

# Beyond the Surface: An Exploration of Emotional Labor on Burnout and Turnover Intentions Among Public Employees

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history:</b>            Published: February 2026</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b>            Burnout            Deep acting            Emotional labor            Turnover intentions            Surface acting</p>	<p>This study examined how emotional labor strategies (deep and surface acting) influence burnout and turnover intentions among public personnel in the Philippines and investigated the moderating role of key job resources: supervisor and coworker support, job satisfaction, and job autonomy. Using survey data from 305 public sector employees, multiple regression and moderated regression analyses demonstrated that both deep and surface acting positively predicted burnout and turnover intentions, with surface acting exerting stronger effects. Job satisfaction, supervisor support, and coworker support significantly reduced burnout and turnover intentions, while autonomy primarily reduced burnout. Certain interactions revealed complex patterns, including coworker support intensifying strain among deep actors. Findings reinforce the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) framework and emphasize emotional labor as a structural demand in public service. Implications highlight the need for emotional support programs, leadership training, and policy reforms to sustain public workforce well-being.</p>

## 1. Introduction

Government employees frequently act as the interface between public institutions and citizens, serving as mediators between bureaucratic systems and the needs of the community. This role requires not only technical expertise but also a high level of emotional regulation to effectively manage interactions with diverse stakeholders (Ahmed and Aref, 2019). For example, local government workers, social service providers, and public health professionals often find themselves in emotionally charged situations, such as addressing citizen complaints or providing critical services under stressful conditions (Ruiz-Fernandez et al., 2021).

In these roles, public servants must maintain neutrality and impartiality while dealing with complicated and emotionally taxing circumstances. This is especially clear in social services, where workers encounter vulnerable populations, including the elderly and minors, who require sensitive and empathetic care (Ruiz-Fernandez et al., 2021). The emotional toll of such interactions can be significant, leading to feelings of anger, sadness, fear, and concern among professionals. Therefore, it is imperative that public institutions support their employees in developing emotional regulation skills to enhance their well-being and job performance (Buruck and Dorfel, 2016).

The challenges faced by public sector workers are multifaceted. In addition to managing high emotional demands, they often face bureaucratic hurdles, limited resources, and high caseloads, which can lead to burnout and stress. For instance, social workers frequently report overwhelming caseloads and insufficient funding, which can hinder their ability to provide comprehensive support to clients. Similarly, healthcare workers face intense stress dealing with mortality and human suffering, along with demanding work conditions and administrative burdens (Risk factors for Stress and Burnout 2024).

To address these challenges, public institutions must give their employees' emotional labor skills development top priority. Managing one's emotions to meet organizational expectations is known as emotional labor, and it can significantly impact job performance (Hochschild, 1983). Training programs that focus on deep acting, an emotional labor strategy where the person genuinely express emotions aligned with the objectives of the organization, can improve perceived job productivity and foster a positive work environment (Adam, 2020). By investing in such training and supporting the emotional well-being of public servants, institutions can improve service delivery and uphold a high standard of professionalism despite challenging circumstances.

Using a quantitative approach, this research seeks to explore how different emotional labor strategies affect employee burnout and turnover intentions. Research indicates public health equity workers experience intense emotional demands with inadequate coping support (Abresch et al, 2023). Additionally, public administrators experience burnout and exhaustion from emotional regulation during service delivery (Miller-Fox, 2016). These distinctive characteristics necessitate targeted research to understand how organizational constraints, service expectations, and institutional support mechanisms uniquely affect emotional labor processes and outcomes within public institutions.

Given the increasing recognition of emotional labor's importance in public service delivery (Lee et al, 2020), it is essential to recognize how these factors interact to shape employee outcomes. This study sought to explore the differential impacts of emotional labor strategies on employee burnout and turnover intention among government employees.

Additionally, it explores the moderating effects of workplace factors to provide actionable insights for improving organizational performance and employee well-being in the public service.

Job resources such as job satisfaction, autonomy, and supervisor/coworker support are theorized to buffer emotional labor's negative effects (Altas et al, 2024), but their specific moderating roles remain underexamined. For example, supervisor support may mitigate surface acting's burnout risk by validating emotional efforts, while weak autonomy could exacerbate stress from deep acting by limiting employees' control over emotional strategies. Conversely, high job satisfaction might moderate deep acting and reduced turnover by reinforcing intrinsic fulfillment. Nuanced studies using moderated analyses are needed to disentangle whether these resources act as protective filters, amplifying resilience, or passive enablers, inadvertently normalizing excessive emotional labor demands.

The results of this research will contribute to the body of current literature by providing insights into effective organizational strategies that can improve the wellbeing and retention of employees in public sector. By identifying how different emotional labor strategies impact the employee well-being and how organizational support can mitigate negative outcomes, this research can inform policies aimed at improving work environments and reducing turnover in the context of the Philippine's public employees. Ultimately, this study aims to help organizations develop interventions that support employees' emotional health, leading to more sustainable and productive workplaces.

### *1.1 Current Research on the Topic and Research Gap*

Over the past four decades, emotional labor has become a central theme in understanding occupational stress and well-being across service professions. Seminal work by Hochschild (1983) established that emotional regulation in the work setting entails both deep acting and surface acting. Subsequent studies have demonstrated that these emotional regulation strategies influence job satisfaction, burnout and turnover (Grandey, 2003; Yikilmaz et al., 2024). However, despite extensive research in corporate and healthcare settings, the emotional experiences of public employees, particularly in developing countries, remain underexplored.

Recent studies underscore that public sector employees, especially those in street-level positions such as teachers, social workers, and health officers, face unique emotional demands due to the characteristics of their jobs (Lee et al., 2020; Abresch et al., 2023). Unlike private service roles, public service work is bound by bureaucratic procedures and political accountability. Street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980) exercise discretion while implementing policies, often in resource-constrained environments and under intense citizen scrutiny. These dual pressures, citizen expectations and administrative control, heighten emotional labor demands and increase vulnerability to burnout and turnover.

Existing research has linked emotional labor to burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Kim et al., 2022) and turnover intention (Cao & 정수진, 2018; Xu et al., 2017), yet findings remain inconsistent across contexts. While emotional fatigue is consistently linked to surface acting, the impact of deep acting appears mixed. Some evidence suggests that deep acting mitigates burnout through authenticity and meaning-making (Humphrey et al., 2015), whereas other studies report that sustained deep acting still depletes emotional resources (Lu et al., 2019). Moreover, most studies treat emotional labor as a static predictor, with limited attention to contextual moderators such as job satisfaction, supervisory support, coworker support, and autonomy (Altas et al., 2024).

From a public administration standpoint, there is also limited empirical integration between Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory (SLBT) and emotional labor frameworks. Although Lipsky (1980) acknowledged the emotional strain of frontline service, few studies have operationalized emotional labor within SLBT's structure of discretion, citizen contact, and bureaucratic constraint. As a result, the psychological mechanisms linking emotional labor, burnout, and turnover among government employees are underdeveloped in the literature.

Furthermore, empirical evidence from developing countries, where resource scarcity and bureaucratic rigidity intensify emotional strain, is scarce. In the Philippine public sector, where cultural expectations of compassion coexist with administrative inefficiencies, employees may face heightened emotional dissonance. Yet, systematic research quantifying how emotional labor interacts with job resources to predict burnout and turnover in this context remains lacking.

In sum, while emotional labor has been extensively studied, critical gaps persist in:

- Applying the Street-Level Bureaucracy lens to understand emotional regulation among public employees;
- Examining the moderating effects of job satisfaction, autonomy, and employee support in emotional labor outcomes;
- Generating empirical data from developing-country bureaucracies, particularly in Southeast Asia.

