. Another respondent (11) signified that, “...*Meetings with local authorities and even the CMRS process, was conducted behind closed doors. They have been very secretive about the public awareness, and will not allow the GCS access to such meetings...*”.

In terms of Project Financial Performance as typified one respondent (10) suggested that, “...*The Employer keeps the finances totally closed. We occasionally see a summary in a meeting. No one sees the detailed outcomes as it affects the GCS...*”. Another respondent (1) signified that, “...*Our assessment shows that the Employer outcomes are very different to ours. Something is very wrong here...*”.

In terms of Architectural Visualisation as typified one respondent (6) suggested that, “...*They have ruined, what would have been an architectural icon. All because the MD wanted to play politics - and then lost...*”. Another respondent (2) signified that, “...*The Employer has used money for the beatifying of the public transport stations and used it for themselves. This is despicable. This has only been done by the latest MD, not before...*”.

In terms of Public Safety as typified one respondent (9) suggested that, “...*Our assessments show that the underground works is unsafe - according to the data from site. However, as usual, they [Employer] have forced our staff to issue things that are just not true...*”. Another respondent (7) signified that, “...*of course there are safety concerns, but with the MD stating all the time, Expedite!, Expedite! what is the point of reporting if they don't care about it...*”.

5. Discussion

The research discussion for this study concentrates on the final theme outcomes, as below, as a consequence of being directed by the above research question:

5.1 Employer Management

From the data, the Employer management culture is deemed inadequate and not “*fit for purpose*” (Wolor, et al., 2022), internalised (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2017), and negative and destructive (Chatterjee and Hambrick, 2007). It is also considered dangerous to GCS staff (Field, 2014) instigating serious consequences for job satisfaction and interpersonal relationships (Coakley, 2021) through threats, dismissals and unorganised project administration. The Employer appears to lack capability in technical performance, which further exacerbates meeting outcomes, through the stated observance of authoritarian and micromanagement that destructively grips the project operation. The policy of the Employer appears to dominate everyone on the project through bullying (Kurtuluş, 2020) and not allow anyone to develop any different outcomes to the misguided Employer's directions. Where individuals challenge such Employer orientations, the Employer operates a malicious “*culture*”

of removal” that is applied vehemently by Employer staff (Bhandarker and Rai, 2019) - where any Employer’s staff can issue dismissal outcomes for anyone on the project - without senior Employer staff taking direct action or the GCS management being informed. It was also reported that the Employer would send its staff to conduct overt surveillance - photographing the offices and staff of GCS at site conducting their works with the Employers intention of project harassment and interference (Milosevic, Maric and Loncar, 2019). Also reported was the level of persecution, down to the level of GCS administration (Kellerman, 2004) through the use of Employer internal notes system, WhatsApp messages, the issue of “important” instructions, such as the change of authorised representative, through informal e-mails - with no signature or even from the project Employer’s representative.

Subsequently, due to toxic leadership, there was little, or no proper project management associated with the project. This included the application of open autocratic harassment (Padilla, Hogan and Kaiser, 2007), where failure to adhere to the Employer “instructions” has resulted in dismissals of key GCS from the project (Reed, 2004) or being voluntarily forced out through job insecurity and constant bullying (Niesen, et al., 2018). GCS staff appeared to fear any engagement with the Employer staff (Bhandarker and Rai, 2019), as this resulted in “slave” like work environment, through unethical leadership (Brown and Trevino, 2006), managerial tyranny (Ma, Karri and Chittipeddi, 2004) and abusive supervision (Mitchell and Ambrose, 2007; Liu, Liao and Loi, 2012). Further, the Employer has engaged in institutional supervision abuse (Zhao, et al., 2013), as well as occupational fear, from the harassment and the continuing possibility of losing their job for issues created by the Employer (Krasikova, Green and LeBreton, 2013).

5.2 Technical Outcomes

The approved works programme (an example in a major contract) is reported as being 22 months without an update, and the need to have all work carried “immediately as part of the “expediting” rationale”, the Employer consciously and negatively affects the safety of the works. Subsequently, there is a huge risk to the project (Allen et al., 2015), as the Employer does not conduct any risk analysis, nor risk assessments or any basis that would lead them to shorten the programme schedule (PMI, 2021). The Employer continues to conduct the works without documentary evidence of the reality of the project works outcomes - as part of the evasion of Employer accountability (Morris, Pinto and Söderlund). This is maladaptive risk taking - without knowing those risks (Kuhnen and Knutson, 2005) and cognitive risk taking with singular apathy and abuse of power (Sankowski, 1995). This has led to arbitrary decision-making with dangerous consequences (Ashforth, 1994). The safety of the project therefore is compromised (Lin, 2012) primarily through counterproductive behaviour (Fox and Spector, 2005) and a lack of Employer Agency capability (Parker, et al., 2017) to cater for the acceleration of progress, without viable or visible changes to the project schedule and resourcing (Yaghootkar and Gil, 2012). For example, the data states that 75% of the underground tunnelling works does not conform to the Employers specifications due as a consequence of the Employer evasion of any code of professional ethics (Stevens, 2007). Thus, the Employer culture (Fountain, 2016) as a consequence of undocumented acceleration requirements and where no performance measurements were utilised in a transparent way (Liu,

et al., 2014) or the application of regulatory system requirements, such as labour work standards (Ramaswamy and Binnuri, 2023).

