

DESTRUCTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND MANIPULATION: EMERGENT FORMS, CONSEQUENCES AND COPING IN THE FUNCTION OF SMARTER ORGANIZATIONAL SOLUTIONS

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*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
(Jesus, Mt 23)*

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to list and explain the manifestations of destructive organizational communication (N=24) and manipulation (N=26) as important communication phenomena in the area of dark side management/black art of management/dark managerial skills. For that purpose it is used the method of description, synthesis and insight.

From an organizational/social point of view, it is important to identify, recognize and deal with destructive/deviant communication phenomena that occur and manifest in many forms in order to minimize organizational/social damage (e.g. functional organizational stupidity/stupidity management). Techniques of destructive organizational manipulation were collected through insight into sources and life experience. Total of N=50 known/unknown techniques are connected with functional organizational stupidity and stupidity management as regular consequences of successful use of explicit destructive and manipulative techniques.

As features of coping with the mentioned „dark“ communication techniques, preventive and reactive measures are listed and explicated. This is done in order to control destructive communication tendencies and create/maintain the desired productive (smart) organizational communication climate.

Keywords: *destructive communication, manipulation, functional organizational stupidity, stupidity management, moral management and moral maximization, productive (smart) communication climate, organizational communication, organizational behavior*

JEL Classification: D23, M21, M53, M59, O15.

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1. Introduction

The true choice of competitive advantage, organizational success should be sought in the right places, and most managers seek success in the wrong places (Baker, 2003 according to Jeffrey Pfeffer-Stanford Business School). The right place in this paper is ethical organizational communication (moral management)² that acts synergistically in the function of achieving organizational goals. This also means eliminating/minimizing destructive and manipulative organizational patterns of thought, feeling and behavior. Communication here is essential because it is precondition/key ingredient of every human activity. But by means of communication, besides positive, there are initiated also negative/deviant/destructive organizational behaviors. Negative organizational behaviors can be broken down into *interpersonal deviance* (creating emotional or physical discomfort/harm to others in the organization) and *organizational deviance* (behaviors that harm organizational interests) (Mount, Iliés & Johnson, 2006). In deviant/destructive organizational behavior, destructive and manipulative communication is the main mediating factor.

Although the fundamental factors of business success have changed throughout management history (scientific management, organizational structure, organizational strategy, organizational culture, systematic approach, strategic alliances, organizational learning, business process management, stupidity management...) the common denominator of all these factors is the way people manage business leadership/direction of organizational behavior and human resources (human resource management) in accordance with the organizational strategy (real goals and ways to achieve them). Communication is always basic ingredient of any human activity, therefore a condition without which it is impossible to achieve any organizational goal.³ In all business situations, the ethical factor (ethical thinking, feeling and behavior) is crucial because it mediates the virtues (spirituality) without which perceived reality turns into hypocrisy with antagonistic effect on achieving organizational goals. A glaring example is the management of stupidity with the internalization of functional organizational stupidity (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012).

If the dominant organizational culture/climate is to hide real intentions and goals, hypocrisy appears as a fake behavior. The aim of deception and fraud has visible consequences/manifestations in destructive/deviant forms of communication and

² Human moral and ethical research/study are the keys to the development of better theories of motivated human behaviour (Sikula, 1996, p. 51). Human resources as most valuable organizational asset should be developed in ethical/moral sense, because of evident lack/absence of moral management and moral maximization (Sikula, 1996, p. 60-62 and p. 66). Moral management mission can be defined as moral maximization in organizational settings. To attain such a goal (moral maximization) the first step is to know moral wrong and bad (evil) organizational behavior with moral minimization consequences. Knowing forms of destructive organizational communication and manipulation is a good step in resolving this huge communication and therefore organizational problem as well.

³ It should be noted that organizational goals can also be hidden (from most actors), so they are known only to a narrow dominant stakeholder group (Pastuović, 1999). Thus, there is created a conflict of special and general interests in the function of achieving special interests. Then, as a rule, some of the manifestations of destructive communication and manipulation occur.

manipulation that often result in generating functional organizational stupidity with stupidity management. Given the growing awareness of destructive factors that negatively/antagonistically/conflictually affect organizational success in the context of creating a unproductive/destructive organizational culture and climate (Bogdanović, 2021; Bogdanović, Vetrakova and Filip, 2018; Bogdanović, 2016; Bogdanović, 2015; Bogdanović, 2014; Bogdanović, 2003), for organizations it is becoming increasingly important to know, recognize and deal with destructive organizational communication patterns and manipulative techniques that are contraindications to productive organizational climate and synergistic teamwork.

Wrong and bad organizational behavior (regardless of organizational perpetrators, their organizational roles such as managerial/operational or direction of communication, for example from the top of the hierarchy to the bottom/vice versa or horizontally/diagonally) interfere, slow down, cause harm, therefore it is important to prevent and react on such destructive phenomena. Successful organizations as well as individuals need to successfully solve various intellectual problems (to be cognitively intelligent) and various emotional problems (to be emotionally intelligent) especially in teamwork, but destructive forms of communication and manipulation (with their intellectual, emotional and behavioral components), usually bring to stupidity which can destroy everything.⁴ In the context of achieving organizational goals, it is clear that such destructive forms of manipulation and communication, break the internal and external organizational harmony, so they have antagonistic (negative synergy)⁵ instead of a synergistic effect.

As far as the author is aware, the sources on management/government⁶ lack a systematic list of destructive organizational patterns of communication and manipulative organizational behaviors/techniques. The first step in this attempt is to collect, explain and present them as part of organizational knowledge to the general and interested academic/professional public in order to enable productive communication about the topic and in organizational application to give a boost to the achievement of productive organizational communication climate by preventing destructive/deviant communication climate.⁷

Also in the conditions of increasingly present media methods of influence (media manipulation) it is important to recognize them, and theoretical knowledge is a

⁴ Analogue are known wise sentences: a) „Harmonious brothers are building a house, and in discord/quarrel are ruining everything!“, b) „Against stupidity God himself is helpless!“.

⁵ Synergies can be positive, negative and neutral (Jonek Kowalska, 2012). Smart solutions by the logic of things should be situated where positive synergies are possible and likely.