### *1.2 The Contribution of the Present Study*

This study addresses the gaps discussed above by integrating emotional labor theory with Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory (Lipsky, 1980) within the context of the Philippine public sector. It makes significant contributions to theory as well as practice.

First, it conceptualizes emotional labor as an essential element of street-level work. By framing deep and surface acting as adaptive responses to bureaucratic constraints and citizen demands, the study extends SLBT's understanding of frontline discretion to include emotional discretion, the ability of public employees to regulate feelings in alignment with institutional norms and service ethics. This theoretical synthesis enriches the conceptual link between emotional labor and policy implementation, emphasizing that emotions are not peripheral but constitutive of bureaucratic performance.

Second, this research empirically tests how job resources, namely job satisfaction, supervisor and coworker support, and job autonomy, buffer or exacerbate the effects on burnout and turnover intention. By employing a quantitative design and moderate d regression analysis, it moves beyond descriptive associations to identify protective organizational mechanisms that sustain employee well-being. This approach bridges emotional labor research with the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, situating emotional labor as a demand and social support as a resource within bureaucratic contexts.

Third, by focusing on government employees in the Philippines, the study provides valuable empirical evidence from a developing administrative setting where emotional demands are high but institutional support is often limited. This expands the geographic and cultural scope of emotional labor scholarship, which remains dominated by Western data. It also addresses recent calls in public administration for contextualized theories that reflect the lived experiences of Global South bureaucrats.

Finally, the study offers practical implications for the design of public personnel management policies. Its findings inform how supervisory training, peer support systems, and autonomy-enhancing policies can be structured to mitigate burnout and reduce turnover. By doing so, it aligns with Lipsky's argument that frontline employee discretion, when properly supported, is essential to effective governance.

Overall, the study contributes to expand holistic overview of emotional labor as both an individual coping process and a structural condition of street-level bureaucracy. It advances theoretical integration, provides new empirical evidence, and offers actionable insights for strengthening emotional resilience and retention among public employees.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Emotional Labor

Emotional labor denotes the strategy of governing and regulating emotions to satisfy the emotional demands of work (Hochschild, 1983), frequently involving face-to-face interactions with clients or colleagues. Emotional labor involves evoking or suppressing emotions to meet job expectations, often in roles requiring face-to-face interaction with the public. Jobs that require emotional labor typically involve producing an "emotional state" in another person and allow employers to control the emotional activities of employees (Hochschild, 1983). It is a critical aspect of many service-oriented professions, including customer service, healthcare, education, and public administration.

Emotional labor is distinct from emotion work (Callahan & McCollum, 2016), which occurs in the private sphere without compensation. In the workplace, emotional labor can lead to adverse results such as emotional exhaustion, decreased job satisfaction, and burnout (Amisshah et al, 2022). Hochschild's work highlights the exploitation inherent in commodifying emotions, where workers may become estranged from their feelings. The concept has been expanded to include personal life, where emotional labor can manifest in managing family dynamics or supporting friends emotionally (Yanchus et al, 2010). However, Hochschild emphasizes that emotional labor specifically refers to paid work where emotions are managed according to employer expectations. Emotional labor's impact on both physical and mental health underscores its importance in understanding workplace dynamics and employee well-being (Riforgiate et al, 2022).

### 2.2 Deep Acting

Deep acting is an emotional labor strategy that involves attempting to genuinely feel the emotions required by an organization. This process requires effort to match the emotions displayed with internal emotional state (Hochschild, 1983). Unlike surface acting, where individuals merely pretend to feel certain emotions, deep acting seeks to create an authentic emotional experience. This approach is often used in roles that require building strong relationships or providing empathetic services, such as counseling or teaching.

The process of deep acting involves using cognitive techniques to evoke the desired emotions. Individuals may use imagination or recall past experiences that elicit the required emotional response. For instance, a customer support agent might imagine a positive interaction with a customer to genuinely feel more cheerful and helpful. This technique aims to establish emotional consonance between the feelings that are expressed and those that are felt, making the interaction more authentic and engaging.

Deep acting is often considered more mentally exhausting than surface acting because it requires more cognitive and emotional effort (Lu et al., 2019). The process of altering one's internal emotional state can be exhausting, especially if it involves managing complex or intense emotions. However, deep acting can lead to more authentic interactions with others, which may enhance job satisfaction and personal well-being (Jiang, 2024). Employees engaging with genuine emotions are inclined to encounter emotional fulfillment and build stronger connections with their clients or colleagues.

### 2.3 Surface Acting

Surface acting is an emotional labor strategy where individuals display the required emotions without actually feeling them. This involves creating a dissonance between the emotions displayed and those genuinely felt, often through facial expressions or body language that do not reflect true emotional states (Hochschild, 1983). Surface acting is characterized by a lack of effort to modify internal emotional states; instead, it focuses on presenting an external appearance that aligns with organizational expectations. This strategy is commonly used in service industries where employees must interact with customers, even if they do not experience the feelings that are expected of them.

The process of surface acting often becomes a routine and may not necessarily involve conscious effort. Employees may automatically put on "fake smiles" or adopt additional necessary portrayal of emotion without actively trying to feel what they portray. This can be seen as a more superficial approach compared to deep acting, which requires cognitive effort to align internal feelings with external displays. Surface acting is typically initiated at the flexible action pattern level, meaning it can become

habitual behavior that does not require significant mental resources (Hochschild, 1983). However, while it may seem less taxing initially, emotional strain and dissonance can result from prolonged surface acting (Yikilmaz et al., 2024).

Surface acting is generally linked to adverse outcomes like burnout and decreased job satisfaction (Yikilmaz et al., 2024). Feelings of inauthenticity and strain might result from the dissonance between emotions displayed and felt. Research indicates that surface acting able to function as a mediator between job stressors and negative work-related outcomes, including increased need for recovery and impaired general health. Furthermore, surface acting can affect not only work life but also personal life by increasing fatigue and stress outside the workplace (Sciotto & Pace, 2022).

#### 2.4 Burnout

Burnout is a condition of extreme physical, mental and emotional exhaustion brought by prolonged strain (Bayes & Parker, 2021). It is typified by sentiments of detachment, depletion, and hopelessness from work and life in general. A number of triggers can lead to burnout, including poor work-life balance, excessive workload, lack of control, and unsupportive work environments. However, emotional labor is increasingly recognized as a significant contributor to burnout caused by emotional dissonance (Kim et al., 2022).

Emotional labor involves managing and regulating emotions as part of job requirements, often leading to emotional discord (Hochschild, 1983). This conflict can exacerbate stress and contribute to burnout. Emotional labor can be particularly taxing in jobs that demand frequent contact with the public, such as customer service or healthcare, where employees must consistently regulate their emotions in order to fulfill organizational expectations (Grandey, 2000). The strain of maintaining this emotional facade can result in emotional malaise, cynicism, and reduced performance over time.

#### 2.5 Turnover Intentions

Turnover intention refers to the potential for an individual quitting their employment voluntarily (Holtom et al., 2008). Emotional labor can significantly influence turnover intentions, particularly through surface acting, which involves faking emotions without genuinely feeling them. This may result in emotional discord and exhaustion, ultimately raising the possibility that workers will look for other jobs (Xu et al., 2017). Conversely, deep acting entails aligning emotional demands, which may reduce turnover intentions by minimizing emotional dissonance (Cao and 정수진, 2018).

