

# Uprooting of Networked and Fast Growth of Toxic Leaders in Autonomous Engineering Institutions

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## Abstract

*The Government of India established autonomous engineering colleges in the 1960s to enhance the quality of graduates, support the industry, offer diverse global faculty development programs, and create the necessary knowledge and human capital. Many toxic leaders use autonomy without accountability. Most autonomous institutions suffer due to toxic leaders who discriminate against high-performing faculty teams, deny them their rights, and hinder their legitimate growth and development. Still, they actively support low-performing faculty members who show loyalty to them. They instill corruption in engineering education. These toxic activities undermine the performance of well-established faculty teams, prompting many to resign and join universities overseas. Hence, this research focused on safeguarding best-performing faculty members from toxic leaders who can contribute to the growth of knowledge and human capital through cutting-edge programs and global consultancy projects under many International Development Agencies (IDAs). Given the loss of productivity caused by networked toxic leaders, it is suggested that oversight committees be established, appropriate laws to curb their growth be enacted, and a refined process for selection and empowerment be instituted.*

**Keywords:** *Toxic leaders, Illusion, Loss to well-forming faculty teams, Growth of coteries, Networked toxic leaders, New laws*

## 1. Introduction

The Government of India established many autonomous institutes in 1960-2000 engineering institutes, technical teacher training institutes, Indian Institutes of Technology, National Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Management, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Indian Institutes of Information Technology, and Management, Indian Institute Information Technology, Design, and Management, Schools of Planning and Architecture, etc. for developing needed advanced programs to meet the needs of industries and government departments. These institutes are primarily funded by the Government of India and are governed by a board of governors. These institutes are autonomous in designing various programs in engineering, technology, science, management, architecture, and regional planning, and offer diverse global faculty development courses and continuing education programs for executive development. Furthermore, these institutes can

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set their fees under financial autonomy. Under administrative autonomy, each institute can recruit faculty members based on its own needs, subject to the approval of the Board of Governors. This delegation of needed autonomy mainly eliminates the red tape and delay. For faculty and staff recruitment, the administrative officer must advertise the posts in leading newspapers, including detailed qualifications, experience, accomplishments, pay scales, and retirement benefits, and specify the last date for applications, following the norms set by the Board of Governors. Then, the institute's head must establish a committee of experts to review the application. Verify the credentials, and call the applicants to attend the interview. In this process, there should be no deviation in setting the pay scale or qualifications. The board should approve the experts. No one can be appointed without the board's approval, and the selection should not be altered. When they prepare a comparative statement of the credentials, qualifications, and accomplishments, the scrutinizing committee can't omit or distort any of them. In all public service commissions, candidates must verify the authenticity of the statement and sign it. Many CEO make unauthorized changes to reduce the chances of fair selection. The problem arises when the CEO also influences the experts to avoid a strict assessment of the candidates' credentials. They may accept the CEO's suggestions, select an unaccomplished candidate who may not possess all the critical expertise and has poor records, and overlook a well-accomplished candidate. Here, toxicity begins, and discrimination starts. Most external experts collude to follow the CEO's misguided advice.

The comparative statement is purposely distorted to achieve the toxic leader's objective. No ranking has been marked on the comparative statement all the time. All these unlawful activities undermine the fair selection of the best-performing and most accomplished candidates. The State also suffers due to the low performance of poorly accomplished candidates. No law permits such a colluded and unlawful selection process. If the correct steps are not followed, numerous disasters will occur. These deviations are not accidental but carefully planned and executed in collusion with the experts who are also toxic leaders. Here, discrimination is based on language, religion, caste, gender, corruption, and other factors. Hence, detailed research is required to eliminate such evil practices.

The United Nations General Assembly [15] reiterates that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and have the potential to contribute constructively to the development and well-being of their societies. Further, racism, xenophobia, and related discrimination and intolerance exist in all societies, everywhere. Racism harms not only the lives of those who endure it but also society as a whole. We also lose in a society characterized by discrimination, division, distrust, intolerance, and hate. The fight against racism is everyone's fight. We all have a part to play in building a world beyond racism.

## **2. Literature survey**

According to Asmaa Kamal Ahmed et al. [1], toxic leadership is characterized by abuse, destructiveness, and detrimental effects on faculty, leading to decreased morale, increased stress, diminished organizational performance, and emotional exhaustion among faculty members. Emotional exhaustion is a key component of burnout and has been linked to decreased job performance and increased likelihood of engaging in deviant behaviors at work. Organizational cynicism, as a negative attitude or distrust toward the organization and its leadership, may exacerbate the relationship between leadership and workplace deviance. Their study aimed to examine the interrelationships among leadership, workplace deviance, emotional exhaustion, and organizational cynicism in the teaching profession. Badrilal Gupta [2] studied strategies for promoting and sustaining autonomy in higher education institutions,