⁶ Organizations can be divided into *functional organizations* (which meet a specific need), and for their drive it uses the term management (etymologically: manago+ment = management of human hands that happens through mind management), and *territorial organizations* (which facilitate satisfaction of different common needs of people living in a certain territory), and for their drive/management it is used the term government (etymologically: govern+ment = management of the human mind) (cf. Pastuović, 1999., p. 526).

⁷ A supportive/productive communication climate is characterized by openness, support, inclusiveness and reward. Such a climate allows the expression of different ideas, agreements and disagreements. Where such a climate prevails, members of the organization have a strong sense of involvement, commitment, pride and trust. The negative communication climate is defensive, closed, alienating, accusing, discouraging, punishing, and reflects power relations (Levi, 2014).

prerequisite for practical doing. Namely people (citizens or organization member) should realize the fundamental human values of truth, freedom, justice⁸ (exercise and achieve their inherent human rights) and be as little as possible influenced by various types of manipulative techniques and destructive communications. It is a way to reduce/mitigate violence (organizational, economic, social, state, civilizational...) in a way to reduce tolerance (perception of unacceptability) towards all forms of destructive communication and manipulative behavior.

Recognizing destructive communication and manipulation is, of course, the first step in that direction. Namely in order that these techniques can be recognized by people of average intelligence which are in the majority (not just the smartest ones — who are statistically always in the minority)⁹, it should be exhaustively stated and explained in order to enable learning for organization and people protection. This is the meaning and goal of this paper.

2. Techniques of destructive organizational communication

At the core of all techniques of destructive and manipulative organizational communication is the violation of the principles of true communication: empathy, honesty/integrity, trust (cf. Borg, 2010, p. 7 & p. 263).

Without going into the causes of such communication, which can basically be situated in personality traits and situational/environmental factors, the observed techniques are listed and explained below. Techniques are divided into:

- a) *destructive organizational communication techniques*,
- b) *manipulative organizational communication techniques*.

Such division is made according to perceived visibility - which is more direct. Namely destructive communication techniques are easier to notice, and manipulative techniques are more indirect and therefore more difficult to notice and easier to replace with something else.

This taxonomy and division is not final because it is a newer field of management (dark managerial skills/deviant management) which, according to the author is in the initial stage of development.

2.1. HYPOCRISY (greek: Hypocrisis = acting not only on the stage but also in life). It consists in communicating socially desirable characteristics (virtues), which in fact the person/organization as a communicator does not have, in order to fake in front

⁸ For the purposes of this paper, it may be easiest to operate with 5 fundamental virtues: right action, truth, freedom, peace, nonviolence (cf. Bogdanović, 2021).

⁹ If the data that the average IQ in the world in 2019 (Richard Lynn and David Becker from the Ulster Institute in the UK) is taken as credible, then the measured average IQ of adults varies from IQ=43 (Nepal) to IQ=106.5 (Japan) with a world average of IQ=82. Source: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/average-iq-by-country> (18. 01. 2022.). These data mean that in a significant number of countries (countries from ordinal number 58 to 199) 50% and more % of people are below average level of intelligence (IQ<90), so this fact makes it difficult to recognize destructive communication and manipulation. It is all the more important to acquaint the general public with the manifestations of these phenomena in order not to be their victims. Amoral/antimoral more intelligent individuals often take advantage of such a general cognitive situation to the detriment of the less intelligent, more powerful/dominant at the expense of the powerless/subdominant.

of others a quality/virtue that does not exist or is exaggerated (e.g. pretending achievement /superiority). An important part of hypocrisy is the silence of facts that serves not to establish a sincere dialogue with people, about moral dilemmas, moral deficits, mistakes, imperfections, untruths, freedoms, injustices. Hypocrisy has existed since ancient times, it is also present in intelligent primates (e.g. pretending that no food was found), it is present everywhere (although with different levels of tolerance). Even Jesus saw it as a very negative phenomenon: „*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!*”).¹⁰ If the concealment of important, true information is established, the structure of hypocrisy (pretense) is born. Truth is a counterpoint to hypocrisy. Words (verbal statements) are false if they are contrary to deeds/reality, deeds are dead, if they are manifested only in words (deeds do not exist or are truncated). Acts prove the authenticity of words, the essence is manifested even without words/verbal statements, but to understand it you need to interpret it correctly. Hypocritical communication is destructive because it creates a "culture of lies". Some organizational theorists claim that the main organizational problem is the "culture of lies" and when a "culture of truth" is established, all organizational problems are solved practically on their own (Bogdanović, 2015). It is also hypocrisy to speak about the truth, but not to use true speech, as well as to use the authority argument instead of the authority of arguments.

2.2. INTIMIDATION TO THE BODY INTEGRITY. This means threat, intimidation by physical punishment, threat by strength/body size/aggressive behavior. In some organizations there is a culture of physical intimidation with physical punishment of employees/members by superiors or colleagues (military and sometimes even business organizations). It has been very effective in shaping behavior and has been used since ancient times, although in Europe corporal punishment at work (with some exception in penalty, military or police organizations) is ethically and morally inappropriate and legally forbidden today. The principles and effectiveness of punishment or only intimidation with punishment are today well known and part of scientific/applied psychology (Čudina-Obradović, 1989).

2.3. LYING/DECEPTION is the direct communication of incorrect information, facts, false knowledge (untruths). The goal is to distort accurate information and known facts (by lie) in order to confuse the recipient and achieve the target behavior (e.g. decision(s) as desired, or unconsciously communicate untruths (unverified/manipulative) informations/messages. False testimony according to the Bible is a grave sin, and degradation of fundamental moral law: "You shall not bear false witness!" This is one of the 10 fundamental commandments of Biblical God. Some legislatures punish lies (USA) - especially in court. Unfortunately, in the "culture of lies", lying becomes a general pattern of behavior that destroys trust, productive communication and organizational climate. This category of deception and lying includes false/inaccurate record keeping and forgery of all written records from reports,

¹⁰ It may be less clear to whom this biblical proverb attributed to Jesus refers in today's social situation, but translated into today's context, "scribes" could be educated civil servants, especially lawyers, commissioned writers/trolls, dependant intellectuals/scientists and addicted professors on the budget. The Pharisees could be unethical politicians manipulators, quasi-moralists, pseudo-theologians, and all those who widely use hypocrisy and manipulation (so-called notorious liars) as a strategy of deceiving others in the function of their success.

professional/scientific works to entire books (so-called falsification of reality in desired direction).