#### 2.6 Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory

The seminal theory of Michael Lipsky's "street-level bureaucracy" (1980), posits that frontline public service employees are more than just parts of a bureaucratic machine but are, in fact, de facto policymakers. The nature of street-level work inherently involves high levels of emotional labor. Public employees in these roles are frequently required to manage their emotions to adhere to organizational requirements such as remaining calm in stressful situations, showing empathy to distressed clients, maintaining a professional demeanor.

Chronic burnout, driven by unresolved emotional dissonance and the stressful nature of street-level work, diminishes job satisfaction and organizational commitment, increasing the likelihood that public employees will consider leaving.

When SLBs feel their discretion is constrained, their efforts are unappreciated, or they are continually performing emotional labor without adequate resources or support, their dedication to the institution and desire to remain diminishes. Thus, the theoretical framework of street-level bureaucracy offers a crucial framework for understanding how the unique operational context of public service work contributes to the emotional challenges faced by employees, ultimately impacting their well-being and their decision to remain in their roles.

#### 2.7 Job Demands–Resources (JD–R)

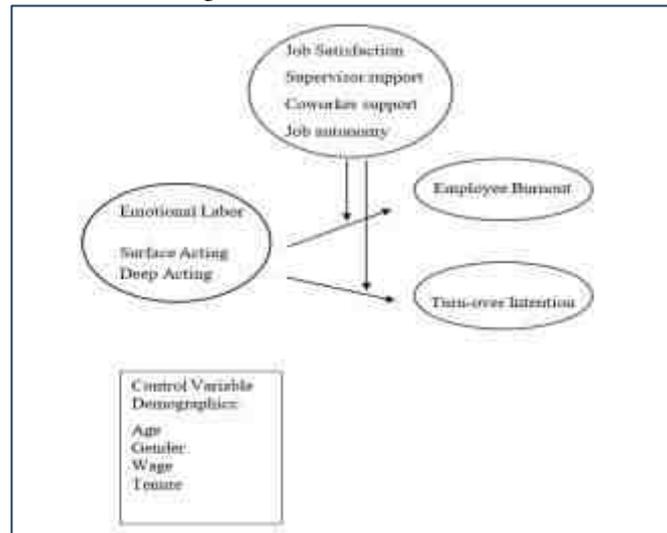
The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) framework offers a comprehensive model for analyzing employee well-being. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2007), job demands constitute those part of the job "physical", "psychological", "social", or "organizational" that call for consistent effort and are thus linked to emotional costs, such as emotional exhaustion, stress, or burnout. Examples include high workload, emotional demands from client interactions, and conflicting expectations from supervisors or clients. On the other hand, job resources are features of the job that either support personal development, lessen working demands and their inherent expenses, or help achieve work goals. These can include social support from colleagues or supervisors, autonomy in job tasks, and opportunities for professional advancement.

The JD–R model is renowned for its flexibility, enabling its application across various occupational settings, including the emotionally intense environments commonly found in public service roles.

Crucially, the JD–R concept asserts that job resources are not just directly motivating, enhancing job engagement and satisfaction, but also mitigate the detrimental impacts of high job demands on the stress levels and well-being of employees. When resources are sufficient, employees can better manage high demands with reduced risk of burnout; conversely, inadequate resources amplify the detrimental impacts of stressors. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2007) clarify that the particular types of demands and resources pertinent to well-being may vary depending on the workplace context, but their core functions remain constant. This perspective offers a useful lens for interpreting the effects of emotional labor in the public sector, framing emotional demands as critical job demands and support systems as essential resources. Integrating the JD–R model into analyses of emotional labor highlights institutional responsibility for providing adequate support, rather than focusing exclusively on individual coping, thereby advancing understanding of both the causes and prevention strategies of occupational burnout in emotionally demanding settings (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

### 3. Methodology

Figure 1: Research Framework



#### 3.1 Hypothesis development

##### Hypothesis 1. The effect of surface acting on burnout

Surface acting involves faking emotions without changing internal feelings, creating emotional dissonance that depletes psychological resources (Yikilmaz, et. al., 2024). This dissonance between displayed and felt emotions requires continuous self-regulation, resulting in emotional malaise, an essential part of burnout. Research consistently shows that surface acting correlates with increased emotional exhaustion across service industries. The strain from maintaining inauthentic emotional displays eventually overwhelms employees' coping resources, resulting in cynicism, detachment, and reduced personal accomplishment. Hochschild's (1983) seminal work established this relationship, with subsequent studies confirming that surface acting requires significant psychological effort that contributes to burnout syndrome.

H1: Surface acting will be positively associated with employee burnout.

##### Hypothesis 2. The effect of deep acting on burnout

Unlike surface acting, deep acting altering one's own emotions to conform to the prescribed emotional displays, creating authentic gestures that reduce emotional dissonance (Yikilmaz, et. al., 2024). By genuinely experiencing the emotions they display, employees avoid the psychological strain associated with maintaining inauthentic expressions. Research by Grandey (2003) demonstrates that deep acting, while requiring initial effort, ultimately preserves psychological resources by creating alignment between felt and displayed emotions. This authentic emotional labor strategy has been linked with a sense of personal accomplishment and reduced emotional exhaustion, especially in customer-facing roles where emotional connections are valued.

H2: Deep acting will be negatively associated with employee burnout.

##### Hypothesis 3. The effect of surface acting on turnover intention

Employees engaging in frequent surface acting experience emotional exhaustion that extends beyond immediate interactions, creating persistent negative affect that colors their overall job experience. This chronic strain promotes job dissatisfaction and workplace withdrawal behaviors. According to Chau et al. (2009), surface acting creates a cascade of negative outcomes that eventually cause the employees to think about quitting their jobs. The continuous effort of projecting unfeared emotions creates psychological strain that contributes to organizational dissatisfaction and active job-seeking behaviors as employees search for less emotionally demanding work environments.

H3: Surface acting will be positively associated with turnover intention.

##### Hypothesis 4. The effect of deep acting on turnover intention

Deep acting creates authentic emotional experiences that can generate positive customer interactions and associated rewards, potentially offsetting the effort involved in emotional regulation. When employees successfully modify their feelings to align with display rules, they experience greater job satisfaction and reduced emotional dissonance. According to Humphrey et al. (2015), deep acting is linked with positive work outcomes and personal accomplishment that enhance commitment to the organization. The authentic nature of deep acting creates less psychological strain and potentially more positive customer interactions, reducing intentions to leave.

H4: Deep acting will have a weak or negative relationship with turnover intention.

##### Hypothesis 5. The effect of job satisfaction on burnout

Job satisfaction represents a positive affective state toward one's work that serves as a psychological resource buffering against stressors. When employees experience satisfaction with core job components (pay, promotion opportunities, colleagues), they

develop resilience against factors contributing to burnout. According to Maslach and Leiter (2016), job satisfaction act as a protective attribute that reduces vulnerability to emotional exhaustion and cynicism. The positive emotional state associated with job satisfaction counteracts the negative affect cycle that typically precedes burnout, providing motivational resources that sustain engagement even in emotionally demanding work contexts.

H5: Job satisfaction will be negatively associated with employee burnout.

Hypothesis 6. The effect of job satisfaction on turnover intention

High job satisfaction indicates that employees' expectations and needs are being met, reducing motivation to seek alternative employment. Satisfied employees perceive greater organizational fit and view their current position favorably compared to uncertain alternatives. Griffeth et al. (2000) identify the consistent predictors of reduced turnover intention which is job satisfaction as one of the strongest across industries and occupations. The positive attachment to one's job creates psychological commitment that reduces the likelihood of voluntary departure, especially when satisfaction encompasses multiple job facets including relationships, compensation, and work conditions.

H6: Job satisfaction will be negatively associated with turnover intention.

