**Abstract**

Relationships among surface and deep acting, psychological capital (PsyCap), and the three burnout components (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment) were examined. Data were collected from a sample of 416 working professionals. While surface acting positively correlated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, it negatively correlated with personal accomplishment. Deep acting positively correlated with depersonalization and personal accomplishment, but was not significantly related to emotional exhaustion. PsyCap negatively correlated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, but positively correlated with personal accomplishment. Surface acting negatively correlated with PsyCap, while deep acting positively correlated with it. Lastly, PsyCap moderated the relationship between surface acting and emotional exhaustion, as well as between deep acting and both depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Identifying the benefits and costs of emotional labor, specifically surface and deep acting, can lead to organizational practices that benefit employers and employees alike. Organizations should invest in resources that increase employees’ PsyCap to help workers combat the negative outcomes associated with emotional labor, specifically the components of burnout.

**Key words:** emotional labor, surface acting, deep acting, psychological capital, burnout

In the United States, service activities account for 77% of the gross domestic product (Central Intelligence Agency, 2015). Thus, a large percentage of the labor force is employed in jobs that require employees to manage their emotional displays. To remain competitive in today’s market, supervisors must focus on the nature and quality of services provided to customers (Schneider & Bowen, 1995; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990). Customers’ views of an organization are often tied to the interactions they have with the organization’s employees. Thus, effective workplace interactions (e.g., positively displayed emotions within customer service roles) may yield the best organizational results (Grandey, 2000). Although the necessity to display organizationally desired emotions was primarily studied within the helping professions (Hochschild, 1983), it has grown to include employees within other domains because most jobs require that employees work with people in some capacity. This process of managing feelings and expressions when interacting with customers and coworkers is termed *emotional labor* and was coined by Arlie Hochschild (1983)*.*

Displaying the proper emotion in a given situation requires effort and taps into a deep part of an employee’s individuality. When an organization controls something as personal as an employee’s emotions, a number of undesirable effects can result including decreased physical and psychological health, as well as burnout (Gross 1998a; Gross, 1998b; Hochschild, 1983). Given that publicly displaying certain emotions while hiding others may have detrimental effects for employees’ health, it might be best for employees’ wellbeing if employers were to abandon the emotional labor requirement. Unfortunately, it is unrealistic to think this will happen any time soon due to the reliance on customer service principles within the service sector and beyond. Thus, researchers must study variables that weaken the relationship between emotional labor and the burnout components.

In the current study, we investigated the relationships among surface and deep acting, psychological capital, and the three burnout components (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment). Psychological capital, or PsyCap, is made up of the state-like components of efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, and can be developed within employees (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). This makes it an opportune variable to study because it can be manipulated. Consequently, we sought to determine whether the presence of PsyCap could weaken the relationship between surface and deep acting with each burnout dimension. This is the first study to examine PsyCap as a moderator between surface and deep acting with the burnout components, using a wide sample of employees. Theoretically and empirically studying these variables could have vast implications for employees who are expected to manage their emotions at work.

**Emotional Labor Overview**

Although emotions were previously ignored in the study of organizational behavior (Putnam & Mumby, 1993), they have since become a topic of great interest. Emotional labor refers to the work required by an employee to express organizationally desired emotions; it requires effort, planning, and control (Hochschild, 1983). These emotions are governed by display rules, which are created within organizations to define the appropriate expression of emotions on the job (Ekman, 1973). Emotional labor requires an individual to tap into a deep and integral part of one’s individuality (Hochschild, 1983). Thus, employees working in jobs that require them to express organizationally desired emotions must regulate their emotions through the process of emotional labor.

Emotional labor is such a critical part of today’s organizations because employers believe that the suppression and expression of certain emotions influences customers (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987) and results in more effective workplace interactions (Grandey, 2000). Performance outcomes are at the root of many business decisions and the reasons for performing emotional labor are no exception. Thus, emotional labor has become a routine part of the lives of many employees in today’s organizations and its continued exploration is warranted.

**Surface acting.** Individuals engage in emotional labor by means of surface acting or deep acting. Surface acting involves changing one’s outward emotional expression without changing the felt internal emotion (Hochschild, 1983). An employee engaging in surface acting might smile, but would not necessarily feel happy internally. This process requires less effort than deep acting.

**Deep acting**. Deep acting is a more effortful process that involves changing the felt internal emotion to match what is expected by the organization (Hochschild, 1983). For instance, if a waitress is engaging in deep acting she might think of a pleasant memory so that she feels happy internally. This makes it easier for her to smile at a difficult customer because internally she is happy.