2.4. CHEATING BY SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS (asking suggestive false questions). The question of false suggestive questions that already contain an answer. For example: "So you outwitted/cheated a client? You testified falsely against xy? You are this Flat earthen boy?"

This gives the impression that the person to whom the question is addressed is lying, and not the questioner (manipulator). Also, asking questions that already have the desired answer (suggesting answers, i.e. "putting desired words/sentences/verbal statements in someone else's mouth" and interpreting other people's statements that are not in line with the essence of what was said) represents a violation of freedoms and rights to speech. E.g., labeling with "Hate speech"; "Conspiracy theorist"; "Flat earthen" of any communicator with a undesirable statement that nobody reasonable does not want to be heard /that is unfavorable to someone, and can be part of a factual substrate or a legitimate attitude. E.g. a legitimate attitude is to be for the family and against same-sex marriage, against euthanasia, against Covid vaccination, and such an attitude can be discredited by asking suggestive questions as well as labeling it with something highly undesirable. Also, on the contrary, something really very undesirable can be made very desirable through the "Overton window" and declared as a (legitimate) policy.¹¹

2.5. GUILTY FOCUSED QUESTIONS. Asking questions that already have a built-in presumption of someone's guilt (e.g. Are you lying again?; Stealing again?; Explain to me that scam you committed?). In this way, the manipulator shifts the blame to the manipulated person. By suggesting a fabrication of guilt (without any evidence), the manipulated person is led to a defensive attitude and proving his innocence (because whoever defends himself gives the impression that he is guilty and therefore defends himself). Thus manipulator is creating the impression that the manipulated person did something wrong, and in fact it has not, but has been brought into such position by such destructive communication.

2.6. REPETITION OF LIES WITH SOMEONE'S NAME. In this way, something negative is communicated about the person, with the intention by repeating the „fact“ in one's consciousness become common, and thus becoming "true" (other people begin to believe that person xy is as it appears in repeated communication). So, e.g. "X was in jail for killing his mother". This is about intentionally negatively creating the image of an person which is target to manipulator. This technique is similar to Overton's window, where the constant repetition of the abnormal seeks to achieve the normal (to make lies and unacceptable in the minds of other people true and acceptable).

2.7. REPETITION OF SOMEONE'S NAME IN NEGATIVE CONTEXT. Frequent hearing of one's name in negatively connoted context, (e.g. "X was known as a petty thief and extortioner for his gang before he becomes manager"), increases the

¹¹ Overton window is a model for policy change. It can dramatically change public opinion i.e. from firstly inappropriate idea, behavior can be normalized to the normal even desired idea, behavior (e.g. homosexuality, hypocrisy, etc). This is process how from unthinkable idea, gradually through radically, acceptable, reasonably, popular idea, finally becomes policy on default. (<https://www.mackinac.org/OvertonWindow>)

likelihood that the victim/person himself begins to believe it (although it has nothing to do with the truth). Here is used classic conditioning (paired name and negatively connoted content), which connects the name/person with bad traits, and repetition fixes such a content in memory. Repetition of untruth/semi-truth/asymmetric truth¹² especially in a highly stressful situation (e.g. life-threatening/torture) is an auxiliary technique that contributes to the emergence of the so-called Stockholm syndrome.¹³

2.8. LABELING. By labeling, someone is forcibly placed in a category with a negative connotation, which will place them in a socially undesirable group of people, according to which a negative attitude and discriminatory behavior is expected. For example: "He is an anti-vaxer!"; "He is an flath-earthling!"; "He is an anarchist/communist/terrorist!".

2.9. SHOUTING/YELLING. In paralinguistic communication, the volume of the voice communicates emotional states. In an amplified tone, one wants to force behavior when it is not possible/desirable with the power of arguments. The manipulator wants to create feelings of discomfort, fear, humiliation in order to let the victim know who is in charge (who has the power). By yelling at the victim, the manipulator restores feelings of superiority and feelings of control. Often used, as variation of this destructive communicative technique is narcissistic rage at the victim where yelling is usual behavior.

2.10. AVOIDING COMMUNICATION. Avoiding communicating about problems to be solved (on a personal or organizational level) puts the unwanted people with questions on hold. It is a way of creating tensions and a bad interpersonal climate. Delaying communication, for example by waiting (people waiting for a manager to receive them in the office, even though he has no important job, lets people know that they are waiting to be less valuable and in a subordinate position). Avoiding communication can also be treated as a destructive communication/manipulation technique in situations where, e.g., communicating a problem is avoided by removing an undesirable item from the agenda or not putting an important item on the agenda at all. Thus, communication is actually communicated only in those frameworks in which it is convenient for the manipulator (it can also be on group level e.g. an interest group, a political party, a commission...). This technique is sometimes called "frame definition", which limits the discussion to "appropriate" topics and dilemmas (often trivial). The same technique can be observed when an agenda item is strongly postponed or placed on the agenda at an unfavorable time (when there is no quorum, when opposition is not present or "awkward" discussants are present, etc.). Also, avoiding communicating inappropriate/unethical behavior of manipulators (especially

¹² Similar is the campaign Beechnut Packing company in 1920-ies because of low bacon purchase. It was engaged „father of PR Edward Bernays“, so it was arranged that medical doctor suggest (in mass media) that strong and plentiful breakfast (so called „american breakfast“) e.g. with bacon and eggs is good for health (Bernays, 2004 according Bernays, 1928). The campaign was very successful, so until this day, the conditioning remains, so in the consciousness of many people remain that such an American breakfast is the right thing to do.

¹³ In Stockholm syndrome victim perception is changed, i.e. the perpetrator becomes a benefactor and the conditioned untruth become true in the victim's mind. Also variation of this techniques are described in the Orwells antiutopistic novel „1984“ (Orvell, 1983) where we should have in mind the new terms of new speak, double thought and evil thought. There become obvious that the greatest enemy of normal human expression/communication is lie (Orvell, 1983).

manipulative and illegal) destroys relationships of trust. Where there is no trust there is no productive communication, productive organizational climate and positive organizational results are difficult to achieve.¹⁴ This manipulative technique is often applied by people of power (directors/managers and officials of all levels when communicating with those less powerful than themselves).

