

POPULISM AND TOXIC LEADERSHIP: THE TWO FACES OF CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INDUSTRIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Abstract: This article examines the phenomenon of toxic leadership observed in the business world with rising populism in contemporary political processes from the perspective of both political science and industrial and organizational psychology. The charismatic authority, frequently used by populist leaders, is a strong source of motivation that activates the masses, but also has risks that threaten democratic institutions and organizational balances. This dual structure is the promise of hope, belonging and transformation, which attracts followers on the “bright” face of charismatic authority; On the “dark” face, it involves the suppression of critical thought, dependence relations and critical thought. While the literature of industrial and organizational psychology shows the destructive effects of toxic leadership on employee commitment, job satisfaction and organizational productivity, political science research draws attention to the potential of weakening democratic values of populist leadership. In this context, the article considers charismatic authority as a bidirectional phenomenon both in organizational and political context; On the one hand, it discusses its constructive effects that increase social and organizational motivation, and on the other hand, the destructive aspects that trigger authoritarianization and institutional collapse. The study is based on literature screening and aims to evaluate the intersection areas of populism and toxic leadership from a holistic perspective by blending the theoretical frameworks in different disciplines. This approach offers an interdisciplinary discussion for both political science and organizational psychology.

Keywords: Populism, toxic leadership, charismatic authority, political science, industrial and organizational psychology.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership in political and organizational structures played a decisive role in shaping social dynamics throughout history. In particular, the forms of leadership based on charismatic authority have been a strong source of motivation at both political and institutional levels. The charismatic authority bases the voluntary commitment of the masses with an extraordinary force attributed to individual qualities as Weber (1978) describes. While this feature can respond to the search for trust, hope, and change of the masses, it also brings risks such as suppression of critical thought, weakening of democratic norms, and strengthening authoritarian tendencies. Today, this dual nature has become a field of investigation in which both political science and industrial and organizational psychology are emphasized. Political charismatic leadership has become more visible, especially with the rise of populism from the 20th century onwards. Populism emerges as a form of political discourse built on the tension between the “pure will of the people” and the “corrupt interests of the elites” (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Using this binary opposition, populist

leaders address the people's emotions, mobilize them, and try to transform their institutional mechanisms around their leadership figures. In this process, the charisma of the leader sits at the center of political legitimacy.

The rise of populism is not only a regional phenomenon today but a global tendency. Particularly since the beginning of the 21st century, populist leaders in a wide geography from Latin America to Europe, from Asia to the United States have gained strength in politics (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). This has created a process that weakens the institutional basis of liberal democracies, threatens the state of law, and deepens political polarization. For example, in Latin America, charismatic leadership figures promote solutions to the economic problems of the people, while populist discourses rising through the opposition of immigration in Europe have increased social polarization (Laclau, 2005). In this process, populism stands out not only as an element of political competition but also as a ground where democratic values are tested. The weakening of democratic institutions, the regression of pluralism, and the pressure on the critical press represent the “dark side” of populist leadership. On the other hand, the “bright face” of

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populism may include positive aspects such as criticizing the corrupt structures of the elites, ensuring further participation of the people in the political process, and struggle against inequalities (Mounk, 2018). The bond between populist leadership and charismatic authority is important in terms of adapting Weber's conceptualization to today's political practices. The personal characteristics of the charismatic leader can prevent democratic rules by having an intense psychological effect on followers. In this context, populism offers an important field of research not only for political science but also for industrial and organizational psychology. Because similar authoritarian and toxic tendencies are observed not only at the national political level but also in organizational structures.

Toxic leadership has been a phenomenon that has become increasingly important in organizational psychology literature in recent years. In general, toxic leadership is defined as a style of leadership that undermines the psychological well-being of employees, affects the organizational climate negatively, and reduces institutional productivity in the long term (Goldman, 2009). This form of leadership manifests by behavioral patterns such as authoritarianism, narcissism, manipulation, emotional abuse, and disregarding the values of employees. Toxic leadership in organizations does not only wear out individuals at the individual level; it also leads to the corruption of organizational culture, the damage to trust, and the increase in the intention of quitting. In particular, the leader's abuse of charismatic authority can create a damaging commitment relationship in employees, similar to some kind of "corporate Stockholm syndrome" (Schmidt, 2008). While employees are affected by the negative behaviors of the leader on the one hand, they may feel compelled to submit to this authority. Basic features of toxic leadership:

Narcissistic Trends: Toxic leaders usually put their own interests ahead of the interests of the organization, do not accept criticism, and prioritize their success. This directly weakens the motivation and creativity of employees (Padilla et al., 2007).