**Burnout Overview**

Burnout is a prolonged response to chronic work stressors that results from an inability to replenish spent resources (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Cordes and Dougherty (1993) view it as “a chronic affective response pattern to stressful work conditions that features high levels of interpersonal contact” (p. 625). Burnout is defined as high emotional exhaustion, high depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Burnout can lead to low morale, decreased quality of service, and absenteeism (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). It is also associated with decreased job satisfaction, lower work productivity, and reduced organizational commitment (Maslach et al., 2001). Additionally, burnout is linked to poor mental health (Leiter & Maslach, 2001), physical exhaustion, insomnia, increased alcohol and drug use, and marital/family issues (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Thus, the negative implications of burnout exist both in an organizational setting as well as at home.

**Emotional exhaustion.** The exhaustion component represents the physical and mental exhaustion experienced due to a feeling of depletion of one’s resources (Maslach et al., 2001).

**Depersonalization.** The depersonalization component, also referred to as cynicism, represents a detached response to the job and the clients one is helping (Maslach et al., 2001).

**Reduced personal accomplishment.** The reduced personal accomplishment component, also referred to as inefficacy, is a feeling of incompetence and loss of productivity at work (Maslach et al., 2001).

**Psychological Capital Overview**

Psychological capital (PsyCap) is a state-like variable that is related to attitudinal, behavioral, and performance outcomes (Youssef‐Morgan & Luthans, 2015). It consists of positive psychological capacities—efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience (Luthans, Luthans, & Luthans, 2004). Efficacy refers to the confidence to succeed, hope refers to perseverance towards goals, optimism refers to a positive attribution for success, and resilience refers to the capacity to bounce back (Luthans et al., 2004).

Individuals high in PsyCap display greater work happiness, well-being, performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Avey, Reichard, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2011; Choi & Lee, 2014; Luthans, Avey, Avolio, & Peterson, 2010). Choi and Lee (2014) found a negative relationship between PsyCap and turnover intention, even after controlling for the Big Five personality traits. Avey, Luthans, Smith, and Palmer (2010) found a positive relationship between PsyCap and psychological well-being. Youssef-Morgan and Luthans (2015) argue that PsyCap yields a desirable return on development because of its state-like nature—it is malleable, yet relatively stable, making it an optimal resource for workplace development. Thus, PsyCap may be a promising variable in organizational interventions and employers may increase it through micro interventions, which can contribute to “who you become” (Luthans, 2012). For instance, Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, and Combs (2006) found PsyCap could be improved in a 1 to 3-hour micro-intervention using exercises and video clips to identify personal goals, pathways towards achieving those goals, and obstacles that might prevent the participants from achieving their goals.  Using utility analysis, Luthans et al. (2006) calculated a 270% return on investment for a sample of 74 engineering managers in a high-tech manufacturing firm who participated in the micro intervention.

**Surface Acting, Deep Acting, and Burnout**

Researchers have demonstrated a higher correlation between job-related stressors and burnout than between client-related stressors and burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). Zapf, Seifert, Schmutte, Mertini, and Holz (2001) found that emotion-related work variables, such as the requirement to be empathetic, account for additional variance in burnout scores above and beyond job stressors. Thus, it is important to look at variables such as emotional labor given that it has a strong relationship with burnout. Regulating one’s displayed emotions to meet the appropriate display rules requires effort. Thus, Hochschild (1983) proposed that emotional labor was related to burnout. Workers in roles that require frequent and intense interpersonal interactions experience higher burnout than those in less emotionally demanding roles (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993).

Emotional labor is typically performed by either surface or deep acting. Surface acting is positively correlated with burnout (Cheung, Tang, & Tang, 2011). Specifically, Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) found it was related to exhaustion, detachment, and reduced personal accomplishment. Hulscheger and Schewe (2011) also found that surface acting was positively associated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Thus, there is ample evidence to show that surface acting and the burnout components are correlated with each other. Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) also studied the relationship between deep acting and the burnout components. They found that deep acting was only related to personal accomplishment.

**Psychological Capital and Burnout**

High PsyCap could buffer the negative outcomes experienced in the three burnout components. Individuals high in PsyCap, especially the efficacy dimension, can use this as a resource to cope with reduced personal accomplishment. There should be a direct link between PsyCap and burnout because they are interrelated. Cordes and Dougherty (1993) and Lee and Ashforth (1990) suggest that personal accomplishment, one of the burnout components, reflects a personality characteristic similar to efficacy, one of the PsyCap components. Hence, burnout and PsyCap may correlate because they both share the element of confidence in one’s ability. In fact, Cheung et al. (2011) and Ding et al. (2015) found that higher PsyCap was negatively related to burnout.

PsyCap should protect individuals from resource loss typically associated with burnout. In a study comprised of Canadian nurses, PsyCap appeared to protect nurses from negative work experiences (Laschinger & Fida, 2014). Thus, building upon interpersonal resources such as PsyCap can strengthen an individual’s ability to combat stressors that lead to the components of burnout.

