


# How Does Social Media Use Influence the Relationship Between Emotional Labor and Burnout? The Case of Public Employees in Ghana

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## ABSTRACT

This study used data from an online questionnaire survey of public employees in Ghana and examined the relationship between emotional labor (surface acting and deep acting) and burnout (emotional exhaustion), as well as the moderating-mediating effects of social media use on that relationship. Surface acting has been found to be a stronger predictor of burnout than deep acting. Social media use reinforces the influence of surface acting on burnout but does not moderate the relationship between deep acting and burnout. Social media use mediates the relationship between deep acting and burnout, whereas a mediation effect is not found between surface acting and burnout. These findings suggest that public agencies should develop strategies to decrease stress arising from emotional labor and understand the relationship between emotional labor and social media use.

## KEYWORDS

Burnout, Emotional Exhaustion, Emotional Labor, Social Media

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization defines burnout as “a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed,” characterizing this occupational phenomenon using three dimensions: “feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion,” “increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job,” and “reduced professional efficacy” ([www.who.int/mental\\_health/evidence/burn-out/en/](http://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/burn-out/en/)). The first dimension, emotional exhaustion, has been considered a key element of job-induced burnout, which is a stress-related response to the enormous emotional requirement demanded by an organization to enhance organizational performance.

Emotional exhaustion is detrimental to the health of workers because it makes them feel drained and decreases their enthusiasm and passion (Heuven et al., 2006; Hsieh, 2014; Maslach, 1982; McCarthy, Trougakos, & Cheng, 2016; Tuxford & Bradley, 2015). Especially in human services, jobs generally demand a considerable proportion of emotional labor that requires the regulation of one’s emotions in accordance with organizational display roles (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983; Refaeli & Shutton, 1989). Public agencies are also fashioned to have face-to-face or voice-to-voice

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engagements with citizens during service. With a recent (technology-supported) transition from traditional to interactive mode in citizen-government relationships, emotional labor is fundamental to appropriate operations of public service delivery (Golembiewski, 1996; Guy, Newman, & Mastracci, 2014; Hsieh & Guy, 2009; Hsieh, Yang, & Fu, 2012; Jin & Guy, 2009; Meier, Mastracci, & Wilson, 2006; Shin, 2014, 2019). It may increase or decrease emotional exhaustion, depending on the nature of its requirements and the context of the job and the organizational culture (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Barger & Grandey, 2006; Foucreault, Ollier-Malaterre, & Ménard, 2018; Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983; Hsieh & Guy, 2009; Huhtala et al., 2015; Nitzsche et al., 2013).

By enabling interactions for expressing and sharing emotions when engaging with citizens, a range of social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp) have become the focus of emotional labor discussion (especially in human services) and are considered as a last resort to relieve stress from emotional labor (Baym, 2015; Duffy & Wissinger, 2017; McCance et al., 2013). Like the two contrasting views on emotional labor, the impact of social media on burnout is positive or negative. Individual employees increasingly use social media for private (personal) or organizational (work-related) purposes. Messaging via social media can provide workmates with an efficient tool for sharing relevant information in a timely manner (Leonardi, Huysman, & Steinfield, 2013; Razmerita, Kirchner, & Nielsen, 2016; Oh & Syn, 2015). Social media use may boost individual productivity by integrating face-to-face interactions and reducing counterproductive work behavior such as absenteeism (Garrett & Danziger, 2008; Landers & Callan, 2014; Robertson & Kee, 2017). In contrast, social media generates adverse effects, which explodes with unfiltered emotional expressions, invades privacy boundaries, and decreases organizational productivity through the dispersion of attention and irrelevant use (Baruah, 2012; Bizzi, 2020; Broughton, Reutens, & Sobey, 2009; Klotz & Buckley, 2013; Yu et al., 2018).

Given this background, this study aims to untangle the relationship between emotional labor and occupational burnout, focusing on the influence of social media use. The following research question is addressed: “How does social media use by public employees influence the relationship between emotional labor and burnout?” To answer this inquiry, this study examines the moderating and mediating effects of public employees’ social media use on that relationship, using data from an online questionnaire survey of 307 public employees in Ghana. The article consists of five sections, including the foregoing introduction. Section 2 reviews previous relevant literature in conceptual, theoretical, and empirical aspects. Section 3 describes the research design. Section 4 reports the results and findings of the statistical analysis. Section 5 discusses the academic and practical implications.