Manipulation and Abuse: Emotional manipulation of employees in toxic leadership, shaking confidence relations, and suppressing individual differences are common. In this process, the leader turns employees' commitment to the organization into a means of control and pressure.

Authoritarianism and Control: Toxic leaders limit the independent decision-making processes of their subordinates, keep them under constant control, and create a culture of fear in the organization. This prevents innovation by eliminating the sense of psychological security (Pelletier, 2010).

Effects on Organizational Climate: The long-term effects of toxic leadership include insecurity among employees, an increase in intention to quit, weakness in organizational commitment, and decrease in work performance (Webster et al., 2016).

Individuals working under toxic leadership often have psychological problems such as burnout, stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Industrial and organizational psychology research has revealed that there is a strong relationship between toxic leadership and employees' lack of job satisfaction (Gallus et al., 2013). In addition, in organizations under the direction of toxic leaders, talented employees have a high rate of quitting, which weakens the sustainable competitiveness of organizations in the long run. Leaders with charismatic authority who display toxic behavior can have more destructive consequences in organizations. Since the charismatic leader has a strong psychological effect on followers,

they have the potential to normalize and legitimize toxic behavior. In this case, employees may tend to protect their commitment to the leader, rather than questioning damaging leadership practices. This phenomenon leads to the weakening of democratic and participatory culture in organizations and authoritarianization.

Toxic leadership in political populism and organizations are phenomena that emerge at different levels but contain similar dynamics. Populism is one of the basic research subjects of political science; toxic leadership is an area in which industrial and organizational psychology is intensively examined. The examination of the intersection points between these two areas makes a critical contribution to understanding the multidimensional effects of leadership on individuals, institutions, and society. In this context, the interdisciplinary approach not only enriches academic knowledge production but also allows the development of practical policies and strategies. Interdisciplinary views allow concepts to be understood in different contexts, not in a narrow framework. For example, while the concept of charismatic authority of Weber (1978) explains the tendencies of authoritarianization from the perspective of political science, it can be used to understand the dependence relations of employees in the context of organizational psychology. In this way, concepts become functional not only at the theoretical level but also in solving the practical problems of different disciplines. The interdisciplinary approach gives methodological diversity to research. While political science applies discourse analysis, comparative politics, and inter-institutional relations; industrial and organizational psychology examines individual-organization interactions through surveys, scale development, and experimental studies. The combination of these two methodological approaches provides the opportunity to analyze both political dynamics at the macro level and micro-level organizational behaviors simultaneously (Gulbenkian Commission, 1996). Interdisciplinary studies not only contribute to the theoretical literature but also offer practical inferences. When the corrosive effects of populist politics and the aspects of toxic leadership in organizations are handled together, stimulating results emerge for both public policies and organizational administration. In this context, an interdisciplinary approach can be guiding in the design of leadership training programs, the development of democratic governance models, and the transformation of organizational cultures. The adoption of an interdisciplinary perspective opens new doors to future research. In particular, phenomena such as "authoritarianization" and "organizational collapse" have too complex structures to be explained within the framework of a single discipline. Therefore, the dialogue of political science and industrial and organizational psychology through common concepts, methods, and theories creates a multidimensional analysis (Repko et al., 2017).

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Populism stands out as a versatile and controversial concept in political science literature and is defined in different ways in different theoretical traditions. According to Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017), populism is a "thin-centered ideology" based on the opposition between "the people" and "the elites" and glorifies the pure will of the people. This definition positions populism as an independent ideology, rather than merely a form of discourse that can be added to right, left, nationalist, or liberal ideologies. Laclau (2005), on the other hand, saw populism as the process of integrating social demands under the "People" category and considered it a central element in the construction of the political subject, not only a strategy. The basic features of populism

