

**“Investigating the negative impact of emotional labour on full-time permanent academic staff in the social sciences departments at Rhodes University”.**

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## ABSTRACT

In investigating the prevalence of emotional labour among academics within the student/academic staff relationship, this study expands from Arlie Hochschild's theoretical orientation of 'emotional labour'. Through this lens, this study documents the manner in which the adoption of neoliberal ideologies by higher education institutions have transformed it into the service industry and redefined students as consumers and academic staff as service providers. Drawing from previous research in academia, the central argument of the study is that the university system is now an increasingly corporatized and marketized institution that creates an expectation for academic staff to perform emotional labour. However, there is limited literature that looks at emotional labour in academia and more especially within the South African context. Therefore, the focus of this research is how academic work, particularly with students, has shifted to emotion work in an effort to provide quality services.

The study was conducted at Rhodes University in the Eastern Cape Province with academic staff who work in the social sciences department. The research methodology employed is qualitative and evidence was derived from semi structured interviews to establish the negative consequences of emotional labour on the wellbeing of academic staff. Data was analysed and thematically presented in line with the research objectives.

The research finds evidence of increased emotional labour in academic staff, it argues that this is largely as a result of the effects of corporatization which included intensified workloads, entitled students, increasing pastoral care and discontentment from the transformations. It was revealed that emotional labour was differentially experienced for females, younger academics and those in lower/ initial positions in academia, it explored the gendered expectations and concluded that based on certain organizational and personal characteristics, emotion management differed in academics. Lastly, discussions regarding implications and recommendations for further research were made.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINE

## 1.1 Introduction

The ‘management of feelings’ has become a central aspect in organisations and a topic of greater interest to scholars over the years (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Fineman, 1993; Grandey, 2000; Dashper, 2019). The ability to manipulate one’s emotions for the purpose of better and satisfactory work outcomes has become important in many occupations and hence, would not be foreign within an academic setting. More specifically, researchers are interested in the aspect of emotional labour in the work environment. This research focuses on the negative impact of emotional labour that has been argued to exist among academic staff (Dashper, 2019; Ogbonna & Harris, 2014). The study concentrates on the academic staff in the social sciences departments at Rhodes University.

The concept of emotional labour became well-known from studies done on flight attendants by sociologist Arlie Hochschild; she defined emotional labour to be the “management of feelings to create publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labour is sold for a wage” (Hochschild, 2003: 7). Emotional labour is performed by workers as an attempt to comply with the emotional and behavioural expectations of the organisation. Hochschild (2003: 8) asserted that emotional labour happens in jobs that require face to face and voice to voice contact with the public where workers are required to produce an emotional state in another person. In other words, emotional labour requires interaction with others in the workplace.

Thus, the pioneering work of Hochschild (1983) is embodied within symbolic interaction theory which asserts that an individual's beliefs, actions and behaviours are influenced by their interactions with other group members (Byrne & Heyman, 1997: 95). According to Fields et al (2006: 156), Symbolic interactionists explore how individuals use their ‘capacity for agency’ to behave and feel in a manner that is expected of them. Studies of emotions in the symbolic interactionist perspective outline how individuals’ reactions to other people’s behaviour is an anticipated action (Mead, 1934); this means that individuals recognise that others have expectations of how they must behave during interaction. This theory is useful in exploring the implications of employee’s emotional interactions with others within the workplace and how these interactions influence their behaviour. However, within symbolic interactionism, Hochschild (2013) specifically draws upon Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical perspective of customer interactions.

Goffman's (1959, 1963, 1969) dramaturgy perspective states that people play roles to create certain impressions on their audience. This research will explore how Hochschild uses this logic to explain the employee's interactions with customers where employees perform in organisation roles by managing their emotions to achieve organisation goals (Grandey, 2000: 96). Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy theory provides a guiding theoretical framework for Hochschild's (2003) conceptualisation of emotional labour in that through impression management perspective employees manipulate their emotions to appear a certain way towards their customers. In the work environment, the organisational actor must play multiple roles that are appropriate for the workplace (Fineman, 1993: 16); this entails the engagement of emotional labour.

