HOW BAD LEADERS CAN DRIVE OUT GOOD LEADERS

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Destructive leadership has been thoroughly described in the literature. As the term itself indicates, destructive leadership is a leadership style that violates the well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates, and destroys value for the organization directly, or through less motivated and effective employees. Despite such negative effects, some members might prosper from it and may even support destructive leadership. Worse, sometimes destructive leaders are promoted. If the organization rewards destructive leaders with promotions and responsibility, followers may see these behaviors as a way to get ahead and destructive behavior can become a part of the organizational culture. The literature still reports increased turnover intentions. In the current article, the consequences of destructive leadership on leaders and followers are examined. Specifically, destructive leadership is examined through a literature review and by using Gresham's law as an analogy. Gresham's law states that "bad money drives out good money," and the current article demonstrates that a Gresham-tendency can also be observed for leaders under certain circumstances. Thus, the current study converts Gresham's law into a conceptual model for the evolution of destructive leadership in organizations. The proposed model qualitatively describes how various types of destructive leaders influence the organization under certain circumstances.

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Introduction

> One whose humanitarian care extends to all under his command, whose trustworthiness and justice win the allegiance of neighboring nations, who understands the signs of the sky above, the patterns of the earth below, and the affairs of humanity in between, and who regards all people as his family, is a world-class leader, one who cannot be opposed.
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> *Zhuge Liang; Capacities as Commanders*

In 2003, Secretary of the U.S. Army Thomas E. White asked the U.S. Army War College to address how the U.S. Army could effectively assess leaders to detect those who might have "destructive leadership styles" (Bullis & Reed, 2003). Destructive leadership styles, however, apply not only to the armed forces. Gallup data covering more than a million American workers revealed that half of all employees report having left a company because of a bad boss (Gallup, 2015). Furthermore, the cases of destructive corporate CEOs are many (Deutschman, 2005). Thus, "bad leaders," or "destructive leaders", is a common phenomenon across nations (Shaw et al., 2015). Unfortunately, the body of knowledge is much richer concerning effective and constructive leadership than about destructive leadership, and more is written about active destructive leadership than passive destructive leadership (Hoel et al., 2010). In fact, destructive leadership research lacks a solid foundation because prior findings remain disjointed, and the multitude of destructive leadership styles and theoretical foundations applied within the literature have generated confusion about the current state of knowledge in the field (Mackey et al., 2021). Hence, destructive leadership warrants further study.

Given the results from Gallup (2015), the prevalence of destructive leadership cannot be ignorance on the part of top management. The thesis presented here is that destructive leadership is a natural phenomenon, particularly in large organizations, arising under certain circumstances because of a mechanism inherent to the system. The present research therefore aims at identifying the mechanism behind this phenomenon by posing a proposition; "bad" leaders drive out "good" leaders. Note that "bad" is interpreted as "destructive," and "good" constitutes the antithesis of "destructive."

Since the term "destructive leadership" is most commonly used in the scholarly literature (Krasikova et al., 2013) it is also used here. However, when referring to the literature, the original terms are used to avoid influencing the interpretation unnecessarily. Destructive leadership behavior can be defined as the systematic and repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organization by undermining and/or sabotaging the organization's goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of his/her subordinates (Einarsen et al., 2007).

Since the term "destructive leadership" is most commonly used in the scholarly literature (Krasikova et al., 2013) it is also used here. However, when referring to the literature, the original terms are used to avoid influencing the interpretation unnecessarily.

Furthermore, the model of Einarsen et al. (2007) offered a sound initial foundation for classifying destructiveness, and therefore used as a basis within the current article. The model Einarsen et al., proposed was a 2 by 2 matrix where the behavior is divided into pro-/antisubordinate behavior and pro-/antiorganizational behavior. In creating the matrix, Einarsen et al., identified three types of destructive leadership—(a) Supportive–Disloyal Leadership (antiorganization but prosubordinates behavior), (b) Derailed Leadership (antiorganization and antisubordinates behavior), and (c) Tyrannical Leadership (pro-organization but antisubordinates behavior). The fourth quadrant is Constructive Leadership (proorganization and prosubordinate behavior), which is not destructive.

Unfortunately, most models found in the literature are largely descriptive with little predictive usage concerning unidentified destructive leaders. Typically, the literature offers generic insights such as the fact that certain kinds of people with identifiable personality characteristics tend to rise to the upper echelons of organizations and these people are potentially very costly to those organizations (Hogan et al., 1990). Furthermore, Wright et al. (2016) reported that 5% of the sample of CEOs in a survey can be categorized as narcissists, which is one personality characteristic some destructive leaders exhibit as discussed later, whereas commonly

cited prevalence estimates of narcissism range from 0 to 5.3% in the general population and from 1 to 17% in clinical samples (Ronningstam, 2009). Note that the prevalence of narcissistic personality disorder remains poorly defined, reflecting the lack of clarity around the diagnosis (Caligor et al., 2015).

Followers also play a role in providing the consensus for the survival of leadership in any organization. Unfortunately, the usage of "subordinates," "followers," and related terms is inconsistent across the literature. The term "follower" is used here because the concept of followership has become increasingly relevant to both practitioners and academics (Crossman & Crossman, 2011). The academic literature has evolved significantly since the seminal work of Kelley (1992), and Crossman and Crossman (2011) defined followership as a relational role in which followers have the ability to influence leaders and contribute to the improvement and attainment of group and organizational objectives. It is primarily a hierarchically upwards influence. The same definition is used in the current article.

If the proposition presented here is supported, then the notion that destructive leaders will accumulate follows by default. Indeed, McClure and Winston (1996) noted that the biggest single reason for such accumulation is that such behavior is tolerated. If the leader walks by and observes something wrong without making the correction, a new standard of behavior has been established (Doty & Fenlason, 2013).

The present research relied on the novel argument that Gresham's law can be applied in leadership. The argument is supported by the application of Gresham's law in different settings as discussed later. First, however, the research method is discussed. Then, the literature on destructive leadership is reviewed followed by a short introduction to Gresham's law and how it can be used in understanding the evolution of destructive leadership in organizations. Finally, the literature is used to argue the proposed model.

Method

The literature about destructive leadership was reviewed to identify the current state of knowledge, and to identify key concepts and models that have been noted in the literature. Such a review is important since more than 9,000 different systems, languages, principles, and paradigms have been offered to explain the mysteries of management and leadership, as Buckingham and Coffman (1999) claimed more than 20 years ago. According to Snyder (2019), a full systematic review process can be hindered when wanting to study a broader topic that has been conceptualized differently and studied within diverse disciplines. Thus, the present study employed a semi-systematic review approach. Starting with a broad search strategy, key concepts and models were mapped and knowledge gaps within the literature were identified. Similarly to thematic synthesis method (Thomas & Harden, 2008), searches continued until conceptual saturation was achieved (i.e., little new of value could be identified) to secure the quality of the work.