include public-elite opposition, charismatic leadership, anti-institutionalism, emotion-centered politics, and flexibility (Taggart, 2000; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). In this context, leaders such as Hugo Chávez and Evo Morales in Latin America represent left populism (Panizza, 2005); in Europe, Viktor Orbán and Marine Le Pen stand out as examples of right populism; in the USA, Donald Trump has become a remarkable representative of contemporary populism with his anti-elite rhetoric and populist discourses (Mudde, 2007; Norris & Inglehart, 2019). These examples show that populism is not a uniform ideology, but rather a multidimensional phenomenon that can emerge with different content in different political and cultural contexts. In the literature, populism is both a leadership style and a political strategy. Similarly, toxic leadership in industrial and organizational psychology is defined as a style of leadership that damages the psychological well-being of employees, affects the organizational climate negatively, and reduces institutional performance (Goldman, 2009). The toxic leadership scale developed by Schmidt (2008) conceptualizes this phenomenon in five dimensions: exploitation, narcissism, unpredictability, authoritarianism, and self-centeredness, and shows that the toxic leader not only threatens the basic values and sustainability of the organization, but also the individual-organization interaction. Symptoms of toxic leadership include exploitation, mobbing, and manipulation; a management style based on excessive supervision instead of trust; shifting narcissism and failures to subordinates; creating anxiety with uncertain expectations and unpredictable decisions; and polarization through the distinction of “us and them” within the organization (Padilla et al., 2007; Pelletier, 2010). The effects of this leadership style include stress, burnout, low self-esteem, and job dissatisfaction (Gallus et al., 2013); elimination of psychological safety at the organizational level; prevention of creativity; increase in turnover rates; and, ultimately, corporate collapse (Webster et al., 2016). At the societal level, toxic leadership, especially in public institutions or large organizations, leads to a decrease in service quality, erosion of trust, and weakening of institutional legitimacy. Therefore, toxic leadership is considered not only an individual problem but also a multidimensional phenomenon affecting organizational culture and the psychological health of employees, and is critical for both employee welfare and corporate sustainability.

3. PARALLELS BETWEEN POPULISM AND TOXIC LEADERSHIP

One of the most remarkable parallels between populism and toxic leadership is that both cases effectively use charismatic authority. The charismatic authority, which Max Weber (1978) conceptualized, bases the loyalty of the masses to the leader on an extraordinary power attributed to individual qualities. Populist leaders present themselves as “the voice of the people” with discourses that activate the emotions of the masses; toxic leaders strengthen loyalty and devotion by creating a similar psychological effect on their followers within organizations. This leadership style is centered on personal charisma, pushing the importance of rational institutions and rules into the background. In the political context, this leads to the weakening of democratic institutions, while in the organizational context, it causes the erosion of participatory culture and the emergence of dependency relations. In this way, the concentration of charismatic authority in favor of the leader brings about a form of governance that suppresses critical thinking both at political and organizational levels and excludes alternative voices. Another parallel between the two cases is the distinction of “us versus them” and the polarization strategy.

Populist leadership describes “the people” as a pure and innocent whole, while portraying elites or external groups as corrupt. This dual contrast constitutes the basic dynamic of political mobilization (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Similarly, toxic leaders create a sharp distinction between “loyal employees” and “opposing or problematic employees” within the organization. This distinction fuels conflict between teams, damages trust among employees, and weakens organizational cooperation. Social polarization at the political level, and division and internal conflict at the organizational level, both become tools serving the leader’s consolidation of power. Thus, in both populism and toxic leadership, the polarizing language increases the legitimacy of the leader while democratic values and organizational integrity are seriously threatened. Finally, in both contexts, a crucial element is manipulation and emotion management. Populist leaders use strong emotions such as fear, hope, and anger in the political arena as a means of mobilization. Fear is fed with the claim that external threats or elites will harm the people; hope is shaped through the promise that a fairer order will be established with the will of the people; and anger is directed at hostile groups or elites, thereby activating the masses (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Similarly, toxic leaders exert control by directing the emotions of employees within organizations. They obtain obedience by creating a culture of fear, channel employees’ motivation through promises of hope that serve their own interests, and direct anger toward departments, subordinates, or external actors, often labeled as “the other.” This emotional manipulation not only eliminates employees’ psychological safety but also prevents questioning of the leader’s authority. Thus, both in political populism and organizational toxic leadership, emotion management and manipulation play a central role in maintaining leadership.