Hypothesis 7. The effect of supervisor support on burnout

Supportive supervisors provide both instrumental resources (guidance, assistance) and emotional resources (recognition, encouragement) that help employees manage work demands, including emotional labor requirements. This support establishes a psychologically secure culture where personnel can discuss challenges and seek assistance. Halbesleben's (2006) meta-analysis confirmed that supervisor support lessens burnout by increasing employees' coping capacity. Supportive leadership behaviors signal organizational caring and provide practical assistance that reduces the stressors at work and their effects on personnel wellbeing.

H7: Supervisor support will be negatively associated with employee burnout.

Hypothesis 8. The effect of supervisor support on turnover intention

Supportive supervision creates social exchange relationships where employees feel valued and reciprocate with loyalty and commitment. When supervisors provide mentoring, recognition, and developmental opportunities, employees perceive greater organizational investment in their careers. Eisenberger et al. (2002) demonstrated that supervisor support influences turnover intentions through perceived organizational support, as supervisors represent the organization to employees. The importance of interactions between leaders and members creates psychological and practical barriers to leaving, making alternative employment less attractive even when other opportunities exist.

H8: Supervisor support will be negatively associated with turnover intention.

Hypothesis 9. The effect of coworker support on burnout

Supportive coworkers provide emotional assistance, practical help with tasks, and opportunities to vent frustrations that collectively buffer against emotional exhaustion. This peer support creates a community feeling that counteracts the isolation often preceding burnout. Research by Charoensukmongkol et al. (2016) shows that coworker support moderates the relationship between burnout and emotional labor by distributing emotional burdens across the workgroup. Positive peer relationships provide both instrumental support for managing workloads and emotional support for processing difficult customer interactions, creating resilience against chronic workplace stressors.

H9: Coworker support will be negatively associated with employee burnout.

Hypothesis 10. The effect of coworker support on turnover intention

Strong coworker relationships create social embeddedness that increases the psychological cost of leaving an organization. These connections provide both professional networking and friendship that satisfy belonging needs. Meta-analytic findings by Chiaburu and Harrison (2008) confirm that positive coworker relationships reduce withdrawal behaviors including turnover intentions. Employees with supportive coworkers develop affective commitment to their work community that makes alternative employment less attractive, even when other job components are suboptimal. These social bonds create organizational attachment that persists through workplace challenges.

H10: Coworker support will be negatively associated with turnover intention.

Hypothesis 11. The effect of job autonomy on burnout

Autonomy provides employees control over how they perform emotional labor, allowing personalization of interaction styles and strategic use of breaks when emotionally taxed. This control reduces the strain associated with rigid display rules and allows authentic expressions when appropriate. Research from Grandey et al. (2005), positions autonomy as a critical resource that reduces emotional dissonance and associated exhaustion. The sense of agency created by autonomy satisfies basic psychological needs for self-determination that protect against burnout's depersonalization component (Fernet et al., 2013).

H11: Job autonomy will be negatively associated with employee burnout.

Hypothesis 12. The effect of job autonomy on turnover intention

Job autonomy signals organizational trust and respect for employee capabilities, enhancing perceived organizational support and professional dignity. Autonomous work arrangements allow personnel to craft their roles that complement their individual abilities

and preferences. Research by Kim and Stoner (2008) found that autonomy contributes to job satisfaction and professional efficacy that reduce intentions to leave. When employees can control aspects of their work process, they experience ownership and investment in outcomes that strengthen organizational commitment and reduce the appeal of alternative employment opportunities.

H12: Job autonomy will be negatively associated with turnover intention.

### 3.2 Research Context

The Philippine public sector provides a unique context for studying emotional labor within the framework of Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory (SLBT). Public employees in agencies such as the Department of Trade and Industry, Health (DOH), Education (DepEd), and local government units operate at the frontline of policy implementation, directly mediating between state mandates and citizens' expectations. Consistent with Lipsky's (1980) depiction of street-level bureaucrats, these employees are required to interpret rules, manage scarce resources, and deliver services under public scrutiny.

Within this setting, emotional labor more than just an interpersonal skill but a bureaucratic necessity. Frontline officers must remain composed, empathetic, and impartial when addressing citizen complaints, enforcing regulations, or managing service delivery bottlenecks. The continuous negotiation between compassion and compliance typifies the emotional dilemmas of discretion that define street-level work.

At the same time, structural limitations, rigid hierarchies, limited funding, high caseloads, and bureaucratic accountability, constrain employees' autonomy, heightening the emotional strain. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) paradigm is consistent with these institutional pressures: high emotional and organizational demands coexist with variable access to job resources.

The Philippine bureaucracy also reflects a collectivist cultural orientation in which interpersonal harmony and service to the community are deeply valued. These cultural norms can amplify emotional expectations, as employees are implicitly expected to display patience and empathy even in adverse conditions. Understanding emotional labor in this environment therefore requires situating it within the interplay of institutional constraints, cultural expectations, and individual discretion, the very dynamics that SLBT seeks to explain.

This contextual grounding justifies the study's focus on Philippine government employees as a population that embodies the emotional, organizational, and ethical complexities of street-level work. Exploring how they perform emotional labor and how job resources buffer its effects offers both theoretical and practical insights into sustaining effective and humane governance.

In addition to the Philippine setting, this study was designed and completed while the researcher was based in South Korea, particularly at Seoul National University, where emotional labor research has gained significant academic attention. South Korea provides a relevant comparative backdrop because public-sector workers there also face high emotional demands due to hierarchical organizational cultures, strong citizen expectations, and the rapid digitalization of public services. Korean scholars have extensively examined emotional labor, burnout, and bureaucratic stress in public institutions, offering theoretical and empirical insights that strengthened the analytical grounding of this thesis.

### 3.3 Data

To examine these dynamics, the study used a cross-sectional, quantitative survey targeting frontline and administrative employees across selected Philippine government institutions. The research population comprised personnel from the DTI, DOH, DepEd, , and the Local Government Unit of South Cotabato. These agencies were selected because they exemplify diverse service mandates, economic regulation, education, healthcare, and local governance, yet all require continuous citizen interaction and emotional regulation consistent with street-level roles.

Data collection focused on regular and contractual employees occupying operational, supervisory, and technical positions. This inclusivity ensured representation across hierarchical levels and organizational functions, enabling comparison of emotional labor experiences within the bureaucratic structure. The survey yielded 305 valid responses, sufficient for multivariate analysis.

Surveys were administered electronically, ensuring accessibility for employees across urban and provincial offices. All respondents gave their informed consent, and participation was anonymous and voluntary, with informed consent obtained from all respondents. The ethical permission was granted by the affiliated academic institution.

The dataset captures a snapshot of street-level emotional governance within the Philippine bureaucracy. By quantifying employees' emotional regulation strategies and perceived job resources, it allows empirical testing of how SLBT's structural constraints and the JD-R model's motivational processes jointly predict burnout and turnover. This dual-theoretical orientation ensures that the data analysis connects micro-level emotional behavior with macro-level institutional design, providing a rigorous basis for evaluating both psychological and organizational determinants of public-sector resilience.

### 3.4 Measures

#### 3.4.1 Dependent variables

##### 1) Burnout

The Burnout Assessment Tool (Schaufeli et al, 2020), a validated instrument designed to measure the multiple characteristics of burnout in occupational settings. The BAT assesses core dimensions such as exhaustion, mental detachment, and emotional and cognitive decline, providing a comprehensive profile of burnout symptoms (Schaufeli et al, 2020). Respondents rate their experiences on a Likert scale, indicating the frequency and intensity of burnout-related feelings and behaviors. The BAT's robust psychometric properties ensure reliable and valid measurement across diverse employee populations. Utilizing this tool allows for

nuanced analysis of burnout's prevalence and severity, supporting the examination of its mediating role in emotional labor research (Schaufeli et al, 2019).