2.11. DENIAL OF THE GIVEN PROMISE/AGREEMENT. It is about disputing an agreement, a promise or justifying certain inappropriate behavior (which deviates from expectations based on an agreement/given word/promise). The manipulator hereby reserves the right to withdraw any verbal (and written) promise whenever it suits him. A milder variant is that written testimonies that do not suit the manipulator (e.g. in the form of a contract, certificate, decision) are not seen/there is no will to be seen, are ignored. Such behavior is particularly effective in undermining trust and interpersonal relationships.

2.12. INVENTING A PROMISE THAT NEVER WAS MADE. This is a variant of occasional lying in order to gain time, or shift the blame to the other side. Communicating with others from the position of promises that are not really given, but are conveniently invented. This is a variant of lying, but such as to make sure that there was an agreement, an agreement on an issue, and in fact there was none. This manipulation is particularly effective in undermining trust and interpersonal relationships.

2.13. JOKES/MOCKING ON OTHER PEOPLE'S ACCOUNT. This is joke with someone to belittle him, humiliate him. By such destructive communication technique is telling stories in which someone is portrayed in a very unfavorable, undesirable light, which implies incompetence, inappropriateness, inefficiency. For example: "Even my underage son from the 3rd grade of elementary school would do better, but he is a minor so he can't replace a colleague XY."

2.14. OFFENSE AND DISCREDITIVE ATTACK ON OTHERS. This technique often use destructive verbal attack that have or have nothing to do with the victim, they may be fictional, as well as different levels of insult (verbal attacks with vulgar expression). Insults as threats to dignity are legally subject to lawsuits, although it is not an easy path to their realization, especially if the superior i.e. "strong boss" in the organizational context commits such a verbal offense.¹⁵

2.15. USE OF SARCASM AND/OR IRONY. Although it essentially serves as a natural defense against stupidity (by expressing oneself in a witty way), it can also be used destructively in a way that belittles, diminishes, humiliates. E.g.: "I'm firing you because you bring more problem than you solve it in this company", "I'm sorry I hurt your feelings when I called you stupid, I really thought you already knew."

¹⁴ A special practical problem within the issue of avoiding communication is not responding to e-mails, such as: "a) How to deal with people who do not respond to arguments, how to deal with illogical, irrational people who after their illogical/unargued/uncritic monologue do not respond to emails?, b) How to treat people who simply become deaf when something does not suit them? c) How to deal with those who turn a deaf ear after a given promise/given word, an agreement reached?" These are present communication behaviors conditioned by the manipulative selfish attitude: "What does not suit to me, I do not react to it!"

¹⁵ In some organization is normal behavior (such climate/culture) that boss has „right“ to undermine or offend his employees in an „ugly way“. In such situations the victim has unformal „right“ only to „be quiet“ or „cry“ (if e.g. victim is a women). It is obvious that this is destructive communication.

(Cf. <https://hr.gottamentor.com/feeling-witty-these-200-sarcastic-quotes-ensure-you-always-have-comeback>).

2.16. COMMUNICATION THAT CORRUPT REPUTATION, PRIDE, DIGNITY. This is a communication of belittling (lowering) which seeks to diminish the value and self-esteem of the recipient. E.g.: "I know you, at school we called you drooling/dumb/silly XY!" Also deliberately incorrect addressing and misspelling of someone else's name and surname is part of this destructive communicative technique.¹⁶

2.17. EXAGGERATION IN STATEMENT AND DESCRIPTION OF HIS OWN PROBLEMS. Here is used the power of the powerless. One's own problem is exaggerated in order to create sympathy in others. It can also be used as a technique to reject an applicant (e.g., for a job or a service).

2.18. ARGUMENTATION OF THE "DEVIL'S LAWYER" TYPE. By means of this technique every idea, suggestion, observation, text is subjected to relentless criticism so that those for whom such communication is intended doubt themselves (e.g. that they are less smart, capable, that their arguments do not stand or partially do not stand), to distort their sense of security in their attitudes and beliefs. It is the nature of all things to have characteristics that can be evaluated in either a positive or negative light. Emphasizing only negative side/characteristics, and keeping silent about positive ones can easily create the impression/belief of inappropriateness, especially for people who cannot/have not permission to defend themselves and repel such attacks. Here the argumentation can be completely false and wrong, which is not important, the goal is important (negative impression that someone or someone wants to create). This technique is very similar to condemnation/judgment in a predominantly negative context where the recipient wants to cause uncertainty about the decision, to create great suspicion so that people lose faith in their own attitudes, opinions, ideas, values, or themselves.

2.19. GIVING FALSE/WRONG ADVICE, INSTRUCTIONS, SUGGESTIONS. Communicating advice, instructions, suggestions that only harm/hinder is a form of destructive communication (actually lying about the purpose of manipulating the recipient of the message) which seeks to disable/slow down the well-being, goal, task of victim(s).

2.20. DESTRUCTIVE CRITICISM WITH EXAGGERATION. This is such criticism that humiliates a person, creates a feeling of insecurity, turns a trifle into a huge mistake, a failure, a fateful event. Some magicians, lawyers, politicians are masters of this technique when they make a story of great importance out of insignificant, minor, unimportant things, i.e. "they make an elephant from a fly". In the media, for example, there are texts and comments on variations of this technique, such as what someone has occasionally dressed from politicians or pop artists, so as to create a negative impression of the person.¹⁷

¹⁶ E.g. famous croatian writer Miroslav Krleža was sometimes incorrectly addressed as: Dr. Krlježa, Krležo, Krešo Miroslav, etc., regardless of the fact that he was the director of the Lexicographic Institute in Zagreb and a top world writer with huge legacy (Čengić, 1987).

¹⁷ E.g. Croatian Del Boy, Nino Raspudić (Member of the Croatian Parliament of the opposition party) <https://www.index.hr/magazin/clanak/hrvatski-del-boy-nino-raspudic/2326767.aspx> (19. 12. 2021.). Comment: "Nino Raspudić on the set of „Only Fool and Horses“ Nino Boy, in the episode in which, together with his wife (Marija Selak Raspudić also member of the Croatian Parliament of the opposition

2.21. COMMUNICATION OF GUILT, REJECTION, REPRESENTATION. The goal of such a communication is to embarrass and evoke feelings of shame in the victim.

