

Examining toxic leadership, pay satisfaction and LMX among nurses: evidence from Ghana

Kwasi Dartey-Baah, Samuel Howard Quartey and Kwame Gyeabour Asante

Kwasi Dartey-Baah is based at the Department of Organisation and HRM, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana. Samuel Howard Quartey is based at the Department of Adult Education and HR Studies, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana and Koforidua Learning Centre, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana. Kwame Gyeabour Asante is based at the Department of Organisation and Human Resource Management, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana.

Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this paper is to establish a relationship between pay satisfaction and leader–member relationship and examine pay satisfaction as a moderator of the relationship between toxic leadership and LMX among public sector nurses in Ghana.*

Design/methodology/approach – *Using a cross-sectional survey approach, the authors used questionnaires to collect data from 225 nurses working in public hospitals in Ghana. The hypotheses were tested using covariance-based structural equation modelling.*

Findings – *The results of this study revealed that pay satisfaction levels of nurses had an influence on leader–member exchange (LMX). The results further showed that pay satisfaction as a moderator of the relationship between toxic leadership and LMX was not statistically significant.*

Research limitations/implications – *Cross-sectional surveys are often criticised for causality issue. The causality issue here is that the link between toxic leadership, pay satisfaction and LMX was explored at a given point in time and ignores changes through time.*

Practical implications – *Hospitals must encourage their leaders to demonstrate more supportive and positive behaviours to foster positive leader–member relationships. Maladjusted, malcontent and malevolent leadership behaviours are dangerous for nurses and hospitals and can be addressed through leadership training and development.*

Social implications – *Toxic leadership has considerable organisational costs of low productivity and negative work relationship at the workplace. The indirect effects of toxic leadership at the workplace on employees' families and friends are often silent in organisations.*

Originality/value – *Nurses have been ignored in toxic leadership research in emerging economies. LMX is extended to examine toxic leadership and pay satisfaction in public hospitals in an emerging economy.*

Keywords *Toxic leadership, Pay satisfaction, LMX, Public hospitals, Nurses, Ghana*

Paper type *Research paper*

1. Introduction

Leadership research has been influenced by a growing desire to learn effective ways to lead (Schyns and Schilling, 2013; Shaw, Erickson and Harvey, 2011). Majority of these studies have focused more attention on the positive side of leadership and subsequently perceive leader–member relationship as a positive phenomenon and outcome (Aasland *et al.*, 2010; Otto *et al.*, 2018). Fewer studies have looked at the impact of destructive behaviours of leaders on the relationship between leaders and subordinates using the taxonomy of toxic leadership behaviours (Agarwal, 2019; Milosevic *et al.*, 2020; Schmid *et al.*, 2018). These studies have illuminated our thinking and understanding of how these maladjusted, malcontent and malevolent behaviours of toxic leaders affect personal and organisational relationships and development. Though toxic leadership behaviours are associated with several negative organisational and personal outcomes, there is still less certainty regarding the extent of these consequences (Mackey *et al.*, 2017).

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Toxic leadership in health-care organisations is a growing phenomenon (Ramadan and Eid, 2020; Reyhanoglu and Akin, 2022). There is no doubt that leaders in the health sectors are faced with various challenges because of the evolving nature of work including shortage of nurses and increasing patient base. Because of these conditions, the demand of health-care service would best be met by having leaders who demonstrate good leadership. However, the reality is that the pressures of the medical and health work and the general absence of leadership training throughout their education make them unprepared for the various leadership roles. These can lead to the proliferation of various toxic leadership tendencies in the health-care sectors which can lead to serious harm to nurses, organisational environment and patients.