with an emphasis on the role of culture. Untitled leaders identified steps to prevent a toxic leader's negative behavior. Castaner and Oliveria [3] conducted a systematic literature review on collaboration, coordination, and cooperation among organizations. Christian Wiradendi Wolor et al [4] assessed the impact of toxic leadership on employee performance. Jjiosvold et al. [5] assessed the process of managing conflict and developing effective leadership. Franco Gandolfi and Seth Stone [6] studied toxic leadership behaviors, characteristics, and consequences. Vedhathiri [7] focused on developing a culture of winning in autonomous Indian engineering institutions. Sally Mohammed et al. [8] explored the relationship between toxic leadership and organizational performance. Pelletier et al [16] created a toxic triangle consisting of common follower responses: assertion, avoidance, or adaptation. Assertion can lead to severed relationships in a toxic work environment. A follower's avoidance can easily lead to disengagement from their job and organization, as well as reduced productivity. Finally, adaptation is seldom going to manifest into a healthy outcome in a toxic environment, because the adaptor inevitably becomes part of the toxicity. Vedhathiri [9] concluded that organizations need leadership with equity, ethics, humility, and an outstanding culture to develop them. Further, he [10] concluded that there is a need for strategies to develop faculty members and protect them from toxic environments. Toxic leadership leads to white-collar crimes in autonomous institutions [11]. Identifying, addressing, and preventing negative behavior is essential [12]. Steevan Robert and Michael Rizzo [13] identified seven factors that contribute to American racism. Amnesty International [14] explored racial justice. The United Nations [15] fixed 21 March as an international day to eliminate racial discrimination. Melissa [17] examined systemic racism in the United States. Artnet.com [18] concluded that anti-black discrimination in toxic workplaces is too common in the arts administration. Zachary and Rapheel [19][20] concluded that faculty recognize it is hopeless and overwhelming to try to change colleges and universities fundamentally. Equality and Human Rights Commission [21] concluded that racism should not be tolerated on campus. Racial harassment is a common occurrence for many students and staff in British universities. MIT Sloan Management Review [22] stated that women and racial minorities are more likely to experience their employer's culture as toxic for reasons rooted in destruction and harassment. Aclu.org [23] suggested that access to education is key to systemic equality. Lstatedigitalpress.com concluded that black students' experiences of race-based discrimination in K-12 public schools were a result of negative perceptions and attitudes. University of Liverpool [24]. Universities are challenged in eliminating racial harassment. Shaun and Davis [25] examined the efforts to combat racism in college classrooms. Pirnavskaia and Kaknzi [26] proposed three key steps to uproot racism on university campuses. Many organizations [27][28][29][30][31][32][33] explored the violence and racial discrimination in U.S. public schools due to negative effects on black students' safety and ability to access educational benefits. According to Nitasha Tiku [34], Indian Engineers thrived in Silicon Valley. It has its caste system. According to Thenmozhi Soundaraj, Director of Equity Labs, 260 [34] U.S. tech workers reported caste-based slurs and jokes, bullying, discriminatory hiring practices, bias in peer review, and sexual harassment. In the same article, engineers from the dominant castes have reported patterns of bias within the U.S., favoring their peers in hiring, references, and performance reviews. According to Regher Kaushik, a Microsoft Engineer [35], "Just like racism, casteism is alive in America and the tech sector. According to Rachel Tulley, "At Apple, we are dedicated to providing employees with a workplace where they feel safe, respected, and inspired to do their best work. We have strict policies that prohibit any discrimination, enabling them to do their best work. We have

strict policies that prohibit discrimination or harassment, including based on caste, and we provide training for all employees to ensure our policies are respected.

These studies don't shed light on the loss due to toxic actions that affect knowledge and human capital, or on the growth of networked toxic leaders in the region. The interlinked growth of toxic leadership across many autonomous institutions is highly detrimental to the development of human and knowledge capital. This paper addresses the growing issue.

### **3. Objectives**

The following are the objectives of this action research paper:

- To identify the causes of the uncontrolled growth of toxic leaders in autonomous institutes
- To assess the reasons for eliminating high-performing faculty members by toxic leaders
- To develop a process of safeguarding the best-performing faculty teams in autonomous institutes
- To review the impact of toxic activities on higher education and engineering institutes
- To create a method of eradicating the networked toxic leaders in linked autonomous institutes

#### **3.1. The need for the research**

Identifying the destructive activities of toxic leaders in autonomous institutes is essential. Many countries suffer from the rise of corrupt leaders across all aspects of human activity, from education and employment to training, development, resource allocation, and protection against natural disasters. Although these countries have developed numerous laws, rules, norms, and standards to protect victims, the problem remains unresolved. In most higher education institutes, high-performing faculty members and outstanding research scholars continuously suffer due to the focused, uncontrolled, and destructive actions of toxic leaders. The destruction of well-accomplished faculty members destroys the growth of knowledge capital and human capital development. This ultimately undermines the nation's economic growth. It is essential to protect them so that higher education institutions, professional universities, national research and development laboratories, faculty members, and budding research scholars can be facilitated in undertaking appropriate research and development activities. Unfortunately, most nations have not focused on these essential issues. Hence, this research work focuses on the various efforts countries have taken to address the rise of toxic leaders, employers, and members of society.