## **2. THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1. Burnout**

Burnout refers to an emotional response to work stress, which results in emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduction of personal accomplishment (Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Maslach, 1982; Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003; Shih et al., 2013). Emotional exhaustion is central to practically conceptualizing and empirically measuring burnout (Han, 2018; Kalliath et al., 2000; Know et al., 2018; Shirom, 2003; Taris, Schreurs, & Schaufeli, 1999; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). It is considered the most important measurement of burnout.

Burnout research has chiefly spotlighted two sides: antecedents and outcomes. The explanation of antecedents stems from the social exchange relationships and individual attributions. Social exchange includes cognitive and informative processes in any occupational context, besides human service delivery (Buunk et al., 2001; van der Zee, Bakker, & Buunk, 2001; McCarthy et al., 2016). The feeling of inequity in social exchange creates burnout: for example, a caregiver’s feeling of inequity in the relationship with clients (Buunk & Schaufeli, 1993; Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018; Meng et al., 2019). The other stream of antecedent research argues that individual differences in personality

influence the environment-burnout relationship (Melchers et al., 2015; Witt, Andrews, & Carlson, 2004; Zysberg et al., 2017).

A range of studies have delved into the outcomes of burnout at individual and organizational levels. At the individual level, burnout produces physiological and affective outcomes (Burke & Greenglass, 1995; Cherniss, 1992; Lizano & Barak, 2015; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Schaufeli, Maslach, & Marek, 2017). At the organizational level, burnout has a negative impact on work attitude, thereby increasing turnover and reducing performance (Armstrong-Stassen, 1994; Kanter & Sherman, 2016; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Scherer, Allen, & Harp, 2016; Wolpin, Burke, & Greenglass, 1991; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). To mitigate the negative outcomes of burnout, previous studies stressed social support from organizations, families, and friends (Birkeland, Richardsen, & Dysvik, 2018; Carlson & Perrewé, 1999; Koniariek & Dudek, 1996; Schaufeli & Greenglass, 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2017).

## **2.2. Emotional Labor**

Hochschild (1983) invented the concept of emotional labor to signify “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (p. 7). According to his early definition, emotional labor denotes an employee’s attempt to repress “improper” emotions or express “proper” ones, where “proper” and “improper” reflect a facet of job demands. Occurring through face-to-face or voice-to-voice encounters, emotional labor can function as a medium through which employees control their emotions to meet organizational goals (Choi & Kim, 2015; Guy et al., 2008; Kruml & Geddes, 2000; Morris & Feldman, 1996), thereby benefiting the employer and keeping customers satisfied (Humphrey, Ashforth, & Diefendorff, 2015; Lopez, 2006). It is indispensable to quality service delivery (Mastracci, Guy, & Newman, 2012). In particular, public employees (especially, frontline or street-level bureaucrats) may engage in emotional labor to provide effective and efficient public services, as studies regarding public service innovation consider emotional labor as a requirement for innovation (Geng et al., 2014; Guy, Mastracci, & Yang, 2019; Ogbonna & Harris, 2004; Robson & Bailey, 2009).

Employees conduct emotional labor through two strategies for emotion regulation: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting occurs when an employee pretends to feel emotions required by the demands of the job (Bhave & Glomb, 2016; Wang & Groth, 2014). Stress and subsequent burnout may result from surface acting because employees do not like to suppress their true feelings or emotions (Gross & Levenson, 1997; Uy, Lin, & Ilies, 2017). On the other hand, deep acting occurs when employees feel emotions that they actually like to express (Gross, 1998; Huang et al., 2015). Emotional labor may improve work performance when aligned with organizational goals; given an organization-person fit, deep acting is generally believed to increase performance more than surface acting (Lam, Huo, & Chen, 2018; Lin & Hsu, 2015). Surface acting is found overall detrimental to the well-being of employees, but both are necessarily associated with burnout and considered a significant predictor of burnout (Geng et al., 2014; Grandey, 2000; Wilding, Chae, & Jang, 2014).

