



Design and Explanation of a Model for Managing Difficult Employees in Human Resource Managers of the Housing Foundation of the Islamic Revolution

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Abstract

This study aims to design and explain a comprehensive model for managing difficult employee behaviors in the Housing Foundation of the Islamic Revolution. The significance of this topic lies in the negative impacts of difficult behaviors on productivity, team morale, and organizational culture. Accordingly, by focusing on identifying and analyzing difficult behaviors, the study seeks to provide practical solutions for human resource managers to help reduce organizational tensions and improve the workplace environment. This research employs a mixed-methods approach (qualitative and quantitative). In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews with human resource managers were analyzed, and relevant findings were extracted. In the quantitative phase, data were collected using standardized questionnaires and analyzed through factor analysis and hypothesis testing. The results highlighted the importance of implementing managerial strategies to mitigate toxic behaviors and enhance constructive interactions. Solutions such as conducting constructive feedback sessions, improving communication processes, and training stress management were among the most effective measures identified in the study. These initiatives, by strengthening team culture and transparency in communication, facilitate the reduction of tensions and increase employee engagement and commitment. Statistical tests also indicated that variables such as explicit honesty and social awareness have the most significant impact on improving organizational behaviors. Ultimately, this study emphasizes that managing difficult organizational behaviors requires a comprehensive and multidimensional approach. The findings underscore the importance of continuous monitoring and evaluation, organizational training, and the application of effective leadership to create a positive work environment and reduce negative behaviors. By identifying key factors and providing practical strategies, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge on managing toxic organizational behaviors and offers guidance for managers and organizational policymakers.

Keywords: Behavioral model, difficult employees, human resource management

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1. Introduction

Difficult employee behavior is one of the most prominent and complex challenges in human resource management, significantly impacting organizational performance, culture, and relationships [1]. These behaviors may manifest as irrational criticism, resistance to change, disrespect, provocation, or even abuse of power, transforming the workplace into a tense and unhealthy environment [2]. Organizations facing such behaviors may not only experience reduced productivity and declining employee performance but also suffer from increased stress levels, decreased job satisfaction, and higher turnover rates. Given that these behaviors directly affect employees' mental health and organizational stability, their proper management and prevention are essential for organizations [3].

The dimensions and complexity of difficult employee behaviors stem from multiple factors, including individual, organizational, and environmental elements. For instance, specific personality traits such as egocentrism or a lack of communication skills are recognized as individual factors [4]. At the organizational level, ineffective policies, lack of transparency in management, and weaknesses in feedback systems can drive difficult behaviors. Additionally, environmental pressures such as intense competition, economic fluctuations, and cultural shifts contribute to the emergence of difficult behaviors in the workplace [5]. This intricate combination of factors highlights the need for comprehensive research to identify and analyze difficult behaviors and their associated determinants. Managing such behaviors is critical not only for improving employee productivity and performance but also for maintaining organizational mental and social well-being. Difficult behaviors can weaken workplace relationships, fostering a tense environment where creativity, innovation, and collaboration are minimized [6]. Therefore, a scientific approach to identifying and analyzing difficult behaviors, along with practical managerial solutions, enables managers to prevent their escalation and foster a constructive work environment. Consequently, designing management models for preventing and controlling difficult behaviors is a necessity for organizations seeking to enhance workplace health and efficiency.

Numerous studies have examined difficult and toxic behaviors in organizations, highlighting their detrimental effects on productivity, organizational culture, and workplace relationships. Bani Sheikh-Islami (2023), through a model based on grounded theory, demonstrated that toxic

employee behaviors in the public sector not only diminish employees' self-esteem and focus but also undermine organizational health. This model provides valuable tools for identifying and managing such behaviors, assisting managers in mitigating their negative consequences. Other studies have explored the influence of organizational factors on employee performance and innovation [7]. Zinati Shoa (2023) found that employee participation and knowledge absorption capacity significantly contribute to enhancing organizational innovation and business performance [8]. Similarly, Bostani (2023) emphasized that ethical management behavior plays a crucial role in reducing employee fraud and increasing an organization's adaptability to environmental changes [9]. Akbari (2023) also examined the importance of organizational justice in fostering innovative employee behaviors, highlighting the mediating role of organizational learning in this relationship [10].