The expectations of organisations for appropriate emotions can be understood in terms of display and feeling rules. Emotional display rules are the organizational standards that are acknowledged for which emotions are appropriate for the work environment while feeling rules are the standard shared norms of how individuals should feel in social relations (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983). It is in accordance to these display and feeling rules that employees perform emotional labour. The frequent use of emotional labour has been said to affect the identity of the worker and have varying negative impacts. According to Ashforth & Humphrey (1993: 97), the constant engagement of expected emotions affects the 'sense of self' of service professionals.

The primary goal of this study is to explore emotional labour among academic staff in higher education with specific reference to the university system in the social sciences departments at Rhodes university. Previous research on emotional labour has focused mostly on service roles such as flight attendants (Hochschild, 2003) and sales agents (Fineman, 1993); more recently, there has been a global recognition for emotional labour studies in academia as academic jobs have been found to be exposed to high demands of emotional labour from academic institutions, students and other stakeholders (Ogbonna & Harris, 2014; Lawless, 2018). Notably, emotional labour in South African higher education institutions is a relatively understudied research area with limited literature over the years (Dhanpat, 2016; Macdonald, 2013; Webster & Mosoetsa, 2001). Therefore, the current research embarks on adding to the existing gap in the literature.

This study is conducted against the backdrop of the transformation agenda of the system, policies and practices in the post- apartheid South African higher education which can be understood in terms of marketisation and corporatisation (Ntshoe, 2004; Rabe & Rugunan, 2004).

2012). The arguments largely revolve around the changes in the higher education system - such as massification, work intensification and increased stakeholder demands/ expectations – which are features of a corporatized university institution (Dhanpat, 2016; Ogbonna & Harris, 2014). The research is informed by the notion that students are considered as consumers and academic staff are the service providers (Lawless, 2018: 86). This dynamic created by marketisation and corporatisation entails that academic staff perform emotional labour. Even though academic staff encounter numerous relationships in their work environment, this study focuses solely on the relationship with the students who are considered as the ‘customer’ in the corporatized university institution (Dhanpat, 2016; Gaan, 2012; Lawless, 2018).

According to Dhanpat (2016: 577), academics are struggling with increased volumes of students; a strong association exists between organisation stress and emotional labour and is likely to have negative effects on the individual. The case of increased student volumes is no different at Rhodes University, where this research was conducted. The university enrolls over 8000 students with the school of humanities holding the largest admission numbers totalling 41% registered students, thus providing an adequate reason to pinpoint an academic sector of this faculty as a focus for research. The largest department within humanities is the social sciences department which constitutes six disciplines that provided a valuable body of knowledge to this research (Rhodes University, 2019).

Accordingly, the increased levels of negative emotional labour that are found globally in university academic staff is a call for concern. It is therefore imperative to investigate the perceived expectations for emotional labour in their interaction with the students at Rhodes and the corresponding negative impact this has on academic staff.

## 1.2 Goals of the research

### 1.2.1 Primary objective

The primary objective of the research is to investigate the negative impact of emotional labour on full-time permanent academic staff in the social science department at Rhodes University.

### 1.2.3 Secondary objectives

The study is informed by the following secondary objectives;

- To establish if the tasks and responsibilities performed by academic staff affect their emotions in the workplace (in relation to their work with students).

- To search if the academic position held by the academic staff influences the management of emotions in the workplace.
- To investigate if the years of experience, gender and age of the academic staff influences the management of emotions in the workplace.
- To investigate the perceptions and opinions of academic staff in relation to the consequences of emotional labour in the workplace.

### 1.3 Research methods and methodology

The overarching methodology that was used in this research was qualitative, a research methodology that is founded on the principles of understanding the thoughts, feelings, and meaning behind an individual's actions and intentions (Sutton, 2015: 226).

The technique used was in-depth interviews. According to Kothari (2005: 110), in-depth interviews are held to explore the needs, desires and feelings of respondents. The instrument of data collection used by the researcher was in-depth interview guide or schedule. The interviews were semi-structured, mainly containing open-ended questions. Each objective was expressed in the schedule as a general topic; each topic contained a set of open-ended questions.

The universe of the research were all full-time permanent academic staff working in the social sciences department at Rhodes University. Due to the explorative nature of the research, the sampling technique that was deemed most appropriate for this study was purposive sampling. Kothari (2005: 15) describes purposive sampling as “a method that involves deliberate selection of particular units of the universe for constituting a sample which represents the universe”. The sample size for this research consisted of twelve (12) participants, the filter was drawn from a sample of social science scholars and the academic position of such scholars. Thus, two academic staff from each of the six social science disciplines being sociology, psychology, anthropology, political studies, history and philosophy departments, and three professors, three associate professors, three senior lecturer and three lecturers were selected in the sample. The logic of selecting twelve participants was to offer a better representation of the social sciences academic staff and their academic positions. Thus, the unit of analysis is each one of the selected full-time permanent academic staff that hold different academic positions and work under the six social science departments at Rhodes University.