Health workers in Ghana have complained about various unsatisfactory working conditions such as long working hours, poor organisational leadership, inadequate remunerations and lack appropriate working tools (Abuosi and Abor, 2015). As a result, whilst some individuals remain committed to serving the nation considering these challenges, others also seek better prospects outside the country. Issues surrounding pay continue to be a challenge for health and medical workers and influences various outcomes. Pay satisfaction is a significant factor of employees' intentions and motivations. Thus, it is instrumental in understanding its influence on the relationship between toxic leadership and leader-member exchange (LMX) relationships. Individual differences in pay satisfaction levels may also be significant mitigating factors for the adverse effects of toxic leadership. Therefore, the current study seeks to examine and understand the link between toxic leadership and leader-member relationship, as well as pay satisfaction as a moderator for the above linkage.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1 Leader-member exchange theory

LMX theory is used to explain the importance of leader-member relationships. Gregory and Osmonbekov (2019) explained LMX as the quality of the relationship between a leader and the followers. The development and quality of this relationship are based on the interaction and fulfilment of expectations between leaders and followers (Sue-Chan *et al.*, 2011). This relationship may vary from one follower to another, implying that high quality relationships may be developed with some employees, while low exchange relationships may be developed with some followers (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2012). High-quality relationships are characterised by a relatively elevated levels of benefits which causes employees to exhibit positive attitudes (Gregory and Osmonbekov, 2019). This social relationship represents critical job resources that leads to the sharing of information between leaders and followers and improved communication (Gregory and Osmonbekov, 2019). To this effect, the positive treatment that subordinates receive from their leaders instils a sense of obligation in subordinates to reciprocate by putting in more efforts at work. Martin *et al.* (2018) asserted that high-quality LMX is characterised by trust, communication, support and rewards which make employees loyal and respectful towards their leaders. On the other hand, low exchange relationships are characterised by a lack of trust and commitment from followers (Gardner *et al.*, 2019). In addition, subordinates in low exchange relationships have less communication, rewards and supports from their superiors (Martinko *et al.*, 2009). Such employees feel no obligations towards their leaders and may not reciprocate through extra efforts in their work. Thus, employees in low exchange relationships are likely to perform duties with low commitment and loyalty.

2.2 Toxic leadership

According to O'Hara (2015), the concept of toxic leadership was first introduced by Whicker (1996). Whicker (1996) defined toxic leaders as "maladjusted, malcontent, and often malevolent and malcontent people who tear down others in order to succeed" (p.11). The

term toxic leadership became popular after a publication on the concept by Lipman-Blumen. According to Lipman-Blumen (2006), “leaders are considered toxic when they inflict severe and enduring harm on their constituents by virtue of their destructive behaviour or dysfunctional personal characteristics” (p.18). However, for certain behaviours to be considered as toxic, intent plays a significant role. In this regard, toxic leaders operate with the intention to harm and to enhance self to the detriment of subordinates and organisations. Schmidt (2008) identified that toxic leaders treat the well-being of subordinates with neglect and are capable of harming and abusing subordinates. Toxic leaders are noted for their micromanagement of employee, and this causes subordinates to cringe. Toxic leaders also engage in behaviours that are narcissistic, self-centred and are less empathetic and sensitive to subordinates (O’Hara, 2015; Schmidt, 2008). Schmidt (2008) further noted that toxic leaders were identified as “narcissistic and self-promoters who engage in an unpredictable pattern of abusive and authoritarian supervision” (p.57). Thus, toxic leadership behaviours also include authoritarianism, narcissism, self-promotion, abusive behaviours and unpredictability.

2.3 Pay satisfaction

Organisational goals are translated into fruition through the efforts of employees. Employees are paid for their efforts and inputs by the organisation (Azeem and Humayon, 2017). Pay has been considered as an important incentive to motivate employees. The monies that employees are given for their input from an organisation is referred to as pay, while the amount of positive affect that employees have towards the monies received from the organisation is known as pay satisfaction (Azeem and Humayon, 2017). According to Azeem and Humayon (2017), satisfaction with pay involves an awareness of the amount received as salary incumbent on the hope given to the worker by the organisation. Satisfaction with pay is the feelings that employees have towards their salaries (Benjamin, 2015). Campbell and Im (2019) also asserted that pay satisfaction is the extent of the positive feeling among employees as a result of the assessment of monetary incentives that is given for their outputs. These definitions point to the fact that pay satisfaction goes beyond the nominal value of the salaries received as remuneration. Moreover, pay satisfaction is considered as a function of an employee’s pay situation in comparison to the perceived pay situation which extends the meaning of this concept beyond the absolute pay level (Roy, 2019). Darus, Azizan and Ahmad (2016) applied Lawler’s (1971) model to explain pay satisfaction as the outcome of the comparison between salaries that one expects to receive and what is actually received. From the above statement, satisfaction occurs when salaries received is equal to salaries expected. However, when salaries expected is above that which are received then employees are dissatisfied, whereas if salaries received are above salaries expected, then employees may feel guilty and sense of unfairness. Thus, pay satisfaction can influence employees’ attitudes towards leaders and organisations.