More recent research has specifically focused on toxic leadership and its consequences. Ibrahim (2024) found that social and cultural values play a decisive role in shaping toxic leadership in organizations. This study emphasized that fostering constructive leadership through the promotion of positive social values can mitigate the effects of toxic behaviors [11]. Sabino (2024) revealed a positive correlation between toxic leadership and employee turnover, defensive silence, and negligence, while loyalty partially mediated the reduction of these effects [12]. Additionally, Huili and Yumei (2024) developed and validated assessment tools for measuring toxic leadership in the nursing sector. The results confirmed the high reliability and validity of the designed scale, making it a precise tool for evaluating the severity of toxic behaviors among managers [13]. These studies collectively confirm that toxic behaviors not only impact employees but also affect overall organizational performance.

In summary, the research literature indicates that difficult and toxic behaviors can have detrimental effects on organizational efficiency. However, designing and implementing comprehensive models for identifying and managing these behaviors, as in the present study, can reduce their negative impacts and promote organizational well-being. This paper aims to build on previous findings by proposing a comprehensive model for managing difficult behaviors, particularly within public sector organizations.

Given the significance of this issue, the present study seeks to design and explain a comprehensive model for identifying, analyzing, and managing difficult behaviors in organizational environments, focusing on the Housing

Foundation of the Islamic Revolution. This study aims to provide managers with evidence-based solutions and practical scientific tools. The proposed model not only analyzes the causes of difficult behaviors but also offers preventive and control strategies. Conducting this research is crucial due to the profound impact of difficult behaviors on organizational efficiency and the necessity of creating a dynamic and healthy workplace, making it a significant step toward improving organizational performance and sustainability.

This study aims to design and explain a comprehensive model for managing difficult behaviors in organizational settings, providing a practical framework for organizations, particularly public sector entities such as the Housing Foundation of the Islamic Revolution. The proposed model is based on analyzing the various dimensions of difficult behaviors and identifying their influencing factors. The research approach integrates qualitative and quantitative methods, enabling an in-depth examination of difficult behaviors, identification of behavioral patterns, and development of managerial solutions.

In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted to deeply understand difficult behaviors and their related factors. In the quantitative phase, standardized questionnaires were utilized, and data analysis was conducted using advanced statistical tools. The primary objectives of this study include identifying difficult behaviors, analyzing influential factors, and providing practical strategies for managing and reducing these behaviors. A key focus of this research is examining the role of managerial support, communication transparency, and emotional intelligence in mitigating difficult behaviors. The findings suggest that training managers in conflict management, delivering effective feedback, and fostering a supportive organizational culture can significantly reduce difficult behaviors. Additionally, the study proposes preventive policies and support systems that can help prevent the occurrence of such behaviors.

2. Methodology

The methodology of this research is based on a mixed-methods approach (qualitative–quantitative) designed to harness the advantages of both methods in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic, namely, dealing with difficult employees. This mixed-method approach not only enables an in-depth analysis of

qualitative data but also facilitates the examination of causal and quantitative relationships among variables.

The qualitative component of the study focuses on content analysis and theme extraction. The primary data collection tool in this phase was semi-structured interviews conducted with senior managers and human resource personnel at the Housing Foundation of the Islamic Revolution. These individuals were selected due to their central role in managing difficult employees. Qualitative data were analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding to identify the main themes and patterns. This approach allowed the researcher to explore the deep and diverse perspectives of managers regarding the challenges and solutions for managing difficult behaviors.

The quantitative component of the study utilized Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The data collection tool in this phase was standardized questionnaires, which were designed based on the indices and variables identified in the qualitative phase and distributed among human resource managers. The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS and LISREL software to test the research hypotheses and examine the relationships among variables.