**Surface Acting, Deep Acting, and Psychological Capital**

Little research has been done on the relationship between emotional labor and PsyCap. Identifying factors which can ameliorate the negative outcomes of performing emotional labor is important for employees and organizations. It is unrealistic to expect that the requirement to perform emotional labor will disappear, so examining factors that can lessen the burden it has on individuals is essential. PsyCap can serve as a personal resource to employees performing emotional labor. Properly employing emotional labor strategies could lead to mastery in which the employees’ sense of efficacy in their abilities to achieve desired outcomes is enhanced. This, in turn, should increase the employees’ hope and optimism about the future, which should then enhance resilience when employees are faced with setbacks.

One who must overcome the adversity associated with emotional labor will be better suited to engage in it with high amounts of efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience compared to an individual without such resources. Emotional labor rids employees of autonomy over their emotional expression in the workplace. Higher efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience can help combat the detrimental effects experienced by this loss of autonomy. Framing job demands as challenging rather than depleting, a characteristic common among optimistic and resilient individuals, can help them better cope with the demands associated with emotional labor-intensive jobs (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994). Contrary to prediction, Cheung et al. (2011) did not find significant relationships between PsyCap and surface or deep acting. Brotheridge and Grandey (2002), however, found deep acting was related to greater personal efficacy at work. Hence, we sought to clarify some of the confusion.

**Current Study**

Although burnout, emotional labor, and PsyCap are popular, only one study to date has investigated the link amongst these variables (Cheung et al., 2011). Thus, we sought to expand the current literature and better understand these associations by testing PsyCap as a moderator in the relationship between surface and deep acting with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Emotional labor takes a great toll on employees’ well-being, therefore, PsyCap can be used as a personal resource to ameliorate the influence that emotional labor has on burnout.

To realize the true potential of PsyCap, the relationship between it and the burnout components was explored. The relationships between surface and deep acting with PsyCap were also studied. Lastly, the relationships between surface and deep acting with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment were investigated within the context of PsyCap. Identifying PsyCap to help employees cope with work demands and stress, can help alleviate the negative influence emotional labor has on the burnout components.

Cheung et al. (2011) studied PsyCap as a moderator, drawing specifically from schoolteachers in China, and found the relationship between emotional labor and burnout was weaker for those with higher PsyCap. The current study is different from Cheung et al. (2011) and adds to the existing literature by exploring the relationships among these variables from a broad sample of workers. Furthermore, emotional labor was originally studied within the helping professions (e.g., flight attendants, nurses, teachers; Cheung et al., 2011; Diefendorff, Erickson, Grandey, & Dahling, 2011; Hochschild, 1983). However, emotional labor is not limited to teachers or the service sector. Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) found the caring professions did not create higher burnout compared to employees working as managers or physical laborers. Thus, the current study also contributes to the present research by including adults who work over 40 hours a week, rather than from a specific industry. Employees who deal with difficult customers or patients are not so different from those who deal with demanding coworkers or managers.

Emotional labor positively correlates with burnout (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002), while one study found that PsyCap negatively correlates with burnout (Cheung et al., 2011). Although results regarding the relationship between emotional labor and PsyCap are mixed, it is expected that they will share a negative relationship because emotional labor is a job demand and PsyCap is a job resource. Accordingly, PsyCap should offset the negative implications associated with emotional labor. Thus, the following hypotheses are presented:

**Hypothesis 1a (H1a):** Surface acting will positively correlate with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and negatively correlate with personal accomplishment.

**Hypothesis 1b (H1b):** Deep acting will positively correlate with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and negatively correlate with personal accomplishment.

**Hypothesis 1c (H1c):** PsyCap will negatively correlate with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and positively correlate with personal accomplishment.

**Hypothesis 1d (H1d):** Surface acting and deep acting will negatively correlate with PsyCap.

PsyCap is a positive resource capacity, hence, if the aforementioned hypotheses are in the predicted direction, then it should buffer the negative effects that emotional labor has on burnout. Individuals who have the positive resource capacities of efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience to draw from when performing emotional labor, should experience less burnout because they can utilize these resources when job demands are high. Therefore, individuals high in PsyCap should experience less burnout when performing emotional labor. Thus, the following hypothesis is presented:

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** PsyCap will moderate the relationships between emotional labor (i.e., surface and deep acting) andburnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishment), such that the greater the level of PsyCap, the weaker the relationship between emotional labor and burnout.

**Method**

**Participants**

Ultimately, 141 participants were in the snowball sample and 275 were in the MTurk sample. The two samples (snowball and MTurk) were compared on all of the critical variables (i.e., surface acting, deep acting, PsyCap, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment) using a discriminant function analysis. The difference between the two samples fell well short of statistical significance, λ = .985, χ2(6) = .651, *p* = .41. Box’s test was used to determine whether the correlations among these variables differed between the two samples. They did not differ significantly, *M* = 16.516, *F*(21, 306,958) = 0.772, *p* = .76. Accordingly, the two samples were combined for subsequent analysis.

