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# **Leader–member exchange, organizational citizenship behaviours and performance of Ghanaian Technical University Lecturers**

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**This study investigates the mediating role of organizational citizenship behaviours (OCBs) on the leader-member exchange (LMX) and employee performance relation and the degree to which work experience moderates the relation between leader-member exchange and OCBs. Lecturers from six technical universities in Ghana, making up three hundred and thirty-six lecturers, were selected using convenience sampling. The participants completed self-administered surveys. OCBs fully mediated the association between LMX and employee performance. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the interplay between LMX and work experience on OCBs is compensatory in nature such that as work experience increases, the positive association between LMX and OCBs decrease. Managers of higher education institutions should create enabling work environments that encourage high-quality LMX and citizenship behaviours. Moreover, as work experience tends to attenuate the positive influence of LMX on OCBs, managers in higher education should focus their attention on employees with low rather than high work experience. This research adds to the employee performance literature through examining a novel link among leader-member exchange, organizational citizenship behaviours and performance.**

**Key words:** Leader-member exchange, organizational citizenship behaviours, Ghana, Technical University.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Ghana's transition to a knowledge economy, coupled with accelerating complexities regarding the demands for

lecturers and managers in higher education institutions (HEI), is pressuring HEIs, especially academic staff

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members and institutions transitioning to university status to holistically support teaching, learning and the development of a research culture to enhance university performance (Ho et al., 2013; Jones et al., 2017;

Technical University ACT, 2016). Such changes require leadership interactions in HEIs and actions that promote higher-education goals that ultimately lead to effective performance. Hogg et al. (2005) assert that leadership is a social influence process that shapes the cognitive experience established on social relations, ultimately influencing group life and the team engagement of group members. Social exchange theory (SET) explains social and interpersonal behaviour as social exchanges of valuable resources (for instance, social support) and has the potential to explain a wide range of interpersonal interactions in organizational settings (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). In line with the SET, if organizational members receive support through the interpersonal interactions they engage in, they tend to reciprocate and offer support in return. Following these basic tenets of SET the Leader-Member-Exchange (LMX) shows that employees tend to increase their task engagement when they experience high rather than low quality exchanges (LMX) with their leaders. A leader's relational approach and personal attention toward a subordinate's social and work life are thus paramount to understanding such behaviours (Khan and Malik, 2017). LMX emphasizes the value of harmonious relationships between leaders and subordinates as well as argues that team and organizational performance is fostered when leaders and subordinates develop mature and rewarding relationships (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Haspari et al., 2019; Lo et al., 2006). Empirical research suggests that LMX predicts organizational citizenship behaviours (OCBs) because employees engaged in high-quality relations with their supervisors also tend to engage in behaviours that support others in their work environment and ultimately increase performance (Organ, 1998; Martin et al., 2016). OCBs constitute informal modes of cooperation and contributions (that is, job behaviours) in which individuals engage to achieve job satisfaction and perceived fairness at work (Organ, 2018). Empirical research to date shows that OCBs are essential to performance, and such behaviours are often triggered by the support and effort of leaders (Khan and Malik, 2017; Organ, 2018).

Although LMX promotes OCBs in higher education (Alabi, 2012; Power, 2013), the complex relationship between LMX, OCBs, and performance of lecturers as contributors to knowledge and national development, especially in Ghana, remain under examined and thus should be further explored (Atatsi et al., 2019). Research on OCBs in Ghana focuses on workforce in general organizational contexts (Asiedu et al., 2014; Gyekye and Haybatollabi, 2015; Mensah and Bawole, 2018), and the studies on lecturers' OCBs in higher education have not received much attention (Alabi, 2012; Inelmen et al., 2017).

