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## Transactional Leadership, Affective Commitment, and Workplace Deviance: Does Onboarding Experience Moderate the Relationship? Evidence from Nigeria

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### Abstract

Workplace deviance as a global phenomenon has become pervasive among academics and a thorn in the flesh of the management of Nigerian high institutions. Mitigating workplace deviance has also become a primary concern for policymakers and researchers. Based on the precepts of social exchange and organisational support theories, we examined the relationships between transactional leadership, affective commitment, and workplace deviance. Using a moderated mediation model, this paper also examined how the onboarding experience moderates the mediated relationship between transactional leadership and workplace deviance through affective commitment. Partial least square-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyse data elicited from 308 participants in a cross-sectional design conducted across federal polytechnics in Northwestern Nigeria. The findings revealed that an employee's commitment mediated the negative relationship between transactional leadership and workplace deviance. Additionally, the direction of this mediated interaction was moderated by onboarding experience. The current study adds a novel perspective to the literature on deviant workplace behaviour with its moderated mediation model that investigates affective commitment and onboarding experience as underlying processes via which transactional leadership affects workplace deviance. The theoretical and practical implications of the study's results are discussed.

**Keywords:** Workplace Deviance, Transactional Leadership, Affective Commitment, Onboarding Experience.

### Introduction

In public and commercial organisations deviant workplace behaviour (Robinson & Bennett, 1995), is a global concern (Lugosi, 2019; Tanyolac, 2020). An organisation's well-being and the interests of its stakeholders are jeopardised by what is known as volitionally damaging workplace behaviour (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). According to Robinson and Bennett (1995 p.556), workplace deviance (WD) is the "voluntary behaviour that violates significant organisational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organisation, its

members, or both". Bennett and Robinson (2000) identified two types of WD-organisational and interpersonal deviances. Organisational deviance is often defined as deviant behaviour that focuses on the organisation's operations and quality. These include absenteeism, illegal use of organisational property, sabotage, theft of firm property, arriving late to work, and departing early (Brooks, 2012). Interpersonal deviance is an abnormal behaviour that focuses on the organisation's stakeholders (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). Interpersonal deviance includes bullying, talking about coworkers, and physically or verbally abusing a coworker or client (Sarwar et al., 2020). The expense of either of the two dimensions is massive (Tanyolac, 2020). For example, a recent study found that fraud alone may cost companies 3.7 trillion dollars worldwide (Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, (ACFE), 2016). It has also been estimated that depressive and anxiety-related illnesses associated with aggressive workers cost the United States an estimated 1.15 trillion US dollars annually (Michalak & Ashkanasy, 2020).

Furthermore, according to previous surveys, more than 56% of hospitality employees in the United Kingdom have been harassed by a customer and roughly 27% by their boss (Topping, 2018). Similarly, US studies show that 66% of women and over 50% of males have been harassed by their managers, with more significant numbers reporting harassment from coworkers (Sherwyn & Wagner, 2018). Moreover, in some African nations, studies indicate that female students are sexually harassed by their lecturers (Erinosho et al., 2021; Ijtona et al., 2018; Muasya, 2014; Steiner & Spear, 2020). Consequently, Western hotel businesses have seen a rise in staff turnover (Lugosi, 2019), and according to Olufemi (2020), female student dropout rates are exceptionally high in some Nigerian high schools. Many researchers have thus questioned if these employee misbehaviours are contributing to these rising staff turnover rates and student dropouts (Lugosi, 2019; Nneka & Nwagbata, 2020). Considering these developments, analysing the extent and reasons for driving employee deviation in the educational sector is essential.

Empirical research from all over the world has linked WD to four categories of factors: personal/psychological, situational/organisational, interpersonal, and job-related (Lugosi, 2019; Tanyolac, 2020). For instance, literature has claimed that WDs reflect the distinct personality traits, "The Big Five" (Amin et al., 2018b; Braje et al., 2020). Specifically showing that emotionally stable, tolerant, trustworthy, and responsible people are likely to display lower levels of WD (Braje et al., 2020). Furthermore, the conflict between work and family is also a significant predictor (Malisetty & Kumari, 2016; Sayyida & Untarini, 2020). Similarly, employees' deviant workplace behaviour can also be influenced by spirituality and religion (Haldorai et al., 2020). Though the main effects of organisational factors on organisational outcomes are generally well supported by research (Patanjali & Bhatta, 2022). However, their role in predicting WD is relatively negligible, creating a considerable knowledge gap which this study intends to fill.