## 2) Turnover Intentions

The Turnover Intention Scale (TIS-6), a validated six-item instrument developed by Bothma and Roodt (2013) was used to measure employees intent to quit their jobs. The TIS-6 has demonstrated strong reliability and validity across diverse occupational and cultural settings, making it a reliable instrument for studying turnover intention (Bothma & Roodt, 2013).

### 3.4.2 Independent variable

#### 1) Emotional Labor

Brotheridge and Lee (2003) "Emotional Labor Scale", a validated instrument was used to measure EL. The ELS assesses how frequently and intensely personnel participate in both deep and surface acting. Respondents rate items like "pretend to have emotions that I don't really feel" (surface acting) and "try to actually experience the emotions that I must show" (deep acting) on a Likert scale, capturing both the frequency and intensity of these behaviors (Jordan, 2006). These scales have demonstrated strong reliability and validity across occupational contexts, making them suitable for nuanced measurement of emotional labor in research.

### 3.4.3 Moderating variables

The instrument developed by Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh (1979) was used to measure Job Satisfaction. The 3-item "Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (MOAQ)" is a job satisfaction subscale which measures employees' overall satisfaction with their job and organization through concise items that capture subjective perceptions and affective responses (Bowling & Hammond, 2008). Respondents rate their agreement with statements reflecting their general feelings about their job, providing a global indicator of job satisfaction. The MOAQ job satisfaction scale has shown to be highly reliable and construct-wise valid across numerous studies and organizational contexts, making it a robust and efficient tool for organizational research (Bowling & Hammond, 2008).

The instrument developed by Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990) was used to measure supervisory support. A scale used to evaluate how the employees' perceive the extent and quality of support offered by their supervisors. This nine-item instrument covers key aspects such as career recognition, guidance, performance feedback, opportunities to develop skills, and support for career advancement. This comprehensive measure captures both emotional and practical dimensions of supervisory support in the workplace (Greenhaus et al, 1990).

The instrument developed by Caplan et al. (1980), which is part of the broader Social Support Scale, was used to measure coworker support. It was designed to assess perceived support in the workplace. This instrument includes items that evaluate how much coworkers "go out of their way" to help, how easy they are to talk to, how reliable they are during tough times, and their willingness to listen to personal problems.

Job autonomy was measured using the revised "Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS)" scale developed by Idaszak and Drasgow (1987). This scale specifically assesses the extent to which a job offers employees with autonomy, discretion, and personal initiative in carrying out their work. The instrument is widely used in organizational research to capture execution-related autonomy, reflecting employees' perceived authority over when and how they to do their jobs.

### 3.4.4 Control variables

Control variables such as age, gender, wage, and tenure were included as standard demographic questions to account for individual differences that might influence the associations among dependent and independent variables. Including these variables helps isolate the effects of the main study constructs by controlling for background factors known to impact workplace attitudes and behaviors (Berneth & Aguinis, 2016). For example, age and tenure can affect job satisfaction and turnover. The more experienced and older employees may feel more secured or satisfied in their jobs compared to the younger employees who are more prone to change their jobs. Additionally, the gender and wage may shape perceptions of support and burnout. Well paid employees tend to stay in the job compared to those who are in minimum wage who may seek another job which pays well.

## 3.5 Analytical Strategy

The data collection and organization include a development of a structured database with the variables as columns and individual employees as rows then assign unique identifiers to each participant to maintain confidentiality while enabling tracking. The data was screened for missing values across all variables, particularly in key scales (Emotional Labor Scale, Burnout Assessment Tool and Turnover Intention Scale) and standardize formatting for demographic variables (age, gender, wage and tenure). The variables were transformed for the calculation of composite scores for multi-item constructs.

An exploratory analysis was carried out to have a preliminary overview of the dataset. Generate visualizations, tables, and summary statistics to identify patterns, trends, and potential relationships among variables. A hierarchical regression analysis with interaction terms was employed to test for moderation effects of job resources on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. A statistical tool was used for data analysis.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Sociodemographic profile of the participants (N=305).

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Gender	Female	214	70%
	Male	91	30%
Age Group	18-24	6	2%
	25-34	171	56%
	35-44	70	23%
	45-54	32	11%
	55-64	26	8%
	65 up	0	0%
Salary Grade	1-10	61	20%
	11-15	133	44%
	16 above	111	36%
Tenure	Less than 1 year	29	10%
	1-2 years	42	14%
	3-5 years	55	18%
	6-10 years	86	28%
	More than 11 years	93	30%

A total of 305 public sector employees participated in the study. Table 1 provides an overview of their demographics. The sample was predominantly female (70%), aligning with the composition of many frontline public service units in the Philippines. The majority of respondents were aged 25–34 (56%) and had substantial tenure in government service, with 59% reporting six or more years in employment. Nearly half (44%) were classified within Salary Grades 11–15, typical of technical and front-line civil service roles.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of study variables (N=305)

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Deep Acting	1.00	5.00	3.41	.95
Surface Acting	1.00	5.00	2.83	.98
Burnout	1.17	5.00	2.52	.73
Turnover Intentions	1.67	5.00	3.18	.58
Job Satisfaction	1.00	6.00	4.64	.99
Supervisor Support	1.00	5.00	3.66	.94
Coworker Support	1.00	4.00	3.14	.66
Job Autonomy	1.00	7.00	5.41	1.30

Deep Acting mean score (M = 3.41, SD = 0.95) shows that public employees moderately engage in genuine emotional expression. In contrast, the mean for Surface Acting (M = 2.83, SD = 0.98) suggests lower reliance on faking emotions, meaning employees more often attempt to feel the required emotions instead of merely displaying them.

For the dependent variables, Burnout (M = 2.52, SD = 0.73) suggests a moderate level of emotional exhaustion across respondents, while Turnover Intention (M = 3.18, SD = 0.58) indicates a moderate tendency to consider leaving the organization.

Among job resources, Job Satisfaction (M = 4.64, SD = 0.99) was relatively high, showing positive job attitudes. Supervisor Support (M = 3.66, SD = 0.94) and Coworker Support (M = 3.14, SD = 0.66) were also moderate to high, reflecting a generally supportive workplace environment. Job Autonomy (M = 5.41, SD = 1.30) on a 7-point scale suggests that respondents perceive substantial freedom and control in their work.

Overall, the descriptive findings suggest that the employees experience a moderate degree of emotional labor and burnout, coupled with relatively high satisfaction and perceived support.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Correlations Among Study Variables (N = 305)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Deep Acting	—							
2. Surface Acting	.11	—						
3. Burnout	.14*	.60**	—					
4. Turnover Intentions	.15*	.43**	.58**	—				
5. Job Satisfaction	.08	-.39**	-.61**	-.50**	—			
6. Supervisor Support	.02	-.09	-.47**	-.43**	.42**	—		
7. Coworker Support	.02	-.34**	-.49**	-.44**	.42**	.37**	—	
8. Job Autonomy	.06	-.32**	-.50**	-.30**	.39**	.40**	.31**	—

Note: \*significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). \*\*significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis explored bivariate relationships among the main study variables.

Surface Acting showed significant positive correlations with Burnout ( $r = .601, p < .001$ ) and Turnover Intention ( $r = .426, p < .001$ ), confirming that employees who frequently fake emotions tend to encounter more exhaustion and are more apt to consider leaving their jobs.

Deep Acting was weakly but positively correlated with Burnout ( $r = .143, p = .013$ ) and Turnover Intention ( $r = .145, p = .011$ ). This suggests that while deep acting is generally considered adaptive, it can still contribute to strain when sustained over time.