Epitropaki and Martin (1999) show that demographics such as work tenure/experience affect the quality of leader-member exchanges in HEI. The accumulation of individual qualitative and quantitative work experiences during the years impacts on employees' cognitive and affective responses at work (Forteza and Prieto, 1994; Tesluk and Jacobs, 1998) and ultimately impact on their engagement in interpersonal relationships at work as well. However, only few empirical studies explored the way in which tenure and work experience play out in the relational landscape at work (Ng and Feldman, 2010), especially because work tenure/experience are commonly used as control variables (Cogliser et al., 2009; Ng and Feldman, 2013). It was argued that work tenure and work experience are contingencies of the way in which LMX affects individual behaviours and OCB. A moderation argument for work tenure was built, based on previous research showing that individual and contextual factors related to work experience bring valuable work-related skills, knowledge and incentives fostering individual and organizational outcomes (Lance et al., 1989; Ng and Feldman, 2010; Tesluk and Jacobs, 1988). In the current study, work experiences as number of years a person has been in a workforce or has been working was evaluated (Kegans et al., 2012; McDaniel et al., 1988) and intend to examine the degree to which work experience moderates the influence of LMX on OCB among higher-education lecturers.

In this paper, we set out to investigate LMX, OCBs, work experience, and performance of lecturers in Ghanaian technical universities. This study is among the first to explore in an integrated model, the mediating role of OCB in the relationship between LMX and performance as well as the moderating role of work experience on the relationship between LMX and OCB. The study has two important contributions. First, it contributes to the studies on teacher performance in higher education setting by exploring the mechanisms and contingencies that explain the association between LMX and individual performance. Secondly, it contributes to the scarce empirical evidence from the African higher education by testing this model in Ghanaian context, in which higher education is expected to make major contributions to economic and social development (Coker-Kolo and Darley, 2013; Morley et al., 2009).

### **Employee performance defined**

Central to any organization's growth is employee performance, a multi-dimensional concept (that is, task performance, citizenship behaviour, counter-productive behaviour), with each dimension referring to specific dimensions of performance, from individual standalone performance to the quality of interpersonal relations with other employees that ultimately impact overall performance of groups and organizations (Atatsi et al.,

2019; Bergeron et al., 2014; Huei et al., 2014; Martin et al., 2016; Viswesvaran and Ones, 2002). Despite the significance of individual performance in organizations, little consensus exists regarding a definition for employee performance. Employee performance instruments evaluate either behaviours employees engaged in or outcomes of their actions (Campbell and Wiernik, 2015). Borman and Motowidlo (1993 p.71) argue that employee performance represents "the proficiency with which incumbents perform activities that are formally recognized as part of their jobs; activities that contribute to the organization's technical core either directly by implementing a part of its technical process, or indirectly by providing it with needed materials or services". Janssen and Van Yperen (2004) suggest that employee performance results from the realization of specific actions required through an employee's job description that the employer subsequently appraises and rewards.

Building on these characterizations, Viswesvaran and Ones (2000) describe job performance as a notional concept because: a) one cannot point to something physical and concrete and state that it is job performance and one can only point out the manifestations of the construct, and b) there are many manifestations that indicate job performance. This characterization is unsurprising since as Schmidt (1993) suggests, and corroborated by Pulakos et al. (2000), Masa'deh et al. (2017), Viswesvaran (2001) and Harari et al. (2014) that job performance (especially in knowledge intensive jobs) can be attributed to work dynamism, innovations, emergence of the knowledge management, knowledge-sharing, and transfer in contemporary work environments, and dimensions of employee performance will continue to adapt to explain current situations. This study examines employee performance as task-related performance, a stand-alone construct introduced by Viswesvaran and Ones (2000) that measures how well employees perform his/her job as prescribed in their job descriptions. We use Viswesvaran and Ones's (2000) characterization and refer to employee or job performance as "scalable actions, behaviour, and outcomes that employees engage in or bring about that are linked with and can contribute to organizational goals" (Viswesvaran and One 2000, p. 216).

### **LMX, OCB, and Employee performance**

As prompts of enhanced performance, leader-member relationships have attracted researchers' attention for several decades. To date, mediators like role clarity, job satisfaction, trust, motivation empowerment and organizational commitment were used to explain the positive association between LMX and job performance (Martin et al., 2016). These findings were extended by arguing that relational factors may play a mediating role as well. Grounded in SET (Blau, 1964), LMX suggests that reciprocal relationships between supervisors and