#### **3.2. Action research**

The destructive activities were collected from over 2000 faculty members and cross-verified through a triangulation process. This action research is based on focused studies of existing control methods to stop and eradicate the growth of toxic leaders, particularly in engineering education. Further, the focus has been on developing practical approaches to eradicate toxic activities and the growth of networked toxic leaders in other autonomous institutes in the region. Since the global literature is extensive, it is advantageous to use Artificial Intelligence-enabled tools like “Microsoft Copilot, which has been enabled by Artificial Intelligence, in this research.

#### **4. High-performing faculty members**

High-performing faculty members are fully qualified, well-accomplished, intrinsically motivated, and selected through a regular process.

1. They are interested in developing interdisciplinary and industry-specific programs.
2. They are interested in developing innovative learning and instructional models and bidding for global consultancy projects with various international development agencies, government engineering departments, and micro, medium, and small enterprises.
3. They plan interdisciplinary postgraduate programs and Ph.D. programs, and offer a diverse range of global faculty development programs.
4. Their illusion is likely rooted in a deep commitment to higher education, technical, vocational education, cooperative education, and non-formal education.
5. They need recognition and rewards for their accomplishments, services, and achievements in engineering education.
6. Their primary drive is the joy of innovation, teaching, and making a meaningful impact on the learners and the knowledge capital.
7. They trust that the system will eventually reward them for their contributions and achievements, unaware that politics and favoritism can often skew the outcomes.
8. Their focus is on leaving a long-lasting legacy through their work, often at the expense of personal financial security and career advancement.
9. Unfortunately, this illusion can lead them to overlook the importance of self-advocacy and strategic networking, which are crucial for personal security benefits and career advancements.
10. It is a stark reminder that even the most dedicated and high-achieving individuals need to balance their idealism with practical considerations for their own well-being and professional growth.

##### **4.1. Toxic leaders in engineering education**

Toxic leaders in autonomous institutions are often selected without a thorough evaluation of their abilities and vision. There is no oversight of their performance. They revolve around their deep investment in authority, control, and personal gains. For these toxic administrators, their emotional and psychological investment in the social field of higher education can manifest in detrimental ways as follows:

1. **Power and Authority:** They may derive a sense of self-worth and validation from their power and authority. This often leads to manipulation and controlling behaviors to maintain their status.
2. **Regulation and Prestige:** Their commitment to achieving and maintaining recognition and prestige within the Institution can drive them to undermine others, including high-performing faculty, to eliminate perceived threats.
3. **Personal Advancement:** Their illusion may be heavily tied to individual advancement, prioritizing their career growth over the institutions and their colleagues' well-being.
4. **Insecurity and Validation:** Often, toxic leaders may feel insecure about their abilities and seek validation through their position, resorting to toxic behaviors to compensate for their insecurities.

5. Resistance to Change: They might be deeply invested in maintaining the status quo, resisting any changes that threaten their established authority or highlight their incompetence.
6. Minimal Effort: Aiming to exert minimal effort while reaping maximum benefits, hence the laziness and lack of strategic planning.
7. Security through Connections: Relying on protection from the Board of Governors and the Ministry Officials to maintain their positions despite incompetence.
8. Avoidance of Accountability: Leveraging their network to avoid consequences for their actions. Ensuring they can continue their unethical practices.
9. Networking: One community is interested in dominance forever, and networking helps in the exchange of information on the emergence of a possible way to surpass their dominance
10. Fear of Eradication: When they lose academic leadership, they risk stagnating in their growth.
11. Total intolerance for the growth of suppressed communities: The dominant classes will ultimately lose their existence in higher education.

This illusion is damaging not just to the Institution's progress but also to the morale and integrity of its faculty and students.

**4.2. SWOT analysis of high-performing faculty team member**

To know the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of High-Performing faculty members in autonomous institutes, the following analysis has been undertaken:

Table 1. SWOT analysis of well-performing faculty team members

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Fully qualified, Achievement-oriented, Energetic, Published excellent research papers in many international journals/conferences, Up-to-date Textbooks, Laboratory Manuals, Design and Drawing Manuals, Item Banks, Case Studies, Monographs, Educational Video Programs, Completed Sponsored Research Programs, Planned and Implemented Interdisciplinary Postgraduate and Doctoral Programs, Offered Executive Development Programs to Industries, Planned and Organized Diverse Global Faculty Development Programs, Generated Revenue through Royalties, Course fees, Received Fellowships from various National and International Associations, Received many Rewards, Possess Excellent Conduct and Character. Known for its highest reputation. Considered a saint.</p>	<p>Not focused on self-protection, sacrificed health, never had mentors, tolerated all exploitations, undertook too many projects, worked almost 12 hours per day, never demanded equity, tolerated all unethical treatments, failed to maintain time management, never received updates on the service rules, ministry communications, yielded to unrealistic pressures, was unable to get the pay scale as per the norms, never filed court cases on racial discriminations, poor pay scales awarded, undertook all assignment and executed within the time frame. Never estimate the legal costs of filing cases to obtain a court order. Delays the filing beyond the fixed time. Not aware of the schedule. Not keeping copies of official letters of denial of pension to which they are legally eligible. Not aware of government orders on service matters.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>He was selected for foreign training programs under bilateral agreements with the Government, internships in global universities under regional cooperation, offered travel grants for participation in overseas conferences from international development agencies, opportunities for bidding for global projects, funds for organizing faculty and executive development programs, providing keynote addresses in many international conferences, organizing international workshops under external funding, developing</p>	<p>Frequent travel to extension centers, too many programs at a time, too many complaints to accommodate the faculty members, micromanagement by superordinates, having to work with unqualified, demotivated, corrupt seniors, having to undertake additional work that is uncompleted by coworkers, and never recognized for excellent contributions and never receiving the due share from the project gains.</p>