Academic position, gender, age and years of academic experience were recorded in order to provide grouping variables enabling between groups a comparative analysis of the levels of emotional labour. Concepts such as ‘emotional labour’, ‘feeling and display rules’ were broadly defined before the data collection phase. All interviews were recorded, and the responses were transcribed, tabulated and analysed.

Prior to conducting the research, ethical approval was obtained from the Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee (RUESC). Additionally, verbal consent from the respondents was obtained prior to the interview process; participation in the research was voluntary.

#### 1.4 Outline of the thesis

The thesis investigates the negative impact of emotional labour on full-time permanent academic staff in the social sciences departments at Rhodes university. Chapter 1 provides a brief introduction into the key aspects surrounding emotional labour and the significance of conducting this study. This chapter also sets out the research design with details of the sampling methods, research participants and the objectives of the research. Chapter 2 is divided into subsections discussing the pertinent theories and concepts that encompass emotional labour and later develops the argument for how the performance of emotional labour has negative effects on employee wellbeing. Chapter 3 provides a contextual analysis of the transformations that have occurred in higher education beginning at a global level and narrowing down to the South African context. This chapter outlines how the marketisation and corporatisation of higher education in academia has led to an increase in emotional labour among academic staff and further discusses some of the variables that influence the performance of emotional labour which is relevant in highlighting the negative impact on the academic staff’s wellbeing. In chapter 4, the findings from the interviews are analysed and discussed in line with the objectives of the research. Chapter 5 is the final chapter that provides a synopsis of the research findings on the negative impact of emotional labour in academic staff. The chapter ends in offering suggestions for areas of further study.

## CHAPTER 2: THEORISING EMOTIONAL LABOUR

### 2.1 Emotional labour - A staged manner of interaction

Understanding emotional labour is a complex task, the dimensions of this concept stretch wide from different perspectives. In this chapter, the theoretical framework that underpins emotional labour will be explored and highlighted. Depending on the angle of one's research, contradicting theories may be selected to argue out how emotional labour is conceptualised. This thesis adopts the theoretical ideologies of symbolic interactionism theory as a guiding framework in understanding the emotional interactions that exist within the organisation. The work of Hochschild (1983) is drawn from, among others, the symbolic interactionism theory. Symbolic interactionist theory originated from Herbert Mead's (1913; 1934; 1964) work which seeks to understand the relationship between social structures and how individuals interpret the social world and interact with each other.

According to Blunter (1994: 91), symbolic interaction refers to the peculiar and distinctive type of interaction that happens between individuals or groups; the peculiarity of these interactions lies in the way humans interpret each other's actions. Therefore, the interpretation of the use of symbols and ascertaining the meanings of other people's actions is what constitutes and mediates human interaction (Blunter, 1994: 91). Put simply, during interactions, people react or respond to someone else's actions or words based on how they understand these words and actions and the meanings they attach to them.

The key feature of Mead's (1913; 1934; 1964) theories is that he recognises the aspect of 'self'. Mead (1913; 1934) asserts that the human being can be an object of his own actions and can act both towards himself and others. Blumer (1986: 2) explains this further by showing that humans are familiar with their actions and because of this, the human is able to tell him/herself to act a certain way. The ability of a human being to act toward himself enables them to make an indication to him/ herself of things in the surrounding and by doing this allowing their actions to be guided by what they observe, (Blunter, 1994: 92). According to Blunter (1994: 92), this mechanism is what enables an individual to interpret the actions of another and to point out to oneself that the action has this or that meaning or character. Byrne & Heyman (1997: 95) simplify this further by remarking that during social interactions, individuals use symbolic communication tools such as language and gestures that they deem as appropriate for that situation based on how they interpret it.