subordinates shape individual well-being and performance. According to SET, employees engaged in harmonious social interactions from which they derive personal rewards (or resources) tend to reciprocate and share resources or social support with other employees. The tenets of the SET were built on to test an integrative model in which we argue that the positive association between LMX and employee performance is explained by relational mechanisms rooted in social exchange. Uhl-Bien (2006) identifies LMX as a prime leadership approach that emphasises and exemplifies the positive role of social relationships for performance outcomes. It describes a distinct quality of relationship (that is, high or low) between a leader/supervisor and a subordinate over time, and the extent of emotional aid and interchange of valued job-related resources (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Gerstner and Day, 1997; Han et al., 2018; Pellegrini and Scandura, 2006; Wayne and Green, 1993). Quality LMX relationships are thus indicators of robust relationships based on former positive interactions with leaders that concur with employees' expectations. Such employees experiencing high quality LMX are thus able to access resources that they value and experience better relationships than those in a low quality LMX groups do (Sue-Chan et al., 2011). Besides employment contracts, high-quality associations are established on trust, loyalty, obligation, mutual liking, respect and loyalty, coupled with formal monetary exchanges, while low-quality relations are built solely on employment contracts and pure economic exchanges (Khan and Malik, 2017; Khorakian and Sharifirad, 2019). Consequently, employees in high-quality relationships ultimately experience improved work performance (Stoffers et al., 2014) and commitment toward leaders and the organization (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Martin et al., 2016; Sue-Chan et al., 2011). Chan and Mak (2012), Law et al. (2010), Kim et al. (2015), shows a positive influence of LMX on employee performance in research conducted in profit and non-profit organizations in Hong Kong and China, while Alabi (2012) explores the same relationships in HEIs in the Ghana.

In line with SET, it was argued that if members experience high quality LMX they will tend to reciprocate and share resources, time and effort with their colleagues (Anand, Vidyarthi and Rolnicki, 2018). In other words, the quality of LMX in leader-employee dyads influence employee attitudes, capabilities and their tendency of reciprocating by engaging in performance-related behaviours that will support their organization (Breevaart et al., 2015; Stoffers et al., 2014). Among these reciprocation behaviours are OCBs, which Organ (1988, p.4) define as "individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization". OCB behaviours refer to voluntary activities undertaken by employees beyond prescribed job requirements that benefit individuals, groups, and the organization and Organ's 5-factor model

of OCBs consists of altruism, sportsmanship, courtesy, civic virtue, and conscientiousness (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff et al., 2000; Podsakoff et al., 2009). Creating a workplace that promotes such OCB is crucial to the organization as a whole, and dispositional factors, such as relational leader exchanges, predispose employees to engage in OCBs (Graen and Scandura, 1987; Organ and Ryan, 1995; Podsakoff et al., 2000). According to Bolino (1999), employees who seek to promote their image and performance, and who realise the limitations in their in-role work performance, inevitably focuses on OCBs to achieve their performance goals. When leaders pioneer social exchanges by showing commendatory treatment on some employees, those employees tend to reciprocate by working harder in the interest of leader and organization (Loi et al., 2011; Qi et al., 2019). Thus, employees' work-related behaviours depend on treatment from supervisors, with research highlighting positive outcomes of LMX and citizenship behaviours (Ilies et al., 2007; Loi et al., 2011; Rockstuhl et al., 2012).

Citizenship behaviours are conducive for performance in organizations as they enable good quality social interactions, help reciprocation and social support that will eventually facilitate coordination reduce conflicts and foster task engagement (Naqshbandi et al., 2016; Smith et al., 1983; Podsakoff and Mackenzie, 1997; Rose, 2016). Since LMX represents the quality of exchanges, high LMX creates a context conducive to employees engaging in OCBs and performing better consequently. Therefore the hypothesis is that:

H1: Organizational citizenship behaviours mediate the relationship between LMX and employee performance.