4. IMPACTS ON EMPLOYEES AND CITIZENS

Populist leadership and toxic leadership, although emerging in different domains, directly influence the psychological processes experienced by individuals as both citizens and employees. At the political level, charismatic authority, as explained by Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), enables individuals to position themselves within a powerful “we” category. The leader’s discourse reinforces the “us-them” divide and provides citizens with a sense of belonging. While this may initially appear to enhance participation, it simultaneously weakens critical thinking and deepens political polarization. Citizens become mobilized through the leader’s emotional rhetoric, while rational policy discussions are pushed into the background. Donald Trump in the United States and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey exemplify this dynamic; both leaders have mobilized masses through strong emotional bonds but have gradually eroded public trust in democratic institutions. For citizens, this often transforms into collective disappointment, societal hopelessness, and democratic fatigue when expectations are not met. In the organizational context, toxic leadership undermines employees’ perceptions of psychological safety and job satisfaction. At first, the charismatic figure of a leader can inspire motivation and admiration among employees. However, as Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) suggests, once the reciprocity-based relationship breaks down, employees begin to feel that their trust has been exploited. This is conceptualized as a psychological contract breach (Rousseau, 1995). Over time, employees experience job dissatisfaction, burnout, and organizational cynicism. Steve Jobs’ authoritarian and at times toxic leadership style at Apple, while fostering short-term innovation, has been criticized for generating intense pressure, stress, and burnout among employees. Similarly, Elon Musk’s

harsh management style at Twitter (X) has been associated with increasing organizational silence and high staff turnover. From a psychological standpoint, this phenomenon can also be explained through Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory. Both citizens and employees attempt to preserve the emotional resources they gain through the leader's charismatic discourse, yet gradually perceive these resources as being under threat. As the perception of resource loss increases, stress, anxiety, and hopelessness intensify. This fragility, observed both in political participation and organizational commitment, eventually narrows the spaces of independence and freedom. In conclusion, the effects of charismatic authority in both political and organizational contexts rest on the manipulation of individuals through emotional attachment. While this attachment generates strong collective energy in the short term, in the long run it erodes critical thinking and renders democratic institutions and organizational structures fragile. Citizens find it difficult to express their free will in the political sphere, while employees struggle to display creativity within organizations. This picture clearly illustrates the dual face of charismatic authority: on the one hand, mobilization and motivation; on the other, fragility and destructive consequences.

5. THE SEARCH FOR LEGITIMACY IN INSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES

Populist leadership and toxic leadership reshape the quest for legitimacy not only at the individual level but also within institutional and political structures. Charismatic authority, within the framework of Weber's typology of authority, constructs a legitimacy base grounded in personal charisma rather than in the legal-rational order. In the political sphere, this dynamic pushes constitutional institutions and democratic mechanisms into the background. When the leader's personal discourse is positioned above laws and institutions, the authority of institutional structures gradually weakens. In this process, fueled by populist rhetoric, the leader generates legitimacy by claiming to embody the "will of the people." Yet such legitimacy is less sustainable and more fragile, relying largely on short-term mass support. As seen in the examples of Turkey and Hungary, political legitimacy gained through elections has often been intertwined with the leader's personal authority at the expense of weakening institutions. At the organizational level, toxic leadership similarly erodes mechanisms of institutional legitimacy. Instead of norms, procedures, and ethical principles guiding institutional functioning, the leader's personal charisma becomes the defining force. In this context, organizational culture is shaped by the leader's individual preferences, and institutional values lose their flexibility. In the eyes of employees, legitimacy derives not from organizational norms but from loyalty to the leader. Over time, this undermines perceptions of fairness, trust, and collective responsibility within the organization. For example, in certain technology companies, the charismatic leadership of founders initially fostered an innovative organizational culture but eventually overshadowed professional management mechanisms, threatening organizational stability. From a sociological perspective, the personalization of legitimacy in this way creates a fragile ground for both political and organizational structures. At the political level, constitutions, judicial mechanisms, and independent institutions weaken; at the organizational level, ethical codes, institutional procedures, and principles of governance erode. This situation affirms Weber's emphasis on the need for the "routinization" of charismatic authority; when charisma fails to institutionalize, it produces systematic instability instead of generating sustainable legitimacy.

In the long run, once the leader's personal appeal fades or the masses reach a point of saturation, both political and organizational structures face a severe crisis of legitimacy. Indeed, the literature highlights that in cases where charismatic authority is not institutionalized, the sustainability of legitimacy remains weak. As Weber (1978) noted in his classic authority typology, charismatic authority "remains fragile if not routinized" and must eventually give way to rational-legal authority supported by institutional norms. Similarly, Mounk (2018) emphasizes that populist leaders' constructions of legitimacy based on the "will of the people" undermine the effectiveness of democratic institutions over time and may lead to severe governance crises. In the organizational context, Tepper (2000) has shown that toxic leadership erodes institutional legitimacy by damaging employees' perceptions of justice and trust. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that while building legitimacy on charismatic authority may strengthen power in the short term, it remains insufficient to produce lasting stability and trust in the long run.