curricula under the World Bank projects.
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Inference: Most high-performing faculty members have substantially contributed to the rapid growth of engineering education, but they also carry personal-specific weaknesses that hinder their performance. New opportunities arise from the rapid development of the globalized Indian economy and its readiness to undertake industry-specific projects. Threats are due to excess workloads.

### 4.3. Illusion of toxic leaders

Toxic leadership behaviors are hurtful to feelings and emotional fatigue, and faculty silence is a result of the legislative framework. It is harmful to all organizations. However, little emphasis has been placed on research on the mediating mechanisms of their connections and border factors.

### 4.4. SWOT analysis of toxic leaders

Toxic leaders should be assessed to identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Table 2. SWOT analysis of toxic leaders

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Got the CEO's post with the support of external members even with lower qualifications and accomplishments, was ready to take revenge on unprotected, high-performing faculty members, had the authority to transfer the well-accomplished faculty members to other places, had support from loyal faculty members, demanding personal services, enjoys full administrative, financial authority, getting the undivided support of the Board of Governors.</p> <p>The Ministry of Education has always had the discretion to fix pay, reject selection, and downgrade highly qualified and excellent-performing faculty members, with unlimited administrative authority.</p>	<p>A low vision of the institute's capability, poor mission, no interest in institutional growth, destroying the legitimate growth of highly accomplished faculty members that affects the performance of the institute, never focus on the reputation of the institute, continually developing coteries, weak programs, no interest in approving interdisciplinary postgraduate and doctoral programs, claiming all gains to self, never allow high-performing faculty members' deputation to foreign assignments, always interested in his personal and family members growth and high salary, not paying the quarters rent, and always curious to avail all foreign travel.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>To assist the state government in planning for capacity development, quality improvement, and efficiency improvement with the assistance of international development agencies (IDAs). More opportunities to organize diverse global faculty development programs under funding from IDAs, new opportunities for faculty deputation to overseas trips, and to apply for CEO posts in various international institutes.</p>	<p>Many reputed faculty members have resigned and joined other universities, significantly affecting institutional growth. This has led to a decrease in grants-in-aid due to the non-implementation of postgraduate and doctoral programs. Additionally, there have been numerous audit objections due to improper fund utilization, low investment returns, inadequate knowledge capital development, and increased competition from other institutions offering executive development programs.</p>

Inference: Even if they are selected, their strengths don't match the needs of fast-growing autonomous institutes. Their weaknesses stem from their limited vision and lack of focus on developing the necessary professional skills. There are plenty of opportunities for their growth. If they are not active in institutional development, the growth of knowledge and human capital will be affected.

The selected leaders (Directors/Deans/Principals) of the autonomous institutions could be exposed to the needed culture, equity, ethics, integrity, and global vision, developing diverse

global faculty development programs, offering global consultancy programs under international development agencies, undertaking sponsored research and development programs under transnational companies, developing interdisciplinary postgraduate and doctoral programs, revenue generation, code of conduct, and undertaking dynamic leadership.

- (1) The suffering of high-performing faculty members under toxic leaders
  - Not getting selected for higher posts because toxic leaders undermine their credentials through comparative statements presented to expert selection committees.
  - Many toxic leaders reduce pay packages.
  - Never delegate authority to head the department where they have to work
  - They never empower them to organize an international seminar, workshop, or conference
  - Never allow them to join research and development programs of global universities when they were selected based on their outstanding contributions and applications sent through an approved process
  - Never permitted to undergo internships when they were selected by foreign universities or international development agencies
  - Toxic leaders also collude with other experts from various autonomous institutions who were seconded to choose the best candidates for new positions
  - The toxic leaders advise the experts not to select outstanding faculty members; further, they collude in selecting poorly performing candidates
  - Never approve their bidding to undertake research and development projects under international development agencies
  - Refusing to share the project gains as per the rules and standards

These indicate a poor administrative process and inadequate supervision and oversight by the Board of Governors. These toxic activities must be eliminated to enable high-performing faculty teams to contribute to the rapidly developing economy.