The snowball and MTurk samples were also compared on each of the demographic variables. The samples differed significantly with respect to race, χ2(6, *N* = 414) = 157.87, *V* = .62, *p* < .001. Participants in the snowball sample were significantly more likely to identify as Caucasian (91.5%) than were participants in the MTurk sample (27.5%), and significantly less likely to identify as Latino (2.8%) than those in the MTurk sample (58.2%), *p* < .001. It is of note that respondents from MTurk samples are more representative of the U.S. population compared to in-person convenience samples (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012). Members of the MTurk sample were significantly more likely to have a managerial position (76.0%) than were members of the snowball sample (48.2%), χ2(1, *N* = 415) = 32.32, *p* < .001. The samples did not differ significantly on any of other the demographic variables. Of note, Michel, O’Neill, Hartman, & Lorys, A. (2018) found that, based on O\*NET career clusters, employed Turkers reported diverse labor market classifications and did not differ greatly from population estimates.

Thus, the sample included 416 working professionals—53.4% men and 46.6% women, with a mean age of 33.8 years (*SD* = 10.2). Regarding race, 49.3% were Caucasian, 39.4% Asian, 3.6% Hispanic, 3.1% African American, 1.2% Native American, 3.1% identified as Other, and 0.2% Pacific Islander. In terms of marital status, 47.0% were married and 56.9% did not have any children. Regarding education, 8.7% had a high school degree, 8.5% an associate’s degree, 40.9% a bachelor’s degree, 28.3% a master’s degree, and 13.6% a doctoral degree. In terms of career status, 33.4% were in non-management positions, 18% were first-line management, 32.9% were middle management, 9.6% were senior management, and 6.0% responded Not Applicable. Participants worked on average 46.8 hours per week (*SD* = 7.6), both in and out of the office. They worked on average 5.7 years in their current organization and 4.3 years in their current job.

**Procedure**

Participants were recruited through social media (i.e., Facebook, LinkedIn) and Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), whereby workers are paid a small monetary incentive to complete human intelligence tasks. They were told about the purpose of the study, the time for survey completion, requirements for study participation, and a link to the survey which was administered through Qualtrics. Those who decided to participate were provided with informed consent describing the voluntary nature of the study and information assuring them of confidentiality and anonymity. After obtaining consent, participants were measured on emotional labor, PsyCap, and burnout.

**Measures**

**Emotional labor.** The 11-item Emotional Labor Scale developed by Diefendorff, Croyle, and Gosserand (2005) was used to measure emotional labor. Sample items for surface acting include, “I put on an act in order to deal with customers in an appropriate way” and “I show feelings to customers that are different from what I feel inside.” Sample items for deep acting include, “I make an effort to actually feel the emotions that I need to display toward others” and “I work at developing the feelings inside of me that I need to show to customers.” Respondents used a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), in which higher scores indicate performing more surface and deep acting. A Cronbach’s alpha of .90 was found for surface acting and .80 for deep acting.

**Psychological capital.** The 24-item Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ; Luthans et al., 2007) was utilized to measure PsyCap. Avey, Luthans, and Jensen (2009) suggest that, instead of its individual components, the core construct of PsyCap should be analyzed. Thus, overall PsyCap was assessed. Sample items include, “If I should find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it,” and “When things are uncertain for me at work, I usually expect the best.” The PCQ is scored on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), whereby higher scores indicate greater levels of PsyCap. A Cronbach’s alpha of .90 was obtained.

**Burnout.** The 22-item Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach & Jackson, 1981) was used to measure burnout. A sample item for emotional exhaustion includes, “I feel like I’m at the end of my rope.” A sample item for depersonalization includes, “I’ve become more callous toward people since I took this job.” A sample item for personal accomplishment includes, “I feel I’m positively influencing other people’s lives through my work.” The MBI is scored on a 6-point scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*every day*). High scores on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, as well as low scores on personal accomplishment, reflect high burnout (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1997). A Cronbach’s alpha of .91 was found for emotional exhaustion, .80 for depersonalization, and .76 for personal accomplishment.