## **2.3. Social Media Use in The Work Context**

As the boundary between work and life has been dimmed with the advent of Internet-based technologies, findings of research on social media use at work are controversial according to who (organization or individual) benefits (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Cousins & Robey, 2015; Haeger & Lingham, 2014; van Zoonen, Verhoeven, & Vliegthart, 2016). In a positive standpoint, those who engage in lengthy online interactions with their organization tend to be satisfied with the organization, share and collaborate better with colleagues, and commit to achieving organizational goals (Bharati, Zhang, & Chaudhury, 2015; Novak, Hoffman, & Yung, 2000; Smith & Gallicano, 2015). Nduhura and Prieler (2017), focusing on the public sector workplace in Rwanda, found that when public employees chat online, they feel relaxed and work better. Social media use for occupational relationships may increase organizational productivity (effectiveness in terms of customer satisfaction and efficiency in terms of two-way communication) and visibility (reduction in negative work behavior like absenteeism),

especially when integrated with face-to-face interactions (Garrett & Danziger, 2008; Gibbs, Rozaidi, & Eisenberg, 2013; Lam, Yeung, & Cheng, 2016; Paniagua & Sapena, 2014). Since an increasing number of corporate organizations have their own social media platforms through which employees communicate work-related information, social media use may contribute to organizational (formal or informal) communication and information sharing (Forsgren & Byström, 2018; Leonardi, 2014; Leonardi et al., 2013; Nisar, Prabhakar, & Strakova, 2019; Pan & Crotts, 2012; Sloan, Checel, & Yang, 2012). Individual employees can combine work with home affairs at the same time via social media, and their stress may lessen with social media-based interactions.

In contrast, a negative perspective points out the opposite situation, where social media use at work may weaken concentration, decrease organizational performance (failure to complete given work), and invade privacy (Baruah, 2012; Forsgren & Byström, 2018; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Mardi et al., 2018; Nah & Saxton, 2013; Wang & Kobsa, 2009; Zivnuska et al., 2019). An accumulation of evidence revealed that social media users at work search for information about other job opportunities, resulting in temporary absenteeism and eventual turnover (Broughton et al., 2009; Ivens, Schaarschmidt, & Könsgen, forthcoming; Moqbel et al., 2020; Tang et al., forthcoming; Zivnuska et al., 2019). In addition, psychological studies found that an excessive use of the Internet, especially an obsession with social media, is conspicuously detrimental to individual performance and human relationships (Khan, Swar, & Lee, 2014; Liu & Ma, 2018; Salmela-Aro et al., 2017). National governments have started to consider the addictive nature of social media as a disease, e.g., in the U.K. (Kemp, 2019; McDermott, 2019; Waterson, 2019) and the U.S. (The Economist, 2019).

## 2.4. Hypothesis Building

Emotion regulation theory and resource conservation theory help explain the association of burnout with emotional labor and social media use. The former conceptualizes emotional labor and its relationship with burnout. A work activity may incite an employee's emotional response (e.g., anger, disappointment, fear, or frustration), and he or she may react to this emotion in an inappropriate way, such as shouting or verbal attack (Grandey, 2000; Gross, 1998; Totterdell & Holman, 2003; Yin et al., 2018). However, the employee would do emotional labor to regulate an immediate response because of organizational norms or display rules. Emotional regulation strategies involve deep acting (thinking good thoughts or reappraising an event) or surface acting (modifying emotional expressions by faking facial and body signs). Since the process of emotional regulation suppresses spontaneous emotional expression, a human body converts its resources to energy for handling the situation at hand, culminating in negative health consequences and emotional exhaustion (Chi & Liang, 2013; Lee et al., 2016).

According to resource conservation theory, individuals attempt to obtain, keep, and safeguard resources (things that they cherish and find beneficial): e.g., objects such as a house, conditions like a satisfying job, personal characteristics such as truthfulness, and energies such as time (Hobfoll, 1988, 1989, 2001). Loss of cherished resources may cause stress, i.e., a propensity to lose resources, or in the failure to renew the resources after investment. When applied to burnout, this theory assumes that job stress and burnout arise when individuals feel a danger to their resources. As behavioral psychologists revealed in empirical research, an individual is more sensitive to the loss of resources than to resource gains, thereby valuing resource loss far more than resource gain (Lu, 2019; Taylor, 1991; Yi & Kim, 2020). Emotional labor as a form of job demand endangers an individual's resources, and long-term pressure of emotional labor ends up in burnout. Recently, a rising number of employees have combined their formal work with the use of social media, which is considered a strategy for conserving emotional resources (Charoensukmongkol, 2016; Charoensukmongkol, Moqbel, & Gutierrez-Wirsching, 2017; Liu & Ma, 2018; Salmela-Aro et al., 2017).