2.4 Hypotheses development

There are limited studies examining the moderating role of pay satisfaction in the relationship between toxic leadership and leader–member relationship. However, existing studies have shown that pay satisfaction can be a moderator for several organisational variables. Bormann and Abrahamson (2014) found that among nurses, the leadership styles used had an influence on satisfaction in areas such as job, supervision and pay. They also noted that passive-avoidant leadership styles yielded a negative relationship with satisfaction variables such as job, supervision and pay. Gregory *et al.* (2013) investigated the role of pay satisfaction in the relationship between abusive supervision (toxic leadership) and organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB) and found that negative relationship between abusive supervision and OCB was moderated by satisfaction with pay. The negative relationship between abusive supervision and OCB was weaker when pay satisfaction was higher

compared to when it is low. From these findings, pay satisfaction can serve as a buffer for both negative and positive workplace experiences.

Research has established a relationship between employee satisfaction and leader–member relationship (Han and Jekel, 2011; Karin *et al.*, 2010; Liu, Lin and Hu, 2013; Malik *et al.*, 2015). These studies have identified that employees who are in high exchange relationship are more motivated and as a result experience high levels of satisfaction. Employees in such exchange relationships who belong to in-group feel accepted and valued and have access to useful resources from leaders which makes them satisfied. LMX has been identified as a mediator which had a positive influence on job satisfaction (Han and Jekel, 2011; Liu *et al.*, 2013). Although the notion that LMX relationship positively predict satisfaction is true and backed by empirical evidence, there is also sufficient evidence to suggest that satisfaction levels of employees can have an influence on LMX relationships, suggesting a potential reciprocal relationship between satisfaction and leader–member relationships (Volmer *et al.*, 2011).

Research revealed that affective and cognitive evaluations of job experience influence the quality of LMX relationships (Volmer *et al.*, 2011). This implies that positive attitudes and emotions can have the possibility of facilitating social interactions. The emotional and psychological well-being of the employee characterised by satisfaction can serve as vital resources that can influence their level of interaction with their leaders, thereby impacting on the quality of LMX relationships. Employees who demonstrate enthusiasm in their work are considered as high performers and demonstrate more innovation (Flickinger *et al.*, 2016; Volmer *et al.*, 2011). They are healthier and are highly involved in their jobs. These positive attitudes and behaviours act as relevant resources which enables employees to establish positive and rewarding interactions. Satisfaction will, therefore, be able to allow these employees to seek and engage in more positive social interactions. Specifically, for pay satisfaction, similar outcomes can be expected when its relationship with LMX is explored. Meng and Wu (2015) reported on a possible relationship between pay satisfaction and the quality of LMX relationship and found that the perceived fairness (a dimension of pay satisfaction) of merit pay had a significant positive influence on the quality of LMX relationship. Based on the above findings, it is hypothesised that:

- H1. There will be a relationship between pay satisfaction and leader–member relationship.
- H2. Pay satisfaction will moderate the relationship between toxic leadership and leader–member relationship.