2.22. MONOLOGUE/TAKING OVER THE COMMUNICATION. It is about constantly talking about himself, self-attitudes, self-views, self-topics, and not allowing others to say something. Complete inability to listen to others is one of the destructive communication patterns because it effectively destroys the communication relationship.

2.23. GOSSIP/POISONING RELATIONSHIPS. Expressing a bad opinion of someone, in their absence. Sometimes the person being gossiped is not even known, nor has been ever met.

2.24. COMMUNICATION INTERRUPTION IN THE WAY OF SURROUNDING A WALL OF SILENCE. This destructive communication technique means interruption of communication before someone was able to express their desires, needs. This technique informs the interlocutor that he has no interest in continuing communication (most often it is an effort to prevent statements about someone's needs or desires). Also this type of communication is done in tactless (rough) way.

3. Techniques of organizational manipulation

Manipulative techniques are often more deeply elaborated and designed because their purpose is not being directly noticeable and recognizable. For their observation, recognition and cognition are needed cognitive ability, critical thinking and deeper analysis of the phenomenon also a certain temporal commitment ("dealing with") with this „dark“ communication phenomenon. This section lists the basic manipulative techniques observed, which are not final due to the initial situation in this area of management (dark managerial skills/deviant management).

3.1. IDOLATRY. Worship of concepts, notions, images, institutions instead of evaluation according to its contents (e.g. trees, humans, institutions, concepts should be evaluated according to their fruits, i.e. manifestations/results). The goal of idolatry is to create an idol that will be uncritically worshiped. This can be e.g. "race", but also concepts that should not be questioned (with taboo characteristics, e.g. Aryan/non-Aryan race; group 1-privileged/ group 2-deprived), because otherwise it is characterized as blasphemia. Today, generalizations are widely used to generalize polarizations (e.g. globes/flat earth concepts; vaccinated/unvaccinated; rich/poor; leaders/followers, Church (human institution)/God (ideal institution), employees/employers, believers/unbelievers, wolfs/sheeps, etc.

3.2. PROPAGANDA. The term represents thoughtful dissemination of targeted information/misinformation, ideas for one's purposes/achievement of organizational goals. In this way, various ideologies that promote certain idolatry are effectively spread through the media and communication (either public or organizational).¹⁸

party), he procures used, "lovely- jobly" coffins, so he starts collecting signatures for the referendum against covid-certificates.

¹⁸ E.g. fascism promoted the idolatry of Aryan superiority and racial purity, communism the idolatry of the working class, and more recently we face ideological manipulation of Overton's window or normalization of the abnormal (<https://hr.sainte-anastasie.org/articles/psicologia/la-ventana-de-overton.html> 08. 12. 2021.). Opposing and disabling the propaganda window of Overton is figuratively called "breaking the Overton window".

3.3. **GAME CONTROL.** The manipulator seeks to get others (victims) to fit into his reality and see things from the manipulator's perspective (how he wants others to see, believe and behave). In this way manipulator controls social interactions and interpersonal relationships, people (victims) play by its rules thinking of the manipulator in a desirable way. This produce obedience to an authority that has some power (expert, legitimate, referential, power of the powerless), e.g. obedience of worker to management, obedience of believers to church dignitaries, obedience of patients to doctors, obedience of subjects to authority, obedience of students to professors, compliance to socially disadvantaged/in bad health, material and psychological situation. The manipulative technique of establishing control of the game has the greatest potential for adapting and modifying behavior.¹⁹

3.4. **MICROMANAGEMENT.** This manipulative technique is an attempt to completely control (employed) people/victims throughout the day (both working and non-working part of the day) so that the victim is employed not only during their working hours at work, but also in their free private time.²⁰ The purpose of micromanagement is to create such work pressure that the victim does not have time for anything else but to perform the tasks and orders of his boss manipulator. Victims are occupied with duties all of their free time, and tasks arrive constantly via "online" and "offline" modes. The purpose of this technique is total control of subordinates.

3.5. **SABOTAGE/PEST.** This is manipulative technique that prevents someone from achieving success or (self) satisfaction that could jeopardize the power of the manipulator over the manipulated ones. Sabotage can manifest itself in various forms, from creating unfavorable conditions (deprivation, negative discrimination) to directly doing various damages (banning, threatening, inciting others to harm an undesirable/notorious individual, engaging other people, institutions, technology, children, animals)²¹ in order to make victim weak and so keep control over them.

3.6. **SOCIAL PRESSURE/CONFORMIST PRESSURE.** The manipulator uses the social pressure of colleagues to shape the victim's behavior. The rationalized view/opinion is that one should work as everyone does (majority, crowd). Although social pressure is normally present in some extent as a socializing mediator (e.g. organizational socialization), can also be a facilitator of unethical and criminal acts.

3.7. **"HOT-COLD" TECHNIQUE / VICTIM IDEALIZATION-DEPRIVILEGATION.** The manipulator first praises/exalts the victim, portrays him as a positive example, privileges him with petty privileges, and then abruptly deprives him. The goal of this technique is to control the victim in such a way that the victim

¹⁹ Powerful people like to use this technique, so in the application of this manipulative technique it can be heard that workers/citizens are indulged, that they have to high expectations, that they live (to) well, that if bread is expensive, they should cut it into thinner slices, to adjust their current needs and wishes for the betterment of the future, as well as combined with arrogance and arrogant statements, e.g.: "Who does not like to live here (in his home- country) let him stay where he likes (abroad)", etc.

²⁰ The known proverb of manipulator here is: „Trust is good, but control is always much better!“

²¹ Poisoning (spraying the workplace with poisons), use of radiation (placing employees under an antenna or other radiation source), bioterrorism (use of contagion), instructing institutions to harm/cripple (e.g. on public competition), as well as banally feeding a victim to a dog. Here is important to note that someone could have only in his mind the various violent act of against him and this is than most possibly paranoia. Paranoia exist if it is only present in the mind of the victim, but it is not if something like mentioned is objectively present in reality and can be proved, no matter how amazing it seems.

should regain the manipulator's mercy and approval. It induces culture: "When you are in grace you have everything, when you are not you have nothing!" (Similar to the devil's temptation of Jesus in the desert).²²

3.8. **INDUCTION/MANAGEMENT OF FEAR.** This techniques direct the victim to work in a specific way, with often control and intimidation/punishing. The victim in order to avoid embarrassment/punishment (from investigation, dismissal to death threat) feel constant fear not to do anything wrong.