Initially, a basic search for "destructive leadership," "toxic leadership," and "followership" using Google Scholar came back with 7,230 documents containing "destructive leadership" and 5,240 documents containing "toxic leadership" and 33,300 on "followership." Subsequently, another 1,960 documents where "followership" was mentioned in the title, 404 documents with destructive leadership in the title, and 560 with toxic leadership in the title were identified. Restricting the search to review articles resulted in a total of 20 articles.

Repeating the same procedure using Science Direct, produced 51 research articles for "destructive leadership" and 181 for "toxic leadership" and 127 for "followership." Only relevant articles were included, resulting in a total of 146 articles including 37 articles concerning Gresham's law. Among these articles, recent relevant structured literature reviews were found.

The second step was to understand the insights offered by the centuries old Gresham's law. There is a robust historical basis for Gresham's law, and other researchers' historical analyses are therefore also useful.

Third, an analogy enabled the transfer of Gresham's law to the leadership domain. Using analogies is common. Indeed, the history of physics illustrates that the search for analogies between two distinct categories of phenomena offers perhaps the surest and most fruitful method of all the procedures in the construction of physical theories (Duhem, 1991). Chemistry has also

benefitted significantly from the use of analogies (Del Re, 2000).

Analogies bring together two abstract systems: (a) either one of them already known which serves to help guess the form of the other not yet known, or (b) both being formulated and they clarify the other (Duhem, 1991). An analogy consists of assertions of similarity or difference between corresponding elements in two different systems, and about the sets of causal relations operating within each system (Hesse, 1963). The observational similarities between Gresham's Law and destructive leadership are critical for using Gresham's Law as an analogy.

A model is a derivative of a specified analogy, but the model has a more elaborate or "deeper" structure than the analogy (Mellor, 1968). Yet, most models are "wrong" or "limited" in some key aspect (Grosslight et al., 1991). Models are tools of scientific thinking (Del Re, 2000). Unfortunately, because of the inherent uncertainties of both analogies and models, claims cannot be judged on a strict true or false basis. People must distinguish between different degrees of truth (Del Re, 2000). In fact, all of the so-called inexorable laws of nature that existed before approximately 1900 were qualified or even rejected in due time—except the Newtonian law of gravitation (see Merz, 1915). Hence, the current study is a supplement to the destructive leadership literature and not a replacement. The originality lies in providing some additional insight into destructive leadership through modeling based on a well-documented phenomenon in another domain, that is, Gresham's law in monetary/coinage policy.

Thus, an implicit assumption is that Gresham's law is better understood than how destructive leaders drive out good leaders. The assumption is fair because of the extensive historical record supporting Gresham's law, and the fact that coinage is easier to study than leadership phenomena involving destructive leaders.

The final step is to discuss the model, to the extent possible through meta-analysis using the literature. Hence, the next section forms the basis for the discussion later. Limitations, future work, and conclusions are provided at the end.

Literature on Destructive Leadership

The term "destructive leader" invokes the prototypical image of a boss who yells at everyone. However, recent research implies that destructiveness has many dimensions, and many terms as noted earlier. As Mackey et al's (2021) systematic review illustrated, the field has many additional challenges as discussed subsequently.

First, there is a plethora of terms in the literature including "tyrannical" (Ashforth, 1994), "bullying" (Namie & Namie, 2000), "unethical" and "bad" (Kellerman, 2004), "dark" (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), "dysfunctional" (Walton, 2011) where Harvey et al. (2007) see the bully as an archetypal destructive leader. The different terms have considerable overlap with "destructive leadership." Lašáková and Remišov (2015) provided a good overview discussing not only the terms above but also "psychopathic" (Boddy, 2011; Mathieu et al., 2014), "self-serving" (Rus et al., 2010), "despotic" (De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008), "Machiavellian" (Judge et al., 2009). They then offered a new definition of "unethical leadership" as "a process of intentional or unintentional, passive or active, and recurrent influencing that harms others, being it individuals, organization and/or society as a whole."

Another term used in the literature is "toxic leadership," but the literature on toxic leadership is less well-defined as the thorough overview provided by Laguda (2021) illustrated. Indeed, no consensus has been reached (Reed, 2015), although Pelletier (2010) argued the term "toxic leadership" offers some additional value. The term "toxic leader" is used with increasing frequency in business, leadership, and management literature, and it appears often with derivative terms such as "toxic manager," "toxic culture," and "toxic organization" (Reed, 2004). Additionally, there are three characteristics associated with the term: (a) an apparent lack of concern for the well-being of subordinates, (b) a personality or interpersonal technique that negatively affects organizational climate, and (c) a conviction by subordinates that the leader is motivated primarily by self-interest. As illustrated by these two definitions, they are not the same and cannot be used interchangeably. Various

definitions in the literature offer various insights because they have different foci. In fact, Thorough-good et al., (2018) defined destructive leadership as a complex process of influence between flawed, toxic, or ineffective leaders, susceptible followers, and conducive environments. Destructive leadership unfolds over time and, on balance, culminates in destructive group or organizational outcomes that compromise the quality of life for internal and external constituents and detract from their group-focused goals or purposes. Yet, some scholars use toxic- and destructive leadership interchangeably (Kurtulmus, 2019) while Pelletier (2010) argued that an overlap exists, although distinctions between the two have been reported. Based on the earlier discussion, the current article ascribes to the latter view that toxic leadership is a subset of destructive leadership and in line with Smith and Fredricks-Lowman's (2019) view.

Building on Becker (1973), Lipman-Blumen (2005) made a unique contribution to the study of "bad" leaders by acknowledging that "toxic" leaders contravene basic standards of human rights by consciously reframing "toxic" agendas as noble endeavors, they play to the basic fears and needs of their constituents, and they mislead followers by deliberate lying and distorting facts. In fact, many corporate executives are psychopaths, only differentiated from criminal psychopaths, in that the executives are successful, less impulsive, and aggressive (Deutschman, 2005).

Essentially, the situation is similar to "leadership" where Bass (1990) claimed that there are almost as many definitions of leadership as the number of persons who have attempted to define the concept. Consequently, the existence of "leadership" as a construct can be questioned (Washbush, 2005; Yoos, 1984) because people are unable to describe it. Similarly, it is difficult to properly describe "destructive leadership," but people recognize it when facing it. Therefore, the literature across all terms is used to build a picture of the current state of knowledge.