Moreover, within the symbolic interaction theory, Hochschild (2013) specifically draws upon Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective of customer interactions. Goffman (1959) develops on the ideas of Kenneth Burke (1945) who pioneered the dramatism approach. The work of Goffman (1959) seeks to bring to light everyday interactions and how individuals present themselves during these interactions. An interesting point is made by Blunter (1994: 101) to contextualise the ideas of "presentation of self", he does so by illustrating how people act in a particular way towards others based on how they perceive the person and how they define the situation of their interaction. Based on these interpretations, individuals know how best to act in order to get a desired response from the people they are interacting with (Blunter, 1994: 101). This aligns with the mechanisms Mead (1934: 78) describes which are possessed by human beings to study their surroundings, interpret and attach meanings before deciding what actions to take during interactions.

In exploring how one presents themselves to others, Goffman (1959: 8) introduces a dimension of symbolic interaction which he terms as dramaturgy. Goffman's (1959, 1963, 1969) dramaturgy perspective states that people play roles to create certain impressions on their audience. Grove & Fisk (1989: 430) state that the dramaturgical perspective requires impression management by the employee where "actors may employ expressive devices" in order to put up a performance for their audience. Indeed, Goffman (1959) viewed the social life to be about impression management and understood it as a theatrical performance, (Blunter, 1994: 89).

According to Kivisto (2011: 300), a vital part of Goffman's dramaturgy perspective is the role which is described as a specific image or character that an actor wants to convey; it is the sense of self that the individual wants others to see. In essence, Goffman (1959) suggests that individuals, just like in a play/ theatre, take on roles during interactions and act in a way they wish to be perceived by others. Kivisto (2011: 300) gives an example of how people with white collar jobs must assume a professional role whilst at work. Aside from discussing the role, Goffman (1959) solidifies his theory of the resemblance of social life to a theatrical performance with the use of the term 'performance'.

The aspect of performance is of great importance in understanding social behaviour and human interactions using the dramaturgy theory. Goffman (1959: 22) defines performance as "the total activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by the individual's continuous presence before a particular set of observers or "audience" and which has some impact upon them". In essence, people control how they conduct themselves during social interactions

especially when they are aware that they are being observed by others, they portray or present themselves differently depending on their audience. Grove & Fisk (1983: 46) state that a performance may either be sincere or cynical wherein the former entails that the actor is taken in by his own act and the latter involves a fake act which is only a means to an end by the actor. This sincere performance analysis is consistent with the claims Goffman (1959: 10) makes when he says that the actor may convince himself that the impression of reality is in fact the true reality. As for cynical performances, Goffman (1959) argues that a cynical individual may delude his audience for what he considers to be their own good, or for the good of the community. Ultimately, the final goal of the individual is to play a convincing role to their audience and create the intended impression on them.

### 2.1.2 A dramaturgical perspective on Emotional Labour

It is Hochschild's (2003) view that the same way Goffman (1959) understands social life interaction as a stage where actors create impressions through performing roles, is the same way emotional labour can be understood in the work environment. In this subsection, the research will attempt to explain how aspects of Goffman's dramaturgy theory are used to inspire how Hochschild (2003) conceptualises emotional labour. Using this theory, Hochschild (2003) contextualises employee's interactions with customers, where "the customer is the audience, the employee is the actor, and the work setting is the stage" (Grandey, 2000: 96). Certain jobs require extensive interaction with customers or clients; jobs such as teaching, nursing, pastoring and waitressing by nature involve interacting directly with other people. During these interactions, the employee is expected to create an impression on the customer. Hence, the organisational actor must play multiple roles that are appropriate for the workplace (Fineman, 1993: 16); this entails the engagement of emotional labour.

Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy theory can be seen to influence Hochschild's (2003) conceptualisation of emotional labour when we consider how employees manipulate their emotions to play a role and create an impression on their customers. Furthermore, the dramaturgy theory proposes that an individual will consciously and intentionally express himself in a particular way because of the requirements of this kind of expression by other people (Goffman, 1959: 3). This is consistent with Hochschild's (2003: 229) argument that an individual is aware of his/ her efforts to manage their feelings in the work setting. Therefore, emotional labour can be said to be a conscious and deliberate act on the part of the employee.

The conscious management of feelings by employees is done to satisfy the expectations of the organisation in which he/she works. The organisation expectations can be understood in terms of display rules. Emotional display rules are the organizational standards that are acknowledged for which emotions are appropriate for the work environment (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996). It is in accordance to these display rules that employees perform emotional labour.