3.9. **INDUCTION OF GUILT.** This technique consist of creating the condition that the victim can be blamed for something. This is achieved by giving many demanding work tasks in an inappropriately short time, and then as the tasks are not performed within the given time and quality, using the victim's guilt to make the manipulator achieve the mental control over the victim. Namely, the victim is induced to think how incompetent (s)he is and to achive self-blame for the unenviable situation.

3.10. **OSTRACISM (exile/ quarantine).** Origin of ostracism is from ancient Greek (fighting technique which eliminate political opponents), in organizational context this technique depicts ignoring the victim's person, not talking, not responding to their words, feelings, inquiries. This is an organizationally very effective technique because people are social beings who find this difficult, especially if it is programmed that the manipulator "incites" the entire social environment against the victim. (cf. Wu, Yim, Kwan & Zhang, 2012).

3.11. **REFUSAL OF APPROVALS.** This technique depicts induction of such situation where any normal functioning of the organization requires some approval/application/completed form/prescribed procedure from the manipulator. Victims thus need the usual and/or special approval of the manipulator. Thus, the manipulator prevents the victim from any work that is beyond the dictates of the manipulator. So by strong work formalization is enabled this type of manipulation.

3.12. **EXTORTION OF FAST REACTION** is technique using artificial shortening of the deadline. It is a manipulative technique of giving a very short time so that the victim reacts quickly without thorough consideration. It is often used in sales, signing employment/credit agreements, mobbing strategies (with the aim of making the victim make a mistake and continuing the abuse based on that mistake), a very short appeal period in a complex case, etc.

3.13. **THE ILLUSION OF CHOICE.** Here is a technique by which the victim is putting in front of a finished act of choice that will illusionally resolve an important problem by victim choice. This violates distributive justice (for example, lottery decision-making and so-called democratic decision-making on important issues of work and life, without essential knowledge/information on the subject of decision-making), because the victim thinks (s)he made the decision, but in fact decision-making is imposed by the manipulator. This produce a paradox in which the victim is asked to make a choice that has already been decided, and the victim is induced with the illusion (cheated) that (s)he has made that choice.

3.14. **BULLYING/MOBING (physical, psychological, economic abuse).** It is about aggressive or subtle intimidation/bringing to a finished act, in order to force certain psychological states and behaviors (fear, humility, material impoverishment).

²² „If you obey me you will have everything you want, if you don't you will suffer“.

Mobbing can be not only on personal but also on organizational/state level than it is called strategic mobbing.²³

3.15. **BLURRING/CONCEALING THE TRUE TRUTH** (colloquial "SLUDGE"). The goal is to gain approval, in a way that confuses one's reason, judgment, perception, memory. This is possible if the manipulator is skilled and intelligent, and „tell stories" to less intelligent and/or subordinates according to the principle of the popular proverb: "It is easy to confuse any shallow mind!"

3.16. **OFFERING „FREE LUNCH“/FREE LITTLE BENEFIT.** This is technique of winning a person for his aim, e.g. with lunch/dinner, a gift, great kindness and extraordinary reception/praise, in order to psychologically commit the victim and get something much more valuable.

3.17. **PREPOTENCY/ARROGANCE.** This manipulation is characterised by looking at others "from above", letting others know that they are "below/less valued in comparison with arrogant" and "worse than arrogant". This manipulative technique seems to take "mental" control over other people and create the illusion of their subordination, and for the arrogant the illusion of their "natural" superiority and "natural" leadership. Pretending to be "above" or "better" is a technique of selling imaginary and non-existent values or existing but significantly lower values, and is also part of impression management techniques.²⁴ The intention is to obtain a higher status/value, and then take a leading (control) role within that and such a status. This technique is often used when there is no real coverage for the power that someone formally has and appropriates (especially with legitimate, expert, reference power). Arrogant people create an unproductive organizational climate, because they often demand privileges/special rights that do not belong to them due to their qualities ("checks without cover").

3.18. **THEFT OF OTHER PEOPLE'S IDEAS, ACHIEVEMENTS, IDENTITY.** This manipulation technique describes folk proverb: "Decorating with other beards feathers". Good parts of other people's achievements and characteristics are stolen from manipulator. This can take on pathological proportions when the boss attributes all the achievements of his team to himself, pretending to be a versatile genius, and treats others as if they were poor and weak-minded.

3.19. **THREATENING GAZE/LOOK.** This is a technique of intimidation with the aim of frightening others, with intention they give up from their claims, attitudes, problem view.

3.20. **PASSIVE AGGRESSION.** Here it is a case of transferring a psychological defense mechanism when frustration is shown not directly on the cause of frustration but indirectly on someone around (usually people of lower status/power who cannot retaliate, take revenge, oppose authority). Using of sarcasm/irony often is a sign of passive aggression, and it can be also used as manipulator tactic to deminish victims.

3.21. **OBLIGATION OF THE VICTIM AT A JOINT MEETING.** The goal is to psychologically force someone to do something (e.g. to an activity that no one

²³ Generating paper money inflation at the macro-organizational level (reducing the value of money) also falls into this category of manipulative abuse, i.e. the subcategory of strategic economic violence by which target group(s) of manipulated people are forcibly impoverished.

²⁴ Impression management uses techniques/strategies: 1) self-promotion, 2) cringe/sycopancy, 3) self-sacrifice, 4) intimidation, and 5) humble request (using the power of the powerless) (cf. Bolino & Turnley, 1999).

wants, that is awkward, has only costs, and mostly no benefit to the executor) in a way that is done publicly. In public/meeting at the explicit request of the leader (boss), the victim has less opportunity to refuse/think about it, and is thus manipulated into consent, even though he or she does not really want to.