Drawing from insights from both theories, empirical studies (e.g., Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Jeung, Kim, & Chang, 2018; Kruml & Geddes, 2000) have accumulated evidence that indicates the causality of emotional labor with respect to burnout. While H1 (divided into H1a and H1b) is

already supported substantially across various occupational and organizational contexts, this study hypothesizes the moderating (H2) and mediating (H3) effects of social media use on the causal relationship between emotional labor and burnout.

H2 (the moderating effect) is based on the claim that social media use at work may help employees conserve (Gibbs et al., 2013; Nduhura & Prieler, 2017; Sloan et al., 2012) or deprive (Baruah, 2012; Salmela-Aro et al., 2017) them of personal resources, thereby increasing or decreasing the extent to which emotional labor induces emotional exhaustion (the moderating effect of social media use). The hypothetical moderating effect needs to be examined separately regarding the influence of surface acting and that of deep acting.

H3 (the mediating effect) is based on the findings of previous studies (e.g., Choi, Chu, & Choi, 2019; Coyne, 2016; Demircioglu, 2018) that emotional laborers can be heavy users of social media for work (i.e., frontline communication with customers) or for private purposes (i.e., relaxation and non-work personal communication). The intensity of their social media use may influence their level of emotional exhaustion, and this can be measured as the mediating effect of social media use (Charoensukmongkol, Moqbel, & Gutierrez-Wirsching, 2017; Han, 2018; Sriwilai & Charoensukmongkol, 2016; van Zoonen et al., 2016, 2017). H3 reflects this postulation, divided into H3a (the mediating effect for surface acting) and H3b (the mediating effect for deep acting). Table 1 describes the hypotheses, and Figure 1 illustrates them.

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

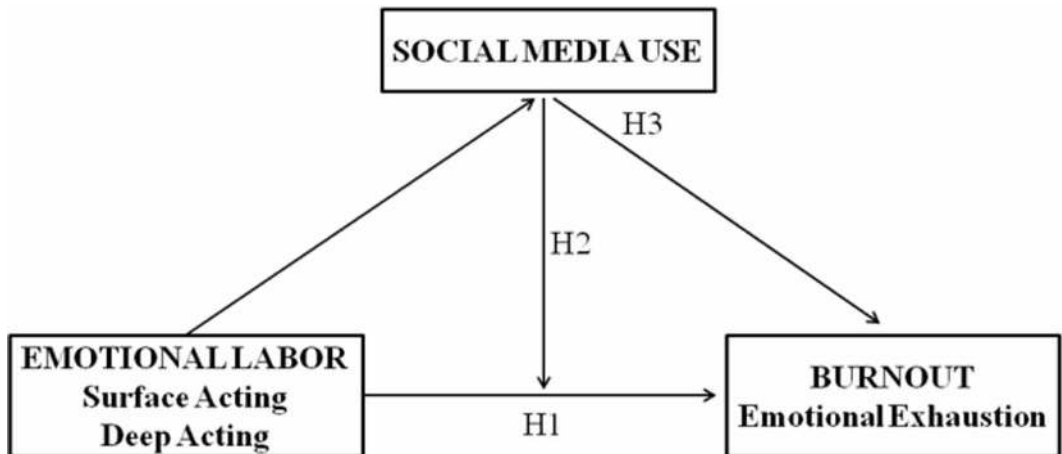
#### 3.1. The Context of Emotional Labor and Social Media Use In Ghana

The Republic of Ghana, located in West Africa, has a population of approximately 30 million spanning a variety of ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups. The administrative jurisdictions consist of 16 regions and 275 districts. The number of public sector employees approaches 600,000. The recent version of massive-scale public sector reform in Ghana is still New Public Management, which aims at efficient and effective public service delivery to the population. The Ghanaian context of public employee burnout is also heavily related to New Public Management that treats citizens as customers and pushes public employees to provide customer services as the private sector ordinarily does (Basheka & Tshombe, 2017; Dassah, 2017; Ohemeng & Ayee, 2016; Osei-Kojo, 2017; Tshombe & Dassah, 2017). Public employees in Ghana have been required to engage in emotional labor for better performance of public service delivery. Citizens would be satisfied with public service delivery if their engagement with frontline public servants is positive. Emotional labor is necessary for public services because organizational display rules expect public servants to appear enthusiastic, friendly, and cheerful. Though a reasonable number of studies shed light on burnout in the occupational (e.g., nursing and teaching) context in Ghana (Addison & Yankyera, 2015; Agyemang & Ofei, 2013; Amponsah-Tawiah, Annor, & Arthur, 2016; Asiedu, 2018; Asumah, Agyapong, & Owusu,