The worrisome prevalence of WD in Nigeria, particularly in higher education institutions which characterised by extortion, absenteeism, exam misconduct, sexual harassment known as "sex for grades"(Amin et al., 2018a; Erinosho et al., 2021; Olufemi, 2020), is an indication that something is fundamentally wrong with the leadership style and employee orientation within the context of higher education (Hendricks & Louw-Potgieter, 2012; Zheng et al., 2020). The current study draws from past literature's scarce attention to the leadership-WD relationship in Nigeria, and the recent research findings that suggest that positive stimulus (reward) and negative reinforcement (punishment) have a significant relationship with employee behaviour in Nigeria (Olowookere et al., 2021), to investigate the impact of leader

reward and punishment behaviour known as transactional leadership (Bass & Bass) on the WD. Furthermore, previous studies linking employee misbehaviour with leadership style (Amin et al., 2018a; Zheng et al., 2020) have typically failed to look into the interaction of other variables, such as employee commitment and his early experiences in the workplace. Therefore, to better understand its key predictors, this research also looks at the moderating role of employee onboarding experience (OE) in the indirect effect of TL style and WD, in which affective commitment (AC) plays a mediating role among Nigerian academics. Consequently, the moderated mediation model we utilised in this study reflects the nature of the link between leadership style and WD and enhances our knowledge of its underlying mechanism. Therefore, this study is organised in the following sequence to achieve the objectives: literature review and hypotheses development underpinned by the social exchange and organisational support theories. Thenceforth, the methodology, result, and analysis are provided, followed by a discussion of the findings and their implications. Finally, some closing observations are made at the end of this work.

## **Theory and Hypotheses Development**

### **Unpinning Theory**

This research which is centred on the outcome of a quality employer-employee exchange relationship and perceived organisational support, has been underpinned by the social exchange theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) and its offshoot, the organisational support theory (OST) (Eisenberger et al., 1986). SET, built around the concept of mutuality (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), suggests that people engage in social interactions that entail tangible or intangible transactions (Casimir et al., 2014). Economic or social transactions might be thought of as part of that interactions. Economic transactions entail tangible exchanges that result in obligations and commitments (Marique et al., 2013). According to Casimir et al. (2014), the two interactions are the foundation of high-quality relationships between employees and their transactional leaders and between employees and their firms. The link between the two is of reciprocal in nature, in which an employee strives to repay the interchange relationship for what he receives (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Consistent with the assumptions of SET, employees form connections with their employers based on social interactions or psychological contracts, and their impression of the company's commitment to them impacts their commitment to the company (Afshari & Gibson, 2016; Kim et al., 2016), which is in line with the reciprocity norm (Eisenberger et al., 2001). Employees who believe their employers value their contributions and care about their well-being are more likely to perform well in their jobs (Casimir et al., 2014; Cetin et al., 2015), and resist the urge to engage in illegal or harmful behaviour (Aryee et al., 2002). In contrast, a subordinate's vindictive behaviour is triggered in response to perceived unjust treatment from a superior (Greenberg, 2018).

Similarly, OST postulates that staff members develop general perceptions of how the company appreciates their contributions and is concerned about their well-being (Kim et al., 2016). Based on the TL contingent reward behaviour and leader's reciprocity norms, such perceived organisational support would elicit employees feeling obligated to be concerned about the organisation's welfare and assist the organisation in achieving its goal. Employees could pay off this debt through a stronger emotional bond with the organisation and a stronger desire not to harm its interest (Eisenberger et al., 2001).

### **Transactional Leadership and Workplace Deviance**

Transactional leadership refers to a leadership style in which the leaders openly announce their expectations for an exchange connection between the leaders and the followers. Leaders set clear expectations and reward or penalise their followers based on whether or not they fulfil the agreed-upon goals. According to Judge and Piccolo (2004), TL has three components: contingent reward, management by exception-active, and management by exception-passive. Contingent reward refers to a leader setting up positive transactions or exchanges with his or her followers: Leadership sets standards and rewards people who meet them. The degree to which a leader responds to the outcomes of leader-follower interactions by taking remedial action is referred to be management by exception-active. Adekanmbi (2019) asserts that the difference between management by exception-active and management by exception-passive is the time of the leader's action. Active leaders monitor their followers' behaviour, anticipate issues, and act before they become major issues. Passive leaders wait until the behaviour has generated problems before intervening (Bass & Bass, 2008).

Podsakoff and Kuskova (2010) also distinguished two TL styles: contingent reward and contingent punishment. They define contingent reward behaviour as the leader's giving of positive feedback in the form of recognition, praise, and acknowledgement to those workers who display good performance, show advances in performance or exhibit desirable behaviours. Contingent punishment behaviours, on the other hand, are characterised as a leader's supply of negative feedback in the form of reprimands, criticism, or disapproval to employees who display poor or decreasing performance or undesirable behaviours.

Reward and punishment contingencies explain the effect of TL (Deichmann & Stam, 2015; Walumbwa et al., 2008). As evidenced from previous studies, it was found that contingent reward and punishment leadership behaviour improves organisational citizenship behaviour (Judge & Piccolo, 2004), and is negatively related to unproductive behaviour (Ali, 2016). Conversely, Litzky et al (2006); Valentina (2021); Yao et al (2014) show that the more the TL style is used with employees, the more stressed they become and the more likely they are to engage in unproductive behaviour that can harm the organisation. In contrast, Mekpor (2017) found no significant association between TL and WD in 237 Ghanaian bank workers.