### **Work experience as moderator in the LMX-OCB relationship**

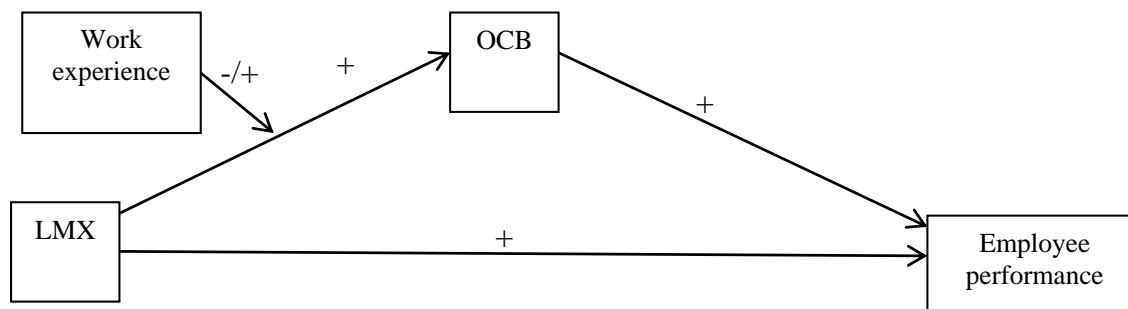
Research to date showed that the likely association between LMX and OCB is contingent on a factors related to the leader (Anand et al., 2018); while variables related to the employees, like their work experience received little to no attention so far. In this study, work experience was operationalized as the number of years an employee has been working. Such a conceptualization links experience to the total exposure time one has to task and organizational factors that ultimately form the context in which one's expertise is created (Lance et al., 1989; Ng and Feldman, 2010; Tesluk and Jacobs, 1988). Work experience is associated with OCB through work-value balance (Kegans et al., 2012), and work experience may lead to accumulation of both human and social capital that foster OCBs (Ng and Feldman, 2010, 2011). However, engagement in OCBs may vary for employees with different work experiences (Dirican and Erdil, 2016; Ng and Feldman 2011; Sethi, 2019).

Research suggests that LMX relates positively to

OCBs, but little is known about the effects of moderators, such as work experience, on the relationship (Cogliser et al., 2009; Martin et al., 2016). Research shows a positive relationships between work tenure and job behaviours, but little theoretical and empirical research assesses work tenure's and experience's effect on employee outcomes (Ng and Feldman, 2010; Sturman, 2003; Wright and Bonett, 2002). The quality of social relationship is vital to shaping employee work experiences (Brower et al., 2000), and employers and employees enjoy beneficial work outcomes of such relationships (Cogliser et al., 2009; Ishak, 2005). Understanding the effects of work experience on the LMX-OCB relationship is essential to enabling practitioners to make functional changes and thus improve individual work performance (Kim et al., 2015; Ucanok, 2008).

Two contrary theoretical reasons explain the outcomes of work experience in relationship to employee OCBs. Some proponents argue that inexperienced workers, aiming to accumulate as fast as possible new perspectives on work performance, experiment with novel strategies that have the potential to improve the work context as well; while more experienced employees who already possess a range of work strategies through years of experience may lack such engagement (Kim et al., 2015). This explanation might link to the honeymoon effect, described by Bonett and Wright (2002) and Huang et al. (2006). It argues that new employees' have a high degree of enthusiasm toward work that promotes OCB, especially when the LMX is high. LMX is expected to be more beneficial to OCB when it triggers the reciprocation motives (employees are ready to help others outside of their work task when they were helped themselves). As such employees with little work experience working in contexts with high quality LMX are most likely to feel supported by their supervisors and in exchange be ready to help others as well. As a consequence, in this conceptual perspective the interplay between LMX and work experience is compensatory in nature.

Other research suggest that employees with greater work experience value their work more and have accumulated during the years relationship-specific knowledge, skills and expertise that encourage OCBs (Kegans et al., 2012; Ng and Feldman, 2010; Sturman, 2003). This argument is based on the premise that as individuals spend more years working, they acquire greater human (that is, expertise and knowledge about business processes and strategies; Becker, 1964) and social capital (that is, social network of relationships in and outside of work environments, Burt, 1992). As a consequence the accumulation of human and social capital promotes OCBs (Ng and Feldman, 2011; Slaughter et al., 2007). According to these arguments, LMX will facilitate the engagement in OCB especially for employees with high work experience that already have accumulated substantial human and social capital. This



**Figure 1.** Overall conceptual model.

second perspective focuses on a capital accumulation perspective, assuming lecturers' OCBs increase with work experience and the LMX adds to this effect a multiplicative fashion. Therefore LMX influences OCBs (Li et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2016) and work experience represents a contingency that accentuates the positive association between LMX and OCBs. Given these two opposing views on the moderating role of work experience, we formulate an exploratory hypothesis (phrased as two competing hypotheses) on the moderating role of work experience in the relationship between LMX and OCBs:

H2: The positive effect of leader-member exchange on organizational citizenship behaviours is moderated by work experience such that: (a) the effect increases with work experience VS (b) the effect decreases with greater work experience.