Job Satisfaction, Supervisor Support, Coworker Support, and Job Autonomy were all negatively correlated with both Burnout and Turnover Intention, with coefficients ranging from  $-.30$  to  $-.61$  ( $p < .001$ ). This means that greater satisfaction levels, support, and autonomy are linked to a lower burnout and lower intent to leave.

These correlations align with the theoretical expectations that emotional labor (particularly surface acting) exacerbates burnout, while supportive job resources help mitigate negative emotional outcome.

4.3 Regression Analysis

Table 4. Model 1 – Predicting Burnout

Predictor Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	3.55	.25		14.16	<.001		
Surface Acting	.27	.03	.36	8.95	<.001	.72	1.39
Deep Acting	.12	.03	.15	4.16	<.001	.88	1.14
Job Satisfaction	-.23	.03	-.31	-7.10	<.001	.61	1.65
Job Autonomy	-.11	.02	-.19	-4.83	<.001	.69	1.45
Supervisor Support	-.15	.03	-.19	-4.69	<.001	.69	1.45
Coworker Support	-.13	.04	-.12	-2.92	.004	.72	1.40
Age	.04	.03	.05	1.08	.281	.54	1.84
Gender	.09	.06	.06	1.74	.084	.95	1.05
Tenure	.02	.03	.04	.87	.386	.55	1.84
Salary Grade	.04	.04	.04	.89	.371	.64	1.56

Model Fit:  $R = .81, R^2 = .66, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = .65, p < .001$

An analysis of multiple regression carried out to examine the predictors of burnout among employees. The overall model was significant, showing that the set of variables explained a meaningful proportion of the variance in burnout.

Deep acting ( $\beta = .12, p < .001$ ) and surface acting ( $\beta = .27, p < .001$ ) both significantly and positively predict burnout, with surface acting having the largest standardized effect ( $\beta = .36$ ), indicating that more consistent use of deep and surface acting is associated with higher burnout.

In contrast, job satisfaction ( $\beta = .23, p < .001$ ), job autonomy ( $\beta = .11, p < .001$ ), supervisor support ( $\beta = .15, p < .001$ ), and coworker support ( $\beta = .13, p = .004$ ) are all significant negative predictors, suggesting these factors protect against burnout.

Demographic variables (age, gender, tenure, salary grade) did not significantly predict burnout ( $p > .05$  for all), indicating their effects were not statistically meaningful in the presence of other predictors.

Tolerance and VIF statistics for all predictors indicate an absence of multicollinearity (all VIFs < 2). Overall, the results suggest that emotional labor strategies are elements that increase the risk of burnout, whereas positive work conditions (higher job satisfaction, autonomy, and social support) are protective.

Table 5. Model 2 – Predicting Turnover Intention

Predictor Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	4.20	.26		16.41	<.001		
Surface Acting	.13	.03	.21	4.16	<.001	.72	1.39
Deep Acting	.07	.03	.11	2.35	.020	.88	1.14
Job Satisfaction	-.14	.03	-.23	-4.13	<.001	.61	1.65
Job Autonomy	-.01	.02	-.02	-.39	.694	.69	1.45
Supervisor Support	-.15	.03	-.24	-4.51	<.001	.69	1.45
Coworker Support	-.15	.05	-.17	-3.23	.001	.72	1.40
Age	-.11	.04	-.19	-3.18	.002	.54	1.83
Gender	.09	.06	.01	.14	.891	.95	1.05
Tenure	.07	.03	.15	2.56	.011	.55	1.84
Salary Grade	.05	.04	.06	1.07	.288	.64	1.56

Model Fit:  $R = .67, R^2 = .45, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = .43, p < .001$

A second multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine predictors of turnover intentions. The overall model was significant,  $R = .67, R^2 = .45, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = .43$ , indicating that the predictors explained approximately 45% of the variance in turnover intentions ( $p < .001$ ).

Surface acting ( $\beta = .13, p < .001$ ) and deep acting ( $\beta = .07, p = .020$ ) both significantly and positively predict turnover intention, indicating that higher use of these emotional labor strategies is associated with increased intention to leave. Surface acting exhibited the strongest standardized impact among these ( $\beta = .21$ ). Significant negative predictors included lower job satisfaction ( $\beta = -.14, p < .001$ ), lower supervisor support ( $\beta = -.15, p < .001$ ), and lower coworker support ( $\beta = -.15, p = .001$ ). Each showed medium effect sizes, indicating that higher job satisfaction and supportive work environments reduce turnover intention.

Other predictors showed less consistent effects. Job autonomy ( $\beta = -.01, p = .694$ ), gender ( $\beta = .09, p = .891$ ), and salary grade ( $\beta = .05, p = .288$ ) were not statistically significant. Age ( $\beta = -.11, p = .002$ ) and tenure ( $\beta = .07, p = .011$ ) were significant, with older age predicting lower turnover intention and longer tenure predicting higher turnover intention.

Tolerance and VIF values confirmed the absence of problematic multicollinearity (VIFs all below 2). Collectively, these results indicate that emotional labor and workplace satisfaction/social support are important predictors of employee turnover intention, while most demographics have limited influence.

Table 6. Model 3 – Moderated Regression Predicting Burnout

Predictor Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	3.24	.16		19.94	<.001		
DeepActingxJobSatisfaction	-.03	.04	-.05	-.68	.499	.43	2.32
DeepActingxJobAutonomy	-.06	.04	-.14	-1.70	.090	.34	2.95
DeepActingxSupervisorSupport	-.02	.04	-.04	-.53	.598	.46	2.19
DeepActingxCoworkerSupport	.26	.06	.32	4.45	<.001	.48	2.01
SurfaceActingxCoworkerSupport	-.18	.06	-.23	-2.10	.003	.40	2.54
SurfaceActingxSupervisorSupport	-.12	.04	-.23	-3.40	<.001	.51	1.98
SurfaceActingxJobSatisfaction	.02	.03	.05	.77	.444	.63	1.59
SurfaceActingxJobAutonomy	-.04	.03	-.10	-1.29	.198	.46	2.15
Age	-.24	.04	-.40	-6.39	<.001	.61	1.65
Gender	.06	.07	.05	.90	.370	.93	1.08
Tenure	.10	.03	.23	3.44	<.001	.56	1.78
Salary Grade	.032	.05	.04	.66	.513	.62	1.62

A moderated multiple regression was carried out to analyze the relationship emotional labor strategies and job resources on employee burnout. Among the interaction effects, the interaction between deep acting and coworker support emerged as a significant positive predictor of burnout ( $\beta = .26, p < .001$ ), suggesting that the combination of deep acting and higher coworker support is related to increased burnout. Significant negative interaction effects were observed for surface acting with coworker support ( $\beta = -.18, p = .003$ ) and surface acting with supervisor support ( $\beta = -.12, p < .001$ ), indicating that coworker and supervisor support can buffer the impact of surface acting on burnout.

Other interaction terms (e.g., deep acting with job satisfaction, job autonomy, supervisor support; surface acting with job satisfaction and job autonomy) did not reach statistical significance ( $p > .05$ ).

For the control variables, age ( $\beta = -.24, p < .001$ ) was a strong negative predictor of burnout, while tenure ( $\beta = .10, p < .001$ ) predicted higher burnout. Gender and salary grade showed no significant effects.