- (2) Toxic leaders can undermine high-performing faculty members through various tactics such as:
  1. Undermining Authority: Discrediting the work of the high-performing faculty members and their achievements to diminish their reputation.
  2. Resource Allocation: Allocate resources from less impactful projects to more impactful ones.
  3. Isolation: Excluding them from essential meetings or decision-making processes like the academic council or the board of governors
  4. Unfair Evaluation: Providing biased or unfair performance evaluations.
  5. Creating a Hostile Environment: Encouraging a toxic work culture that hinders their ability to thrive.

- (3) Case studies in decision analysis on discrimination and the necessary remedial actions for victims.

It is possible to analyze the CEO's discretion and final decision by reviewing the proposal, its legibility, the method used to scrutinize possible outcomes, and the outcome.

Table 3. Analysis of the CEO's orders on the proposals submitted

Proposal	Eligibility	Qualifications	Advantages?	Bottleneck	CEO's Discretion	Outcome	Discrimination	Follow up
Application for a higher post	Yes	Fully qualified, highest performance	To the Institution is 100%	The experts have been advised not to select the applicant.	Not authorized to advise the experts.	Not selected	Yes Quotations supported	Appeal to the Ministry, if no action is taken, after a month, file a case
Request for nomination for an internship	Yes	Fully qualified, having leave at credit	100%	Nil	Not willing to nominate	No order was received.	Yes	Appeal to the Ministry: The available time is too short. Request the agency for time.
Pay fixation	Yes	Selected	100%	Nil	Reduced by 20%	Made to accept	Yes	Appeal to the Ministry; if there is no reply, file a case
Request for relief to join an international training program	Yes, the application was sent through the CEO	Yes	100%	The CEO stated that he never expected to be selected!	Nil, he has to relieve, since no one else can substitute	Not relieved	Yes	Appeal to the Ministry
Bidding for a training program under another ministry	Expert in: Completed many programs	Yes	100% IRG	The CEO is not positive	Rejected the proposal	Bidding was stopped	Yes	Appeal to the Ministry
Claiming an eligible part of the project gain	100%	Planned & developed the bid document, & won	The CEO is also eligible to share	The CEO took all the project gains	Unethical to take 100% of the gain.	Loss, disappointment. Frustrated	Yes, and criminalization.	Appeal to the Ministry, if no reply is received, then file a case within one month.
Proposal to conduct an executive development program.	100% qualified	Experienced.	IRG The CEO is also eligible.	The CEO transferred the project to an external agency.	Nil. The action is criminal.	The Institute also lost the IRG.	Yes	Appeal to the Ministry
LOI was transferred to another unqualified faculty.	Fully eligible	Qualified	Nil	Ignore the action.	Nil, but misuse of authority.	Poor quality output.	Equity is lost.	Can appeal to the Ministry
Micromanagement of the project.	CEO claims	Partial	Loss and Conflicts	Quality could be lost.	The CEO never delegates authority	Moderate	Yes	Ignore
Converting the EDP manager's post to a nonteaching position	No. This is a professor's post.	EDP manager is fully qualified, guides Ph.D. scholars, conducts courses, etc.	Reveals the toxic behaviour of the CEO	Limited expertise of the Chairman & the Board members	Wrong discretion	The board approved the decision of the CEO	Yes	The EDP manager filed the case and won. The court also fined the CEO.

Rejected the application of the fully qualified candidate for the professor's post.	A candidate is fully eligible for the professor's post.	Ph.D. and relevant expertise & 15 years of service.	Loss to the Institute.	The CEO's Low knowledge in interpreting the service rules.	Reject the candidate !	Frustration to all faculty members.	Yes	The candidate filed a writ petition and prevailed. She was later selected for the professor's post.
The CEO dismissed a professor for poor conduct and character.	The professor had good conduct /character.	Possessed full experience.	A poor reputation was created.	Poor quality of assessment	Ousted the professor	The professor filed a writ petition and owns the case	Yes	Based on the judgment, the professor was reinstated, and his salary was restored.

Inference: The CEO is often interested in discrimination in various activities, particularly when he dislikes a faculty member. The board has not thoroughly evaluated the cases. The reputation was broadened.

(4) Root cause analysis of the fast growth of toxic leaders

- Improper job description
- The selection committee is interested in selecting a toxic candidate
- Flawed selection process
- Lack of in-depth analysis of cognitive performance
- Absence of outstanding accomplishments
- Lack of focus on leadership abilities
- Lack of focus on diverse faculty development
- Giving credence to political backing
- Corruption in the selection process
- Absence of feedback from the faculty members
- Lack of protection for whistleblowers
- Absence of the investigation process
- Absence of Grievance recording and follow-up

(5) Self-protection of victims

- Lack of in-depth knowledge of human rights
- Lack of in-depth expertise in preparing a draft affidavit
- Too late in filing the affidavit at the Hon'ble High Court
- Too long a litigation process due to continuous adjournments
- Lack of resources
- Too much fear of exposing the criminal leaders
- Fear of transfer to outstation
- Absence of a grievance redressal mechanism in the institute
- Faculty members are in fear of action
- The board is not interested in exposing the toxic leader

(6) Supporting articles of protection under the Indian constitution

1. Article 14: Prohibition of discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.

The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

2. Article 15: Prohibition of discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. They shall not discriminate against any citizen based on religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, or any of them.
3. Article 16: Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. All citizens shall have equal opportunities in issues relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State. No citizen shall, on grounds of opportunity for all citizens, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence, or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against regarding any employment or office under the State.
4. Article 44: Uniform civil code for citizens. The state endeavors to establish a uniform civil code for all citizens throughout India.
5. Article 51 A: Fundamental Duties. It shall be the duty of any citizen of India to promote harmony and the spirit of brotherhood amongst all the people of India, transcending religion, linguistic, and regional or sectional diversions; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of work.