The overall theoretical model is presented in Figure 1.

## METHODOLOGY

The respondents for this study were Ghanaian technical university lecturers. a quantitative design was used to collect data using a cross-sectional survey. Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect data from faculty members through convenience sampling due to time and cost limits. Responses were elicited from 498 lecturers across six technical universities in six regions of Ghana. Of these, 162 returned incomplete responses and were removed from analysis, leaving 336 usable surveys (67.5% response rate).

## Measures

### Employee performance

Employee performance was evaluated using a validated scale from Rodwell et al. (1998). The construct comprises 9 items scored on a Likert-type scale that ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Sample items included "I am currently working at my best performance level", "I set very high standards for my work", "I am one of the best at the work I do", "My work is always of high quality," and "I am proud of my work performance." Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was .72. Given the fact that the individual performance scale is multi-dimensional, we have used the

dominant factor score as indicator of the underlying dominant factor (namely individual performance). In computing the dominant factor score, the Bartlett's approach was used, as this approach makes it possible to obtain the "true dominant factor score of the variable" (DiStefano et al., 2009).

### Leader-member exchange

Developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), LMX 7 was used to assess respondents' perceptions of LMX quality. The scale consisted of seven items that were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale and characterised the overall effectiveness of dyads between leaders and subordinates. Sample items included, "Do you know where you stand with your leader (follower)... [and] do you usually know how satisfied your leader (follower) is with what you do?" (1= rarely, 5=very often), "I have enough confidence in my leader (follower) that I would defend and justify his or her decision if he or she were not present to do so" (1 =strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .85. The overall LMX score was also computed using the Bartlett's approach, by saving the dominant factor score as the scale score for further analyses (DiStefano et al., 2009)

### Organizational citizenship behaviour

OCBs were measured using Podsakoff et al.'s (1990) 24-item scale and scored on a 7-point Likert-scale. Sample items included "I help others who have heavy workloads"(altruism), "My attendance at work is above the norm"(conscientiousness), "I am a classic' squeaky wheel' that needs greasing" (sportsmanship), "I take steps to try to prevent problems with other employees" (courtesy), and "I attend functions that are not required, but help the company image"(civic virtue). The general score for OCBs was obtained using the Bartlett dominant factor score and Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was 0.86.

### Work tenure/experience

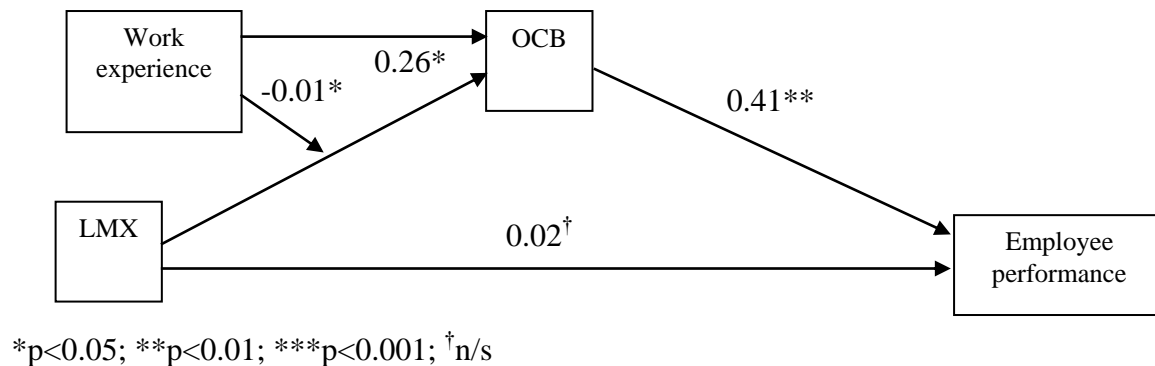
Respondents were asked to report the number of years they have been working and we have used this as a continuous variable to reflect work tenure in our analyses.