Throughout Hochschild's (1979; 1983; 2003) work, she argues that the engagement of emotional labour entails a form of performance by the employee which involves 'acting' a certain way to create an emotional connection with a customer. Hochschild uses concepts such as deep acting and surface acting to show how emotions are managed by the employee in order to meet the display rules of the organisation; the influence of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical work comes into play with these notions. Hochschild's dramaturgical perspective of surface acting involves the use of the body to show feelings in a way that one masks their true feelings and instead fakes their emotions to meet the emotional work demands (Hochschild, 2003: 25). This implies that one invests in emotional labour to comply with the display rules by pretending to feel an emotion.

In her research on flight attendants, Hochschild (1983) found that the notion of acting in emotional labour went beyond simply faking emotions through surface acting, she then proposed a more in-depth perspective of how employees manage their emotions through deep acting. Unlike this on the surface approach to managing emotions, according to Hochschild (2003: 25), deep acting refers to altering one's genuine feelings in order to meet the emotional job demands; it is a more complex form of emotional labour that "uses the body to inspire feeling". The deep acting and surface acting interactions mentioned by Hochschild (2003) are similar to Goffman's (1959) cynical and sincere performances that were earlier mentioned. Interestingly, both Goffman (1959) and Hochschild (2003) assert that there is a potential for alienation brought about because of the problems of authentically embracing a role rather than feeling a certain ambivalence or distance from it (Hochschild. 2003; Kivisto, 2011).

Hochschild's (1983; 2003) unique perspective of altering the internal state through deep acting adds a valuable contribution to conceptualising emotional labour and at the same time invites criticism from other scholars (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Morris & Feldman, 1996).

The contention surrounding deep acting, according to Ashforth & Humphrey (1993) is that Hochschild does not consider that an individual may experience and express the same emotion

at the same time (cited in Kruml & Geddes, 2000: 12). According to Zapf (2002: 243), Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) point out that Hochschild's (1983) definition of emotional labour implicitly presumes that performing emotion work necessarily means applying either surface acting or deep acting. They argue that there are instances or situations in the workplace where one need not act or modify their genuine emotions to comply with organisation rules. Ashforth & Humphrey (1993: 94) illustrate the genuine and spontaneous experience of emotions by describing a nurse who sympathises with an injured child; they contend that such a situation does not require acting. However, this argument may be dismissed by factoring in the notion of passive deep acting which Hochschild (2003: 39) argues that individuals, even though unconsciously, still acts in accordance to their emotional job demands.

### 2.1.3. Karl Marx's theory of alienation

As earlier indicated, Hochschild (1979; 1983; 2003) draws from more than just the dramaturgy perspective of symbolic interactionism to develop her concept of emotional labour, she also uses alienation theory of Karl Marx to detail the negative consequences of emotional labour. It is therefore important to briefly set out alienation theory in this subsection.

Marx's (1975) theory of alienation covers four main dimensions that are specific to the workplace; Hochschild (1983; 2003) restricts her use to two of these four dimensions being product alienation and labour process alienation (Brook, 2009: 9). According to Ollman & Bertell (1976: 144), product alienation occurs when the worker is alienated from the product of their labour because the capitalist owns and controls its disposal thus the product is external to the worker and their species being. This dynamic entails a 'one sided enrichment' on the part of the capitalist thereby having a human cost for the worker as it consequently leads to an estrangement from the product of labour (Brook, 2009: 9).

On the other hand, labour process alienation can be understood in two ways: firstly, the worker is not in control of the process of production – “the conditions under which we work, how our work is organised, what we produce and the effect it has on our health” (Cox, 1998 cited in Brook, 2009: 16). The second aspect of the labour process alienation is explained by Brook (2009: 16) as:

*“Labour process alienation is the fact that work is under the control of forces hostile to us. This is because owing to the competitive nature of capitalism, managers are under constant pressure to extract more value from the worker, thereby cheapening*

*the worth of the individual to capitalism. As capitalism develops and corporations grow larger, there is a general tendency for work to be designed to achieve ever-greater economies of scale, unit efficiencies and labour productivity, thereby enhancing the importance of the productive process, its logistics and technologies over the skills and value of the individual”.*

In summary, the dynamics created by having to exchange emotional work for a wage can be seen to act as a building block for which alienation ensues. The worker is alienated from the product and labour process which is reinforced by the competitive global markets; the control of workers emotional display and performance by management for the purpose of profit-making is indeed causing an estranged experience for the employees. Thus, having set out the emotional labour framework and two of theories on which Hochschild (1979; 1983; 2003) builds her thesis, the next section will delve into the implications of the management of feeling in the workplace on the employee.