Despite the contradictory results, the hypotheses of the current study is supported by the precepts of the SET (Blau, 1964) and its offshoot-the OST (Eisenberger et al., 1986). According to these theories, which are based on the principles underlying the leader-follower exchange relationship and reciprocity (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005); as well as a valuable framework for understanding employee misbehaviour, human relationships are formed through the use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis in which employees prefer to favourably reciprocate actions that have been rewarded in the past, and the more frequently a particular behaviour has resulted in a reward, the more that has been repeated and reinforced (Abbasi & Baradari, 2020; Walumbwa et al., 2008). On the other hand, employee perceptions of negative exchange relationships or unjustified treatment may induce retaliatory measures targeted at harming the organisation or its agents (Aryee et al., 2002; Greenberg, 2018). The two theories' central premise is that if a leader treats his or her employees well. As a result, the employee perceives organisational support; the employee will tend to reciprocate by engaging in extra-role behaviour and suppressing unproductive behaviour that could harm the workgroup or organisation (Abbasi & Baradari, 2020; Li & Zeng, 2019; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Hence, the following hypothesis is based on empirical evidence and theoretical assumptions, as discussed above:

*H1: Transactional leadership is negatively related to workplace deviance*

### **Transactional Leadership and Affective Commitment**

Affective commitment is essentially referred to as "the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization (Meyer et al., 2002). The critical elements in the definitions of affective commitment include employee's firm conviction in the organisation's values and ideals, a willingness to work on its behalf, and a desire to stay with it (Meyer et al., 1993). Consequently, according to a study, people with a high level of AC are more likely to act in ways that benefit the company (Cetin et al., 2015).

Previous studies have shown that the perception of organisational support and fairness is the primary determinant of employee commitment (Casimir et al., 2014). According to Lee and Wei (2017), TL successfully boosts employee commitment across cultures. This is because, in a TL climate, a reward or compliment is bestowed when a task is completed satisfactorily (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Lee & Wei, 2017). literature reveals that workers expect an acknowledgement from the company after they have done their best effort, boosting the concept of reciprocity (Eisenberger et al., 2001; Kim et al., 2016). According to Lee and Wei (2017), workers who witness the interactional justice of working with transactional leaders would feel obligated to reciprocate the kindness of their transactional leaders. In light of these considerations, despite Litzky et al (2006), who show that transactional leadership behaviour leads to negative stressors, other studies supported the social exchange and organisational support theories of reciprocity, arguing that positive leader-member exchange relationship boasts employees' AC to their firms and very likely to display citizenship behaviour (Abasilim et al., 2019; Budur, 2022; Rahman et al., 2022). Based on the findings mentioned earlier, TL has the potential to impact employee AC to the organisation's goals and values. Hence it is hypothesised that:

*H2: Transactional leadership style is positively related to affective commitment*

### **Affective Commitment as a Mediator**

Affective commitment, described as a person's emotional and sentimental tie to an organisation, has three key features: a conviction in and acceptance of the organisation's principles and aims; readiness to work toward the organisation's goals; and the desire to keep the connection with the organisation going (Porter et al., 1974). How can a leader's use of contingent rewards and punishments foster employee AC in the organisation, and what are the implications of that commitment for the firm? Budur (2022); Walumbwa et al (2008) contend that contingent compensations in exchange for work lead to more outstanding employee commitment to an organisation. According to the social exchange and organisational support theories postulations (Aryee et al., 2002), employees who are given incentives to perform better at work in exchange for a reward would feel obligated to return the favour by improving their performance to help the organisation achieve its objectives (Aryee et al., 2002; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Similarly, when employees see procedural justice as a result of contingently provided negative feedback (punishment), they are more likely to acquire emotional feelings of attachment and support for the organisational principles, which leads to extra-role and positive conduct (Kim et al., 2016). For example, Trevino (1992) observed that onlookers instinctively assess the appropriateness of leaders' penalties. Consequently, their assessments of the punishment's distributive and procedural fairness might have various affective, attitudinal, and behavioural effects in the workplace (Wang & Murnighan, 2017).

Thus, when leaders support their employees by providing contingent rewards for good work and contingently giving deserved feedback for poor performance, AC to the leader's course is enhanced (Afshari & Gibson, 2016; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Employees with a high level of AC have a strong emotional tie to their organisations and hence are more motivated to stay and contribute to their success (Meyer et al., 2002). According to Gill et al. (2011), employees with great AC are more likely to have a positive affect and less negative affect. This likely involves a decreased willingness to engage in detrimental employee misbehaviour. On the other hand, negative affect has been connected to the occurrence of employee misbehaviour both conceptually and experimentally (Dalal, 2005; Koopman et al., 2020). We hypothesise the following based on the preceding:

*H3: Affective commitment is negatively related to workplace deviance.*

*H4: Affective commitment mediates the relationship between transactional leadership style and workplace deviance.*

### **Onboarding Experience as a Moderator**

Onboarding training is a vital method in which recruits are typically formally welcomed and provided with required knowledge and resources, as well as informally coached and aided by their coworkers to be able to compose themselves and perform well during this critical time of uncertainty and excessive worry (Klein et al., 2015). Broadly, employee onboarding is defined as the formal as well as an informal process of orienting recruits to their new jobs, familiarising them with the organisation's goals, beliefs, regulations, duties, and procedures, and socialising them into the culture of the company (Bauer, 2010; Sharma & Stol, 2020). Prior empirical studies suggest that employees' first and fundamental attitude within the first six months of OE is perceived organisational support and AC (Bauer, 2010; Klein et al., 2015). Past studies has shown that effective onboarding leads to increased job satisfaction, a clear sense of organisational support, a full-blown AC to the job, and a consequent reduction in the desire to leave the company and other withdrawal behaviour (Chan et al., 2021; Meter & Bartels, 2017). Given that the goal of onboarding is to help employees feel more at ease in their new job, a complete OE is said to improve employees' perceptions of leadership support and attachment to the organisation (Meyer & Bartels, 2017; Sharma & Stol, 2020), facilitate citizenship behaviour (Walumbwa et al., 2008), and thus reduce the likelihood of WD (Cetin et al., 2015). Meyer and Bartels (2017) revealed that after 6 and 12 months, workers who had a complete OE that reinforced social and leader support reported higher levels of perceived organisational support and AC than those who had not and were also less likely to harm their organisation with withdrawal behaviour (Chan et al., 2021).