## RESULTS

PROCESS macros was used to analyse data (Hayes,

**Table 1.** Conditional effects of work experience.

| Work experience | LMX to OCB Effect Size (SE) | 95% confidence Interval |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Low             | 0.14 (.04)                  | [0.08, 0.25]            |
| Average         | 0.10 (.03)                  | [0.06, .17]             |
| High            | 0.07 (.03)                  | [0.02, 0.14]            |

**Figure 2.** Results of the mediation analysis.

2017) as this statistical procedure allows the simultaneous estimation of mediation and moderation effect and it can handle asymmetric distributions when the normal distribution assumptions are not tenable. Based on a resampling procedure, the indirect effect of LMX on performance was estimated using OCB as a mediator (PROCESS Model 4). To account for potential confounding effects of the moderator that was entered during subsequent analyses, work experience was also included as a control variable. Results suggest that the indirect effect was significant (effect size=.10, SE=.03,  $CI_{low} = .056$ ;  $CI_{high} = .165$ ), supporting H1. The influence of LMX on OCBs was positive and significant ( $B=.24$ ,  $SE=.05$ ,  $p<.0001$ ), and the influence on OCBs on performance was also positive ( $B = .40$ ,  $SE=.05$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). Since the remaining influence of LMX on performance was non-significant when OCB was entered in the model as a mediator ( $B = .01$ ,  $SE=.05$ ,  $p=.73$ ), it can be concluded that the mediation was full rather than partial. To test H2, PROCESS Model 7, which estimates conditional mediation on work experience was used. Results suggest that moderation by work experience in the relationship between LMX and OCB is significant ( $B = -.01$ ,  $SE=.006$ ,  $p=.04$ ), supporting H2. The conditional effects are presented in Table 1, and results of the overall mediation model are shown in Figure 2. The magnitude of the positive effect of LMX on OCB decreased with work experience, supporting H2 (b). Thus, it was argued that work experience seems to substitute the beneficial relational effects of LMX on OCB, and work experience therefore motivates OCBs. This argument is also

supported by a significant association between work experience and OCBs ( $B=.023$ ,  $SE=.006$ ,  $p=.0005$ ), suggesting that as work experience increases, employees engage in more or rather than less OCBs.

## DISCUSSION

Given the importance of individual performance in enhancing the value and goals of an organization, this study tested an LMX, OCB, and employee performance mediation model, exploring moderation by work tenure on the LMX–OCB relationship of lecturers in Ghanaian technical universities. These results support a positive relationship between LMX and OCBs, and between OCBs and employee performance. This study contributes to employee performance literature by showing that the beneficial effects of LMX on individual performance can be explained by the engagement in OCBs. In other words, employees that work in contexts in which the quality of their relationships with the supervisors is high tend to perform better because they engage in OCBs. In line with the SET OCBs represent a relational mechanism; possible related to reciprocation and reciprocity norms, that explains the relationship between LMX and performance outcomes.

The context of this study offers cultural insights from Ghana regarding the effects of LMX, OCBs, and performance relationships. Results concur with extant research that suggests that quality LMX is an antecedent of OCBs (Duong, 2011; Han et al., 2018; Khan and Malik,

2017; Martin et al., 2016). The results are in line with the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) explaining that high-quality relationships between leaders and subordinates that create a sense of reciprocity and thus compel employees to exert extra effort through OCBs and result in performance. Although our results show that the remaining direct relationship between LMX and employee performance is not significant, other factors may be at play in explaining the relationship. This full mediation was rather surprising in light of previous research that documented a positive association between LMX and individual performance. One explanation is the Ghanaian culture, characterised by collectivism and high power distance, high-quality exchanges offer opportunities for employees to be in a leader's in-group, hence the need for reciprocity through OCBs.

This study also speaks to the importance of OCBs in higher education and their significance in the growth and maturation of institutions/organizations in a global-knowledge, competitive business context (Khan and Malik, 2017). Results for H2 suggest that the interplay between work experience and LMX is compensatory in nature namely the positive effects of LMX on OCB decrease as work experience increases. This finding is in line with the honeymoon effect among low-experienced employees since they come to an organization with needs, desires, skills, and abilities, and expect that their skills and abilities can be used to meet their needs. Consequently, when they experience high LMX they engage in OCBs and expend effort to achieve organizational goals (Chan and Mak, 2014; Harris et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2006; Ibrahim and Amin, 2014; Wright and Bonnet, 2002).