Every faculty member should acquire the necessary expertise to safeguard constitutional rights through self-directed learning and professional development. Faculty Associations can educate faculty members about their rights under the Constitution of India. The Faculty Association can file a writ petition on behalf of its members whenever they face discrimination due to toxic leaders, seeking court orders to protect the victims.

#### (7) Causes for the uncontrolled growth of toxic leaders in autonomous institutes

Generally, they don't plan to acquire the necessary experience and expertise, outstanding research skills, and vision to transform the institute into a global organization, develop faculty members, and bid for projects under various international development agencies. These toxic members never value training and leadership. They resort to toxic behaviors out of ignorance or frustration. They receive the highest post due to a poor assessment of their leadership abilities and a lack of alignment with institutional values. These toxic leaders face intense pressure to meet performance targets and, due to poor vision, underperform. They finally assert control over the faculty members and try to achieve short-term results at the expense of long-term growth. These toxic leaders fail to create a vision and values, and will struggle to connect with high-performing faculty. They also often misunderstand the institute's mission and become embroiled in numerous conflicts. Without proper checks and balances, toxic leaders may feel emboldened to act without accountability and ultimately harm others. These poisonous leaders consistently resist change, creating a toxic environment that perpetuates the status quo and stifles innovation and progress. Toxic leaders with personal insecurities may project their issues onto others, leading to micromanagement, favoritism, and bullying.

Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach, including better training, improved recruitment procedures, and fostering a culture of accountability and scaffolding.

#### (8) Growth of Coteries /Low-Performing Faculty Members

Generally, toxic leaders never allow high-performing faculty members to take advantage of study leave, fellowships, and assistantships to pursue advanced degrees. Toxic leaders may not be comfortable when their subordinates develop their higher-order cognitive abilities. Further, they might be skeptical of the program's relevance and effectiveness. They might worry about job security. Toxic leaders neither reward nor motivate their dynamic, work-oriented faculty teams because they don't see a direct benefit to themselves. Most poisonous leaders prefer poor-quality faculty members, as they are often loyal to the toxic leader. The leader enables these underperformers to access all resources, concessions, and higher pay

packages, and approves their participation in all foreign fellowships. Empowering them to head the departments even though they don't possess the required qualifications, experience, and vision. They get more travel assistance. They have to work as spies. Never reveal the important communications received from the Ministry of Education.

Table 4. Assessment of losses due to discrimination against high-performing faculty members

Discrimination against a well-performing faculty team (WPFT)	Impact on the WPFT	Impact on human resources	Impact on the economy
Denying approval for undergoing advanced training at an international university, even though the application was routed through the institute.	Loss of professional growth and leadership.	Loss to the students in acquiring advanced courses and undertaking interdisciplinary research. Loss of the ability to develop critical thinking.	Loss of industry-ready graduates who are needed for developing innovative products.
Denying approval to develop a bidding for a consultancy project.	Loss of an opportunity to win and implement a complex project.	Loss of opportunity to associate with complex projects.	Loss to companies to meet the requirements of clients.
Not sharing the project gains with the faculty members who completed the projects.	Financial loss. Increase in mental agony. Difficult to prepare innovative papers.	Loss to graduate students due to denying an opportunity to work on complex projects.	Loss to include the industry-ready graduates.

(9) Reasons for Eliminating High-Performing Faculty Members

Toxic leaders eliminating high-performing faculty members could stem from a few harmful motivations:

- Threat Perception: High-performing faculty members may be perceived as threats to the positions and influence of toxic leaders. These leaders might eliminate them to maintain control and dominance.
- Insecurity and Jealousy: The success and achievements of high-performing faculty can evoke feelings of insecurity and jealousy among toxic leaders, leading them to act against those who outshine them.
- Consolidation of Authority: By removing top performers, toxic leaders can surround themselves with less competent faculty members who are easier to manipulate and control, considering their authority.
- Bias and Favoritism: Personal biases and favoritism can lead to unfair treatment of high achievers, especially when those in authority have preexisting alliances or grudges.
- Lack of Accountability: In environments without proper checks and balances, toxic leaders can act with impunity, making decisions based on personal vendettas rather than merit.

Addressing these issues requires strong institutional governance, transparency, and accountability to ensure merit prevails over toxic behavior.