## 2.2 Negative consequences of emotional labour on employee wellbeing

A contentious topic in discussing emotional labour in the workplace is that of the impact it has on an individual. While some scholars (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993) argue that emotional labour can be beneficial to an employee, others have cautioned against the negative impact it has on the wellbeing of the employee (Hochschild, 2003; Morris & Feldman, 1996). Indeed, emotional labour has been known to be ‘double edged’ with both negative and positive effects. The concern of this research is to discuss the negative impact of emotional labour. Thus, this section attempts to review the supporting literature in that regard.

### 2.2.1 Emotional labour and alienation

As alluded to earlier, emotional labour has arguably been said to lead to alienation as a critical negative by-product of suppressing one’s genuine feelings for the sake of display rules (Goffman, 1959; Hochschild, 2003).

A general conception around the term ‘labour’ is one that poses a strain on oneself, an immediate association is made with physical or manual work but rarely with professional jobs. In her studies on flight attendants, Hochschild (2003) recognises that besides performing minimal physical labour such as pushing a meal cart, flight attendants also perform emotional

labour. This sort of labour, according to Hochschild (2003: 7), involves coordination of the mind and feeling. She goes on to add that there may be times that emotional labour draws on the source of self. While it is expected for one to argue that physical labour is unlike emotional labour, Hochschild (2003) makes an interesting comparison between the two forms of labour by using an analogy of a boy working in a wallpaper factory. The comparison made is of the physical labour performed by a young boy working in a wallpaper factory and emotional labour of a flight attendant. Hochschild (2003: 7) states that “beneath the difference between physical and emotional labour lies a similarity in the possible cost of doing work: the worker can become estranged or alienated from an aspect of self, either the body or the margins of the soul, that is ‘used’ to the work”. This simply entails that both physical labour and emotional labour result in an estrangement and alienation of self; it is on this premise that Hochschild (2003) argues that emotional labour has negative and harmful consequences on employees.

According to Brook (2009: 15), the explanation used by Hochschild (2003) on how emotional labour produces harmful consequences on employee well-being is grounded in the ‘one sided enrichment’ of organisations through the imposition of feeling rules. Hochschild (2003: 198) argues that when the product is a smile, a mood, a feeling, or a relationship, it comes to belong more to the organization and less to the self. As earlier mentioned, organisations have emotional expectations that dictate how one must appear to customers, complying with these emotions requires emotional labour. During face to face or voice interactions employees are expected to present themselves in a certain manner that is deemed appropriate for the workplace, for instance, when interacting with angry customers, employees are expected to still maintain a professional impression. The identity of employee is costed when feeling rules are negotiated through company manuals within the public domain rather than by the worker (Hochschild. 2003: 118). Hochschild in 2013 (cited in Brook, 2009: 16) argues that “there comes a breaking point between the real and acted self, and that as a matter of self-protection an individual is forced to ‘divide’: ‘some workers conclude that only one self (usually the non-work self) is the real self’”. It is for this reason that Hochschild (2003) argues that emotional labour causes “alienation and estrangement” from one’s genuine feelings, and it thereby has detrimental consequences on wellbeing.

Hochschild’s application of Marx’s (1975) alienation theory is not without criticism (Wouters, 1989; Bolton, 2005). Bolton and Boyd’s (2003) criticise Hochschild’s (2003) comparison of the factory worker and the flight attendant’s emotional work and physical work. They argue that unlike the factory worker, flight attendants own the means of production and hence are

unlikely to be alienated from the labour process (Bolton and Boyd, 2003: 293). According to Bolton and Boyd (2003: 294), the organisation may control and define the emotional expectations of the worker, but the worker is still in control of how much feeling they invest into the performance. On this basis Bolton and Boyd (2003: 294) suggests that to a certain degree workers have a choice of which emotions can be commodified and are not as powerless as Hochschild (2003) implies in her application of alienation. Nevertheless, the alienation debate remains ongoing as other scholars such as Brook (2009) defend Hochschild's (2003) stance on how emotional labour leads to alienation and estrangement.