The study population comprised human resource managers at the Housing Foundation of the Islamic Revolution. In the qualitative phase, purposive sampling was employed, and interviews were conducted until theoretical saturation was achieved. In the quantitative phase, simple random sampling was used to select the samples. The sample size was determined using statistical formulas, and efforts were made to obtain a comprehensive and representative sample of the population.

In the qualitative phase, the credibility of the data was confirmed through triangulation methods and participant reviews. In the quantitative phase, the validity of the questionnaires was assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and their reliability was measured with Cronbach's alpha. These measures ensured the accuracy and validity of the research findings.

The present study is based on a pragmatism paradigm, which permits the integration of inductive (qualitative) and deductive (quantitative) approaches. The research strategy was a case study conducted within the context of the Housing Foundation of the Islamic Revolution, and its methodology was designed as a sequential exploratory mixed-method approach.

This mixed-method approach enabled the researcher to validate the qualitative findings with quantitative data. Such a comprehensive methodology provides a robust foundation

for proposing a practical and valid model in the field of managing difficult employee behaviors.

3. Findings and Results

This section not only examines key behaviors within the organization but also analyzes the relationships among variables, uncovers behavioral patterns, and identifies the strengths and weaknesses of managerial structures. By employing a mixed-methods approach, both quantitative and qualitative analyses are integrated to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the subject matter. The data in this section were collected through semi-structured interviews and standardized questionnaires.

The qualitative component of this study was designed with the aim of identifying and understanding the behavioral patterns of difficult employees within the organization. The content analysis of the qualitative data involved the stages of initial coding, extraction of organizing themes, and

identification of overarching themes. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with managers and human resource experts, and were examined using thematic analysis techniques.

The analysis process included the following steps:

1. Implementation of interviews: All interviews were transcribed, and the qualitative data were examined in detail.
2. Open coding: In this stage, preliminary concepts were extracted and categorized from the data.
3. Axial coding: Similar codes were organized into conceptual categories.
4. Selective coding: The main themes were extracted and prioritized based on their conceptual interrelationships.

Five main research questions were posed in the qualitative phase, and the key themes and patterns identified are as follows:

Table 1. The Impact of Toxic Behaviors on Employee Motivation and Enthusiasm

Initial Codes	Main Themes
Reduced motivation, psychological tension, lack of creativity	Decrease in motivation and enthusiasm
Improved adaptability, increased self-assessment	Efforts to elicit positive motivation
Creativity and innovative thinking, establishment of communication networks	Increased enthusiasm through proper management

The table above demonstrates the relationship between the initial codes and the main themes related to employee motivation and enthusiasm. In the first theme, codes such as reduced motivation, psychological tension, and lack of creativity clearly indicate the negative effects of toxic organizational behaviors on employees. These themes show that inefficient or challenging behaviors in the workplace can lead to decreased energy, creativity, and willingness among employees to actively engage in their tasks. These results emphasize that the presence of a tense work environment not only reduces productivity but also negatively affects employee morale and motivation. In contrast, codes such as improved adaptability and increased

self-assessment indicate employees' efforts to cope with difficult conditions and attract positive motivation. Such behaviors may include self-performance reviews, self-motivation, and the implementation of self-regulatory strategies. Additionally, creativity and innovative thinking combined with the establishment of communication networks underscore the importance of proper management in enhancing employee enthusiasm. This main theme stresses that managerial support, encouragement of innovation, and strengthening communications can help increase employee motivation and mitigate the negative effects of challenging work environments.

Table 2. The Impact of Toxic Behaviors on Relationships and Trust Among Employees

Initial Codes	Main Themes
Decrease in mutual trust, increased tension	Reduction in trust and constructive interactions
Growth of jealousy and unhealthy competition, decline in team spirit	Escalation of interpersonal conflicts

The table above illustrates the negative effects of toxic and challenging behaviors in the organization on employee interactions and team spirit. In the first theme, initial codes such as decreased mutual trust and increased tension indicate

that destructive behaviors can lead to a breakdown in effective communication and constructive interactions among employees. This reduction in trust not only impacts the quality of working relationships but also creates an

unsafe and tense environment that, over time, results in diminished productivity and failure to achieve organizational goals. In the second theme, codes such as the growth of jealousy, unhealthy competition, and reduced team spirit point to the intensification of interpersonal conflicts. These factors suggest that unhealthy competition and a lack of empathy among employees transform the

workplace into an arena of tension and confrontation. This situation leads to a weakening of team spirit, reduced cooperation, and ultimately an overall decline in team performance. These themes emphasize the importance of establishing a healthy and supportive organizational culture that can strengthen mutual trust and positive interactions among employees.