Experienced employees might indirectly respond to challenging work by withdrawing commitment to work, becoming burned out, less motivated, or apathetic (Wright and Bonnet 1997). Although such employees demonstrate loyalty to the organization, they may approach work activities more mechanically as they approach retirement (Huang et al., 2006; Chan and Mak, 2014; Rosen and Jerdee, 1976; Wright and Bonett, 1997). If this explanation is accurate, the effect of LMX on OCB and ultimately their performance tends to be lower. Wright and Bonett (2002) support this argument; committed employees with short tenures perform better than workers with long tenures do. Another explanation is based on the importance of reciprocity and social interaction perceptions. Highly experienced, tenured workers build strong, durable interpersonal relationships with spouses, family, and friends due to a need for status and affection for status and affection (Steverink and Lindenberg, 2006), but younger employees focus on work-life balance, opportunities to develop skills, and pay associated with performance (Finegold et al., 2002). For employees with less work experience, it becomes more important to reciprocate at work rather than in the family domain; therefore for this group of employees, the

positive effect of LMX on OCBs tends to be higher than for those with high work experience.

### Limitations and directions for future research

Further exploration of mediation and moderation of OCB in relation to other variables related to reciprocation in social interactions (such as social support and learning in team contexts), would extend understanding of OCBs and performance in HEIs. Moreover, comparative, cross-cultural studies of lecturers that examine disparities of mechanisms through which OCBs influence LMX, performance, tenure, and other variables should be conducted to assess these concepts from various cultural perspectives. With exchanges of faculty members among HEIs globally, research should examine LMX, power distance, and OCBs to align empirical results with associated cultures and help managers, practitioners, and stakeholders of HEIs deal with cultural challenges. A limitation of the study is that it used a cross-sectional approach that evaluated globally the OCBs and more fine-grained investigations are required to further understand the intricate relationship between LMX and OCBs. For example, focus groups could also be used to elicit multiple responses from lecturers on divergent perspectives related to LMX, OCBs, tenure, and performance to assess Ghanaian technical university lecturers' perceptions regarding these concepts and their relevance to higher education in Ghana. Being a cross-sectional study, our results do not warrant causal claims and future research could try to use instrumental variables in field research or experimental designs to further explore the causal association between LMX and OCB. Finally, another limitation of the study is the fact that all data were collected from the same source; therefore common-method bias is likely to have impacted the results (Podsakoff et al., 2011). However, common method bias is less likely to lead to overestimation of interaction effects (Siemsen et al., 2010); therefore it can be concluded that the results for the interaction effect are less likely to be affected by common method bias. The scales have good internal consistency, yet the Cronbach's alpha for the employee performance scale was rather low. Future research could rely on data collected from multiple sources and performance data for example could be based on supervisor ratings or on some established metrics of academic impact instead of using self-reports as did in this research.

### Practical implications

This study highlights to stakeholders, managers, and practitioners in Ghanaian HEIs, the importance of LMX when promoting core mandates of faculty and facilitating an enabling work environment. The study provides



insights and contributes to literature on LMX, OCBs, work experience, and performance of lecturers in Ghana's public education sector. Teachers (especially the ones with less work experience) tend to engage in OCB when they experience good relationships with their supervisors. The most important managerial insight refers therefore to providing good supervisory support, especially to those with little work experience. High quality LMX is conducive for OCBs that are ultimately reflected in employee performance. Given how critical work experience is in influencing employees' cognitive and affective reactions to OCBs (Forteza and Prieto, 1994) and in development of knowledge and skills in higher education, practitioners must pay attention to both qualitative and quantitative components of high-work-experience employees. Attention should also be paid to LMX and extra-role behaviours to identify expertise during learning and development of abilities and skills necessary for the performance in tertiary education (Lance et al., 1989; Morrison and Branter, 1992; Tesluk and Jacobs, 1998). Such attention shapes the quality of leadership, performance, and socioeconomic growth of Ghana in the long-term.

## Conclusion

Given the importance of lecturers' performance in higher education, it is essential for stakeholders, practitioners, and managers of HEIs to understand the interactions of variables that influence performance. Results from the current study suggest OCBs mediate the effect of LMX on performance, and the positive association between OCB and LMS is moderated by work experience. From a stakeholder viewpoint, this study represents a reference for leaders and supervisors, especially those in African and Ghanaian HEIs, who want to enhance the performance of faculty members.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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