VARIOUS CATEGORIES OF DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR

Historically, tyrannical leadership is the oldest form of "bad" leadership. Tyrants, as the Greek philosopher Plato defined them in The Republic, are rulers who look to their own advantage rather than the well-being of their subjects and in the process were apt to employ extreme and cruel tactics (Christensen, 2004). As such, tyranny, as suggested by Christensen (2004), is the noxious result of the compounding of a malignant narcissistic personality structure and absolute power. With absolute power nonexistent today, this version of "bad" leadership is only of historical relevance, but it should not be forgotten.

The definitions in the current literature are not radically different, as Pelletier (2010) showed. For example, the definition by Einarsen et al. (2007) is not very different from the definition of Schyns and Schilling (2013) who defined destructive leadership as a process in which over a longer period of time the activities, experiences, and/or relationships of an individual or the members of a group are repeatedly influenced by their supervisor in a way that is perceived as hostile and/or obstructive.

As noted by Kellerman (2004), negative leader behaviors continuously span from ineffective/incompetent to outright unethical/evil. Drawing on Einarsen et al. (2007) and Schyns and Schilling (2013), Schmid et al. (2018) divided destructive leadership into three main areas; (a) destructive leadership as abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000), which is high on hostility towards subordinates; (b) destructive leadership as exploitative leadership which is low on hostility (Schmid et al., 2017), and (c) destructive leadership as organization-directed destructive leadership (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). The latter may also include accepting bribes, stealing, or making personal use of company property (Einarsen et al., 2007; Thoroughgood et al., 2012).

Different destructive leader behaviors relate to decision-making and risk-taking (Forgas & George, 2001). An abusive supervisor, who elicits higher anxiety in followers, may inhibit risk-taking behavior that would impede the long-term innovation and flexibility of teams and ultimately the entire organization. Thus, destructive leadership may have negative effects on both innovation and on caring climate. In fact, Henriques et al. (2019) showed that a caring climate influences innovation in a positive way, while destructive leadership has a negative effect on

employees' ability to adopt new ways of doing things, and can subsequently prevent the formation of an innovative culture in organizations. Other studies concluded similarly (Colquitt et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2013).

Exploitative leadership is one of the more recently described forms of destructive leadership (Schmid et al., 2017), and it refers to genuinely self-interested leader behaviors, such as using followers for personal gain and taking credit for followers' work. Exploitative leadership is reflected in five dimensions: genuine egoistic behaviors, taking credit, exerting pressure, undermining development, and manipulating (Schmid et al., 2017). Therefore, exploitative leadership can be low in regard to hostility and aggression despite the leader's primary intention of furthering self-interests at the expense of the followers if necessary. Indeed, Schmid et al. (2017) concluded that exploitative leadership may even seem friendly toward followers, and there can be situations where the self-interested behaviors of a leader may even benefit the organization if a leader's goals and the organization's goals align. The leader may then push followers to achieve higher targets.

Interestingly, an abusive supervisor, showing hostile behaviors, may lead to an attribution of hostile intentions, whereas an exploitative leader, taking credit for others' work and manipulating others to advance their career, may be seen as rather overly ambitious (Schmid et al., 2018). The result is different individual follower behavioral reactions, but potentially also different team dynamics. Whereas a leader who is seen as hostile may prompt a team to rally together and create cohesion, a leader who is exploitative may rather create a focus on individual self-interest in the team (Peus et al., 2012). Abusive supervision may also be more likely to result in internal attributions of blame, whereas followers with an exploitative leader may rather attribute blame externally—that is, blame the leader for taking credit for their work (Gooty et al., 2009). In fact, external attributions are more likely to trigger retaliatory behaviors such as hiding knowledge or sabotage, whereas internal attributions are thought to trigger more self-destructive deviance such as drug and alcohol abuse (Bamberger & Bacharach, 2006; Martinko et al., 2002).

Finally, a special category of destructive leadership should be discussed. This type receives less attention in the literature, as judged by the number of publications, and it is denoted *laissez-faire* leadership.

Laissez-faire leadership was actually first addressed years ago by Lewin et al. (1939). More recent research suggests that *laissez-faire* leadership is perceived as abusive supervision (Skogstad et al., 2014), because it is passive and such leaders therefore fail to take responsibility and avoid interactions with their followers (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Hence, *laissez-faire* leadership is sometimes referred to as non-leadership (Einarsen et al., 2007; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). *Laissez-faire* leadership is consequently ineffective, as it prevents followers from receiving information and feedback from their leader (Neuman & Baron, 2005) and/or support when dealing with difficult situations. Indeed, the lack of adequate leadership has negative consequences for followers, including higher levels of distress and more conflicts with colleagues (Skogstad et al., 2007), as well as reduced job satisfaction, satisfaction with the leader, and leader effectiveness (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). In fact, *laissez-faire* leadership is comparable to mild abusive behavior although strong abusive behavior is worse in terms of leadership perceptions (Schyns et al., 2018).

Clearly, destructive leadership has many facets and consequences, but two core-dimensions of destructiveness are prevalent—how destructive leaders approach their private objectives, and how destructive leaders search for power to secure their private objectives. These dimensions are also in line with how people experience such leaders. Therefore, an improved model of destructive leadership should also explicitly incorporate *laissez-faire* leadership. Before a better classification can be provided, the impact destructive leaders have on followers is discussed.

HOW DESTRUCTIVE LEADERS IMPACT FOLLOWERS

Different destructive leader behaviors trigger distinct emotional reactions in followers (Schmid et al., 2018). In fact, destructive leadership is a critical source of negative affect among followers (Schyns & Schilling, 2013) and negatively undermining employees' social wellbeing and productivity (Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017; Barsade & Gibson, 2007; Elfenbein, 2007). Furthermore, destructive leader

behaviors are assumed to have a far stronger impact on followers than constructive behaviors, and the adverse impact of such destructive behaviors is also likely to outweigh the benefits gained from positive relationships (e.g., with coworkers or customers). Previous research indicates that negative interactions with a leader are likely perceived as more nuanced and more dissimilar from each other than in the case of positive information about the leader (Baumeister et al., 2001; Dasboroug, 2006; Unkelbach et al., 2008). The explanation can be that bad events and interactions impact people more than good ones, and bad information is processed more thoroughly than good (Baumeister et al., 2001). Hence, negative information has greater emotional and motivational significance, and destructive leaders will strongly influence followers' emotional state and their motivation to act. Therefore, bad impressions form faster and are more resistant to disconfirmation than good ones. The examples are many. Indeed, that "bad is stronger than good" can be seen as a general principle across a broad range of psychological phenomena (Baumeister et al., 2001), which supports the approach of using Gresham's law as an underlying analogy as presented here.