Table 1. Hypotheses

<p><b>H1.</b> Emotional labor of public employees increases burnout (emotional exhaustion). <b>H1a.</b> Surface acting of public employees increases burnout (emotional exhaustion). <b>H1b.</b> Deep acting of public employees increases burnout (emotional exhaustion). <b>H2.</b> Social media use of public employees moderates the relationship between emotional labor and burnout. <b>H2a.</b> Social media use of public employees moderates the relationship between surface acting and burnout. <b>H2b.</b> Social media use of public employees moderates the relationship between deep acting and burnout. <b>H3.</b> Social media use of public employees mediates the relationship between emotional labor and burnout. <b>H3a.</b> Social media use of public employees mediates the relationship between surface acting and burnout. <b>H3b.</b> Social media use of public employees mediates the relationship between deep acting and burnout.</p>
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Figure 1. Research framework



2019; Emmanuel & Collins, 2015; Fiadzo et al., 1997), no research has addressed burnout of public employees across agencies in Ghana.

Social media adoption is another context that should be considered for this study. As Ghana was one of the first African countries to be connected to the Internet in 1989, the Ghanaian government has paid attention to the use of computer technology in teaching and learning since the late 1990s (Essays, 2018). With its intention to become the information technology hub of West Africa, Ghana passed the Electronic Communications Act and the Electronic Transactions Act as a legal framework. Statistics released by the Global State of Digital in 2019 (<https://hootsuite.com/resources/digital-in-2019>) reported Ghana as follows: 130% for mobile subscriptions (outnumbering the whole population), 35% of the population for Internet penetration, 19% for active social media users, and 18% for mobile social media users. Whereas studies regarding social media use in Ghana mostly focused on the educational and behavioral effects in youth and adolescents (Amofah–Serwaa & Dadzie, 2015; Bernard & Dzandza, 2018; Karikari et al., 2017; Markwei & Appiah, 2016; Mingle & Adams, 2015; Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2015; Pfeiffer et al., 2014), there is paucity in research on Ghanaians’ social media use in the occupational context—in particular, public employees.

### 3.2. Data

This study uses data from an online survey conducted during two weeks in August, 2019. Data collection is based on purposive sampling, which allows researchers to address research inquiries by centering on the population’s (public employees in Ghana) important characteristics that are of research interest. Purposive sampling helped select questionnaire recipients from the population of Ghanaian public employees who have relevant experience in directly engaging with public service delivery to citizens (a high level of exposure to emotional labor). The authors contacted initial informants through social media (WhatsApp and Facebook), and those informants recommended other participants that meet the sampling criteria (government employees with direct experience in public service delivery). The snowball sampling provided 307 participants, who are affiliated with one of the following eight agencies (with a high proportion of frontline tasks in their own functions): Local Government Service, Health Service, Immigration Service, Prison Service, National Disaster Management Organization, Electoral Commission, Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice, and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. To obtain complete data by minimizing missing observations, all questions in the survey required questionnaire recipients to answer completely through the online platform. Table 2 presents the demographic composition of

the survey respondents. The five characteristics (sex, age, education, rank in three levels, and career in years) are employed as control variables in the statistical analysis. The sample is characterized by the dominance of males (71%), young employees (85% in their 20s and 30s), and 81% with a career time under 10 years, well-educated persons (46% with a bachelor’s degree and 42% with a master’s degree), and employees in the middle and higher seniority levels (89%); however, this distribution is neither under- or over-representative in certain demographic conditions.

**Table 2. The distribution of the sample**

Category	Groups	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Female (0)	90	29.3%
	Male (1)	217	70.7%
Age ( <i>M</i> =34.86, <i>SD</i> =6.06)	20–30	74	24.1%
	31–40	187	61.0%
	41–50	39	12.8%
Education	51–60	7	2.1%
	High school graduate (1)	34	11.1%
	Bachelor’s degree (2)	143	46.6%
Rank	Master or higher (3)	130	42.3%
	Junior staff (1)	34	11.1%
	Middle management (2)	119	38.8%
Career ( <i>M</i> =7.86, <i>SD</i> =5.07)	Senior staff (3)	154	50.2%
	0–5 years	65	21.2%
	6–10 years	185	60.2%
	11–15 years	36	11.8%
	16–20 years	7	2.3%
	21–25 years	11	3.6%
	Above 25 years	3	0.9%

Note: Coded values in parentheses.