Table 7. Model 4 – Moderated Regression Predicting Turnover Intention

Predictor Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	2.60	.21		12.54	<.001		
DeepActingxJobSatisfaction	.17	.05	.25	3.31	.001	.431	2.32
DeepActingxJobAutonomy	-.22	.05	-.41	-4.82	<.001	.338	2.96
DeepActingxSupervisorSupport	.10	.05	.13	1.75	.08	.457	2.19
DeepActingxCoworkerSupport	.20	.08	.19	2.64	.009	.480	2.09
SurfaceActingxCoworkerSupport	-.21	.08	-.22	-2.70	.007	.394	2.54
SurfaceActingxSupervisorSupport	.03	.04	.05	.67	.50	.506	1.98
SurfaceActingxJobSatisfaction	-.08	.04	-.12	-1.87	.06	.629	1.60
SurfaceActingxJobAutonomy	-.06	.04	-.13	-1.76	.08	.464	2.15
Age	-.16	.05	-.21	-3.32	.001	.606	1.65
Gender	.08	.08	.05	.97	.33	.928	1.08
Tenure	.04	.04	.06	.96	.34	.563	1.78
Salary Grade	-.01	.06	-.01	-.14	.90	.616	1.62

A second moderated regression examined turnover intentions. Significant positive interaction effects were found for deep acting with job satisfaction ( $\beta = .17, p = .001$ ), deep acting with coworker support ( $\beta = .20, p = .009$ ), and deep acting with supervisor support was marginally non-significant ( $\beta = .10, p = .08$ ). This suggests that the interaction between deep acting and turnover intention grows stronger at higher levels of job satisfaction and coworker support. Notably, a significant negative interaction was found for deep acting with job autonomy ( $\beta = -.22, p < .001$ ), indicating that job autonomy can buffer the interaction between deep acting and turnover intention.

For surface acting, the interaction with coworker support was significantly negative ( $\beta = -.21, p = .007$ ), indicating coworker support moderates and potentially weakens the positive interaction between turnover intention and surface acting. Other interactions, such as surface acting with supervisor support, job satisfaction, and job autonomy, were not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ).

Among the control variables, only age was a significant negative predictor of turnover intention ( $\beta = -.16, p = .001$ ). Gender, tenure, and salary grade were not significant.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Summary of the Research Findings

This research investigated the connections between emotional labor strategies and employee outcomes, specifically burnout and turnover intentions, among public personnel in the Philippines. It also examined how job resources influence these relationships. A total of twelve hypotheses were tested through hierarchical regression analyses.

H1: Surface acting will be positively associated with employee burnout. The results strongly supported this hypothesis. Surface acting showed a significant positive relationship with burnout ( $\beta = .36, p < .001$ ), indicating that employees who frequently suppress genuine feelings and display inauthentic emotions experience higher emotional exhaustion.

H2: Deep acting will be negatively associated with employee burnout. Contrary to the hypothesis, deep acting also showed a weak but significant positive association with burnout ( $\beta = .15, p < .001$ ). This suggests that even though deep acting involves genuine emotional engagement, it can still be emotionally demanding and may contribute to strain when performed continuously.

H3: Surface acting will be positively associated with turnover intention. This hypothesis was supported. Surface acting significantly increased turnover intentions ( $\beta = .21, p < .001$ ), confirming that employees who frequently fake emotions are more likely to consider leaving their organization due to emotional exhaustion and job dissatisfaction.

H4: Deep acting will have a weak or negative relationship with turnover intention. The results partially supported this hypothesis. Deep acting had a small but positive relationship with turnover intention ( $\beta = .11, p = .020$ ), implying that while deep acting can be authentic, prolonged emotional effort may still contribute to withdrawal tendencies over time.

H5: Job satisfaction will be negatively associated with employee burnout. This hypothesis was strongly supported. Job satisfaction significantly reduced burnout ( $\beta = -.31, p < .001$ ), confirming that satisfied employees are less likely to experience emotional exhaustion and disengagement.

H6: Job satisfaction will be negatively associated with turnover intention. This was also supported ( $\beta = -.23, p < .001$ ). Employees who reported higher satisfaction were less inclined to consider leaving their jobs, emphasizing satisfaction's role as a major protective factor.

H7: Supervisor support will be negatively associated with employee burnout. The findings supported this hypothesis ( $\beta = -.19, p < .001$ ). Supervisory support helped reduce emotional strain, highlighting the importance of leadership empathy and assistance in mitigating burnout.

H8: Supervisor support will be negatively associated with turnover intention. This was confirmed as well ( $\beta = -.24, p < .001$ ). Supportive supervisors foster organizational commitment and reduce employees' desire to leave.

H9: Coworker support will be negatively associated with employee burnout. This hypothesis was supported ( $\beta = -.12, p = .004$ ). Peer support provided emotional buffering and shared coping resources, lessening the risk of burnout.

H10: Coworker support will be negatively associated with turnover intention. The data confirmed this ( $\beta = -.17, p = .001$ ). Supportive relationships with colleagues strengthened employees' sense of belonging and reduced intentions to quit.

H11: Job autonomy will be negatively associated with employee burnout. This hypothesis was supported ( $\beta = -.197, p < .001$ ). Employees with greater autonomy experienced lower burnout levels due to increased control and flexibility in managing their emotional and task-related demands.

H12: Job autonomy will be negatively associated with turnover intention. This was not supported. Job autonomy had no significant effect on turnover intention ( $\beta = -.021, p = .694$ ), suggesting that while autonomy reduces stress, it may not directly influence employees' decisions to stay or leave.

In summary, 10 out of the 12 hypotheses were supported. Surface and deep acting both increased burnout and turnover intentions, although surface acting was more detrimental. Job satisfaction, supervisor support, and coworker support consistently buffered against both burnout and turnover intentions, while autonomy specifically helped reduce burnout. These findings demonstrate that

while emotional labor is an unavoidable aspect of public service, supportive job resources can effectively mitigate its negative consequences.

### 5.2 Theoretical Implications

This research adds to the advancement of organizational behavior and public administration theory by deepening the consideration of emotional labor in bureaucratic contexts through the integration of three key frameworks: Hochschild's (1983) Emotional Labor Theory, the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), and Lipsky's (1980) Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory (SLBT).

First, the findings refine Hochschild's theory by showing that both deep and surface acting can impose emotional costs within bureaucratic settings. Although deep acting is often framed as adaptive, its positive relationship with burnout in this study suggests that even genuine emotional engagement can lead to strain when emotional regulation becomes a sustained organizational expectation. This extends existing theory by identifying contextual boundaries to the benefits of deep acting, showing that organizational constraints, workload intensity, and emotional rule rigidity determine whether deep acting functions as a coping strategy or a stressor.

Second, the results substantiate and expand the JD–R model by positioning emotional labor as a salient job demand within public service work. Emotional demands, when unbalanced by adequate resources, lead to exhaustion and disengagement. The observed buffering effects of job satisfaction, supervisor support, and coworker support illustrate the resource pathway within the JD–R framework, where positive affective states and supportive relationships offset the depletion caused by emotional regulation. Moreover, by applying the JD–R model to bureaucratic contexts, the study emphasizes that emotional labor is not peripheral but structurally embedded in public service, requiring institutional resources to maintain employee well-being, not merely individual.

Third, integrating Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory offers a new theoretical synthesis. The findings illustrate that emotional labor represents an extension of bureaucratic discretion, what can be termed emotional discretion. Public employees manage not only decisions and resources but also emotions in ways that uphold institutional legitimacy and citizen trust. This theoretical expansion situates emotional regulation at the heart of policy implementation, bridging emotional labor theory with the daily realities of governance. Emotional discretion thus becomes a crucial mechanism through which frontline workers navigate conflicting bureaucratic expectations and human compassion in service delivery.

