

Title: Emotional labor and contextual performance amongst Ghanaian preschool teachers: the mediating role of emotional exhaustion

## Abstract

### Purpose

Emotions are an important aspect of work performance but are often overlooked, especially amongst preschool teachers whose work environment is laden with emotional job demands. The present study aims to examine the mediating role of emotional exhaustion in the relationship between emotional labour and contextual performance.

### Design/methodology/approach

Using a cross-sectional design, data were obtained from 288 preschool teachers in the Tema Metropolis in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. The study's hypotheses were tested using structural equation modelling with maximum likelihood estimation in AMOS 21.0.

### Findings

The structural equation modelling analyses revealed that deep acting had a direct positive relationship with contextual performance, whereas the direct relationship between surface acting and contextual performance was not statistically significant. Furthermore, deep acting and surface acting were indirectly related to contextual performance via emotional exhaustion.

### Practical implications

The study's findings underscore the need for educational institutions and managers to create a supportive environment for teachers engaging in emotional labour, and to ensure that emotional labour is not overburdening teachers.

### Originality/value

The study contributes to the literature on teachers' engagement in discretionary behaviours by elucidating emotional exhaustion as a linking mechanism between emotional labour and contextual performance in a non-Western context. This is one of the few studies to link emotional labour to contextual performance in the educational context.