**Results**

As shown in Table 1, the results supported Hypothesis 1a. Surface acting was positively correlated with emotional exhaustion, *r* = .449, *p* < .001, 95% CI [.369, .522] and depersonalization, *r* = .502, *p* < .001, 95% CI [.427, .570], and negatively correlated with personal accomplishment, *r* = -.167, *p* = .001, 95% CI [-.258, -.073]. The results partially supported Hypothesis 1b. Deep acting was positively correlated with depersonalization, *r* = .161, *p* = .001, 95% CI [.066, .253] and personal accomplishment, *r* = .251, *p* < .001, 95% CI [.159, .338]. Contrary to expectations, deep acting was not related to emotional exhaustion, *r* = .075, *p* = .13, 95% CI [-.021, .169]. Hypothesis 1c was also supported. PsyCap was negatively correlated with emotional exhaustion, *r* = -.391, *p* < .001, 95% CI [-.47, -.31] and depersonalization, *r* = -.368, *p* < .001, 95% CI [-.45, -.28], and positively correlated with personal accomplishment *r* = .562, *p* < .001, 95% CI [.49, .62]. Hypothesis 1d was partially supported as PsyCap was negatively correlated with surface acting, *r* = -.251, *p* < .001, 95% CI [-.338, -.159] and positively correlated with deep acting, *r* = .148, *p* = .002, 95% CI [.053, .240].

Multiple regression was employed to relate each burnout component to surface acting, deep acting, and PsyCap, with interaction terms included for the potential moderation effects of PsyCap. Hypothesis 2 was partially supported. For emotional exhaustion, the overall model was statistically significant, *R* = .550, *F*(5, 410) = 35.582, *p* < .001. Emotional exhaustion was positively related to surface acting and negatively related to PsyCap, and PsyCap significantly moderated the effect of surface acting (see Table 2). The interaction is depicted in Figure 1. The standardized slope for the effect of surface acting was significant (*p* < .001) when PsyCap was one *SD* below the mean (β = .488), at the mean (β = .388), and one *SD* above the mean (β = .287). As the level of PsyCap increased, the strength of the relationship between surface acting and emotional exhaustion decreased.

For depersonalization, the overall model was statistically significant, *R* = .586, *F*(5, 410) = 42.812, *p* < .001. Depersonalization was positively related to surface acting and deep acting, and PsyCap significantly moderated the effect of deep acting (see Table 3). The interaction is depicted in Figure 2. The standardized slope for the effect of deep acting was significant (*p* < .001) when PsyCap was one *SD* below the mean (β = .256), at the mean (β = .158), but not at one *SD* above the mean (β = .059). As the level of PsyCap increased, the strength of the relationship between deep acting and depersonalization decreased.

For personal accomplishment, the overall model was statistically significant, *R* = .566, *F*(5, 410) = 45.140, *p* < .001. Personal accomplishment was positively related to deep acting and PsyCap, and PsyCap significantly moderated the effect of deep acting (see Table 4). The interaction is depicted in Figure 3. The standardized slope for the effect of deep acting was significant (*p* < .001) when PsyCap was one *SD* below the mean (β = .285), at the mean (β = .199), and at one *SD* above the mean (β = .113, *p* = .032). As the level of PsyCap increased, the strength of the relationship between deep acting and personal accomplishment decreased.

**Discussion**

The expression of emotions in the workplace is a topic of great interest. Originally studied within helping professions, the emotional labor requirement is now widespread throughout many fields and occupations. Fulfilling the emotional necessities of a job by emotional labor strategies benefits the organization through increased perceptions of friendliness (Grandey, 2003). However, individuals working in jobs that require interpersonal interactions, especially with customers or clients, are particularly at risk to experience negative outcomes (e.g., decreased physical and psychological health, burnout; Gross, 1998a; Gross, 1998b; Hochschild, 1983). Although employees might benefit from removing the emotional labor components of their jobs, it is unlikely that organizations will abandon this requirement. Thus, it is essential to study variables that may weaken the relationship between emotional labor and the burnout components.

The relationships between surface and deep acting with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment were first explored. Employees who are expected to manage their emotions must put forth a lot of effort. When expected to show emotions that they do not naturally feel, they may experience emotional dissonance (Abraham, 1998). Emotional dissonance has been consistently linked to emotional exhaustion (Abraham, 1998; Brotheridge & Lee, 1998; Morris & Feldman, 1997). This notion might explain why surface acting was positively correlated with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and negatively correlated with personal accomplishment. Employees performing surface acting display unfelt emotions, which leaves them feeling disassociated from their true feelings. It is emotionally exhausting to outwardly display an emotion when one is not truly feeling it, leaving individuals to feel they have not accomplished what they intended to.

Employees working in roles that require emotional labor usually have frequent and intense interpersonal interactions and experience higher burnout than those in less emotionally demanding roles (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). This may explain why deep acting positively correlated with depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Individuals who change their inner emotions so they can match the expected outward emotional display, also feel disassociated from their true feelings. Unlike surface acting, however, they feel a sense of achievement in their work by having faked the intended emotion well. Interestingly, deep acting was not related to emotional exhaustion. Perhaps when individuals change their inner emotions to match the desired emotional display, they do not feel emotionally burdened by the act.