6. THE TWO FACES OF CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY: CONSTRUCTIVE AND DESTRUCTIVE EFFECTS

As one of the three types of authority defined by Weber (1978), charismatic authority stems from the belief that the individual possesses extraordinary qualities. This form of authority can be a strong source of mobilization in both political and organizational contexts. However, charismatic authority does not only have constructive and transformative effects; it can also lead to destructive consequences such as authoritarianism, dependency relations, and erosion of trust. In its constructive dimension, charismatic authority facilitates mobilization by instilling hope and trust, especially in times of crisis. Populist leaders can activate the emotions of the people and include large masses in political processes, thereby increasing political participation rates (Laclau, 2005). Similarly, in organizations, charismatic leaders strengthen employees' sense of belonging, encourage innovative thinking, and create unity around a collective purpose (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). However, when unchecked, charismatic authority entails serious risks. When populist leaders see public support as an absolute source of legitimacy, they weaken pluralism and undermine democratic institutions (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). This deepens polarization and suppresses critical voices. At the organizational level, toxic leaders exploit charisma as a means of manipulation and control. Employees lose their capacity for critical questioning due to admiration or fear, leading to damaged psychological safety and accelerating organizational collapse (Pelletier, 2010). Thus, charismatic authority must be understood as a two-way dynamic. While it can generate belonging, hope, and collective motivation, it can also pave the way for authoritarianism, dependency, and trust erosion. In political contexts, this necessitates equilibrium mechanisms to safeguard democracy; in organizational contexts, it requires ethical leadership, transparent management practices, and policies that prioritize employees' psychological safety.

7. CASE EXAMPLES: CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY AT THE POLITICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

The bidirectional nature of charismatic authority becomes clearer when examined through concrete examples. At the political level, populist leaders mobilize social support with charismatic discourses; at the organizational level, toxic leaders influence

employees with similar strategies. This shows that charisma can be both a source of hope and mobilization, and a precursor to polarization and collapse. In Latin America, Hugo Chávez positioned himself as the representative of the poor and mobilized the masses through charismatic oratory (Laclau, 2005). While Chávez's leadership contributed to strengthening social policies in the short term, it weakened democratic institutions and deepened polarization in the long run. In Hungary, Viktor Orbán consolidated support with nationalist-populist discourses, but undermined the rule of law through pressure on democratic institutions (Mudde, 2007). In the USA, Donald Trump mobilized voters with the slogan "Make America Great Again" and gained mass support through crisis rhetoric and anti-elite discourse. However, this produced consequences such as deep political polarization, loss of trust in the media, and institutional instability (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). In Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan built strong charisma by appealing to religious and national values, sustaining public support, but raising concerns about pluralism and democratic checks and balances. At the organizational level, similar patterns emerge. The Enron scandal revealed how executives inspired employees and investors with visionary discourses of "innovation," but led to collapse through manipulation and unethical practices (McLean & Elkind, 2003). Uber's former CEO Travis Kalanick expanded the company globally with entrepreneurial charisma, but authoritarian and toxic leadership practices triggered a cultural crisis (Isaac, 2017). WeWork's founder Adam Neumann gained trust with visionary and inspiring discourses, but personal authority-based governance and unsustainable decisions caused the company's downfall (Gelles, 2021). Taken together, these cases reveal both constructive and destructive aspects of charismatic authority. While leaders like Chávez, Orbán, Trump, and Erdoğan show how charisma can create short-term legitimacy, they also illustrate how it can undermine institutional sustainability. Similarly, Enron, Uber, and WeWork demonstrate that charismatic leadership can inspire innovation but also facilitate corruption and organizational decay. Thus, charismatic authority functions as a double-edged sword in both politics and organizations: without proper checks and balances, it can accelerate institutional collapse.