Whereas all three behaviors, that is, abusive supervision, exploitative leadership, and organization-directed destructive leadership, negatively affect followers, follower-directed destructive behaviors affect followers most. All three forms of negative leadership are also related to high general turnover intention. While the level of calculative turnover intention is inconspicuous among the three conditions, abusive supervision tends to relate to higher immediate turnover. Similar findings are provided by Schmid et al. (2017), Schyns and Schilling (2013), and Tepper (2000), suggesting that abusive supervision and organization-directed destructive leadership relate to general turnover intentions. The explanation is that when followers are confronted with self-worth threatening interactions, they feel a need to empower themselves, and a very strong way to empower themselves is turnover because a follower who intends to leave the job is less dependent on their supervisor (Tepper et al., 2009). This is also true for *laissez-faire* leadership. Robert and Vandenberghe (2022) found

that laissez-faire leadership had positive indirect effect on employee actual turnover through organizational identity threat.

The findings concerning exploitative leadership, however, are less clear because exploitative leadership may seem friendly (Schmid et al., 2017). For example, narcissists are seen as charming and confident on first encounter, while their exploitative and manipulative side only shows over time, leading to a delay in negative effect on others (Paulhus, 1998). In fact, leaders with socially undesirable characteristics may successfully attract a crowd of admirers (Judge et al., 2009; Kets de Vries, 2006; Walker et al., 2020). Notably, 33% of respondents endorsed leader profiles that were higher on the dimension of leader tyranny than the prototypical, socially desirable leader profile (e.g., leaders who are sensitive, intelligent, and dedicated; Foti et al., 2012). Destructive leaders are also known to enhance their personal power by using charisma to create an environment of fear and insecurity (Padilla et al., 2007). It should also be noted that leaders may behave both destructively and constructively, demonstrating different behavior and different combinations of behavior in relation to different subordinates (Aasland et al., 2010; Rayner & Cooper, 2003).

Therefore, people who work for an exploitative leader may experience problems in convincing others of the exploitative behavior, and any complaint or report on the exploitative leader may be interpreted as envy. As Lipman-Blumen (2005) noted; "one person's toxic leader may be another person's hero." Since exploitative leaders are likely to vary their behavior towards their subordinates (Tepper et al., 2017), not to mention to their superiors, convincing others becomes even harder. Moreover, the defensive routines all people exhibit (Argyris & Schön, 1974) present another hurdle of detection.

These findings are in line with social construction theory (Hunt, 1984), whereby followers' perceptions of leaders may differ based on psychological aspects of the observer or relational aspects characterizing the leader–follower dyad. Therefore, in the context of "toxic leaders" in the US Army, "toxic" leaders can be quite responsive to missions from higher headquarters and obsequious to peers and especially to superiors, but their deficiencies

are evident to subordinates (Reed, 2004). Subordinates are arguably the people who can best identify exploitative behavior. However, if followers cannot agree as to what constitutes destructive behavior or rhetoric, followers might be unable or unwilling to challenge or confront the leader (Kets de Vries, 1989).

It should be noted that reverse causality can be a problem in studies. For example, follower stress is related to the perception of abusive supervision (Chen & Kao, 2009; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Tepper, 2000). There is also a possibility that leaders might react negatively to stressed followers so that follower stress influences actual leader behavior, or that the relationship is circular. Similarly, followers' poor performance or negative affectivity may lead to negative reactions by the leader, which then is perceived as abusive by the follower (Wang et al., 2015).

Based on the literature, a simple model of destructive leadership can be presented incorporating the four main categories of destructive leadership: Abusive supervision, Exploitative leadership, Organization-directed destructive leadership, and *Laissez-faire* leadership. *Laissez-faire* leadership is the most prevalent type of destructive leadership, according to Aasland et al. (2010), which is why it is included. The model is presented in Figure 1 and can serve as a summary and a mnemonic. The overt/covert dimension focuses on what is visible/invisible and the same can be said about their search for power. The choice is based on the simple insight that, similar to toxic leadership where Reed (2004) stated that it can be "more easily described than defined," destructive leadership too, can be more easily described than defined.

Unfortunately, destructive leaders are not alone, as discussed below.

FOLLOWERS AS SUPPORTERS OF DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP

It is important to notice that not all followers perceive a destructive leader as something problematic. Follower behavior can range from doing absolutely nothing to being deeply involved. Kelley (1988) proposed the model in Figure 2.

Thirty years later, it is still being used (e.g., Thomas et al., 2017). The model was subsequently expanded

Figure 1   The Destructive Leadership Matrix

by Kelly (1992, 2008) and Boswell (2015). Table 1 is a summary of follower types and associated findings.

Followers can also be grouped differently. For example, Weierter (1997) differentiated between followers who lack a clearly defined self-concept from those who share the leader's values, whereas Kellerman (2004) distinguished between bystanders, who allow destructive leadership to happen, and acolytes, the "true believers" that join in the destruction.

By combining these concepts, Padilla et al. (2007) defined two groups of followers: conformers and colluders. Conformers comply with destructive leaders out of fear, whereas colluders actively participate in a destructive leader's agenda. Both types are motivated by self-interest, but their concerns are different (Higgins, 1997). Conformers minimize the consequences of not going along while colluders seek personal gain through association with a destructive leader, that is, there is motivation concerning prevention or promotion. In their own way, both conformers or colluders can participate in destructive followership and contribute to destructive leadership (Dorasamy, 2018). Conformers do so by being passive and not challenging the destructive leader, and colluders do so by actively participating in the destructive leadership because of shared beliefs and motivation of personal gain, as described by Padilla et al. (2007).

Critical to the personal gain rationale is the possibility that although destructive leadership creates negative outcomes for organizations as a whole, some members might prosper from it (Offermann, 2004).
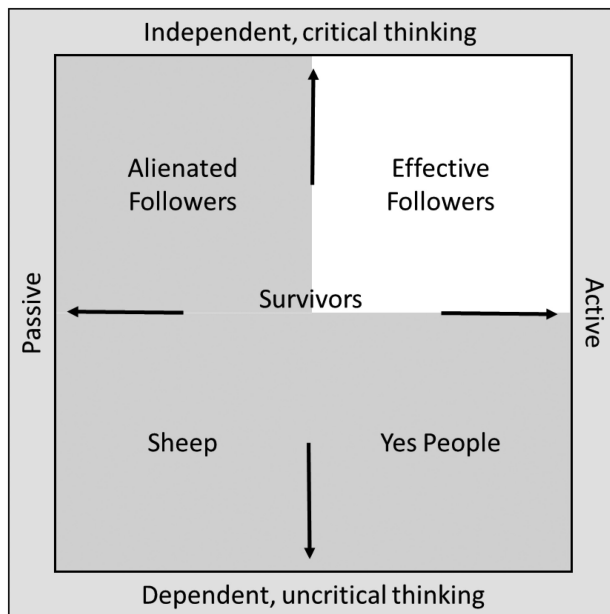
Figure 2   Follower Effectiveness.
Source: **Kelley (1988).**

These members are individuals close to the leader and others willing to implement the destructive vision (Kellerman, 2004; Offermann, 2004). Ambitious people sometimes engage in exploitative relations, and may be willing to follow coercive policies if it advances their personal agendas and status (McClelland, 1975).