(10) Process of Safeguarding the Best-Performing Faculty Teams

Victims of discrimination in higher education institutions can seek legal compensation through various means. Here are some steps and potential outcomes:

- **Filing a complaint:** Victims can file a complaint with the Institution's internal grievance procedures or with external bodies like the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
- **Legal Action:** Victims can file a lawsuit in civil court for damages related to discrimination, harassment, or a hostile work environment.
- **Compensation:** If the court favors the victim, they may be awarded compensation for lost wages, emotional distress, and other damages.
- **Injunctions:** The court may also issue injunctions requiring the employer to take corrective actions, such as reinstating the victim to their former position or providing training to prevent future discrimination. Victims must document all instances of discrimination and seek legal advice to understand their rights and the best course of action.

(11) The needed remedies when a group of toxic experts discriminate against the best-performing faculty

These were constituted by a board of Governors but colluded to eliminate high-performing faculty by removing achievements and dining selections based on the advice of an internal toxic administrator.

It is crucial to take steps to address and remedy the situation. Here are some potential remedies [9][10][11][12]:

- **Internal Grievance Procedures:** The faculty member should file a formal complaint through the Institution's internal grievance procedures. This can initiate an investigation into the allegations of discrimination.
- **Legal Action:** If the internal procedures are ineffective, the faculty member can seek legal action. This may involve filing a lawsuit for discrimination, harassment, or a hostile work environment.
- **External Oversight:** Engaging external bodies, such as accreditation organizations or legal authorities, to investigate and address complaints of toxic behavior.
- **Policy Reforms:** Instituting clear policies and procedures for addressing discrimination and toxic behavior, including mandatory training of administrators.
- **Support Networkers:** Connecting with support networks, such as faculty unions or professional associations, can provide guidance and advocacy.
- **Public Awareness:** Raising awareness about the issue through media or public forums to gather support and pressure the Institution to take corrective actions.

(12) These remedies can help ensure that the faculty member's achievements are recognized and that they are treated fairly and equitably.

- **To address toxic issues legally,** institutions can implement clear policies against poisonous behavior and ensure they are effectively communicated to all faculty.
- **Providing Reporting Mechanisms:** Create proper reporting channels for faculty to report toxic behavior without fear of retaliation.
- **Conduct a Fair Investigation:** Ensure that complaints are thoroughly and impartially investigated.
- **Legal Action:** In cases of severe misconduct, legal action can be taken against the toxic individuals involved.
- **External Oversight:** Engage external bodies to review and assess the Institution's handling of toxic behavior.

(13) Impact of toxic leaders on the high-performing faculty

The following are some of the health Impacts on high-performing faculty members:

- Emotional Exhaustion Constant discrimination can lead to emotional exhaustion, a key component of burnout. This can manifest as chronic fatigue, stress, and a feeling of being overwhelmed.
- Mental Health Issues: Prolonged exposure to a toxic environment can cause anxiety, depression, and mental health issues.
- Physical Health Problems: Chronic stress can also lead to physical health consequences, including headaches, gastrointestinal issues, and a weakened immune system.

(14) Impacts on professional growth

- Stunted career progression due to inadequate selection processes: If the selection process doesn't rigorously evaluate the candidate's leadership abilities and alignment with the Institution's values, it can result in the appointment of unsuitable faculty members.
- Discrimination in promotion and pay fixation can hinder the faculty member's career progression and limit their opportunities for advancement and recognition.
- Reduced Motivation and Engagement: Feeling undervalued and unfairly treated can lead to decreased motivation and engagement with their work.
- Limited Professional Development: Being denied opportunities for overseas professional development programs can hinder a faculty member's growth and ability to stay current with advancements in their field.
- Diminished Job Satisfaction: The overall hostile environment can lead to reduced job satisfaction and a sense of disillusionment with a career.

In summary, the discriminatory actions of a toxic administrator can have profound and lasting effects on a dedicated faculty member's health and professional growth. Institutions must foster a supportive, fair environment that ensures the well-being and development of their faculty.

(15) Multiplication of toxic leaders in other autonomous institutions in the region

This is due to poor job specifications and a lack of focus on outstanding leadership abilities, such as research publications, completion of global projects, planning interdisciplinary and sponsored postgraduate programs, and the capacity to generate adequate revenue through royalties and licensing fees. It is also due to the absence of development policies and interference from external forces. This is also due to the absence of leadership training, the failure to set smart goals, and a lack of continuous training. Ultimately, the toxic leadership multiplies. Hence, steps must be taken to evaluate the institute's achievement under leadership. If performance is low, immediate quality control measures must be implemented.

(16) Methods of eliminating the toxic activities (Microsoft COPILOT):

Addressing unbearable toxic activities like continuous discrimination in autonomous higher education institutes requires a combination of legal and institutional measures.

- Anti-Discrimination Laws: Enforce existing anti-discrimination laws that prohibit employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and other protected characteristics.
- Whistleblower Protections: Implement and enforce whistleblower protection laws to ensure that faculty members can report toxic behavior without fear of retaliation.