The current study uses the precepts of social exchange and organisational support theories to explain the OE interactional link in the relationship between AC and WD. According to the reciprocity principle of social exchange and perceived organisational support (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Kim et al., 2016), perceived leader support through a successful OE inspires workers to respond favourably toward their employer through positive reciprocity (Aryee et al., 2002). Given the established findings that AC reduces turnover intention and unproductive behaviour (Baysal et al., 2020; Fazio et al., 2017; Gill et al., 2011), it is natural to conclude that OE buffers the mediating effect of AC in the TL-WD relationships. Furthermore, the impact of TL-induced emotional commitment on WD is stronger when the leader implements an effective onboarding training program for his employees, as opposed to when the employees are onboarded or left in a swim or sink practice (Ssempebwa et al., 2016). Based on the preceding, we hypothesised that:

*H5: Onboarding experience is negatively related to the workplace deviance*

*H4: Onboarding experience moderates the mediated relationship between transactional leadership and workplace deviance through affective commitment, such that this mediating effect is more potent when employees are effectively onboarded than when employees are not effectively onboarded.*

The current study's proposed research model, which is represented in Figure 1, highlights the potential relationship between the key constructs that are congruent with the OST and SET.

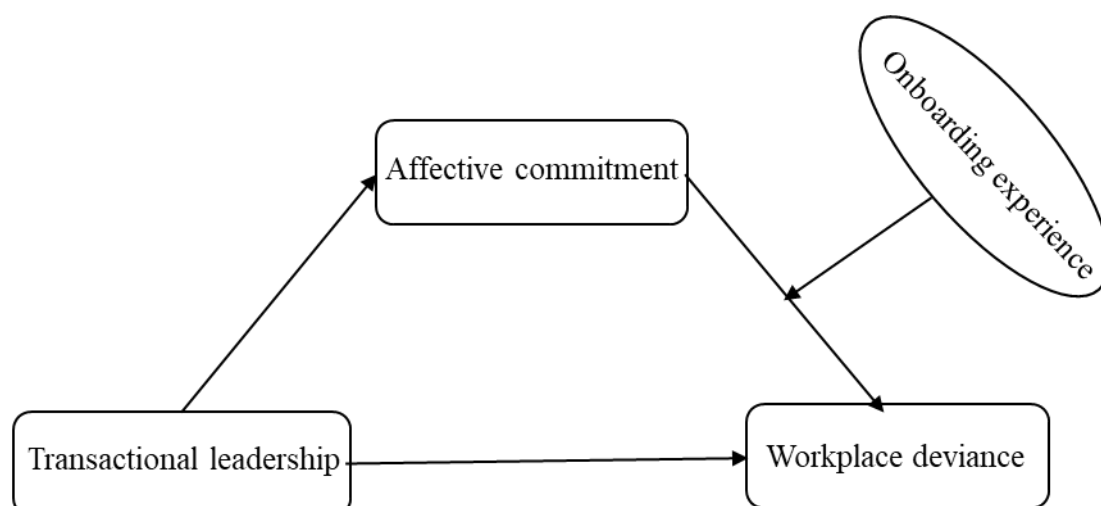


Figure 1 Research framework

### Methodology

Due to travel constraints caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, a web-based online survey was employed to collect data from 308 Nigerian federal polytechnic academics in Northwest. According to Geldsetzer (2020), during times of crisis, such as a disease outbreak or natural disaster, the availability of online resources presents a valuable potential for efficiently reaching far-flung populations and collecting data that previously would not have been possible. Furthermore, the direct measurement of deviant behaviour in the workplace is complicated because workers are hesitant to report their aberrant behaviour unless their responses are fully anonymous. Therefore, a snowballing technique was employed to increase the reliability and accuracy of the responses since it allows referrals from persons who share a trait of research interest with the target population (Berndt, 2020). Moreover, the federal polytechnics were chosen to reflect the diversity and breadth of the country (Majekodunmi, 2013).

