

# Review of: "[Commentary] Toxic Leadership and Vicarious Bullying"

Jimmy Yu Zhong<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Georgia Institute of Technology

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

The current commentary, "Toxic Leadership and Vicarious Bullying," written by Prof. Dr. Margaret Sims, discusses toxic leadership and vicarious bullying in the contemporary world, mainly from a Western-centric perspective (first two sections, pp. 1-3), and seeks to link these two variables together through contemplations about the underlying influences of neoliberalism that permeate Western democracies and narcissism on the part of the "toxic" leader (Discussion section, pp. 4-5).

While I do find this commentary an interesting read and agree with most of the arguments and opinions of Dr. Sims, I must confess that it is too short and is definitely in need of more elaboration and lengthening. What I recommend is for her to give proper definitions of key terms like "toxic leadership," "vicarious bullying," "neoliberal politics," and "narcissistic leadership style," etc., right from the start in an introduction section and explain how she wants to link all of them together instead of presenting them in an *à la carte*, piecemeal fashion at the end, as presented in the current manuscript. The primary problem with this current piece, in my humble opinion, is that its "meat" or "main dish" is presented at the end under a very short Discussion section, in which good arguments and opinions were made but not substantiated or elaborated further - and I do find that to be quite a shame. What I recommend for improvement are the provisions of specific real-world examples of the negative effects of toxic and narcissistic leadership at work, and how it can spur vicarious bullying. As a fellow academic scholar, what I am eager to know is the pervasiveness of such negative (or corrupt) behaviors in academia, and what academic scholars can do to eliminate them, a concern which rhymes with the last paragraph in the current paper. With respect to the corrective actions that Dr. Sims suggested at the end, I do look forward to her extending the paragraph to a page or two, giving her thoughts on the concrete actions or political policies that need to be introduced in order to bring about positive and effective changes that can mitigate, and ideally eliminate, the negative impact of toxic leadership and bullying of any kind.

These are my main concerns and suggestions. On a sidenote, there are some minor changes that I suggest making. On p. 3 (1st paragraph under Vicarious Bullying section), I am highly confused by the comparisons of percentages. Exactly who are the parties you are comparing with? Are you talking about comparing victims of vicarious bullying with non-victims of vicarious bullying? Please review and make the needed corrections. Another thing I would like to raise concerns the statistics of the survey results you presented. It would be ideal if you could present the most up-to-date survey results concerning bullying in the world, and in the countries of concern you mentioned (i.e., USA, UK). The survey results currently were not the most recent, and it is difficult to build a strong argument against organizational bullying without the

most up-to-date survey results simply because bullying might be less of an issue due to corrective actions taken by most organizations against workplace bullying over the past few years. Another approach is to present some longitudinal survey findings showing that organizational bullying was a problem in the past (e.g., 5 years ago) and still remains a huge problem today. This approach, in my humble opinion, would be most factual and convincing.

Lastly, I would like to remind Dr. Sims of the necessity of updating and enlengthening her abstract after making all necessary revisions.

For now, these are all my pertinent concerns, and I hope that Dr. Sims will take them into account when converting her paper into a higher quality version for online publication in due time.

Best wishes,

Dr. JZ

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