5.3 Works Features

The data indicates that the project finance has been interfered with by the Employer (Locatelli, et al., 2017), who will not pay project/contractual costs and have materially reduced the number of GCS staff (320 to 180) with a disproportionate increase in undocumented works activities.

Thus, project quality and technical capability is compromised (San Cristóbal, et al., 2018) by the Employer, and where little or no understanding of appropriate project management (Brown and Trevino, 2006) of metro construction was reported as being observed (Olsson and Berg-Johansen, 2016). Further, the data suggests that the blocking of EIB communications with the GCS by the Employer has not been rectified as an interdisciplinary interaction of major level stakeholder on the project (Malisiovas and Song, 2014), as well as all other major stakeholders on the project (Barney, 2018). This indicates a serious lack of donor governance of the project, (EIB, 2015) resulting in unsurmountable safety and quality failures. The site reports indicate 75% of the underground works as non-compliant, grossly affecting the safety, stability and integrity of the underground works.

Due to the undocumented acceleration requirements, it would appear that the normal technical inputs/outcomes were not recorded at the time, and where falsification of “as-Built” drawings were subsequently issued to CMRS (Metro certification authority), which showed the Employer’s poor project management engagement (Koppenjan, et al., 2011) and lack of authentic leadership (Ford and Harding, 2011) affecting the safety of the project. This showed clear irresponsible behaviour of the Employer staff, through interference in the project operation (Davis, 2014) leading to poor leadership and ineffective integration and consistent harassment of other stakeholders (Bhandarker and Rai, 2019). This has resulted in delays and quality issues that were never addressed by the Employer. The reported outcome of making GCS staff resubmit documents that did not allow “progress” due to quality infringements, was not because of the Contractor lack of adherence to the processes and standards, but to the Employer legitimising the “Expedite” culture of the project without accountability and responsibility (Steffy, 2010). This is clear evidence of the effects of the toxic leadership outcomes, organisational delinquency (Rooij and Fine, 2018; Lee, Ashton and De Vries, 2005) and the lack of ethics training (Warren, Gaspar and Laufer, 2014).

5.4 Contract Issues

It was reported that the large contract for management services had been demonstrably arrogated by the Employer showing a lack of professional standard or procedural compliance (Tabish and Jha, 2012). This is the structurally integrated feature of how the Employer pushed its negative and toxic management, to hide the financial, quality and safety issues created by the Employer contract management incapability. This was reinforced by a lack of project transparency (Kenny, 2012). Further, it is reported that some GCS staff are paid because they

“assist” the Employer to continue to conduct its arrogation of the contract, and sustain its toxic environment.

It was also reported to show that the Employer has continued its harassment and bullying of the GCS management and have dismissed the 5th PD for the project for the GCS without any basis for the dismissal except to ensure that the negative toxic leadership and impact on the project are not recorded or acted upon. The PD GCS had previously raised reports indicating the strength of non-compliances for quality and safety and deflect this important focus (Steffy, 2010). This is a genuine pervasive corporate dissonance that cannot just be ignored, as it would appear to be a deeply embedded toxic and negative organisational behaviour, sustained by top management actors (Ewing, 2017).

No contractor has been given any extension of time, despite major time-scale issues, with for 1 contractor over a 100 claims, created by the Employer reluctance to engage with 3rd party authorities or make land available. Therefore, the arrogation of the contract, and the lack of response to the contractors claims, show a clear endemic attrition of good project values and capability, justifiably synonymous with toxic management.

5.5 Public Stance

The reported data illustrates an Employer management orientation that does not want to take responsibility or accept accountability, but desperately wants to make all the project decisions secretly, with subsequent lowered project performance, to ensure power-driven administration (Lamsdorff, 2003).

Financial Performance is a difficult matter, as the data from the project indicates major differences between the Employer and GCS. This illustrates a clear intent of the Employer to conceal its project financial position.

Of real concern was the effect of architectural visualisation plans which were agreed after a large amount of discussion on the project, only to be set-aside, by the MD during his on-site discussions, where no person could actually go against the decisions and where no documentation had been authorised through the project trails for any changes. The result is reported to have been completely different to what had been agreed, and where the architectural value had been reduced to - for stations - just metal boxes with no cultural authenticity.