A rating scale with anchors from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" has been used. WD was measured by a scale developed by (Bennett and Robinson, 2000). However, in line with Dalal (2005), a composite measure was used instead. Eleven items relevant to the academic setting were used instead of the 19 items in the original scale. "Dragged out work in order to gain overtime" is an example of an item that was discarded because it was found inappropriate for the academic setting in Nigeria (Adeoti et al., 2021). Furthermore, to explore TL as an independent variable, the present study used 11 items evaluating contingent reward and punishment behaviour from (Farh et al., 1987). They utilised a significantly modified version of the questionnaire by Podsakoff et al. (1982). The AC was measured as a mediator variable with six items developed by (Meyer et al., 1993). "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation" was an example of the items adopted in



the current study. Two of the scale's items were reversed scored. Tian et al (2014) used a similar metric and found internal consistency coefficient alpha of 0.73. The OE was measured as a moderator variable using ten composite measures of onboarding levels created by Bauer (2010) and validated numerous times in various behavioural and job outcomes studies (Meyer & Bartels, 2017; Scholar & Bowers, 2019). The response rate was 89.2%, the average age of the respondents in this study was approximately 40 years, and their average work experience was approximately 11 years.

To confirm the survey's content validity, a pilot test with 20 academic staff from one of the Federal Polytechnics allowed the instruments to be fine-tuned (Alexander et al., 2012). Moreover, ethical problems must be addressed in any research involving human participants. One of the ethical concerns was the participants' protection (Adeoti et al., 2021). Before agreeing to participate in the study, the participants were informed that their participation was completely optional and that they may opt out at any moment throughout the survey. They were also guaranteed that they would not suffer any financial, bodily, mental, or social harm, that their identities would be kept anonymous, and that their replies would be kept private.

## Results

### Measurement Model

The study used the two-step model-building method developed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) to test the suggested model. To assess the structural model, first, the study looked at the measurement model, which comprised the latent constructs and their observable variables. Analyses were conducted to see whether the relevant scales had adequate levels of validity (convergent and discriminant validity) and reliability prior to evaluating the hypothesised links. Convergent validity is the degree of consistency across two or more measures of the same theoretical construct assessed using multiple approaches (Hair et al., 2020). In reflective measurement models, convergent validity is typically assessed using outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (Bashir et al., 2019). Items with outer loadings less than 0.60 were first verified against each variable. For loadings less than 0.50, indicators such as WD10, AC06, and OE04 were omitted (Hair et al., 2010). Even though they had low loadings, AC02, OE01, OE02, WD01, and WD02 (see Table 1) were kept since AVE was within the threshold level of 0.50 (Henseler et al., 2015) in the presence of these indicators.

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which one construct differs from others (Henseler et al., 2015). Following the recommendations of Hair et al (2020); Henseler et al (2016), Fornell-Larcker Criteria (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) (Henseler et al., 2015) were used to evaluate the discriminant validity as presented in Table 2 which confirmed that all model components are distinct (Hair & Alamer, 2022). On the construct reliability, Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability were used to assess construct reliability (Peterson & Kim, 2013). Table 1 demonstrates that all the alpha coefficients, composite reliability values, and AVE were greater than their cutoff values (Hair et al., 2020), justifying the measurement model's reliability and validity.

### Structural Model Assessment

After the measurement model had been validated, a path analysis was performed to evaluate the proposed hypotheses for this enquiry. With a resample size of 5,000, a non-parametric bootstrapping method was employed to get the coefficients and related t-values for the structural model. Before testing the hypotheses, we evaluated the model's predictive

relevance using the  $Q^2$  value and the predictive accuracy using the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) recommended by Hair and Alamer (2022). The  $R^2$  value must be higher than or equal to 0.1. (Hair et al., 2020). The results in Table 3 demonstrate that all  $R^2$  values are greater than 0.1, indicating that the model's predictive power is well-established. Furthermore,  $Q^2$  establishes the predictive value of the endogenous elements. The model is significant for prediction when the  $Q^2$  is higher than 0. The results show that the predictive relevance of the constructs is significant (see Table 3). In line with Henseler et al. (2016), the study model's standardised root means square residual (SRMR), which was used to assess model fit, was determined as the root mean square variance between the observed correlations and those that the model implied. The SRMR for the model was 0.07, which is less than the necessary value of 0.08, indicating that the data fit the model well (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 1

*Reliability and Validity Results*

Constructs	Items	loadings	Cronbach alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
<b>TL</b>	TL01	0.716	<b>0.955</b>	<b>0.961</b>	<b>0.692</b>
	TL02	0.808			
	TL03	0.847			
	TL04	0.861			
	TL05	0.897			
	TL06	0.772			
	TL07	0.891			
	TL08	0.881			
	TL09	0.802			
	TL10	0.862			
	TL11	0.793			
<b>AC</b>	AC01	0.745	<b>0.878</b>	<b>0.907</b>	<b>0.673</b>
	AC02	0.466			
	AC03	0.936			
	AC04	0.936			
	AC05	0.917			
<b>OE</b>	OE01	0.639	<b>0.883</b>	<b>0.917</b>	<b>0.533</b>
	OE02	0.640			
	OE05	0.767			
	OE06	0.725			
	OE07	0.711			
	OE08	0.737			
	OE09	0.811			
	OE10	0.794			
	<b>WD</b>	WD01			

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WD02	0.674
WD03	0.747
WD04	0.718
WD05	0.739
WD06	0.750
WD07	0.830
WD08	0.812
WD09	0.684
WD11	0.732

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Table 2

*Discriminant validity results*


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Latent constructs	Fornell–Larcker criterion				Heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT)			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
1. AC	0.82							
2. OE	0.485	0.73			0.607			
3. TL	-0.044	-0.029	0.832		0.063	0.062		
4. WD	0.033	0.102	-0.531	0.731	0.067	0.098	0.562	