3. Method

3.1 Research context

This study was conducted in public hospitals operating in Ghana. Examining pay satisfaction, toxic leadership and leader–member relationship among nurses in the public hospitals is interesting because of the following reasons: harsh working conditions, huge workloads and busy schedules can create toxic working environment at the hospitals; pay levels of most public sector nurses are low and may be insignificant in extinguishing the effects of toxic working environments (Abuosi and Abor, 2015); high stress levels, poor pay and tight work schedules can lead to weak leader–member relations (Opoku Agyemang *et al.*, 2022). These factors influenced the researchers' decision to choose public hospitals and nurses in Ghana as a setting to examine the relationship between pay satisfaction, toxic leadership and leader–member relationship.

3.2 Research design, sample and procedure

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design. This is because cross-sectional designs can help determine direction and strength of the association between two or more variables by collecting data across population (Howitt and Cramer, 2008). This design

provided a holistic view of the association between pay satisfaction, toxic leadership and leader–member relationship by gathering data from nurses across public hospitals in Ghana.

The selection of the nurses was done conveniently. Because of their busy schedules, readily available nurses in the public hospitals were sampled and asked to participate in the study. Nurses were sampled from 11 public hospitals which made it impractical to consider probability sampling techniques. This is because convenient sampling technique helps researchers to easily collect samples by taking samples that are conveniently located around the study setting (Patton 2002). Public sector nurses were chosen because of the delicate nature of their work which calls for organisational and leadership support. The public hospitals were ideal because it made a good setting to conduct such a study which has possible relevance at the organisational and national level. The sample consisted of 256 nurses working in the public hospitals, of which 92.2% were females and 7.8% males.

A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. Consistent with ethics, the researchers sought formal permission from Hospital Administrators and Directors before the data collection exercises began. Informed consents were also obtained from 225 nurses of the 256 sampled who accepted, completed and submitted the questionnaires.

3.3 Measures

Pay satisfaction: Pay satisfaction was measured using the pay satisfaction scale by Heneman and Schwab (1985). The scale consists of 18 items with sub-scales measuring pay level, pay benefit, pay raise and pay administration. According to Heneman and Schwab (1985), the reported Cronbach's alphas for the sub-scales are pay level (0.95), pay benefit (0.95), pay raise (0.81) and pay administration (0.88). The questionnaire was rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) very dissatisfied to (5) very satisfied.

Leader–member relationship: Leader–member relationship was measured using the Multidimensional Measure of Leader–Member Exchange by Liden and Maslyn (1998). The scale consists of 15 items with sub-scales that measures affect, loyalty, contribution and professional respect. According to Liden and Maslyn (1998), the reported Cronbach's alphas for the sub-scales are affect (0.90), loyalty (0.74), contribution (0.57) and professional respect (0.89). The questionnaire was rated on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree.

Toxic leadership: Toxic leadership was measured using the toxic leadership scale by Schmidt (2008). The questionnaire is made up 15 items with five sub-scales measuring abusive supervision, authoritarian leadership, narcissism, self-promotion and unpredictability. According to Schmidt (2008), the reported Cronbach's alphas for the sub-scales are abusive supervision (0.79), authoritarian leadership (0.84), narcissism (0.81), self-promotion (0.85) and unpredictability (0.85). The questionnaire was rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree. These original scales have a universal application.

4. Results

4.1 Normality

The accuracy of the findings was enhanced by collecting normally distributed data for SEM analysis (Lei and Lomax, 2005). Both skewness and kurtosis were used in determining the normality of the variables. The requirement for both skewness and Kurtosis signifying normal distribution is that the absolute values of both skewness and kurtosis must be between -2 and 2 . As shown in [Table 1](#), the skewness and kurtosis obtained for the various construct is between -2 and 2 , which indicates that the data is normally distributed.

Table 1 Test for normality

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Pay satisfaction	2.85	0.81	0.304	-0.297
Leader member exchange	4.68	1.42	-0.418	-0.610
Toxic leadership	2.75	0.89	0.196	-0.536

Source: Prepared by the authors

4.2 Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to assess the factor structures of the latent constructs. To enhance the model fitness, items that were poorly loaded on the latent factor were deleted based on the recommendation by Hair *et al.* (1995). For each latent construct, at least two observed variables were maintained based on the factor loadings of the variables based on the recommendation of Kenny (2012). As shown in Table 2, the final CFA measurement model had good model fit indices (GFI = 0.953, CFI = 0.989, RMSEA = 0.038, SRMR = 0.041 and CMIN/df = 1.318) when assessed using the benchmark by Hu and Bentler (1999) and Hair *et al.* (1995).