The data provided clearly shows that the tunnels are 75% non-compliant and that the stations are not fire-compliant. These infrastructure are therefore not only “*not fit for purpose*”, but also have cost large amounts of money, that the Employer has not made transparent within the project undertaking. The Employer thus conducts the underground works supervision, without accepting corporate responsibility and conducting risk management to the detriment of the project.

6. Possible Improvements

The summary of the outcome of the project assessment, shows a project in dire need of good project management, requiring team-building and trust development. Changes need to be made

with the way the Employer engages with the project, so that the project consistently follows appropriate agreements, contractual requirements and obligations and conducts appropriate risk assessments. Further, the project requires to be managed without the insidious pull of a way-ward Employer creating opportunities for project failure, negative cost-adjustment and schedule creepage, as presently, the Employer bumbles its way towards a failed project conclusion, that has major issues with quality and operates in an unsafe condition.

The following suggests what activities may be necessary to prevent such negative project behaviour and leader sabotage (Goldman, 2010) and to assist in remedying the non-specifications of the underground works, as well redress the fire issues associated with the works construction:

1. There should be an independent project-wide review conducted, of the behaviour of the Employer to ascertain the status, situation and persons involved in the toxic leadership and the negative impacts associated with the scheduling, quality and safety, and project management processes that have created a failed project outcome.
2. Further, the individuals involved with the Employer's unethical and toxic behaviour within any other stakeholder, must also be reviewed and their negative actions taken into consideration, as to what additional sanctions must be implemented to prevent such occurrences happening again on the project.

Dealing with Employer toxic behaviour will in the shorter term be difficult and upsetting for many people, is complex and will have repercussions for all project stakeholders, as the rationale for the Employer's modus operandi, must be challenged, changed and replaced.

7. Conclusion

The reported data indicates significant project deficiencies and failures associated with the toxic leadership implemented by the Employer. Further, the lack of governance and control placed upon the Employer, has led to a consistent and wide-spread negative project outcome. This outcome was reported, where the Employer creates and supports a toxic culture that has wrought severe impact on the project administration, processes, finance, technical development and social justice, as well as technical quality, safety and project scheduling. Subsequently, the project has failed to deliver on the Employer promises and contractual requirements via the tender process outcomes. The changes to the GCS contract was administered within the purview and due process of the EIB.

The Employer team, including the MD and DWI, has actively conducted and reinforced toxic leadership, that has undermined good project management, and materially affected the quality and safety of the public use of the metro. The Employer appears to have also failed to adopt appropriate levels of risk management and to exacerbate failures in the structural integrity of the underground works - tunnels and stations - by ignoring and falsifying project data outcomes through knowingly presenting "as-built" drawing to CMRS and without regard to passenger or project safety or quality.

It was also reported that it is all the more concerning that the MD has stated in many meetings openly that his way of conducting construction of metro projects is superior to anything devised by Europeans. It is also of great concern that the Employer arrogance and toxic leadership of the project has so negatively affected the project that trust in the way the Employer engages has been lost, not only by the GCS (The Engineer) but also by the contractors and even local communities. The hubris of a dual toxic leadership (MD and DWI), who obviously supported each other, knowingly to guarantee their “world of hate” continues, shows the nastiness of concocted responses to ensure they get their way - no matter what the cost to others or the project.

This outcome that must be challenged, in order to bring the project back from critical failure through more appropriate project management engagement with individuals who are capable and understand the risks associated with metro construction developments.

Of further concern is the lack of supervisory observance above the MD level or an independent unit, that could review the wide-spread non-performance and function of the Employer mandate, policy, and objectives under the contract, that resulted in serious toxic leadership impacts on the project that have gone on unchecked for a considerable length of time.

No key lessons have been learned, and the toxic leadership continues unabated. It is also of concern that no steps were taken internally by the Employer to review any risks on the project, and this encapsulates a management structure and style that was authoritarian in approach, leading to extensively distributed negative impacts on the GCS across both metro developments, that should never have been allowed. The evidence clearly indicates that the Employer management is not “fit for purpose” and incapable of managing a metro construction. The Employer has used financial and other assets to attempt to create the toxic environment directed only to their undertaking.

There would appear to be an Employer derived systemic process and governing failure of the project, to which the Employer has not been made accountable for, and where people who are/have been harmed by the Employer’s negative project activities, and where such people have no confidence in the Employer capability, as “ethically corrupt” individuals. The Employer’s dysfunctional organisation is seen as seriously compromised (Goldman, 2010) and incapable of managing scheduling, quality or safety on the project, where the MD suffers from a demonstrated acute pathological “pursuit of power” (Bakan, 2004).

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