Table 3. The Relationship Between Toxic Behaviors and Overall Team Performance

Initial Codes	Main Themes
Reduced productivity, decline in output quality, increased errors	Negative impact on team performance
Decreased commitment, indifference to results	Indifference toward team objectives

The table above addresses the damaging effects of challenging behaviors within the organization on team performance and shared objectives. In the first theme, codes such as reduced productivity, a decline in output quality, and increased errors clearly indicate that these behaviors significantly diminish a team's ability to deliver desirable and high-quality outcomes. These factors not only affect the overall team output but also lead to resource wastage and managerial crises within the organization. Reduced productivity may weaken team spirit and increase work pressure on other members, thus creating a cycle of inefficiency. In the second theme, codes such as decreased

commitment and indifference toward results indicate the impact of toxic behaviors on employees' motivation in pursuing team objectives. This indifference reduces both organizational and personal commitment, leading to decreased collaboration and coordination in achieving goals. Furthermore, employee indifference toward results poses a serious challenge in establishing a culture of accountability within the organization, potentially hindering long-term team success. These findings highlight the necessity of closely managing team behaviors and reinforcing a sense of responsibility and commitment in the workplace.

Table 4. Strategies for Managing and Reducing Toxic Behaviors

Initial Codes	Main Themes
Conducting feedback sessions, improving communication processes	Strengthening communication and positive feedback
Training in stress management, enhancing team culture	Creating a supportive culture

The table above identifies strategies for managing toxic behaviors and creating a healthier work environment. In the first theme, codes such as conducting feedback sessions and improving communication processes emphasize the importance of strengthening effective communication channels and constructive feedback. Feedback sessions provide employees with the opportunity to express their opinions, expectations, and challenges in a free and supportive setting. This not only improves interactions between employees and managers but also clarifies organizational goals and enhances trust within the work environment. Improving communication processes through the clarification of roles, expectations, and objectives can

reduce misunderstandings and increase team efficiency. In the second theme, codes such as training in stress management and enhancing team culture underscore the key role of organizational culture in creating a positive work environment. Training in stress management helps employees and managers to effectively handle stressful situations and avoid unnecessary tension. Moreover, reinforcing team culture by valuing collaboration and positive interactions increases employees' sense of belonging to the team and transforms the workplace into a supportive and encouraging environment. These strategies not only improve employee satisfaction but also enhance organizational productivity.

Table 5. Identification and Evaluation of Toxic Behaviors

Initial Codes	Main Themes
Evaluation of work interactions, examination of complaints, analysis of feedback	Identification of maladaptive behaviors

The table above focuses on the identification and evaluation of toxic and maladaptive behaviors in the workplace. In the first theme, codes such as the evaluation of work interactions, examination of complaints, and analysis of feedback highlight the importance of identifying maladaptive behaviors at an early stage. Evaluating work interactions can include observing and analyzing how employees collaborate and communicate, thereby enabling the detection of conflicts or negative behavioral patterns. Examining employee complaints and analyzing received feedback also assist the organization in identifying the root causes of issues and destructive behaviors, thereby allowing for remedial actions. This process helps create a transparent and equitable environment while preventing the escalation of conflicts. In the second theme, codes such as the utilization of measurement tools and periodic interviews emphasize the necessity of continuous monitoring and evaluation. The use of measurement tools, such as questionnaires or continuous feedback systems, enables the collection of precise information about employee behaviors. These tools can help identify positive or negative changes in behaviors and provide a clearer picture of organizational interactions. Periodic interviews, by creating an opportunity for dialogue between employees and managers, help examine work attitudes and challenges, thereby supplying valuable information for improving the work environment and addressing behavioral issues. Continuous monitoring and evaluation allow for the timely identification and management of maladaptive behaviors.