4.3 Validity and reliability

The study ascertained the construct validity of the measures by assessing both convergent validity and discriminant validity. The convergent validity was assessed using average variance extracted (AVE). Per the recommendation of Fornell and Larcker (1981), convergent validity is acceptable when the AVE is at least 0.50. Using the Fornell–Larcker method, the discriminant validity was found to be acceptable because the square root of the AVE was higher than the square correlation coefficients among the constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The study assessed the composite reliability to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. The acceptable threshold of the composite reliability according to the recommendation of Hair *et al.* (1995) is that the composite reliability must be at least 0.70. As shown in Table 3, all the variables had CR of at least 0.70, thus affirming their reliabilities. It can also be seen that the square roots of the AVEs (boldened) for all the variables were greater than the squared correlation coefficients between the constructs, thus affirming discriminant validity for all the constructs, as recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Table 2 Fit indices for measurement model

Fit indices	Benchmark/Interpretation	Authors	Final CFA model
CMIN/DF (χ^2/df)	≤ 3, Excellent; < 5, Acceptable	Hu and Bentler (1999)	1.318
CFI	> 0.95, Excellent; 0.90, Acceptable	Schreiber <i>et al.</i> (2006)	0.989
SRMR	< 0.08, Excellent; 0.08–0.10, Acceptable	Hu and Bentler (1999)	0.041
RMSEA	< 0.06, Excellent; 0.06–0.10, Acceptable	Hu and Bentler (1999)	0.038
GFI	≥ 0.95, Excellent	Schreiber <i>et al.</i> (2006)	0.953
AGFI	≥ 0.90, Excellent	Schreiber <i>et al.</i> (2006)	0.926
PCLOSE	> 0.05, Excellent	Schreiber <i>et al.</i> (2006)	0.810

Source: Prepared by the authors

Table 3 Validity and reliability

Variable	CR	AVE	LMX	PS	TL
LMX	0.931	0.772	0.879		
PS	0.838	0.633	0.321	0.796	
TL	0.842	0.640	-0.175	0.247	0.800

Source: Prepared by the authors

4.4 Bivariate correlation analysis

Using Pearson R correlation, the relationship among the study variable was established using SPSS after the CFA was done. The table shows the correlation matrix of the relationship among the variables. The variables within the correlation matrix are Gender, Age, Educational Level, Marital Status, Years of service, Toxic Leadership (TL), LMX Relationship and Pay Satisfaction (PS). As shown in Table 4, toxic leadership has a significant negative relationship with LMX relationship. Pay satisfaction also has a significant positive relationship with LMX relationship.

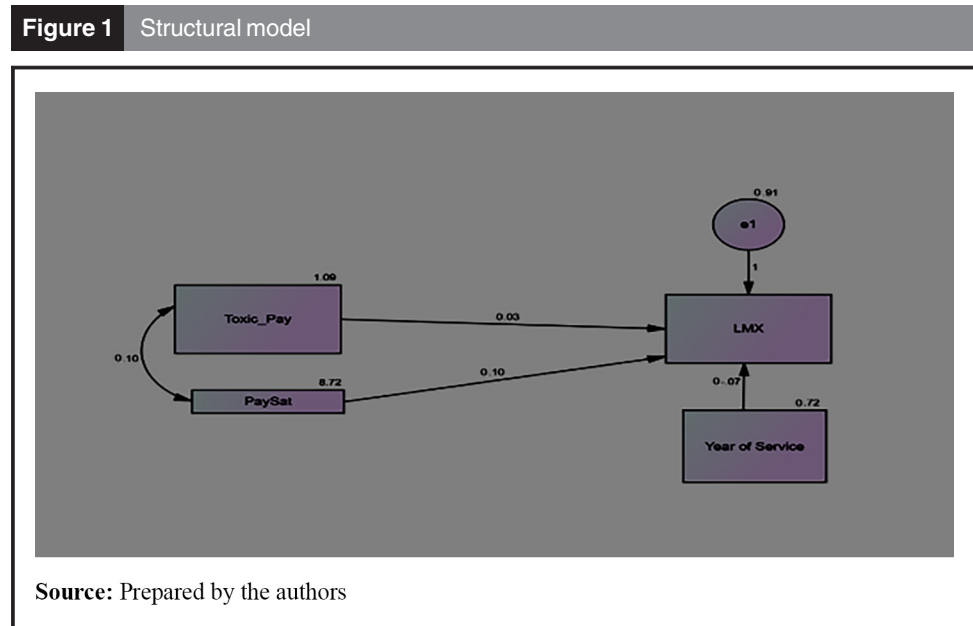
4.5 Hypotheses testing and structural model