### 2.2.2 Burnout, organisation stress and other effects of emotional labour

The negative effect of emotional labour is not limited to alienation, Hochschild (2003) and other scholars (Fineman, 1993; Morris & Feldman, 1996) recognise that investing in emotional labour causes negative psychological effects on the worker. The general view is that having to express disingenuous emotions is the chief reason for internal conflict within an individual during interactions with others in the workplace.

As earlier noted, Hochschild (2003) recognises the work process as a 'one-sided enrichment', she expands this notion further by arguing that the positive effects of emotional labour are only experienced by the organisation and the customer but at the expense of the employee. Ashforth & Humphrey (1993: 98) cite emotive dissonance as one dysfunctional aspect of emotional labour. Emotive dissonance is described as feelings of being phoney, hypocritical, unauthentic or false by an individual (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993: 98). When employees act in their organisation roles to put on a performance for the customer in accordance to feeling and display rules, they are likely to experience emotional dissonance. According to Ashforth & Humphrey (1993: 99), dissonance may lead to poor self-esteem, depression, cynicism and alienation. In the same vein, the dysfunctions of emotional labour extend to an impaired sense of authentic self to a point where one is unable to recognise their genuine emotions (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993: 99). However, it is important to note that not every interaction in the workplace may necessitate expressing emotions that are not genuine, thus dissonance occurs when one engages in suppression of their genuine feelings. Morris & Feldman (1996: 992) illuminate on this further by citing that a mismatch between genuinely felt and organizationally required emotions must exist in order for dissonance to happen and thus greater control and emotional labour will be needed.

Second, other negative outcomes that have consistently been linked to the constant engagement of expected emotions is stress and burnout. Results from Hochschild's (1983) study on flight attendants showed that the workers suffered from stress and burnout caused by the emotional labour their job required. Hochschild holds firmly to the notion that the task of managing an estrangement between the self and display and feeling rules of the organisation lead to stress (Hochschild, 2003: 131). While it is factual that organisational stress may be caused by various individual and work factors such as the type of work and work conditions, among others, the influence of emotional labour has to be acknowledged. Pugliesi (1999: 128) contends that the nature of emotional labour performed by individuals varies in magnitude based on the type of job they have and the work tasks they perform. Literature confirms that emotional labour is higher when a worker lacks autonomy in their job leading to job stress (Pugliesi, 1999: 140). This suggests emotional labour influences job stress in the sense that organisations emotional expectations of the worker render them less control in the job thus resulting in stress. On this basis, Pugliesi (1999: 146) states that "attempting to change one's own or a co-worker's or client's feelings increases subjective job stress, decreases satisfaction, and increases psychological distress".

Furthermore, the aspect of burnout has been associated with emotional labour. Burnout can be understood as when an employee is "overly emotionally involved in interactions with customers and has little way to replenish those emotional resources being spent" (Jackson, Schwab, & Shuler (1986) as cited in Grandey, 2000: 104). Maslach & Jackson (1986) characterises burnout as consisting emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation – where an individual displays negative and cynical attitudes toward customers - and low sense of personal accomplishment (cited in Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002: 17). Hochschild (2003: 187) argues workers who are unaware they are performing a role on behalf of the organisation are likely to suffer stress and burnout. She goes on to say that if the worker does not remove the 'self' from the job, they begin to act passively. Researchers have demonstrated that jobs that involve frequent interactions lead to high levels of burnout caused by the emotional control needed when interacting others in the workplace (Hochschild, 1983; Maslach & Jackson, 1986). In essence, as previously discussed, interacting with customers often involves acting in a way that is conflicting with how one actually feels, and the predictable outcome of this emotional labour is burnout. According to Maslach & Jackson (1986: 193), burnout has dysfunctional consequences such as insomnia, depression, increased alcohol and drug abuse; Hochschild

(2003) reports similar problems linked to emotional labour insofar as reiterating the link between burnout and emotional labour.