Next, the relationship between PsyCap and the burnout components was examined. To realize the full potential of PsyCap, business leaders and HR managers must be interested in employee performance and outcomes. Luthans et al. (2007) propose that companies can benefit by developing PsyCap. Employers should be aware of the relationship it has with burnout so it can be leveraged most effectively to yield strong performance and other outcomes beneficial to the organization. PsyCap is important because it is state-like and shows some degree of malleability; it also affects employee attitudes, behaviors, and performance (Avey et al., 2011; Luthans et al., 2007). Thus, PsyCap can be changed over time to yield desirable outcomes. The personal accomplishment subscale of burnout is similar to the efficacy component of PsyCap. Both measure the belief in one’s ability. The present data support this idea in that PsyCap positively related to personal accomplishment and negatively related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Perhaps individuals use this positive personal resource capacity to cope with job demands that result in burnout.

The relationship between emotional labor and PsyCap was also examined. Emotional labor is taxing and employees need resources to adequately perform these job demands. PsyCap was negatively related to surface acting and positively related to deep acting. Maybe individuals who are higher in PsyCap prefer to change their inner emotions because they have the resources and can expend greater effort in actually changing their emotions rather than simply altering the emotional display. It is more difficult to think of a positive memory when you are sad than it is to fake a smile. Individuals high in PsyCap have the resources to change their inner emotions.

Lastly, PsyCap was investigated as a potential moderator between emotional labor and the burnout components. Expressing socially desired emotions at work may negatively affect employees and lead to burnout. PsyCap was found to buffer the negative outcomes experienced in the burnout dimensions. Specifically, PsyCap moderated the relationship between surface acting and emotional exhaustion—as the level of PsyCap increased, the strength of the relationship decreased. PsyCap also moderated the relationship between deep acting and depersonalization—as the level of PsyCap increased, the strength of the relationship decreased. Finally, PsyCap moderated the relationship between deep acting and personal accomplishment—as the level of PsyCap increased, the strength of the relationship decreased. These results shed light on how PsyCap ameliorates the negative influences of surface acting on emotional exhaustion and deep acting on depersonalization and personal accomplishment. The moods, feelings, and attitudes of workers performing emotional labor are changed by the presence or absence of PsyCap. PsyCap is related to desired attitudinal and performance outcomes in the workplace (Youssef‐Morgan & Luthans, 2015). When organizations leverage the resources to increase one’s PsyCap, they can positively influence performance outcomes and decrease the burnout components among employees who perform emotional labor.

**Study Limitations and Future Directions**

Although our study findings contribute to the existing literature, some limitations are noted. The sample was recruited through snowball sampling and MTurk. Within snowball sampling, the researchers’ acquaintances were asked to complete the study and then to recruit their own acquaintances. Hence, perhaps participants recruited in this way may not represent the general population of full-time workers. Although snowball sampling does not produce a completely random sample, other researchers have used a similar approach (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Lim & Lee, 2011) and some suggest this methodology provides quality data analogous to traditional recruiting methods (Smith, Tisak, Hahn, & Schmieder, 1997).

Additionally, MTurk, a fairly new data collection method, produces reasonably accurate responses and provides demographically diverse participants for behavioral and psychological research (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012). Unfamiliarity with online labor markets may lead some to question the quality of data obtained by these methods. Paolacci, Chandler, and Ipeirotis (2010) found that results obtained in MTurk did not differ substantially from those found in a subject pool at a large university in the United States. Rand (2011) also examined the reliability of the data by comparing the consistency among reported demographics between two studies using the same participants. He found between an 81% and 98% level of agreement, depending on the variable. Thus, data from MTurk participants is typically reliable and its use is warranted. Rand (2011) also compared subjects’ self-reported country of residence to their IP addresses and found that 97% of responses were accurate. Moreover, Michel et al. (2018) found the effect sizes of organizational and occupational health variables in the MTurk sample were comparable to published benchmarks, and these data demonstrated high levels of reliability (i.e., internal consistency and test-retest) and stability of relationships—they conclude that MTurk is a practical resource for organizational and occupational health research. Therefore, this pool of participants seems sufficiently reliable.

Furthermore, although some might view the use of self-report data as a disadvantage, Conway and Lance (2010) convincingly argued that its use is not inferior to reports made by others, nor do the relationships among the variables produce upwardly biased results. Chan (2008) similarly maintained that the measurement biases associated with self-report data may not necessarily exist. Additionally, Avey et al. (2010) contend that PsyCap might be best evaluated by the self, given that the concept is subjective in nature.

Finally, the data were collected at one point in time. Hence, although it is expected that emotional labor leads to burnout, causal inferences cannot be made. That said, testing for moderation effects reduces the chances for common method variance, so moderation analyses may help offset this limitation (Evans, 1985). Future researchers should expand on the results by conducting a longitudinal design in which employees can rate the amount of surface and deep acting, PsyCap, and the three burnout components at multiple times over an extended period of time. Doing so would allow researchers to examine the interactions between the variables on more than one occasion and assess the degree and direction of change over time (Caruana, Roman, Hernandez-Sanchex, & Solli, 2015).  It would also enable us to determine whether this was a long-term phenomenon that was relatively stable, or if one or more of the variables changed dramatically over time.  For instance, future researchers could survey respondents at multiple periods throughout the year.  It would be interesting to see if holidays, performance review cycles, seasons, or certain times of the month influenced self-reports of these variables.