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Table 3

## Model(full) results summary

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Hypotheses	Relationships	$\beta$	SE	t-value	p-value	Findings	R <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>	SRM R
H1	TL→WD	-0.394	0.102	3.851	P<01	Supported	R <sup>2</sup> WD = 0.44	Q <sup>2</sup> -WD = 0.15	0.078
H2	TL→AC	0.776	0.027	28.265	P<01	Supported	R <sup>2</sup> AC = 0.60	Q <sup>2</sup> -AC = 0.004	
H3	AC→WD	-0.260	0.109	2.385	0.017	Supported			
H4	OE→WD	-0.367	0.196	1.871	0.031	Supported			
H5	TL→AC→WD	-0.201	0.086	2.348	0.019	Supported			

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H6	OE x AC→WD	-0.199	0.070	2.846	0.002	Supported
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**Abbreviation: WB, workplace deviance; TL, Transactional leadership; OE, Onboarding experience; AC, Affective commitment.**

Table 4

*Indirect effect model*

Total effect (TL →WD)	(TL →WD)	Direct effect (TL →WD)	(TL →WD)	The indirect effect of TL on WD							Findings
Coefficient	p-value	Coefficient	p-value		Coefficient	SD	t-value	p-value	VAF	B1[2.5%;97.5 %]	
-0.595	0.000	-0.394	0.000	H5: TL →AC →WD	-0.201	0.086	2.348	0.019	40%	-0.369; -0.035	Supported

**Abbreviation: WD, workplace deviance; TL, Transactional leadership; AC, Affective commitment.**

Table 5

## Moderated mediation and conditional mediation results

Moderated Indirect Relationship	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval Low/High	P-Value
TL → AC → WD	-0.235 (3.041)	-0.296 (1.861)		0.031
Low level of OE		0.043	-0.100; 0.268	0.303
High Level of OE		-0.159	-0.357; -0.078	0.006
Mean Level of OE		-0.058	-0.211; 0.076	0.188
Index of Moderated Mediation		-0.199	-0.294; -0.100	0.002

**Abbreviation: WD, workplace deviance; TL, Transactional leadership; AC, Affective commitment; OE, Onboarding experience.**

**Structural Model Analysis****Direct Effect Analysis**

As mentioned earlier, the significance level in the hypothesised relationships were checked using the bootstrapping approach, which produced a p-value of 0.000 and confirmed the significant negative relationship between TL and WD ( $\beta = -0.595$ ), providing evidence in favour of H1. Table 3 provides a synopsis of the results obtained from evaluating the various hypotheses and indicates that all the hypotheses were supported. As can be seen from the results, the independent variables TL and AC explain 44 per cent of the variation in the

dependent variable (WD). The results suggest that the research model's predictive quality and accuracy are about average (Hair et al., 2020).