When colluders protect destructive leaders, then destructiveness becomes part of the organizational culture (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2014). Developing an organizational culture based on high levels of internal competition; weak practices and policies; and tolerance for blaming others, organizations can also become an incubator of destructive relationships. In such organizations, output based on merit may be sacrificed since more attention is placed on self-absorbed goals of the leader and followers. This can disillusion top performers who are outside the destructive relationship, possibly causing them to leave.

Thus, employees who do not want to be conformers or colluders, may experience high levels of job dissatisfaction, negative values, and hopelessness, which can subsequently lead to lower levels of productivity, a tarnished view of the organization and resignations. Some may also be forced to remain in the organization because of no alternate employment opportunities (Dorasamy, 2018).

The individuals who will not be identified as conformers or colluders, and therefore leave the organization, are in the current study termed "Leavers." The destructive followers, conformers and colluders, are thus the ones that are likely to stay when others leave, and who are likely to fulfill Gresham's law of "bad driving out good," as discussed shortly.

Introducing Gresham's Law

The term "Gresham's law" was coined by British economist Henry Dunning Macleod who in 1858 named the tendency for bad money to drive good money out of circulation after Sir Thomas Gresham (1519–1579), financial agent of Queen Elizabeth I. The exact story behind "Gresham's law" is complex. Those seeking additional detail should see Fetter (1932).

Gresham's law in the original, monetary context is presented below. The subsequent section is a review of research where Gresham's law has been applied in non-monetary contexts.

GRESHAM'S LAW IN MONETARY CONTEXT

At the time of Gresham, the historical record was already rich involving minted coins and the value of the precious metals used in them. If coins containing metal of different value have the same nominal value as legal tender, the coins composed of the cheaper metal will be used for payment, while those made of more expensive metal will be hoarded or exported and therefore tend to disappear from circulation. Put differently, legally overvalued currency, that is, "bad coins," will tend to drive legally undervalued currency, that is, "good coins," out of circulation. Thus, Gresham's law explains which money is taken out of circulation, when, at a moment of excess in the total monetary supply, any choice is offered among two or more monies of different commodity values (Fetter, 1932). This also explains why "good" cannot drive out "bad."

The literature generally agrees with the description above, although Velde et al. (1999) claimed that without some private information, the phenomenon

Table 1	Follower Types and Key Findings in the Literature		
Follower type	**Characteristic**	**Organizational impact**	**Relation to destructive leadership**
Effective followers	Manage themselves, competent, courageous, honest, and credible.	Committed to its purpose and goals.	Can succeed without strong leadership, and as such, are not prone to destructive followership.
Survivors	Able to survive change, and are constantly checking the environment to determine how best to adapt.	Approach the organization through least resistance path.	Becomes destructive by influencing the leader to do evil.
Alienated followers	Good, critical thinkers who can act independently, but are disgruntled and have lost faith in their leaders or the system.	Undermine the leader and the mission.	Bring negative energy and quietly go along with the leader's guidance.
Sheep	Uncritical, lacks initiative, will not take responsibility but do as they are told.	Depends on the leader and adds no value except capacity.	Become destructive when they know they are doing evil but refuse to take responsibility for their actions.
Yes-people	Blindly following and executing whatever the leader wants.	Amplifies leader behaviors.	If the organization rewards a destructive leader with promotions and responsibility, they may see these behaviors as a way to get ahead. Leaders are also susceptible to their praise because leaders tend to give higher performance ratings to those who exhibit the behaviors they espouse.

of circulation by tale or Gresham's law would not exist, since both revolve around what happens when one meets an uninformed seller. Other qualifications are offered by Fetter (1932) who argued that "bad" money can circulate along with "good" money, provided there is not too much of the "bad" money. Indeed, "bad" money may be greatly overvalued and will not drive out the better coins, provided that the baser coins are issued only in limited quantity and not in excess of the needs of trade (De Rover, 1949). A key requirement is that there is a fixed exchange rate between the different forms of money which is enforced (Friedman & Schwartz, 1963; Hayek, 1990). Thus, "bad" money does not necessarily drive out "good." In fact, "bad" coins can help stabilize the system by reducing the value less than what would otherwise take place (Fetter, 1932). This is because the nominal value is the same and under difficult circumstances, people have less choice and hence the value will depreciate less.

Thus, the common interpretation of Gresham's law is oversimplified and important qualifications must be added. Gresham's law can therefore be reformulated as follows (Emblemsvåg & Emblemsvåg, 2022);

> "Bad" money drives out "good" money, but "good" money cannot drive out "bad" money when fixed exchange rate is enforced and there is sufficient supply to invoke choice. In lieu of choice, "bad" money stabilizes "good" money and the entire coinage.

The description is key in modeling Gresham's law (see Figure 3). First, note that the process has two loops. The first loop is a loop within the market simply concerning selection of coinage for a transaction. The first loop is the only active loop as long as no further debasing is performed. Then, the "good" coins leave, and "bad" coins enter, that is, are used in the market selection mechanism. Subsequently, by the time new transactions are performed, the transactions will involve more "bad" coins than before.

The outer loop occurs when the decision maker choses to debase the coinage, which in a monetary coinage system is directly related to the usage of metal of poorer grade. The result is that the value of the total coinage is reduced.

The second part of Gresham's law—that "good" cannot drive out "bad"—is just as easy to understand in the context of coinage. When there is a choice, why should anybody spend something "good" when something "bad" suffices? Ironically, this process reduces value of the coinage but in certain circumstances it also helps stabilize it, that is, reduce the value less than what would otherwise take place (Fetter, 1932). The reason is that the nominal value is the same and under difficult circumstances, people have less choice, and hence the value will depreciate less.

GRESHAM'S LAW IN NON-MONETARY CONTEXT

Gresham's law has been applied in different settings involving no sort of money. For example, Brennan and Buchanan (1985) argued concerning politics that the candidate for whom the expected profit is highest, will be the highest bidder for political power. The implication is that "good" politicians are driven out from politics by the "bad" ones.