The hypothesised relationships among the constructs were assessed as well as the fitness of the model. The constructs in the structural model were TL, LMX and PS. As shown in Figure 1, the structural model had good model fit indices (GFI = 0.953, CFI = 0.989, RMSEA = 0.038, SRMR = 0.041 and CMIN/df = 1.318) when assessed using the benchmark by Hu and Bentler (1999) and Hair et al. (1995).

Table 4 Bivariate correlation table

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Gender	1							
2 Age	-0.41	1						
3 Education	0.40	-0.023	1					
4 Marital St.	0.65	-0.402**	-0.75	1				
5 Years	0.73	0.660**	0.10	-0.393**	1			
6 TL	-0.037	0.112	-0.116	-0.051	0.041	1		
7 LMX	-0.042	0.005	-0.001	0.035	-0.033	-0.160*	1	
8 PS	0.025	0.198**	-0.146*	-0.064	0.108	0.191**	0.280**	1

Notes: *Significant correlation at 0.05 level of significance (2 tailed); **significant correlation at 0.05 level of significance (2 tailed)
Source: Prepared by the authors



This first hypothesis stated that pay satisfaction will predict LMX relationship. As shown in Table 5, the findings of the path analysis revealed that PS predicts LMX relationships positively and significantly among nurses ($\beta = 0.096$, $t = 4.461$ and $p = 0.00$). Therefore, the first hypothesis was supported by the data. This second hypothesis stated that PS will act as a moderator in the relationship between toxic leadership and LMX. The findings from the path analysis revealed that PS does not moderate the relationship between TL and LMX among nurses ($\beta = 0.032$, $t = 531$ and $p = 0.595$). Therefore, the second hypothesis was rejected by the data.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this paper is to establish a relationship between pay satisfaction and leader-member relationship and examine pay satisfaction as a moderator of the relationship between toxic leadership and LMX among nurses working in public hospitals in Ghana. Our results extend the LMX theory (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2012; Gregory and Osmonbekov, 2019; Martin *et al.*, 2018) by including pay satisfaction as an antecedent to LMX relationship. The results from the current study further highlight the interactional effects of toxic leadership and pay satisfaction on the quality of exchange relationships between leaders and followers. The current research revealed that pay satisfaction had a positive effect on leader-member relationship. This result was not surprising because positive feelings improve human relationships especially leader-follower interactions. The quality of the exchange relationships between employees and leaders can predict pay satisfaction levels (Malik *et al.*, 2015). Employees who are in relationships characterised by high-quality exchanges are more motivated and experience more satisfaction. As satisfaction is deemed as a reaction of an emotional nature, experiences that improve upon these emotions can improve upon satisfaction (Karin *et al.*, 2010; Liu *et al.*, 2013). Positive relationships at work can induce positive feelings which can culminate into higher levels of satisfaction. This result reinforces the views of earlier studies (Han and Jekel, 2011; Jordan and Troth, 2011) that the quality of LMX relationship predicts satisfaction among employees. This result is also consistent with the views of Vomer *et al.* (2011) that a reciprocal relationship exists between the quality of LMX relationship and satisfaction. This result demonstrates that nurses who are satisfied with their pay can build quality leader-member relationships and further establish positive and rewarding social interactions with their leaders at the public hospitals. Hence, this study has shown that quality exchange relationships can predict satisfaction and vice versa, which underlines the LMX theory.