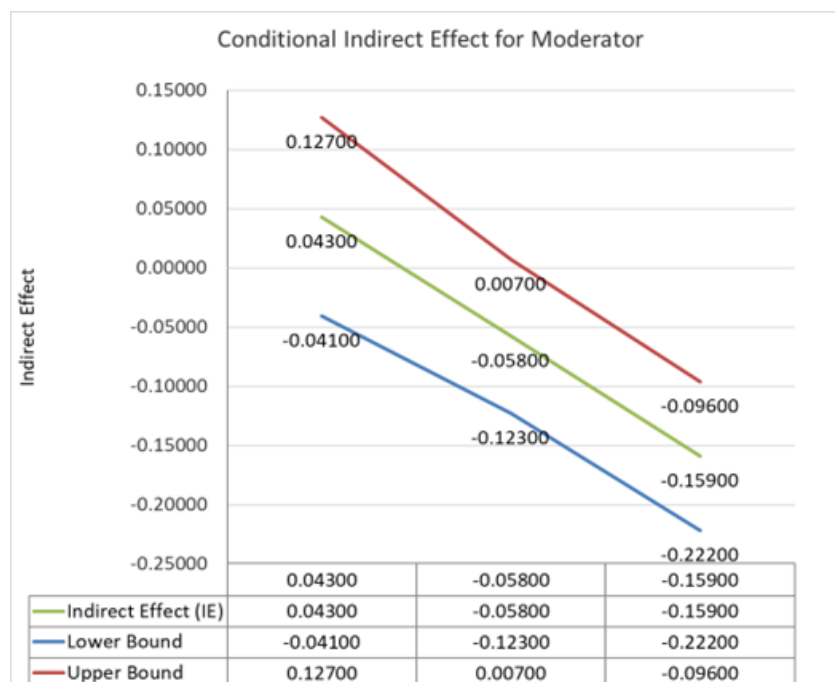
### **Mediation Analysis**

According to Adeoti et al., (2021) and Zaman et al., (2021), bootstrapping is one of the most thorough and effective techniques for determining the mediation effect. Based on recommendations by Preacher and Hayes (2008), we used Smart PLS 4 and the 5000-resample bootstrapping to examine the direct and indirect effects of the mediating model and show the t-values. When AC (mediator) was excluded from the model, Table 4 demonstrates a significant negative direct association between TL and WD ( $\beta = -0.595$ ,  $t = 0.052$ ,  $p = 0.0001$ ). The connection remained significantly negative when the mediator was added to the model ( $\beta = -0.394$ ,  $t = 0.102$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). We did find that the link was more robust without the mediator, in any case. Additionally, as expected, H2 was supported by a positive connection between TL and AC ( $\beta = 0.776$ ,  $t = 28.265$ ,  $p = 0.0001$ ). A negative correlation between AC and WD was expected by hypothesis H3 ( $\beta = -0.260$ ,  $t = 2.385$ ,  $p = 0.017$ ). Additionally, the indirect impact findings support H4 by demonstrating that TL significantly predicts WD through AC negatively ( $\beta = -0.201$ ,  $t = 2.348$ ,  $p = 0.019$ ). These findings show that AC partially mediates the connection between TL and WD, which underpins our H4 hypothesis (see Table 4).

### **Moderated and Conditional Mediation Analysis**

Using SmartPLS 4 PROCESS model, a second test was run in this study to determine the significance of the conditional indirect impact. The findings in Table 5 show that the moderated mediation effect's index value of OE was significant. The test of moderated mediation based on the index term (Hayes, 2015) demonstrated that OE moderated the indirect effect of TL on WD [ $\beta = -0.199$ ,  $t = 2.846$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ]. Additional hypothesis tests were conducted to determine if the conditional indirect effect was statistically significant. The findings in Table 5 showed that for schools with an effective and high OE, AC mediated the association between TL and WD ( $\beta = -0.159$ ,  $t = 2.513$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ). But there was no evidence of an indirect effect for schools with a moderate level of OE ( $\beta = -0.058$ ,  $t = 0.885$ ,  $p = 0.188$ ) or low level of OE ( $\beta = -0.043$ ,  $t = 0.516$ ,  $p = 0.303$ ). Hence, as a function of OE, the indirect effect's size was more negative.

This demonstrates that the negative indirect effect of TL on WD through AC has increased along with the high level of OE. The moderated mediation hypothesis is therefore supported to some extent. The results are further supported by slope analysis (Figure 2), which demonstrates that when OE increases, so does the indirect impact of TL on WD via AC. The findings show that the mediation was moderated, meaning that the moderator further increased the negative effect.



Transactional leadership

Figure 3. Moderated mediation plot

## Discussion

This study's novelty lies in its moderated mediation model that examines how OE may alter the association between TL and WD through AC. In essence, the study sought to understand how TL behaviour, which is well known to have a positive impact on a range of employee attitudes (Abasilim et al., 2019; Afshari & Gibson, 2016; Dai et al., 2013; Walumbwa et al., 2008), can be used to control undesirable behaviours when combined with the effects of other variables. The results confirm the hypothesised inverse link between TL and WD, demonstrating that employees are highly unlikely to engage in counterproductive behaviour in an organisation ruled by transactional leaders. This is consistent with earlier studies of this nature, such as that of Ali (2016), who found that TL style, by its contingent reward behaviour can reduce employee deviance. Our findings lend credence to the core claims of social exchange and organisational support theories, which hold that the relationship between an employer and an employee is an exchange in which fair treatment is expected to be reciprocated. Accordingly, employee perception of leader support and care results in extra-role behaviour and suppression of harmful attitudes (Kim et al., 2016)

Further evidence of a positive association between TL and AC was provided by the results in Table 3, which amply validated earlier findings (Afshari & Gibson, 2016; Budur, 2022). When employees appreciated and valued by their employer through contingent reward behaviour, they are likelier to remain loyal to him (Kim et al., 2016). This pattern of results serves as additional evidence for the social exchange model that underpins employee work-related actions as a kind of payment for the leader's fair treatment of them in the form of rewarded behaviour and a positive attitude. The predicted negative effect of AC on WD discovered in the current investigation (see table 3) is not unprecedented because similar findings have already been made in various circumstances, albeit with inconsistent outcomes (Amin et al., 2021; Qazi et al., 2019).

Furthermore, Table 3 reveals a significant negative association between OE and WD, as expected. This is in addition to the moderator role that OE was expected to play in the indirect effects relationships (Table 4). Previous studies have rarely discovered such a link, but several studies have identified significant positive work and employee behaviour outcomes of a successful OE (Asfaw et al., 2015; Chan et al., 2021; Meyer & Bartels, 2017). Moreover, the moderated mediation results reinforce Chan et al. (2021) and Meyer and Bartel (2017) which show that fully onboarded employees are more likely to exhibit positive behaviours and shun negative attitudes. With these developments, our findings have made the following contributions:

### **Theoretical Contribution**

This study recognises the importance of the OST (Eisenberger et al., 2001) and the SET (Blau, 1964) in comprehending the motivational foundation of employee job outcomes. As a result, the findings of the indirect effects have specifically confirmed the fundamental concepts of the organisational support and social exchange theories and the results of prior studies like Wu et al. (2020). The arguments in these two interconnected theories suggest that if a leader treats their staff well, and the staff perceives organisational support or procedural justice, such as a leader's contingent reward for good deeds and being accommodated, the staff will typically reciprocate by acting outside of their roles and suppressing unproductive behaviour that could harm the workgroup or organisation (Abbasi & Baradari, 2020; Aryee et al., 2002; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