Gresham's law can also be observed regarding media and news. Traditional media organizations seem to be driven into retreat because of the rise of internet resources concerning everything from current affairs to business, and consumers disseminate online negative content to more recipients, for a longer period of time and in more elaborated and assimilated manner than they do positive information (Hornik et al., 2015). In fact, "bad" news travels faster (Fang & Ben-Miled, 2017). Indeed, the entire

Figure 3   Gresham's Law in Monetary Systems at Fixed Exchange Rate and Choice (Emblemsvåg & Emblemsvåg, 2022).

knowledge economy suffers from Gresham's law. As Boorstin (1989) remarked, "In our ironic twentieth-century version of Gresham's law, information tends to drive knowledge out of circulation." Indeed, "bad" information drives out "good" information (Finnell, 2009).

Gresham's law is also found in talent management, because most companies follow a talent pool strategy (Stahl et al., 2012) but it sometimes results in unintended consequences. The idea is to give talented employees "special treatment" to accelerate their development and performance towards a particular succession or career path or within a broader organizational context (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Stahl et al., 2012). Typically, talent is divided into different pools based on whether they are easy or difficult to replace, and of high or low value (Stewart, 1999). Some talent pools are considered easily replaced, either because they add no unique value for various reasons, while the hard to replace, high-value talent pools constitute the human capital. Interestingly, much of this high value, difficult-to-replace talent does not sit at the highest levels of the organization. Indeed, Lewis and Heckman (2006) claimed that these talents would probably not show up on most high-potential talent lists either. Again, Gresham's law is confirmed.

Another approach to talent management is those managers who keep talented people hidden for the rest of the organization so that their team can benefit (Behrens, 2015). Subsequently, this finding leads to the question that if performance management systems are so often reviled, ignored, or gamed, does anyone really know how well talent is managed? Moreover, how many "good" people are being held back by "bad" managers? "Bad" talent, on the other hand, are given "good" references and start circulating within the organization. Managers will unknowingly hire "bad" talent. This mechanism is also instance of Gresham's law.

A famous principle in organizational life is the Peter Principle that Peter and Hull (1969) developed from hundreds of cases of occupational incompetence. The principle states that "in a hierarchy every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence." Basically, if an employee does well, the person is rewarded with a promotion. This mechanism may continue until the
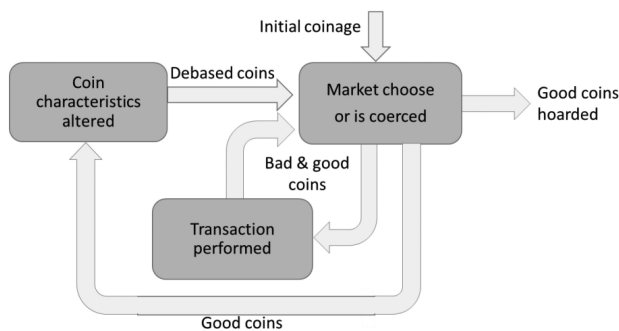
point the person is no longer performing at a level deserving of a promotion, which leaves the person at a level where the person is over-matched by the demands of the job—or, "incompetent."

Interestingly, the Peter Principle would realistically act in any organization where the mechanism of promotion rewards the best members and where the competence at their new level in the hierarchical structure does not depend on the competence they had at the previous level, usually because the tasks of the levels are very different to each other (Pluchino et al., 2009). The authors used agent-based simulations and argue that the latter two features hold in a given model of an organization with a hierarchical structure, then not only is the Peter Principle unavoidable, but also it yields a significant reduction of the global efficiency of the organization (Pluchino et al., 2009). Furthermore, the authors explored different promotion strategies using game theory and found, counterintuitively, that to avoid such an effect the best ways for improving organizational efficiency are either to promote randomly or to promote randomly the best and the worst members in terms of competence.

Accordingly, certain kinds of people with identifiable personality characteristics tend to rise to the top of organizations, and these people are potentially very costly to those organizations (Hogan et al., 1990). The fact that destructive leaders are promoted rather than fired, is supported by others including Erickson et al. (2007) and Martin (2014). Destructive leadership will perpetuate until followers and organizations stop rewarding destructive behaviors. Previous research showed that destructive leadership adversely affects employees' commitment, turnover intent, job satisfaction, physical and emotional wellbeing, and work performance (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Tepper, 2007).

Next, the proposed model is discussed explicitly using Gresham's law as a basis for understanding how destructive leadership evolves in organizations under certain circumstances.

Gresham's Law for Destructive Leadership Evolution

In addition to the interesting findings previously reported, additional contextualization is necessary. Note that a destructive leadership evolution model must avoid being too sensitive to people who are "difficult" or merely "different," because learning to deal with various personalities is a challenge for both leaders and followers (Ury, 1991). That is, difficult people may not be necessarily destructive. A decisive, demanding, and sometimes verbally abusive leader may not necessarily be destructive to subordinates and the organizational unit whereas a charming and cheerful leader may be toxic (Tavanti, 2011). The reality is that difficult workplace circumstances are bound to arise, and when they do there are only three options: take it, leave it, or change it (Sue, 2007, 2010). Therefore, the destructive leadership evolution model must assume a correct identification of a destructive leader.

The assumption does not come without reservations. In reality, destructive leaders can be hard to identify, which is why conducting empirical work on this topic is difficult. Yet, much research is conducted where destructive leadership has been identified.

For example, in the context of leaders of political parties, leaders are known to manipulate the agenda (Riker, 1996), serve as agents of their parties (Fiorina & Shepsle, 1989), and choose policies that enhance their survival (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003). Essentially, they play a covert game. Indeed, some political party leaders are equivocal on policy to broaden their appeal (Shepsle, 1970, 1972; Zeckhauser, 1969), and they may even intentionally obfuscate because of political rivalry (Dewan & Myatt, 2008). Therefore, what is being said is sometimes less important that *how* it is said. Using formal games and heuristics, Dewan and Myatt (2008) found that a leader who can perfectly communicate an imperfect opinion has more influence than a leader who imperfectly communicates a perfect opinion.

Furthermore, when Erickson et al. (2007) wanted to determine how common "bad" leaders are, they asked respondents to indicate the percentage of leaders that could be classified as "bad," according to respondents' own experience. Erickson et al. found the perceptions of prevalence of "bad" leaders to be about 37%. Indeed, depending on the estimation method, the total prevalence of destructive leadership behavior varied from 33.5 to 61% (Aasland

et al., 2010), indicating that destructive leadership is far from an anomaly and has notable variability. The study also showed that *laissez-faire* leadership behavior was the most prevalent destructive leadership behavior, followed by supportive–disloyal leadership and derailed leadership, while tyrannical leadership behavior was the least prevalent destructive leadership behavior.