That said, cross-sectional research designs are typically more cost effective and time efficient, and they can function as a preliminary evaluation before undertaking a longitudinal design (Caruana et al., 2015).

It would also be ideal to do a PsyCap intervention. Participants could attend a certain number of weekly sessions, each lasting 1-3 hours (see Luthans et al., 2006), in which they further develop PsyCap. If significant improvements are seen in the experimental group compared to the control group, then one could examine if the advances from enriching PsyCap were maintained a certain number of months later.  Thus, using a longitudinal design, future researchers could develop an intervention to enhance PsyCap.  They could measure the participants’ emotional labor and burnout before the intervention.  Then, they could teach the participants ways to increase PsyCap.  At the end of the intervention, the researchers could reassess the participants’ levels on the variables.  By enhancing PsyCap, the participant would likely score lower on both emotional labor and burnout.  It is important to assess emotional labor and burnout both before and after an intervention to determine if PsyCap increases and if burnout decreases. With this knowledge, organizations can accordingly design work environments that augment PsyCap.

**Organizational and Practical Implications**

Although initially viewed favorably by many organizations, the emotional labor requirement may actually impede performance in the long run. Burnout can have negative ramifications on organizations and it is in the best interest of companies to combat it. The current study findings demonstrate that PsyCap moderates the relationship between surface acting and emotional exhaustion, and between deep acting and both depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Hence, employees who perform surface acting as part of their job requirements and who are also high in efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, are less likely to experience emotional exhaustion. Employees high in these resources are also less likely to experience depersonalization when performing deep acting. Thus, the state-like variable of PsyCap is a resource for employees to draw from when performing both surface and deep acting. Although some employees might have naturally higher levels of PsyCap, it is also possible to develop these states within them. As mentioned earlier, Luthans et al. (2006) showed that PsyCap micro interventions (e.g., 1 to 3-hour sessions) can yield a high return on investment by further developing participants’ efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, as well as their overall positive mindset. Although the cost of drawing participants away from their daily tasks to partake in a short micro intervention may be small, further studies are needed to measure the sustainability of the micro intervention over time.

By better understanding the concept of emotional labor and its relation to burnout, organizations can begin to implement more effective policies to combat the negative effects that emotional labor has on this stress syndrome. For instance, policies at the individual and organizational level could better help employees manage and cope with emotional arousal. Organizations whose current employees suffer from performing emotional labor, may also implement policies that engender healthy workplaces.

**Conclusions**

The current study expands on past research and is the first study to examine the relationship among surface and deep acting, PsyCap, and the burnout components among a generalized sample of working adults. The results indicate that employees engaging in surface acting are likely to report high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and lower levels of personal accomplishment. Employees engaging in deep acting are likely to report higher levels of depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Although it was expected that employees who perform deep acting would report more emotional exhaustion, this relationship was not significant. Perhaps employees who perform deep acting do not necessarily feel emotionally burdened by the labor.

Furthermore, employees high in PsyCap report lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and higher levels of personal accomplishment. Also, surface acting was negatively related to PsyCap, while deep acting had a positive relationship with it. Lastly, PsyCap moderated the relationship between surface acting and emotional exhaustion, and between deep acting and both depersonalization and personal accomplishment. Therefore, it seems that PsyCap does indeed serve as a positive personal resource to draw from for employees performing emotional labor. PsyCap is linked to wide-ranging positive outcomes and can be effectively utilized within the workplace if employers put forth the resources to invest in human, social, and psychological capital. Essentially, measuring, developing, and harnessing PsyCap will allow both researchers and practitioners to tap into an enormous potential.

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**Table 1.**

*Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. | SA | (.90) |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. | DA | .15\* | (.80) |  |  |  |  |
| 3. | PCQ | -.25\*\* | .15\* | (.90) |  |  |  |
| 4. | EE | .45\*\* | .08 | -.39\*\* | (.91) |  |  |
| 5. | DE | .50\*\* | .16\*\* | -.37\*\* | .63\*\* | (.80) |  |
| 6. | PA | -.17\*\* | .25\*\* | .56\*\* | -.15\* | -.16\* | (.76) |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Range | 7-35 | 4-20 | 24-120 | 0-54 | 0-30 | 0-48 |
| Mean | 21.51 | 13.84 | 91.31 | 24.28 | 9.56 | 34.44 |
| *SD* | 6.35 | 2.90 | 11.86 | 12.62 | 7.11 | 7.57 |

Note. *N* = 416. Entries on the main diagonal are Cronbach’s alphas. SA = Surface Acting; DA = Deep Acting; PCQ = Psychological Capital Questionnaire; EE = Emotional Exhaustion subscale; DE = Depersonalization subscale; PA = Personal Accomplishment subscale

\**p* < .05,\*\**p* < .001.