This study explores the relationship among the four conceptual factors: burnout (the outcome variable), surface acting and deep acting as sub-dimensions of emotional labor (the explanatory variables), and social media use (the moderating and mediating variable). Table 3 presents the measurement items for those factors. All items are measured with the same seven-point Likert-type response scale spreading from “strongly disagree” (a score of 1) to “strongly agree” (a score of 7). The five items regarding burnout gauge the degree of emotional exhaustion, drawing from Wilding et al. (2014). The two theoretical constructs of emotional labor, surface acting and deep acting, are adapted from the six items of Mastracci and Adams (2019). The three items regarding surface acting asked about the degree to which public employees in Ghana pretend to feel emotions when serving the public. The other three items regarding deep acting asked about the degree to which public employees in Ghana attempt to actually experience the emotions they need to feel during service. The five measurements of social media use evaluate the degree to which public employees in Ghana use social

Table 3. Measurements in the seven-point ordinal scale

Variable	Survey items	M (SD)
<b>Burnout</b> (M = 3.83, SD = 1.11, α = 0.86)	I experience an emotional decline at the end of work.	3.90 (1.31)
	I leave work emotionally exhausted.	3.86 (1.42)
	I feel mentally fatigued at the end of each working day.	3.97 (1.45)
	I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.	3.83 (1.45)
	My work situation of experiencing emotional stress is hopeless.	3.58 (1.27)
<b>Surface acting</b> (M = 4.51, SD = 1.33, α = 0.74)	I hide my true feelings to appear pleasant when serving citizens.	4.77 (1.49)
	At work, I act confident and self-assured regardless of how I actually feel.	5.27 (1.23)
	I just pretend to have the emotions I need to do my work.	3.99 (1.54)
<b>Deep acting</b> (M = 4.84, SD = 0.97, α = 0.85)	I try to experience the emotions that I must show when I work.	4.64 (1.24)
	I make efforts to feel the emotions that I need to show to citizens at work.	4.93 (1.19)
	I work at developing the emotions inside of me that I need to show to citizens at work.	4.96 (1.16)
<b>Social media use</b> (M = 4.49, SD = 1.06, α = 0.81)	WhatsApp or Facebook is part of my everyday activity at work.	4.74 (1.56)
	I use WhatsApp or Facebook for both work and personal purposes.	5.08 (1.30)
	Using WhatsApp or Facebook can keep me from unpleasant emotions at work.	4.12 (1.45)
	I experience relief from emotional exhaustion resulting from work on WhatsApp or Facebook.	4.15 (1.35)
	When I am emotionally exhausted, online relationship with my family and friends on WhatsApp or Facebook helps me work with enthusiasm and vigor.	4.37 (1.40)

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; and α = Cronbach's alpha.

media for work-related and/or private purposes during service. Considering the mainstream social media usage in Ghana, these items refer to WhatsApp and Facebook, among a variety of platforms.

### 3.3. Methods

The data were analyzed using three approaches: ordinary least squares regression (comparing the coefficient magnitudes in terms of standardized effects), hierarchical regression of interactive variables (examining the moderating effect of social media use), and structural equation modeling (examining the mediating effect of social media use and the statistical significance of causal paths). In addition, the moderation and mediation effects were examined through statistical tests.

## 4. RESULTS

The correlations among the four variables are described in Table 4. Burnout is more associated with surface acting ( $r = 0.321$ ) than deep acting ( $r = 0.181$ ). The moderation-mediation variable, social media use, is not highly correlated with burnout and emotional labor.

Table 5 presents the results of ordinary least squares regression as a preliminary analysis. While control variables do not have a significant influence on burnout, the three independent variables have a positive influence. In terms of standardized coefficients, the influence of surface acting on burnout ( $\beta = 0.208$ ) is almost twice the magnitude of deep acting ( $\beta = 0.117$ ).