- **Legal Action:** Faculty members can file lawsuits for workplace discrimination, harassment, or a hostile work environment under relevant laws.
- **Policy Reforms:** Instituting clear policies and procedures for addressing discrimination and toxic behavior, including mandatory training for administrators.
- **External Oversight:** Engaging external bodies, such as accreditation organizations or legal authorities, to investigate and address complaints of toxic behaviors.
- **Contractual Obligations:** Ensuring that employment contracts include provisions that protect faculty members from discrimination and provide mechanisms for addressing grievances.

By combining these legal methods with strong institutional policies and support, it's possible to create a safer, more equitable environment for faculty members.

(17) Concrete recommendations for eliminating white-collar crimes due to toxic CEOs [35]:

To eliminate white-collar crimes caused by toxic leaders in autonomous engineering institutions, here are some concrete recommendations:

- **Strengthen Governance Structure:** Implement robust governance frameworks with checks and balances to prevent the abuse of authority. This can involve establishing independent audit committees and ensuring transparency in decision-making.
- **Enhance Accountability:** Establish clear policies and procedures for reporting and investigating misconduct. Ensure that there are consequences for unethical behavior, including termination and, as necessary, legal action.
- **Regular Audits:** Conduct regular internal and external audits to monitor financial transactions and administrative decisions effectively. This can help detect irregularities early.
- **Training and Education:** Provide training for administrators and faculty on ethical behavior, legal compliance, and the consequences of white-collar crimes. This can help create a culture of integrity and accountability.
- **Whistleblower Protections:** Implement strong whistleblower protection policies to ensure faculty and staff report unethical behavior without fear of retaliation.
- **External Oversight:** Engage external bodies, such as accreditation organizations or legal authorities, to oversee the Institution's practices and ensure compliance with ethical standards.
- **Promote a Positive Culture:** Foster a positive and inclusive work environment where ethical behavior is rewarded, and toxic behavior is not tolerated. This can help reduce the growth of white-collar crimes.

By implementing these measures, autonomous engineering institutions can create a more ethical and transparent environment, thereby reducing the risk of white-collar crime driven by toxic leaders.

## 5. Discussion

The growth of toxic leaders stems from the misguided belief that only members of the upper caste are fit to hold the highest office. The caste system is strong, and the CEOs who are from this upper stratum always protect their tribe and are determined to destroy other well-performing faculty members who are from different castes. As long as these CEOs continue to prioritize their interests, the problem persists. Since they silently cause

destruction, their actions remain unexposed. They also get more protection from their godfathers.

As Apple did in the USA, the Ministry of Education must foster a winning culture in autonomous Indian engineering institutions [28]. The CEOs must foster a culture of appreciation for high-performing faculty members and research scholars. They need to ensure protection against a toxic environment and plan the radical development of engineering faculty members. The Government should select leaders who embody equity, integrity, ethics, humility, and a culture of excellence in the development of exceptional engineering institutions. Suppose the CEOs fail to adhere to all the above policies but indulge in discrimination against well-performing faculty teams. In that case, the autonomous higher education system will erode both knowledge capital and human capital. The rapidly developing country will lose all its innovative program developers, leading to a decline in knowledge. The unchecked growth of interlinked toxic leaders is like the rapid spread of a virus, and it will destroy high-performing faculty teams. They are high-profile decision-makers in many national institutes of technology and management. Their ties to high-powered politicians protect them. They should be identified, and the necessary action must be taken.

High-performing faculty teams should learn to scaffold themselves without the need for counseling, coaching, or mentoring. Furthermore, they should pursue legal measures as soon as possible. They should get access to policy documents, rules, laws, and standards. They should be able to draft their grievances without any flaws and choose the best advocate in this field. Present the affidavit immediately without any time delay. There is no shortcut.

## **6. Conclusion**

Toxic leaders in autonomous institutions have unchecked growth and discriminate against high-performing faculty teams to protect their ineffective leadership. There is an urgent need to protect the most effective, achievement-driven faculty teams. This will enable the growth of both knowledge capital and human capital. Although many rules prohibit discrimination, the leaders of autonomous higher education institutions often engage in such practices, believing they are empowered by autonomy, which is intended to foster institutions free of bureaucratic bottlenecks and red tape. Autonomy without accountability will hinder the growth of engineering education, resulting in graduates lacking industry-specific skills and attributes. This will retard the growth of industry, even though it is due to opening the economy to foreign direct investment. Hence, this paper focuses on the causes of the uncontrolled growth of toxic leaders, poorly performing coteries, and low returns on investments in autonomous institutes. To accelerate the growth of knowledge and human capital, various specific methods have been developed. It is hoped that the Boards of Governance will select the most qualified leaders who possess vision, integrity, respect for ethics, and a commitment to equity and diversity.

### **6.1. Shortcomings**

This paper considered only autonomous institutes in Engineering Education. The results and suggestions can't be generalized. Since toxic leaders are present in many other educational institutions, such as aided institutions, in-depth research is required.

## 6.2. Suggestions for further research

Further research could be conducted by extending this study to the national level, and the opportunity to resolve this issue under the auspices of the Human Resource Protection Association could be explored. The Government can appoint an oversight committee to determine the cases at an early stage. The cases could be admitted under the Fast Track Court or the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT).

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