The most frequently cited outcome for a "bad" leader was that the "bad" leader was promoted or rewarded (44.8%) (Erickson et al., 2007). The next most frequent outcome was that nothing happened to the "bad" leader (19.4%), while only 13.4% of respondents indicated that the "bad" leader was forced out of the organization. Thus, in almost 65% of the cases cited, the "bad" leader was promoted, or at least not punished, for their behavior. Note that some destructive people, may possess essential competencies, such as technical skills (Templer, 2018), and can therefore be promoted in spite of their destructive leadership skills.

The finding is also supported by Martin (2014), who found that none of the toxic leaders endured consequences for their destructive behaviors. In fact, Green (2014) found that as many as 90% of the respondents in educational organizations reported previous or current experience with toxic leaders.

Furthermore, the political skills of some toxic employees result in higher salaries and advance into leadership positions (Templer, 2018). While not all toxic people possess political skill, those toxic people who use political skills effectively are seen as better performers.

All the aforementioned findings indicate that Gresham's law is partially at work, but how the victims react must also be discussed. Webster et al. (2016) found that common strategies for coping with destructive leaders, include assertively challenging the leader, seeking social support, or ruminating. Many also reported that once their preferred coping strategies failed, they took leave or left the organization, while employees who remained in the workplace reported a variety of adverse consequences (Webster et al.). The finding was also supported by Martin (2014), who observed that many people chose to resign from their positions or companies, leaving the destructive leader still with the company.

A study from DDI (2019) showed that 57% of employees quit because of their leader, while an additional 32% have seriously considered leaving. These results are even worse than those reported by Gallup (2015) discussed earlier. Clearly, there are large costs to destructive leaders.

The situations described so far do not exist in all organizations. Conducive environments contribute to the materialization of destructive leader behavior, but such behavior is less likely to survive when an organization is healthy and institutes checks and balances for power and control (Padilla et al., 2007). Thus, a destructive leader is successful when there are susceptible followers and the organizational environment enables the destructive behavior, in line with the definition of destructive leadership by Thoroughgood et al. (2018). Indeed, such a destructive triangle is similar to the toxic triangle discussed by Padilla et al. (2007).

All the elements for developing Gresham's law in the context of destructive leadership are described in the destructive leadership evolution model (see Figure 4). Given an initial condition of "good" and "bad" leaders, to use Gresham's terms, people will divide themselves into three main groups—conformers, colluders, and leavers. The former two are potentially "good" people who adjust, and over time, become indirectly destructive. Both the initially "good" and the "bad" people perform their work while participating in the organizational politics initiated by the "bad" leaders. The "good" people will eventually have two choices. They can leave, or they will conclude that to survive they must adjust to the politics and debase their moral standards.

Note that those who engage in organizational politics with destructive intentions can be both leaders and followers, and both leaders and followers can choose to leave. However, the current article focuses on the leaders because they are the ones who can end the organizational politics. Furthermore, leaders represent greater threats to the destructive leaders, and will therefore, logically speaking, be more likely to be targeted by a destructive leader. In other words, because of the formal differences in authorization a "bad" follower cannot drive out a "good" leader, but a "bad" leader can drive out "good" leaders on their own level as well as effective followers.

Figure 4   The Destructive Leadership Evolution Model Derived From Gresham's Law.

Destructive leaders' superiors may be indirectly involved concerning what to believe. By not intervening, they unwittingly set the standard for what is acceptable behavior and "fix the exchange rate," as it were, by failing to distinguish between a "bad" leader and a "good" leader. The problem is that "good" people often do not want to believe that the vicious politics of "bad" people take place (Stout, 2005). Thus, through denial the "good" does not drive out the "bad," or they may basically not be aware of the destructiveness of a leader reporting to them.

Turning to the second half of Gresham's law—that "good" cannot drive out "bad"—the model also works using the insight that people are often good at hiding their actions through defensive routines (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Destructive leaders are arguably equally good or better, at deploying defensive routines and can thereby hide from potential superiors that would otherwise remove them if they knew of their behaviors.

"Bad" leaders also influence "good" leaders that are peers in subtle ways. Typically, destructive leaders will covertly create problems for their peers and followers to secure their own powerbase. However, even if they are unable to do so, the environment will become increasingly difficult for "good" leaders over time through promotion, recruitment, "good" people leaving, and superiors' inabilities of dealing with "bad" leaders. Hence, "good" leaders may also leave.

Subsequently, the initial situation becomes a new situation when new subordinates or leaders are recruited, and they face the same choice. Over time, the organization where the destructive leader is located is left with a majority of colluders and conformers, which is what Gresham's law predicts. It should be noted that Gresham's law should be viewed as a steady-state solution because it takes time for new entrants in an organization to orient themselves and end up facing the choice of leaving or accepting the political games.

Eventually, if the destructive leader is promoted, the destructive leader may recruit a new person as replacement. To secure the powerbase, it is likely that a colluder or an outsider is chosen that the destructive leader believes can become an ally. The selection of a potential ally is because of the fact that people, in general, choose people similar to themselves (Youyou et al., 2017), and that is also the situation in recruitment (Giles, 2018). If an external person is recruited, this person will soon face the same choice as described before. Thus, Gresham's law is at work.

Furthermore, unchecked "bad" leaders will influence culture over time. For example, bullying as a phenomenon is rarely limited to just one person—the individual characteristics interplay with the group characteristics and even the organizational characteristics (Harvey et al., 2007). Thus, destructive leadership will become more prevalent in an organization over time unless there are not too many "bad" leaders in the organization, to paraphrase the qualification made by Fetter (1932) concerning Gresham's law. This situation also ensures that the "exchange rate is fixed," to use another element

from Gresham's Law. If too many "bad" leaders accumulate in a business unit, it will eventually catch the attention of top management. In this way, "bad" leaders have an urgent need for operating covertly, which is aided by the defensive routines in organizations, which ensure that problems stay hidden (Argyris, 1999). Thus, when people leave, new recruits await, that is, there is "excess supply" (Fetter, 1932).

When it comes to the corollary that "bad" coins can stabilize the system, the literature on destructive leadership falls short of such a position. In fact, no previous studies have been conducted on destructive leadership in crisis management context (Brandebo, 2019).