3.22. **PUTTING ITEMS ON LONG WAIT/DISPOSAL AFTER A LONG TIME PASS.** This is simple manipulation technique in which an important issue is put aside (on hold) in order to humiliate those interested in resolving that issue and so feel worthless. By not resolving something that is important to people (especially by putting it on a long wait), it humiliates people and puts them in a subordinate position. It is also a corrupt technique to motivate people on hold to shorten the wait and speed up the resolution of their case by motivating the manipulator (corruption tool).

3.23. **TARGET DESIGN OF A HEAVY/NON-COOPERATIVE PERSON.** Behavior that intentionally deprives attention, pretends to be noncooperative in order to model the behavior of others. It is also corruptive tool because this motivate other people to stimulate/motivate such persons to engage in solving their problems.

3.24. **IGNORING AND PUTTING COMMUNICATION ON WAITING.** This means not paying attention to someone, not responding against other people's attempts to communicate. Targeted ignoring is a manipulative technique to discipline the behavior of another. A variation of this tactic is the so-called a promise but not intended to be fulfilled. In fact, it is about "swinging" or creating false hope and inducing expectations: "Now it will, but it is not", "It should happen, first this, then that", "We are not yet in that phase!", "Wait, wait, "Slowly!", "The case is in the process (court and other)!" Putting on hold is a known form of manipulation. People on hold are actually in a state of manipulation because they expect something positive to happen, and in fact nothing is happening or things are really going badly for them. To the privileged and people of power, things are resolved immediately or very quickly.

3.25. **RECRUITING ALLIES FOR "DIRTY JOBS".** The goal of this technique is to keep the manipulator from being detected, so that dirty work for him is done by other individuals or groups (e.g. commissions or specially selected people for such purposes). This is a common technique of manipulators in higher hierarchical and positions of power ("Heads do not get their hands dirty but plan, organize and give orders to get dirty jobs done!").

3.26. **PLAYING/ACTING THE VICTIM, WEAKNESSES/DISABILITIES.** The manipulator plays the victim, in order to provoke a feeling of regret/pity, the so-called using the power of the powerless (Bolino&Turnley, 1999; Bogdanović, 2003).

4. Destructive organizational communication and manipulation in the function of functional organizational stupidity and stupidity management

Destructive organizational communication and manipulation aims to reduce the resources of growth and development as well as people's resistance to the goals of manipulators. Often the consequences are manifested in functional stupidity, which is further aided by the management of stupidity. Inability or lack of motivation to use intellectual resources or intelligence is often the result of manipulation and destructive organizational communications (people become functionally stupid and less motivated/unmotivated to respond to manipulation and destructive communication). Lack of thinking, thorough thinking and finding the reasons why it works the way it is

done helps maintain the existing organizational (social) order, and is often exacerbated by manipulative untruths, wrongdoing, promotes existing power and relations of domination and emphasizes conformism (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). At the same time, the difference between rhetorical publicly proclaimed norms and real but secret counter-norms (valid) creates a sense of hypocrisy (hypocrisy), especially in organizations that are information- and knowledge-intensive. A brief overview of proclaimed norms and secret counter-norms is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Organizational norms and counter-norms as a cause of hypocrisy and organizational stupidity

Organizational norms (proclaimed) -so-called. public norms (BRIGHT SIDE NORMS)	Organizational counter-norms (actually used) - the so-called secret norms (DARK SIDE NORMS)
Be open and honest	Be secretive and deceitful
Always follow the rules	Use whatever it takes to get the job done
Be profitable	Use available resources or lose them
Take responsibility	Transfer responsibility to another
Be a team player	Take credit for your own activities, publicly promote your credit
Be loyal to your organization	Tell/say bad things about your organization

Source: Sims&Sausser Jr. (2014), p. 45-56 according Jansen&Von Glinow, 1985.

A great example of maintaining functional stupidity is when leadership/government says only desirable and good things about the organization/society/state. Functional stupidity is often created on the basis of irrational belief in complex economic and financial models as well as on the basis of inadequacy of leadership practices (derived from misconceptions, general wisdom, often without any empirical data or fictitious empirical data). When partial knowledge or pseudo-scientific leadership becomes "the way it works", it happens organizational/social stupidity. Leadership also becomes stupid if it is completely abstract, unrelated to reality (it functions in its "imaginary mental bubble"), and e.g. accepts only pure macroeconomic science (as an uncritical mainstream) as the main choice/input resource. Functional stupidity promotes stupidity management that has the following characteristics (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012):

1. Lack of thinking about rules, beliefs, expectations (acceptance of following the orders/orders of the hierarchy regardless of the meaning and content of the order/orders).
2. Lack of reasonable explanation based on arguments, lack of explanation for actions taken, refraining from questions, refraining from seeking explanations in administrative regulations, tradition and fashion (key aspect in the formation of functional stupidity).
3. Lack of independent thorough thinking in such a way that short-sightedness (ill-conceived/partial solutions) are applied to effectively achieve the goal, without knowledge of the broader aspects of the problem. There are no independent questions about what the ultimate goal is, whether the goal is

right and whether the goal makes sense, and what are the appropriate means to achieve the goal. The lack of answers to these questions creates stupidity.

4. Lack of motivation, such as lack of curiosity, lack of openness, personality of the "organizational man" type ("I think and do as it is ordered!") who uncritically obeys, or a professional worker who considers the organizational paradigm unquestionable, because because that's how it should be.
5. Emotional lack due to fear, insecurity, mechanisms of power, domination and coercion (threat of punishment and violence) in the organization.

The main mechanisms of stupidity management are marginalization of doubts, blocking information about doubts, structuring organizational communication in a way that facilitates and encourages positive and easily understood stories, negative and ambiguous stories are marginalized or even banned.

Stupidity management deals with limiting the inappropriate "smart", limiting people in the intellectual or motivational-emotional field. The main supporting factors are (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012):

1. Limitation of rationality (due to lack of time, information, intellectual capacity, lack of knowledge about the problem, etc.).
2. Competences from one area are uncritically extend to competencies in another area (for example, an aircraft manufacturing expert cannot be a neurosurgeon expert and vice versa - stupidity inevitably happens here).
3. Recklessness (acting before thorough thinking and systematic decision-making).
4. Lack of intellect (primary decision-making based on strong emotions and passions - often present in emotionally demanding situations).
5. Denial of one's own ignorance (reliance on incomplete knowledge or pseudo-knowledge where the mediating factor is managerial/political vanity).
6. Fear and anxiety.
7. Insecurity (existential or psychological).
8. Refusal to disturb organizational harmony and the existing way of functioning.
9. Power and policy mechanisms (regulations requiring non-use of intellectual resources).