Based on the collected data, the network of qualitative themes regarding toxic behaviors in the workplace was classified into two main categories. The first category encompasses the negative impacts of toxic behaviors, which include reduced employee motivation, increased interpersonal conflicts, and deteriorated team performance. Reduced motivation and enthusiasm are identified as direct consequences of toxic behaviors, as such behaviors create a negative and tense environment that undermines employee morale. Furthermore, increased conflicts and tension among

team members deteriorate working relationships and decrease cooperation. The ultimate consequence of these negative effects is the decline in team performance, which includes reduced productivity, increased errors, and diminished output quality. These factors not only harm organizational goals but also contribute to reduced job satisfaction and employee commitment.

The second category addresses the proposed solutions for countering toxic behaviors and improving the work environment. These strategies include training in managerial and behavioral skills, improving communication processes, and periodic behavioral evaluations. Training in stress management and communication skills helps both employees and managers to better address behavioral challenges by offering more effective solutions. Additionally, holding feedback sessions and creating a transparent space for exchanging views are key measures for improving organizational communication. These processes strengthen trust and constructive interactions among employees and enable the rapid identification of destructive behaviors. Supervisory strategies such as periodic behavioral evaluations are also among the proposed measures to help continuously identify and manage toxic behaviors. The use of behavioral measurement tools and periodic interviews with employees provides more detailed insights into the causes and consequences of maladaptive behaviors. These measures facilitate the creation of positive and preventive changes in the work environment and help reduce destructive behaviors. Ultimately, this categorization offers organizations a comprehensive perspective that not only identifies the consequences of toxic behaviors but also provides practical solutions for improving the work environment and enhancing productivity.

Descriptive analysis, through the examination of means and standard deviations of variables, provides an overview of the status of organizational behaviors. The results indicate that positive behaviors, such as explicit honesty and information harnessing, have the greatest impact on performance improvement.

Table 6. Descriptive Analysis Tables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Status
Emotion Harnessing	3.21	0.52	Desirable
Information Harnessing	3.23	0.72	Desirable
Social Play	3.15	0.56	Desirable
Explicit Honesty	3.36	0.58	Highly Desirable
Network Ability	3.18	0.45	Desirable

The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, which was used to examine the normality of the data distribution, indicated that all the variables under investigation are normally distributed, as the p-values for all variables were greater than 0.05. These results confirm that the data meet the necessary conditions for the use of parametric statistical tests and allow the researcher to confidently test the relationships among variables using appropriate analytical methods. The normality of the data not only increases the validity of the statistical analyses but also provides a solid foundation for precise and reliable interpretation of the results.

The results of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis indicated that among the variables examined, explicit honesty, with an impact coefficient of 0.32, plays the most significant role in enhancing organizational behavior. This finding underscores the importance of transparency, honesty, and genuine interpersonal behavior in fostering effective relationships and reducing difficult behaviors in the workplace. Explicit honesty enhances mutual trust and improves intra-organizational interactions, and is recognized as a key factor in the development of a healthy

organizational culture. Incorporating this variable into managerial strategies can directly boost employee motivation and create a better work environment. On the other hand, social play, with an impact coefficient of 0.22, plays an intermediate role in managing difficult behaviors. This finding highlights the importance of constructive social interactions, the establishment of communication networks, and cooperation among employees, which can help reduce conflicts and improve team coordination. However, power dynamics, with an impact coefficient of 0.11, have the least effect on managing difficult behaviors. This result suggests that relying solely on power and influence in the organization cannot improve behaviors and may, in some cases, even lead to increased tensions and decreased employee motivation. Therefore, managerial approaches should focus on enhancing explicit honesty and constructive social interactions while avoiding the mere exertion of power.