Table 4. Correlation

	Surface acting	Deep acting	Social media use
Burnout	0.321*	0.181*	0.229*
Surface acting		0.340*	0.069
Deep acting			0.188*

\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 6 presents the results of hierarchical multiple regression, which consists of four phases: Model 1 regressing the five control variables; Model 2 adding emotional labor variables to Model 1; Model 3 adding social media use to Model 2; and Model 4 adding interaction variables to Model 3. Surface acting had a positive significant influence on emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = 0.305$ ), while the hypothetical relationship of deep acting with burnout is not significant. This result confirms the result of ordinary least squares regression and Grandey's (2000) earlier claim: the primacy of surface acting over deep acting in predicting burnout. Deep acting brings the feelings of employees in line with their true expression, and thus the relationship of deep acting with emotional exhaustion is weaker than that of surface acting. The influence of emotional labor on burnout is valid in the non-Western context in which most existing studies have focused.

Table 5. Ordinary least square regression of burnout

	Coefficient	Standardized coefficient
Surface acting	0.175* (0.047)	0.208
Deep acting	0.135* (0.063)	0.117
Social Media use	0.198* (0.053)	0.189
Male	-0.004 (0.125)	-0.002
Age	0.025 (0.014)	0.135
Education	-0.031 (0.095)	-0.018
Career	-0.011 (0.017)	-0.052
Rank	-0.007 (0.094)	-0.004
Constant	2.531* (0.631)	
<i>N</i>	307	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.282	
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.260	
<i>F</i>	12.935	

Note: Standard error in parentheses.

\*  $p < 0.05$

In Model 3, social media use has a positive relationship with burnout. Heavy use of and reliance on social media are likely to increase the level of stress and emotional exhaustion that public employees experience ( $\beta = 0.209$ ). This result supports the negative effect of social media use on public employees' mental health. Model 4, which examines the moderation effect, finds that social media use amplifies the influence of surface acting on emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = 0.175$ ). For public

employees who fake their emotional expressions during service, using social media for their work and personal purposes increases the level of their burnout. However, the moderating effect of social media use is not significant for the relationship between deep acting and burnout. Public employees who can express true feelings during service may engage in using social media platforms on their phones or laptops, but they will not necessarily experience stress or emotional exhaustion from the increased use of social media.

A structural equation model is used to examine the mediation effect of social media use on the causal relationship between emotional labor and burnout. The Sobel test was conducted to examine the statistical significance of the mediation effect. Social media use mediates the causal relationship of deep acting to burnout ( $t = 2.09$ ), but it does not significantly mediate that of surface acting to the expected outcome ( $t = 0.46$ ). Direct effects are consistent with the estimation through ordinary least squares regression and hierarchical regression. As described in Table 7, deep acting does not directly increase emotional exhaustion, but it raises emotional exhaustion through heavy use of and reliance on social media ( $\beta = 0.076$ ). Surface acting directly increases emotional exhaustion ( $\beta =$

**Table 6. Hierarchical regression of burnout**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Male	-0.044	-0.008	0.003	0.017
Age	0.084	1.133	0.155	0.150
Education	0.028	0.033	0.022	0.015
Career	-0.066	-0.107	-0.103	-0.066
Rank	-0.031	-0.039	-0.25	-0.028
Surface acting		0.305*	0.307*	0.310*
Deep acting		0.077	0.038	0.057
Social media use			0.209*	0.207*
Surface acting * social media use				0.175*
Deep acting * social media use				0.049
<i>N</i>	307	307	307	307
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.050	0.117	0.158	0.193
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.012	0.096	0.136	0.166
<i>F</i>	0.294	5.664*	6.999*	7.090*

\*  $p < 0.01$

Note: Coefficients are standardized. To avoid the concern of multicollinearity, mean-centered variables are used.

**Table 7. Structural equation model estimation of causal paths**

Path	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect
Surface acting to social media use	0.020		
Deep acting to social media use	0.260*		
Social media use to burnout	0.292*		
Surface acting to burnout	0.317*	0.006	0.323*
Deep acting to burnout	-0.037	0.076*	0.039

\*  $p < 0.01$

0.317), and the mediation of social media use (the indirect effect) is not valid. Table 8 summarizes the results of hypothesis testing.

Note (model fit compared to cut-off criteria): Minimum  $\chi^2 / df = 1.96 (< 2)$ , Goodness of Fix Index = 0.94 ( $> 0.9$ ), Comparative Fix Index = 0.96 ( $> 0.9$ ), Normed Fix Index = 0.92 ( $> 0.9$ ), Non-Normed Fix Index = 0.94 ( $> 0.9$ ), Incremental Fit Index = 0.96 ( $> 0.9$ ), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation = 0.06 ( $< 0.1$ ).