In addition, the outcome has provided new insight into the role of the organizational support and the social exchange theories in explaining WD, indirectly contributing to the scarce evidence, linking the two traditionally independent research fields, TL and WD, in a moderated mediation model, thereby creating new avenues for enhancing the development of each field. Leadership style and WD are widespread organisational phenomena in the context of education. Earlier research has shown that leadership style significantly influences employee behavioural outcomes (Amin et al., 2018a; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Zheng et al., 2020). However, it is crucial to conduct empirical research to identify a suitable leadership style to address the issue of deviant behaviours among academics, given the worrisome rise in misbehaviour among Nigerian academics (Adeoti et al., 2021). Coincidentally, according to a recent study, Nigerian workers are primarily motivated by reward and punishment (Olowookere et al., 2021), hence, contingent reward leadership behaviour seems to be an appropriate concept to study in the Nigerian context. This finding, therefore, adds TL as one important antecedent of WD.

This study's other major contribution is its identification of AC as a mediator of the association between TL and WD. Thus, it further established the mediating function of AC (Tian et al., 2014; Wu et al., 2020). The results add to the AC literature by suggesting TL as a new predictor of the AC in this scenario. Furthermore, generally, the impacts of inefficient onboarding programs have been limited to withdrawal behaviour in prior studies (Chan et al., 2021; Meyer & Bartels, 2017). To extend the OE literature, we have added the WD measure of well-tested metrics (Bennett & Robinson, 2000).

Another striking contribution of this research is the moderated mediation model that applies the OST and SET to define the mediation and moderation paths. This model gave a theoretical framework for how an independent variable TL might affect a dependent variable WD through a mediator AC. It sheds light on the study of other predictors of WD in which AC may mediate the relationship. As for the moderator, OE moderated the mediating effect of AC,

the indirect relationship between TL and WD. High levels of OE boasted the mediating effect of AC (Tian et al., 2014; Wu et al., 2020).

### **Practical Contribution**

This study offers management guidance on adopting a transactional leadership style to inspire and foster a sense of justice among academics to address WD. Our findings suggest that the leadership of high schools should demonstrate a greater sense of fairness and openness by rewarding good behaviours and fairly sanctioning lousy performance. Furthermore, school management should concentrate on the influence of situational factors. Simultaneously, new employees should be effectively onboarded to enhance the understanding of their roles and responsibilities, school rules and regulations, conditions of service, and harmful results of WD behaviour, and establish harmonious and healthy internal relationships.

In addition, a decent and high-quality education is required for sustainable development, according to agenda target 4 of the 2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development (Owens, 2017). That could be achieved unquestionably with the mitigation of workplace unproductive behaviours in schools

### **Limitations and Future Studies**

The current research has made significant contributions but has some drawbacks. First, the limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic on the movements necessitated using a web-based survey for this research. Online surveys allow researchers to reach a big participant pool and give respondents a feeling of anonymity, which motivates them to be sincere when disclosing sensitive information (such as unproductive behaviour at work) (Duarte et al., 2017). However, this methodology has significant shortcomings that limit the capacity to generalize the study's findings, such as sampling bias, self-selection issues, or under-representation of the population (Kumar et al., 2021). Similar studies after the Covid-19 pandemic are encouraged to employ qualitative methods or in-person interactions to gain a greater understanding of the issue (Creswell, 2014).

Secondly, using cross-sectional data due to limited time and resources limits our ability to make causal inferences. Future researchers are encouraged to use a longitudinal design to show causality over time and learn more about the relationship between predictors TL and outcomes WD. Moreover, this study used self-report measures to evaluate deviance in the workplace. According to Podsakoff et al. (2003) and Tehseen et al. (2017), self-reporting is linked to the common method variance. Participants in this study may have under-reported their deviance on survey questionnaires despite efforts to guarantee anonymity and improve scale items (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). It is recommended that supervisor evaluations and peer reporting of WD be utilised to mitigate social desirability and bias (Patten & Newhart, 2017). Furthermore, although theories (notably, SET and OST) guided the selection of this moderated mediation model (using AC and OE), there are many other interactive elements through which TL may affect WD. Future research can look into potential moderators in TL-WD connections. For instance, formal organisational controls (particularly deterrence effects) may reinforce the inverse relationship between TL and WD (Chen et al., 2012; Zheng et al., 2020). Additionally, the association between TL and WD may change depending on individual characteristics or personalities (Amin et al., 2018b) and self-regulatory efficacy (Kura et al., 2015).



## Conclusions

The current study was inspired by the increasingly unfavourable attitudes of academics in Nigeria, requiring an analysis of the widespread of these negative behaviours and to identify effective remedies. The research's findings indicate that WD in schools can be significantly decreased by switching to a stick-and-carrots leadership style that enhances motivation and commitment. A fascinating finding was that a high level of OB enhances the negative indirect link between TL and WD in the workplace, even though some conditional mediations have not been supported. The findings of our study suggest that the management of the higher education institutions in Nigeria should adopt a transactional leadership style to inspire and foster a sense of justice among academics. By cultivating and enhancing employees' good emotions (such as emotional commitment) through constant orientation and motivation, school management can drastically reduce workplace misbehaviour.

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