From this brief overview, it is apparent that all of these factors promote functional stupidity. If the leadership is actively working for its own benefit and promotion, using various manipulations and destructive communication patterns, optimal smart solutions cannot be expected, and the organization easy arrive in a state of organizational stupidity. Organizational stupidity is very present in modern organizational, social and political life, so it is not true to say that organizations/societies/states are getting smarter, because it is a huge empirical substrate about reduced intelligence and organizational stupidity.²⁵

²⁵ In a time of rapid technical and technological progress, the saying can be heard: "Everything is getting smarter except people!".

Stupidity is a very dangerous phenomenon (practically it has *unlimited power to destroy everything!*), which is very difficult to fight, especially if it is programmed (by manipulation and destructive organizational communication), and if it is not noticed and reacted in time (preventively or reactively), there is potential to create confusion, stagnation and chaos.

5. Measures to reduce destructive organizational communication and manipulation and promote organizational smartness

Basic measures concerning any psycho-social phenomenon can basically be divided into two basic parts: (a) *preventive* measures and (b) *reactive* measures. Prevention is a successful strategy because it is often better to "prevent than cure", but prevention also has certain costs. A reactive strategy is necessary to respond to unwanted communication and manipulation and thus thwart in creating greater organizational damage. So it can be recommended:

(a) Preventive organizational measures:

a1) Improving HRM practices in recruitment and selection of employees. Employees who are prone to destructive communication and manipulation (psychopathic or sociopathic profile) can be detected before engaging in the organization, but this requires additional training of staff engaged in professional selection (psychodiagnostics) in recognizing discrete, malignant phenomena and behaviors to prevent possible negative effects of manipulative and communicatively destructive people.

a2) Improving psychosocial working conditions. Organizational conditions such as the struggle for resources between departments, unequal treatment (discrimination), lack of structure and rules, misunderstanding of organizational values, non-response to hypocrisy, lead to the fact that manipulations and destructive organizational communications are encouraged, especially if they have neutral or even rewarding consequences.

a3) Ethical education with the promotion of spiritual values and management. E.g. moral management/management maximization (Sikula, 1996), service management with the promotion and living of original human values: right treatment, truth, peace, love and non-violence through organizational socialization can help prevent negative/destructive communication/manipulation and behavioral phenomena.

(b) Reactive organizational measures:

b1) Prompt response of management to emerging forms of destructive organizational communication and manipulation in order to timely eliminate the destructive communication effects of human resources and crises, such as disturbed interpersonal relationships, job dissatisfaction, poor work motivation/engagement, engaging in organizational intrigues, political behaviors, are not organizational features that create value. Managerial awareness of the problem of destructive communication and manipulation is crucial to be able to respond to it in a timely manner.

b2) Prompt response of employees to emerging forms of destructive organizational communication and manipulation. Open, unambiguous and effective communication reduces the psychological space for manipulative behaviors. Honesty,

a culture of right behavior and truth is important not only as a preventive but also a reactive measure in recognizing and dealing with destructive communication and manipulative organizational patterns.

b3) Control reactive mechanisms for spotting and dealing with functional organizational stupidity and stupidity management and punishing destructive communication and manipulation. The best way to extinguish certain unwanted behavior, and then destructive-manipulative communications/behavior, proved to be a large and time-fast punishment after the offense/unwanted behavior (Čudina-Obradović, 1991). An important reactive control mechanism are the so-called „deviant organizational members“ who may have the role of internal organizational whistleblower (Bogdanović & Filip, 2018). Therefore, it is suggested to have the so-called. "Deviant" member²⁶ (Cotu, 2009), that is, such a man who does not think like others and questions himself and others, e.g.: “And why do we do that at all?“, „Why do we do it that way?“ Such a member should ideally exist in the organization or be a consultant to the organization with the authority and responsibility to warn of "problematic/bad deeds". The "deviant" member of the organization is extremely important, because through critical thinking it encourages creativity (new original ideas) and learning. In teamwork, the empirical fact is that a team with a "deviant" member achieves superior performance than teams without such a member, and in many cases "deviant thinkers" are a source of great innovation, and the loss of a "deviant" team member usually means whole team becomes average (Cotu, 2009).

6. Conclusion

Destructive forms of communication and manipulation are becoming part of the scientific branch of organization and management, more precisely the specialist field of dark management skills (black art of management) and the dark side of management (dark/deviant side of management). Since there is no organization in which there is no deviant behavior, different manifestations of destructive communication and manipulation of different frequency and intensity of occurrence occur in each organization.

In the context of dealing with these phenomena and the growing problems in times of crisis, this paper listed and explained some of the observed forms of destructive organizational communication and manipulation (N=50) with the aim of their timely detection, prevention (preventive measures) and therapy. The fact is that destructive organizational communication and manipulation is a phenomenon that can result in a dangerous state of functional organizational stupidity and stupidity management, so it is very important to recognize the phenomenon, react to it as a negative organizational phenomenon by preventing and/or reactively shutting down or reshaping.

To deal with destructive organizational communication and manipulation, *preventive* measures (improving the quality of professional selection professionals, improving psychosocial working conditions, ethical education) and *reactive* measures (prompt response of managers and employees to manifestations of destructive

²⁶ A typical "deviant" thinker was, for example, the Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža (1893-1981). His statement is well-known: "I think wrong since I think, I never thought right, I always have something to answer for - for the wrong way of thinking or looking" (Krleža, M., July 6, 1981 according to Čengić, 1987).

organizational communication and manipulation, where punishment occurs as good reactive measure) are proposed. The phenomenon of stupidity management and targeted creation of functional organizational stupidity should also be raised, so that the management itself would not use manipulation and destructive organizational communication to achieve its partial goals according to the "make stupid and rule!" concept. Therefore it is important to conclude that explicated destructive and manipulation technique with coping measures are the way to the smarter organizational solutions by means of smarter organizational communication.

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