Fourth, by drawing on data from the Philippine public sector, the study advances the cultural and contextual diversification of emotional labor research. Prior literature largely reflects Western, individualistic settings emphasizing authenticity and self-expression. In contrast, this study highlights how collectivist cultural values, such as interpersonal harmony, respect, and communal duty, shape emotional labor practices. Employees may prioritize relational harmony over emotional authenticity, suggesting that emotional labor theories must account for cultural norms of emotion regulation and social interdependence. This provides a culturally nuanced perspective that broadens the theoretical applicability of emotional labor frameworks beyond

Finally, the study bridges micro-level emotional processes and macro-level institutional structures. Burnout and turnover intentions emerge not merely as personal outcomes but as systemic indicators of organizational strain. Emotional labor thus becomes an administrative variable linked to policy implementation, service quality, and organizational resilience. This reconceptualization invites future models of public administration to integrate emotional labor as a structural element of bureaucratic functioning, reinforcing the argument that emotional governance is essential to effective and humane public service.

### 5.3 Practical Implications

The results of this research hold substantial consequences for organizational management, leadership development, and policy reform within the Philippine public sector.

The results reveal that surface acting significantly contributes to employee burnout and turnover intentions, confirming earlier assertions that emotional dissonance depletes psychological resources and undermines well-being (Grandey, 2000; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Conversely, job satisfaction, supervisor support, coworker support, and job autonomy emerged as vital protective resources that mitigate these negative effects. Therefore, addressing the emotional demands of public service work requires a comprehensive and systemic response that extends beyond individual coping mechanisms and emphasizes institutional design and culture.

At the organizational level, public institutions such as the DTI, DepEd, DOH and LGUs should establish structured emotional well-being programs. Some of these agencies have Employee Wellness Units however emotion management were sometimes never included. The task should involve not only mindfulness and stress management but also the creation and conduct of regular training on emotional regulation. Such interventions serve as organizational resources that help balance high emotional demands. Partnerships with mental health professionals should be forged to ensure the quality and sensitivity of these initiatives. Confidential counseling services, whether in-person or virtual, should be institutionalized to support employees experiencing emotional strain. By formalizing emotional wellness as a core organizational function, public agencies can reduce burnout prevalence and improve employees' affective well-being.

Another crucial implication involves the formal recognition of emotional labor as a legitimate and measurable component of public service performance. As Hochschild (1983) argued, the management of emotions in professional contexts constitutes real work, deserving institutional acknowledgment and reward. Performance evaluation systems can be revised to include indicators of emotional competence, empathy, and the ability to manage citizen interactions effectively. These adjustments would validate employees' affective contributions and align evaluation systems with the realities of service delivery. The Philippine Civil Service Commission (CSC) may also consider issuing policy memoranda that classify emotional labor as an occupational demand

requiring appropriate support mechanisms. This formal recognition can alleviate feelings of invisibility among employees, reinforcing the organizational value placed on emotional effort and ethical service.

Leadership and supervisory practices also play a decisive role in mitigating emotional strain. The study demonstrated that supervisor support significantly reduces burnout and turnover intention, underscoring the importance of emotionally intelligent leadership. Public organizations should therefore implement mandatory training programs that cultivate supervisors' emotional awareness, empathy, and communication skills. Workshops such as Coaching for Resilience can train leaders to identify early signs of burnout, provide constructive feedback, and create psychologically safe environments (Halbesleben, 2006). Integrating emotional well-being check-ins into regular staff meetings and performance discussions can further normalize open communication and reduce stigma around emotional distress.

Peer relationships also serve as an important resource in managing emotional labor. As supported by prior research (Charoensukmongkol et al., 2016), coworker support fosters shared coping and strengthens resilience. Public institutions can enhance this dynamic through the establishment of Peer Mentorship and Debriefing Circles, structured platforms where employees can share experiences, reflect on challenges, and exchange emotional support. Pairing new or emotionally vulnerable employees with experienced mentors promotes mutual learning and relational trust. Furthermore, monthly team reflection sessions can help cultivate a culture of empathy, recognition, and collective accountability, which in turn reduces isolation and improves group morale.

With respect to job design, autonomy emerged as a key buffer against burnout, though its direct influence on turnover intentions was less pronounced. Providing employees with greater discretion over how they interact with citizens or handle cases allows them to exercise professional judgment and emotional authenticity, thereby reducing dissonance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Grandey et al., 2005). Agencies can experiment with flexi-decision frameworks that permit employees to make certain decisions independently within established guidelines. Pilot initiatives in selected LGUs or regional offices could assess the impact of autonomy on emotional outcomes through employee feedback and performance data. This approach not only enhances engagement but also promotes innovation and ownership of work processes.

To sustain these interventions, continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential. Agencies should conduct biannual assessments of employee burnout, job satisfaction, and emotional labor intensity using validated instruments similar to those used in this research. Integrating these data into HR analytics systems would allow organizations to identify high-risk units and tailor interventions accordingly. Transparent reporting of emotional well-being metrics in annual institutional reports can also foster accountability and data-driven decision-making.

Finally, inter-agency collaboration is necessary for policy-level sustainability. The Philippines' Civil Service Commission, in coordination with the Department of Health and other government agencies, could integrate emotional labor management into the National Mental Health Program for Government Workers. Establishing inter-agency learning networks would facilitate the sharing of best practices and model interventions across departments.

Moreover, allocating dedicated funds for wellness and emotional labor management programs under HR development budgets would ensure the continuity and institutionalization of these efforts.

In summary, the practical implications of this study advocate a paradigm shift from reactive burnout management to proactive emotional governance. Emotional labor must be recognized as a structural reality rather than just an individual challenge as embedded in public administration (Lipsky, 1980). Developing emotionally intelligent institutions, those that value empathy, support, and discretion, can enhance both organizational performance and personnel wellbeing. By implementing structured wellness programs, training empathetic supervisors, fostering peer solidarity, and expanding employee autonomy, government agencies can cultivate resilience among public servants and improve the fairness, quality and sustainability of public service delivery in the Philippines.

#### *5.4 Limitations of the Study and the Direction for Future Research*

There are a number of limitations to this research that suggest opportunities for further inquiry. First, the causal inference is restricted by the research's single time-point data. Experimental designs or longitudinal may be used in future research.

Second, the common method bias of "self-reported data" may have influenced the results. Triangulation with supervisor or peer evaluations could enhance validity.

Third, emotional outcomes may also be influenced by variables such as organizational justice, organizational culture, citizen aggression, emotional intelligence, and personality. Future work should consider these factors to build a more comprehensive emotional labor model in government settings.

Future research should explore moderated mediation models, testing whether job satisfaction mediates emotional labor effects and whether these relationships differ across public vs. private contexts.

#### *5.5 Conclusion*

This research demonstrates that emotional labor is a defining and inescapable feature of street-level bureaucracy. Surface acting, suppressing genuine emotions, was particularly detrimental, while deep acting provided limited protection. Yet the study also revealed that supportive environments, satisfaction, and autonomy can significantly mitigate the emotional toll of frontline work.

By integrating Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory, this research reframes emotional labor from an individual challenge to a structural phenomenon rooted in the discretionary and emotionally charged nature of public service. Burnout and turnover among public employees are thus not merely personal outcomes but indicators of systemic strain within bureaucratic institutions.

The implications are profound: strengthening emotional resilience among public servants requires more than personal coping, it demands organizational redesign. Public institutions must move beyond efficiency metrics to cultivate emotionally intelligent bureaucracies that value empathy, discretion, and human connection as cornerstones of effective governance. In doing so, they not only protect the well-being of employees but also enhance the quality, fairness, and sustainability of public service delivery.

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