First, it is well known that crises are characterized by stress and risks whereby leaders are more prone to using destructive leadership behavior, even if the leaders, in more normal circumstances, would not be prone to do so (Brandebo et al., 2016; Padilla et al., 2007). Second, organizations are more prone to act when leaders have destructive goals compared to when leaders use destructive behaviors towards subordinates (Krasikova et al., 2013). Third, the destructive leadership behaviors identified may be the consequences of the ideals that prevail within crisis management (Brandebo, 2019). Fourth, previous studies show that leaders in crisis management are often assessed and noticed based on their ability to accomplish a task, and not on how well they handle relationships (Boin et al., 2016). Finally, charismatic leadership is likely to emerge in a crisis (Gibson et al., 1996).

Indeed, all these arguments taken together imply that in times of crisis, destructive leaders not only can hide themselves better, but they can even use some of their destructive inclinations productively and contribute positively during the crisis. Hence, like the coins, destructive leaders can stabilize the system. Essentially, people accept some destructive behaviors as a cost of overcoming the crisis. Again, Gresham's law can be fitted into a leadership context, and paraphrased as follows:

> "Bad" leaders drive out "good" leaders, but "good" leaders cannot drive out "bad" leaders when "bad" leaders are allowed to operate with impunity. In times of crisis, "bad" leaders can stabilize the situation because people accept some destructive behavior as a cost to overcome the crisis.

Discussing the Model Using the Literature

The literature on Gresham's law is conclusive that the law provides a fair description of phenomena observed in markets where there is coinage, or similar, operating under a fixed exchange rate. While the analogical usage of Gresham's law can be debated, the ultimate test concerns the simple question whether or not the model captures phenomena discussed in the literature and observed in organizations.

Empirically testing the model in Figure 4 is challenging for several reasons. First, an organization that would be interested in this research must be found, which for them would be tantamount to admitting that destructive leadership may be a problem internally. Second, even if supportive organizations were found, misdiagnosing destructive leadership is common (Shaw et al., 2011) and observing destructive leaders over time would be even harder. Additionally, it would take very long time to obtaining enough study objects to constitute a valid sample. Third, in organizations where leadership qualities are discussed often, there is a real risk that people will start looking for destructive leadership. As such, research in such organizations may fall victim to a famous cognitive bias—self-fulfilling prophecies. Therefore, for the time being, a review of previous research is the most reliable approach, which is provided. It should be noted that surveys have been developed, such as the Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ) that do provide some empirical data albeit with potential biases (Shaw et al., 2011). The DLQ provides some insights but not concerning the entire topic presented in this article because it lacks longitudinal perspectives.

Thus, how the various types of destructive leadership behaviors will work in the model is discussed subsequently and summarized in Table 2, thereby leading to an evaluation of whether the proposed model is useful given the literature presented before.

Reviewed through Figure 4, it is clear that all the categories of destructive leadership will result in higher general turnover intentions (Robert & Vandenberghe, 2022; Schmid et al., 2017; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Tepper, 2000), resulting in an increased

Table 2 Discussing the Model for Various Categories of Destructive Leadership Behaviors

Category	The game they play	Why people leave	How they propagate in organizations
Abusive supervision	Hostility and rigidity and overall difficult with subordinates. They have no issues with imposing penalties or reward to colluders. In this way, they build a base of loyalty.	Being mistreated and essentially bullied and leave to maintain self-worth.	Leaders who are abusive will find such leaders to be strong and action-oriented. To the extent possible, such leaders are also good at managing people above. They also try to prevent people below from directly talking to those above.
Exploitative leadership	The search of self-interest, but in manipulative and indirect ways. Direct confrontation is avoided, but taking credit for other people's work is common. They also avoid making decisions that are risky to avoid blame. These leaders also have colluders that they give preferential treatment.	Frustration with being put aside and being neglected.	They manage their image towards their superiors well, and can therefore be difficult to identify. Typically, they are promoted often because they take credit where they have not contributed and they avoid blame.
Organization-directed destructive leadership	Such people misuse organizational assets to the extent that they may engage in bribes, stealing, or making personal use of assets.	To preserve self-worth—they feel morally better than their leader.	Such leaders succeed only by hiding their actions—sometimes this work other times it does not. Other than that, they have no specific approach to being promoted. They are more driven by personal monetary gain.
Laissez-faire leadership	Inaction and they search for the easiest way out of everything.	Boredom and frustration with inaction—they feel more able than their leader.	They are normally not promoted simply because of the lack of drive and direction.

number of entrants and leavers. The reason is that "The effort an interested party makes to put its case before the decision maker will be in proportion *to the advantage to be gained from a favorable outcome multiplied by the probability of influencing the decisions*" [italics as in original] (Banfield, 1961). The challenge with *laissez-faire* leadership is the low probability of influencing them because such leaders have negligible direction or drive. Therefore, the model in Figure 4 can explain destructive leaders well and how their actions correspond to Gresham's law.

The upper two types of leaders in Figure 1—abusive- and exploitative destructive leadership—have the strongest effects because they actively seek promotions and use their actions in the process. The lower two types—organization-directed destructive leadership and *laissez-faire* leadership—do not seek promotions *per se*, but they nonetheless drive good people out. Hence, the case for arguing that "bad" leaders drive our "good" is

strong, and the provided model is useful within limitations.

Limitations and Future Work

Undoubtedly, empirical research would have been advantageous, but, as noted above, impractical without an innovative approach not yet available.

The prevalence of destructive leadership is widely discussed in the literature, but it is hard to find articles that address the difficult questions of why do "good" leaders leave and what happens to the "bad" leaders? Both these questions require not only correct identification of the leader types, but also longitudinal surveys of multiple organizations over years.

Clearly, there are shortcomings to the present study since it is conceptual and based on literature review and an analogy supported by anecdotal evidence from many domains, but to find realistic ways of addressing these shortcomings empirically is a completely different task.

This is exactly why the thesis developed in the current article could be useful.

Therefore, it is arguably better to keep the model conceptual for the time being, and then over time refine it through additional literature studies and possibly empirical studies if a reliable approach can be developed.

Conclusions

Understanding Gresham's law is a useful avenue for increasing the understanding of how some well-known phenomena in society work including destructive leadership. Ideally, the presented model would have been empirically tested, but such a test at this time is impractical given the sensitivity- and complexity of the topic. The more cases that fit, the more likely the model is to actually explain aspects of the destructive leadership phenomenon. Until then the model should be viewed as conceptual, tested by using the literature and an analogy supported by anecdotal evidence.

Indeed, one sure sign of an organization in trouble is when the best people leave. This is the first thing to look for if Gresham's law is at work. People can argue it is happenstance if one leaves, or maybe coincidence if two leave, but when it occurs often there is a reason—probably destructive leadership.

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Conflict of Interest

We have no conflict of interests.

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