Friedman's test for ranking the importance of variables yielded the following results:

Table 7. Friedman's Test

Variable	Mean Rank	Importance Rank
Explicit Honesty	5.15	1
Emotion Harnessing	4.79	2
Information Harnessing	4.59	3
Social Awareness	4.50	4
Social Play	4.32	5

The results of Friedman's test for ranking the importance of variables indicated that explicit honesty, with a mean rank of 5.15, was identified as the most important variable in managing difficult behaviors. This finding demonstrates the critical importance of transparency, mutual trust, and honest expression in creating a healthy work environment. Explicit honesty can lead to increased employee motivation, enhanced intra-organizational trust, and reduced tensions in interactions. As a cornerstone of organizational communication, this variable plays a key role in improving team performance and reducing negative behaviors. Emotion harnessing, with a mean rank of 4.79, ranked second. This variable highlights the importance of effective emotion management in the workplace and its impact on employee interactions. The ability to understand and manage emotions—both individually and within teams—can help reduce stress, improve working relationships, and create a supportive environment. This is particularly crucial in

organizations under high work pressure, where it plays a determining role in maintaining employee motivation and enthusiasm. Information harnessing, with a mean rank of 4.59, secured the third position. This variable reflects the organization's ability to utilize available information and data for managing difficult behaviors. Intelligent use of information, particularly in analyzing employee behaviors and making data-driven decisions, can help prevent conflicts and facilitate the development of effective strategies. Organizations that excel in information harnessing are better positioned to capitalize on opportunities and address challenges.

Social awareness and social play ranked fourth and fifth, with mean ranks of 4.50 and 4.32, respectively. Social awareness, referring to the ability to understand interactions and social conditions in the workplace, plays an important role in identifying and mitigating negative behaviors. Similarly, social play, which represents interpersonal

interactions and social relationships among employees, is crucial in strengthening team cohesion and creating an empathetic environment. These two variables, by fostering constructive interactions, contribute to the development of a harmonious and motivated work environment. The ranking of these variables highlights the balanced importance of both humanistic and managerial approaches in reducing difficult organizational behaviors.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study indicated that toxic behaviors in organizational environments have significant negative effects on employee motivation, team interactions, and overall performance. Among the most notable adverse impacts are reduced productivity, increased interpersonal conflicts, and a decline in output quality. These findings are consistent with previous research, which has shown that toxic behaviors can transform the work environment into a tense atmosphere that jeopardizes not only employee motivation but also the organization's capacity to achieve its objectives. The direct influence of toxic behaviors in diminishing trust among employees and fostering unhealthy competition underscores the critical importance of proactive management of these challenges [1, 2, 10, 14-16].

One of the key aspects of this research was the identification of effective strategies for reducing toxic behaviors. The findings revealed that approaches such as stress management training, the implementation of constructive feedback sessions, and the enhancement of communication processes can have a marked impact on mitigating negative behaviors. These strategies promote a more positive organizational climate by increasing transparency, strengthening team culture, and improving employees' communication skills. The results emphasize the necessity of bolstering managerial and leadership competencies to better address behavioral challenges within organizations.

Furthermore, the study placed special emphasis on the role of key variables such as explicit honesty and social awareness in improving organizational behavior. Statistical tests demonstrated that these two variables, which exhibited high impact coefficients, play the most significant role in reducing difficult behaviors and enhancing constructive interactions. In particular, explicit honesty, identified as the most critical variable, underscores the importance of fostering a culture of trust and transparency within the organization. These findings suggest that by adopting

transparent and sincere approaches, organizational leaders can create a positive and supportive environment for their employees.

Finally, the study demonstrated that integrating supervisory strategies, periodic evaluations, and continuous training can contribute to improved organizational behavior and mitigate the negative effects of toxic behaviors. The research findings indicate that effective management of organizational behavior requires a multidimensional approach that simultaneously focuses on enhancing human interactions and advancing managerial systems. It is recommended that organizations prioritize personal and team development programs to elevate their work culture and reinforce the role of managers as facilitators of these transformative changes.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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