Interestingly, the current study did not find significant support for pay satisfaction as a moderator of the relationship between toxic leadership and LMX relationship. This result implies that pay cannot be a buffer for the negative link between toxic leadership and LMX relationship, especially among nurses in public hospitals in Ghana. This means that despite high pay satisfaction, nurses in public hospitals in Ghana would not tolerate harmful, unpleasant, maladjusted, malcontent, malevolent and malcontent leaders and managers (Lipman-Blumen, 2006; Whicker, 1996). There may be several reasons for the above result; however, toxic leadership can be stressful for almost every employee (Lipman-Blumen, 2006), including Ghanaian nurses whose work schedules are often busy with poor working

Table 5 Path relationships for the hypothesised effects

	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>CR</i>
TL_PS → LMX	0.032	0.061	0.531
PS → LMX	0.096**	0.022	4.461
Years → LMX	-0.074	0.075	-0.977

Source: Prepared by the authors

conditions (Opoku Agyemang *et al.*, 2022). Stressed nurses despite the level of pay might not be happy building exchange relationship with a toxic leader or manager at the hospital. This is because toxic leadership has been linked to various negative outcomes known to reduce employees' psychological resources as well as high levels of stress (Hadadian and Sayadpour, 2018; Hadadian and Zarei, 2016; Schmidt, 2014; Webster, Brough and Daly, 2016). For example, pay levels of most Ghanaian nurses are on the low (Abuosi and Abor, 2015; Asamani *et al.*, 2019; Okyere *et al.*, 2017) which has led to various forms of industrial actions including strikes. Thus, it can be argued that increased stress levels increase the extent to which toxic leadership behaviours are felt among these nurses. The above explanations have gained expressions from the job demand model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017; Hawkes *et al.*, 2017). When nurses are confronted with various adverse workplace challenges even those pertaining to toxic leadership, pay satisfaction may play an insignificant role in influencing nurses' decisions and actions. This explains why pay satisfaction did not moderate the relationship between toxic leadership and LMX relationship.

5.1 Practical implications

The findings from this study have implications for leadership training and development practices. Most of the issues identified within this study points to the need to train and develop leaders who are capable of motivating and engaging followers in their respective organisations including the hospitals. Addressing toxic leadership behaviours requires providers of leadership training and development within public hospitals to be more aware of the relevance of need analysis (Azaare and Gross, 2011). Almost every hospital organizes leadership training programmes for staff and managers with the intention to modify behaviours and equip them with leadership skills (Yennuten, Ofei and Kwashie, 2020). However, the continuous existence of maladaptive leadership behaviours explains the need to question the leadership training effectiveness in these public hospitals. Needs analysis has the potency to identify and enrich training content by gathering relevant data and perspectives from employees about leadership styles and behaviours. Gathering and harnessing the opinions and experiences of nurses during need analysis to design leadership training and development programmes can improve leadership behaviours and skills among senior and junior staff in the public hospitals in Ghana.

Addressing toxic leadership tendencies through training has the potential to improve pay satisfaction and LMX relationship among nurses in the public hospitals. There is also the need to pay attention to training instructors used to train nurses in public hospitals, irrespective of whether they are external or internal. Using internal senior instructors to train and uncover toxic leadership behaviours and experiences of junior nurses might be difficult because of fear. Hence, nurses participating in a leadership training programme facilitated by an external trainer might improve effectiveness and transparency, especially when using case studies and on-the-job mode of delivery. Moreover, leadership training and development effectiveness requires more demonstration and practice than information (Lacerenza *et al.*, 2017). Providers of training programmes for nurses must offer opportunities to practice skills and abilities given through role-play, simulations, in-basket exercises, guided practice. Because of fewer resources, self-administered leadership training programmes for nurses in most public hospitals might not be effective. Another issue with leadership training and development programmes is the trainees' level of leadership. Thus, training both junior and senior nurses together might not achieve the intended outcomes, especially in the public hospitals in Ghana. The presence of senior level nurses during leadership training and development programmes creates tension where junior nurses become less confident to truly express their experiences during the programme. Evaluating the successes and failures and correcting unsuccessful behaviours such as toxic style of leadership may require 360° feedback (Tony, 2013). This might help the providers gather accurate information about senior

nurses from several sources to ascertain the effectiveness of the leadership training and development.