8. THE IMPORTANCE OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

In the analysis of populism and toxic leadership, the interdisciplinary approach does not only provide theoretical wealth; it also allows for a more holistic and comprehensive understanding. Political science examines populism through the functioning of democratic institutions, the people-elite relationship, and political discourses; industrial and organizational psychology examines toxic leadership through the psychological security of employees, organizational climate, and leadership relations. The evaluation of these two disciplines on a common ground is critical to understanding the multilayered effects of leadership on individuals and institutions. In terms of conceptual richness, the interdisciplinary view prevents the narrowing of concepts within the boundaries of a single discipline. For example, while Weber's (1978) concept of charismatic authority is interpreted as a factor that threatens democratic institutions in political science, in organizational psychology the same concept can be used to understand the dependency relations of employees. Thus, the same concept becomes understandable in its different manifestations at both social and organizational levels. In terms of methodological diversity, political science examines leadership through discourse analysis, comparative politics, and historical studies; industrial and organizational psychology employs surveys, experimental research,

and meta-analyses to investigate the effects of leadership on individuals. An interdisciplinary approach enables the use of these methods together and makes it possible to analyze both the political consequences of leadership and its micro-level organizational effects simultaneously (Gulbenkian Commission, 1996). Theoretically and practically, the parallels between populism and toxic leadership not only enrich the literature; they also provide the capacity to generate applicable solutions. The significant similarities between the democratic regression caused by populism at the political level and the institutional collapse caused by toxic leadership at the organizational level suggest that solutions may overlap. In this context, transparency, accountability, participation, and ethical norms stand out as common principles that limit the destructive effects of leadership in both political and organizational structures (Repko et al., 2017). For future research, an interdisciplinary approach has the potential to open new horizons. A more detailed comparison of the similarities between the political discourses of populism and the organizational rhetoric of toxic leadership will contribute to the development of a more holistic literature on the "dark side of leadership." In addition, the intersection points of political science and psychology can offer practical benefits in designing leadership training programs, developing democratic governance models, and transforming organizational cultures. In summary, an interdisciplinary approach allows us to understand the relationship between populism and toxic leadership in a multifaceted way rather than a one-dimensional one. This approach creates theoretical richness in academia, while at the same time guiding healthier, more transparent, and more sustainable management models at both political and organizational levels.

9. PREVENTION STRATEGIES AND SOLUTION SUGGESTIONS

Although populist leadership and toxic leadership can create strong mobilization and commitment in the short term, in the long run they damage the functioning of institutions, the psychological security of individuals, and democratic values. Therefore, developing prevention strategies at both levels is not only a subject of academic debate but also a necessity for political stability and organizational sustainability. At the political level, one of the most important strategies to limit the destructive effects of populist leadership is strengthening democratic checks and balances. Protecting the separation of powers between the legislative, executive, and judiciary may prevent the populist leader from establishing hegemony over institutions. In addition, independent media, civil society organizations, and transparent electoral processes can prevent public support from becoming a unilateral source of legitimacy (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Strengthening a culture of critical thinking through educational policies makes citizens less vulnerable to manipulation. Internal democracy mechanisms in political parties are another safeguard against the concentration of authority in populism. At the organizational level, prevention strategies require institutionalization of transparency, ethical principles, and accountability to prevent toxic leadership. Human resources policies should focus not only on performance measurement but also on employees' psychological security and job satisfaction (Gallus et al., 2013). Independent mechanisms should provide regular feedback and evaluate complaints of mobbing and abuse. Leadership development programs emphasizing ethical leadership, emotional intelligence, and communication skills may limit the emergence of toxic tendencies. In addition, fostering a participatory, transparent, and cooperative organizational culture reduces the polarizing effect of toxic leaders

(Pelletier, 2010). Common solutions reflect the parallels in both contexts. At the political and institutional level, legitimacy should be based on institutional norms and ethical values rather than blind loyalty to individuals. Strengthening accountability mechanisms may balance tendencies that make leaders' authority unlimited. Supporting participatory culture encourages individuals to take an active role in both democratic processes and organizational decision-making. Furthermore, a kind of "leadership literacy" should be developed within organizations, much like media literacy in societies. The ability of individuals to question charismatic authority and to develop critical capacity is vital for long-term resilience. The future perspective shows that these strategies depend not only on structural arrangements but also on cultural transformation. Limiting populism in democratic societies is possible through a culture that encourages critical thinking. Preventing toxic leadership in organizations requires building a climate of trust and cooperation. In this context, interdisciplinary studies can develop common policy proposals by bringing together political science and industrial and organizational psychology, thus contributing to the creation of more resilient structures in both societies and organizations.