**Table 8. The result of hypothesis test**

Hypothesis	Result
<b>H1a.</b> Surface acting of public employees increases burnout (emotional exhaustion).	Supported
<b>H1b.</b> Deep acting of public employees increases burnout (emotional exhaustion).	Rejected
<b>H2a.</b> Social media use of public employees moderates the relationship between surface acting and burnout.	Supported
<b>H2b.</b> Social media use of public employees moderates the relationship between deep acting and burnout.	Rejected
<b>H3a.</b> Social media use of public employees mediates the relationship between surface acting and burnout.	Rejected
<b>H3b.</b> Social media use of public employees mediates the relationship between deep acting and burnout.	Supported

## 5. FURTHER DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

In line with previous research, the findings of this study imply that public employees who try to fake their emotions (surface acting) during service experience burnout more than those who train themselves to actually experience the required emotions (deep acting). The role of social media in the influence of emotional labor on burnout deserves analytic and managerial attention. As the result of hypothesis testing reveals, this study makes a distinction between surface acting (the moderation effect) and deep acting (the mediation effect) in terms of how social media use changes the influence of emotional labor on burnout.

As a moderation effect, social media use by public employees boosts the influence of surface acting on emotional exhaustion. According to the resource conservation theory, social media platforms may drain emotional resources from public employees pressured to show surface acting. This theory supports that individuals are more sensitive to loss than to gain of emotional resources. By surface acting, Ghanaian public employees may experience a gain in organizational performance but simultaneously experience a loss in emotional resources. In contrast, those who engage in deep acting can conserve their own emotional resources by the expression of true feelings.

As a mediation effect, deep acting increases the level of social media use, and the social media use by public employees who engage in deep acting increases their emotional exhaustion. Both the hierarchical regression and the structural equation model estimation found that deep acting does not have a significant impact on burnout. According to the emotion regulation theory, deep acting employees may self-regulate their emotion through efforts to think good thoughts or reappraise the situation during frontline service provision. Their reliance on social media for communication and interaction probably indicates the exposure to burnout-prone situations.

Theoretical implications drawing from these findings suggest further research on the role of social media and future communication channels with regard to occupational burnout. The long-standing bureaucratic pressure to comply with organizational display rules would have increasingly turned

into guidelines or compulsory directions regarding social media use in the government workplace. In general, public employees are required not to reveal any information obtained during official work to others via any external (social) media. The study of Khan et al. (2014) reported the psychological risks, social risks, and privacy risks of social networking sites used by public employees at work. For example, some public employees in Korea made a mistake which leaked agency-held information via the instant messenger services of social media platforms. In addition to these risks, social media use may have various meanings to diverse segments of public employees pressured by different types of display rules. The nexus between emotional labor and the nature of organizational display rules is worthy of further in depth research.

This study hints at psychological instability of excessive social media users. Especially, considering the excessive use of social media as a sort of disease in the U.K. and the U.S. induced keen attention to the empirical relationship between neuroticism (opposite to emotional stability) and social media use. It has been reported that neurotic individuals are more readily exhausted when pressured by surface acting and more likely to use social media excessively (Malo-Cerrato, Martín-Perpiñá, Viñas-Poch, 2018) or compulsively (Hsiao et al., 2016). As the conceptual dimensions of neuroticism include self-consciousness, neurotics are concerned about how they appear to others (Costa & McCrae, 1992), present an ideal or false self rather than a real one (Michikyan, Subrahmanyam, & Dennis, 2014; Seidman, 2013), and are involved in social networking for self-promotion (Roulin, 2014) and exhibitionism (Wu & Atkin, 2017). Hence, neuroticism can be related to the extent to which an individual employee complies with organizational display rules, commits to emotional labor, and relies upon social media to fulfill self-consciousness.

The main findings of the study also suggest practical implications for public management. These findings provide human resource developers and personnel managers with empirical evidence for building organizational strategies in terms of job burnout, emotional labor, and social media use. Along with empirical efforts to measure the surface acting and deep acting of public employees in diverse dimensions, it is necessary to base organizational research on the practical theme of when social media use is a relief or a detriment, as well as with respect to whom. Such practical research also needs to pay attention to how the pursuit of New Public Management values (especially in developing countries such as Ghana) influences emotional labor.

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