5.2 Limitations and direction for future research

This study like most other studies is not free from a few limitations. The focus of this study was on nurses working in public hospitals. Ghanaian nurses work in both private and public hospitals. Therefore, the results from the study should not be generalised to the entire nurses in Ghana. This limitation relates to sample size which was relatively small compared to the population of nurses working in public and private hospitals in Ghana. Cross-sectional surveys are often criticised for causality issues. The causality issue here is that the link between toxic leadership, pay satisfaction and LMX was explored at a given point in time and ignores changes through time. The results are occupation and country specific. Future research could qualitatively provide a framework for explaining the conditions under which pay satisfaction fails to motivate nurses in the face of toxic leadership. Future research on nurses could also examine gender as a moderator of the link between toxic leadership and leader–member relationship. Personal and organisational cultures could also offer different and interesting perspectives on toxic leadership in the health-care sector in Ghana and other emerging countries. Moreover, future researchers could include some measurement of effectiveness as a predictive variable of leadership training and development among public sector nurses in Ghana. Additional future research endeavour could also expand the study to explore whether compensation is a strong enough predictor of strong LMX to successfully weaken the impacts of coercive or toxic leadership among nurses in Ghana.

6. Conclusion

This study has established a relationship between pay satisfaction and leader–member relationship and examined pay satisfaction as a moderator of the relationship between toxic leadership and LMX among nurses working in public hospitals in Ghana. It has shown that in a bid to advance the goals and objectives of the organisations, some leaders can harm employees which has implications for the growth and development of the organisation. It has further demonstrated that in the presence of toxic leadership, useful job resources such as pay and pay satisfaction can be depleted, implying that employees may not always be able to cope with some of the negative influences associated with toxic leadership. Thus, no amount of pay can address the negative consequences of toxic leadership behaviours at the workplace. For the public hospitals to thrive, employees must be empowered through emotional management training and be provided with more support structures. The supervisors and leaders in public hospitals in Ghana could be trained and developed on how to treat their employees.

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About the authors

Kwasi Dartey-Baah is an Associate Professor at the Department of Organisation and Human Resource Management (OHRM) in the University of Ghana Business School. He holds a PhD in Leadership and Human Resource Development from Trinity College, USA and Canterbury University, UK, and a Civil Engineering Degree from Imperial College, London. He has significant experience in industry and academia. He serves on numerous committees in the University of Ghana. He is an assessor for National Accreditation Board, Ghana and serves on the Grievance Review Committee of Ghana's Fair Wages and Salaries Commission. He reviews for reputable international journals and has published extensively on Leadership, CSR and Oil and Gas.

Samuel Howard Quartey is a Senior Lecturer in Human Resource Development and Organisational Development at the Department of Adult Education and Human Resource Studies, University of Ghana. He is also the Coordinator of the University of Ghana Learning

Centre at Koforidua. Quartey obtained his PhD in Management (specialization: Organisation, Knowledge and Sustainable Development) from the University of Adelaide, Australia. He is a Member of Academy of Human Resource Development, USA and Development Studies Association, UK. He has published quality research papers in the areas of human resource development, human resource management and sustainable development. Samuel Howard Quartey is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: shquartey@ug.edu.gh

Kwame Gyeabour Asante holds a Master of Philosophy in Human Resource Management from the University of Ghana. He is a Teaching and Research Assistant at the Department of Organisation and Human Resource Management of the University of Ghana Business School. He has published research papers in the areas of leadership, organisational behaviour and human resource management.

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