**Table 2.**

*Predicting Emotional Exhaustion from Surface Acting, Deep Acting, and Psychological Capital*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Predictor | *r* | β | *p* for β |
| Surface Acting (SA) | .449 | .390 | .000 |
| Deep Acting (DA) | .075 | .080 | .064 |
| Psychological Capital (PsyCap) | -.391 | -.303 | .000 |
| SA x PsyCap | -.037 | -.115 | .008 |
| DA x PsyCap | .045 | -.028 | .516 |

**Table 3.**

*Predicting Depersonalization from Surface Acting, Deep Acting, and Psychological Capital*

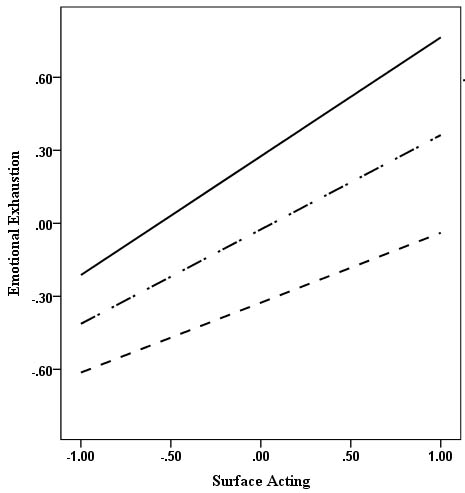
|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Predictor | *r* | β | *p* for β |
| Surface Acting (SA) | .502 | .589 | .038 |
| Deep Acting (DA) | .161 | .884 | .007 |
| Psychological Capital (PsyCap) | -.368 | .232 | .284 |
| SA x PsyCap | .338 | -.169 | .546 |
| DA x PsyCap | -.052 | -.924 | .022 |

**Table 4.**

*Predicting Personal Accomplishment from Surface Acting, Deep Acting, and Psychological Capital*

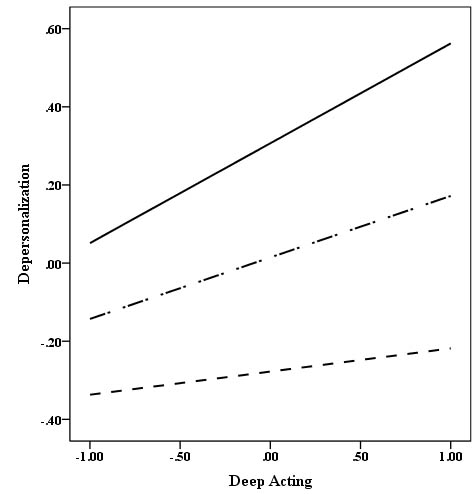
|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Predictor | *r* | β | *p* for β |
| Surface Acting (SA) | -.167 | -.079 | .778 |
| Deep Acting (DA) | .251 | .863 | .008 |
| Psychological Capital (PsyCap) | .562 | .914 | < .001 |
| SA x PsyCap | .080 | .023 | .934 |
| DA x PsyCap | .461 | -.846 | .035 |

***Figure 1.*** Psychological capital as a moderator between surface acting and emotional exhaustion. All variables were standardized to mean 0, variance 1.



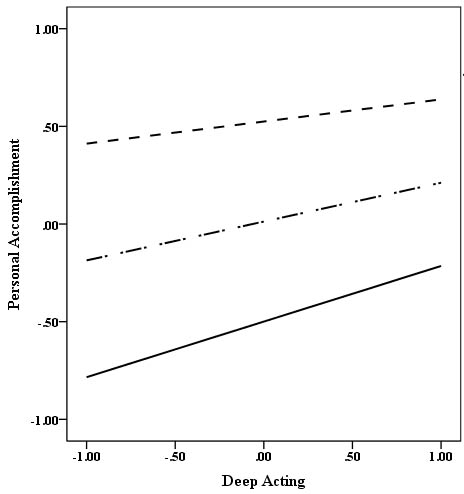
**Psychological Capital: ⎯ -1 ⋅ ⎯ ⋅ 0 - - - +1**

***Figure 2.*** Psychological capital as a moderator between deep acting and depersonalization. All variables were standardized to mean 0, variance 1.



**Psychological Capital: ⎯ -1 ⋅ ⎯ ⋅ 0 - - - +1**

***Figure 3.*** Psychological capital as a moderator between deep acting and personal accomplishment. All variables were standardized to mean 0, variance 1.



**Psychological Capital: ⎯ -1 ⋅ ⎯ ⋅ 0 - - - +1**