10. ARGUMENT

Populism and toxic leadership, though emerging in different contexts, show remarkable similarities at both structural and psychological levels. While populist leadership mobilizes public support in the political arena, toxic leadership controls employees in the organizational context. In both cases, charismatic authority plays a central role in the construction of legitimacy. In populism, charismatic authority produces legitimacy with the claim of increasing democratic participation, but it can also become a mechanism that limits pluralism and deepens polarization (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Similarly, the charismatic power in toxic leadership can motivate employees in the short term, but in the long run it undermines psychological security and makes organizational loyalty unsustainable (Schmidt, 2008). In both contexts, the charm of charismatic authority pushes rational assessments into the background and silences critical voices. Another common point is the "us versus them" polarization strategy. At the political level, populist discourse defines the people as a homogeneous and pure whole while portraying elites or outsiders as enemies (Taggart, 2000). At the organizational level, toxic leaders fuel internal conflict by dividing employees into "loyal employees" and "problematic employees" (Pelletier, 2010). This polarization erodes trust in both societies and organizations, reinforcing leaders' authority while weakening institutional resilience. Manipulation and emotion management are also central to both contexts. Populist leaders use fear, hope, and anger as tools of political mobilization (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Toxic leaders similarly manipulate employees' emotions to maintain control. At both levels, emotions replace rational discussion, leading individuals to unquestioningly commit to the leader's rhetoric. Legitimacy is another fragile dimension in both cases. Public support is the fundamental source of legitimacy for populist leaders, while loyalty is a prerequisite for organizational legitimacy under toxic leaders. However, these forms of legitimacy are unsustainable because they are not based on institutional norms and ethical values. Economic crises, social reactions, or mass resignations may quickly undermine legitimacy (Gallus et al., 2013). All these parallels highlight the importance of an interdisciplinary approach. Political science analyzes the impact of populism on democratic institutions, while industrial and organizational psychology studies the effects of toxic leadership on

employee welfare and organizational productivity. Their intersection lies in the relationship between psychological dependence on individuals and institutional fragility.

In conclusion, while populist and toxic leadership can produce short-term legitimacy through charismatic authority, they threaten long-term institutional resilience, democratic values, and individual psychological security. For permanent legitimacy in both political and organizational contexts, institutional norms, ethical principles, and transparency mechanisms must be reinforced rather than relying on leaders' personal authority.

11. CONCLUSION

In this study, populism and toxic leadership cases were examined comparatively by considering the perspectives of political science and industrial and organizational psychology. The findings reveal that both cases are based on charismatic authority, gain strength through the distinction of "us versus them" and polarizing strategies, shape the behavior of individuals through emotion management and manipulation, and build legitimacy through personal commitment. Populism at the political level redefines democratic processes by mobilizing public support; toxic leadership at the organizational level transforms organizational culture by reinforcing employee commitment in manipulative ways. However, in both contexts, the common problem is that legitimacy is grounded in individual charisma rather than institutional norms and ethical principles. Although this provides strong mobilization in the short term, it leads to the fragility of both democratic institutions and organizational structures in the long term. In the political context, the negative effects of populism on democratic institutions emerge as the decline of pluralism, the rise of polarization, and the strengthening of authoritarian tendencies. At the organizational level, toxic leadership undermines employees' psychological safety, increases burnout and job dissatisfaction, and creates the risk of long-term organizational collapse. Both cases generate a harmful dependence on individuals, similar to an "institutional Stockholm syndrome," which silences critical voices and legitimizes the authority of the leader. The results once again highlight the importance of an interdisciplinary perspective. The parallels between populism and toxic leadership show that the effects of leadership on individuals and institutions should be evaluated not only in political or organizational frameworks, but within a holistic plane. In this context, to ensure permanent legitimacy in political structures, it is necessary to strengthen democratic values, institutional checks and balances, and the rule of law. At the organizational level, developing institutional policies that prioritize transparency, accountability, ethical leadership, and employees' psychological security is crucial to prevent toxic leadership. Furthermore, the comparative framework revealed by this study opens new doors for future research. The similarities between populism and toxic leadership are not only theoretical but also practical. Interdisciplinary studies can contribute to the creation of healthier and more resilient structures at both societal and institutional levels by building bridges between democratic governance and organizational sustainability.

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