Generally, a negative relationship between emotional labour and burnout has been found to exist, more specifically, Zhang & Zhu (2008) found that deep acting is more likely to result in burnout than surface acting. When one alters their internal state to fit the expected emotions of their job it is more likely to lead to emotional exhaustion owing to the fact that deep acting requires immense effort to perform. Moreover, the relationship between emotional labour and burnout is much more complex than what meets the eye. Much like occupational stress, there are factors that play a role in how emotional labour leads to emotional exhaustion. For example, studies done by Erickson & Ritter (2001) found that men experienced higher levels of burnout in comparison to women, because women were better at managing and expressing the emotions using facial expressions. By pointing this out, it is imperative to recognise that the general influence of emotional labour on an individual varies on the basis of social positions such as gender (Pugliesi & Shook, 1997: 284). Heller (1980) posits that women have a greater involvement in emotion-focused tasks which can be attributed to their gender traits such as being caring and nurturing (cited in Pugliesi & Shook, 1997). This would imply that women are more likely to be emotionally exhausted and susceptible to burnout than men because they are not only expected to comply with organisation feeling and display rules, but also show more positive emotions than men. Based on these studies the impact of emotional labour may vary by gender and other variables which will be addressed later in this thesis.

Thus, Hochschild's (2003) view of emotional labour being detrimental to employee wellbeing significantly influences other scholars to explore alternative avenues of the unfavourable effects of emotional by providing a guiding framework.

### 2.3 Conclusion

The aforementioned literature evidently shows that there is a downside to performing emotional labour on the part of the worker and despite opposing views that propose positive effects, there remains a need to further explore the extent of the negative consequences of emotional labour for workers. It is pertinent to the goals of this research to understand this aspect of emotional labour. To this end, this chapter provided the theoretical framework which is Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy perspective of the symbolic interaction theory to propose how employees modify their emotions to meet the organisation's expectations. This chapter also

discussed the Marx (1975) theory of alienation to introduce the assertions made on the negative connotations of emotional labour. In maintaining the aim of this study to explore the negative impacts of emotional labour, this chapter provided literature to support the claims made by Hochschild (1983; 2003) by highlighting some of the consequences being alienation, burnout, stress, dissonance and emotional exhaustion, among others.

The next chapter narrows down the focus from the broader discussions of emotional labour that this thesis has so far engaged in. Chapter three proceeds to explore the discourses of emotional labour within the scope of academia, with particular focus in South Africa's academia, and reviews the corresponding literature to that regard.

## CHAPTER 3: EMOTIONAL LABOUR IN ACADEMIA

### 3.1 Introduction

As the preceding review of literature has shown, emotional labour significantly affects the wellbeing of the worker in a negative way as proposed by Hochschild (2003). In light of these findings and the vast literature on emotional labour in certain service professions, there has been a recent momentous growth in literature on the consequences of emotional labour in higher education, particularly in academia (Constanti & Gibbs, 2004; Ogbonna & Harris, 2014; Lawless, 2018). This chapter is aimed at identifying and discussing literature that highlights academic work as an emotionally tasking occupation and explores the discourses that conceptualises academic institutions as service providers, with customers, means of production and service deliverers (Gibbs, 2002; Constanti & Gibbs, 2004).

#### 3.1.1 Global transformation in higher education

Since 1970s, sociologists have noted that the world has undergone significant changes that involve the formation of an international market economy brought about by the advancement of globalisation (Adams, 2006: 8). According to Adams (2006: 8), the shift caused by globalisation has influenced a change in the global higher education institutions by insisting that they “function on sound market economic principles, where economic rationalism and the profit ideal drive the institution”. This entails that education became a consumable commodity to compete on the global market, education institutions are becoming more corporatized by operating much like corporate entities. To elaborate on the notion of the marketisation of education as a ‘public good’, Gibbs (2002: 326) recognises four aspects that characterise it as such. Of particular interest to this thesis are two prominent ones: firstly, exchange and relationships where the education institution exchanges educational products and services to their consumers and they seek to attract more students, research funds and grants/ donations from the state and other stakeholders. Secondly, Gibbs (2002: 327) mentions that education institutions apply market strategies because they feel the need to build a competitive advantage in order to survive the competitive education market and in doing so, they fall into consumption.

The corporatisation and marketisation of higher education occurring in Western countries has been explored in the literature (Gibbs, 2002; Lawless, 2018; McCrohon & Nyland, 2018).

Although the changes in the higher education institutions may not be homogenous across nations, Giroux in 2003 (cited in Kandiko, 2010: 153) notes that the global forces changing the nature and purpose of higher education all over the world. This implies that the changes in higher education are not restricted to the western countries only but stretch across the globe following what Kandiko (2010: 156) termed as a neo- liberal economic agenda to transform higher education. According to Kandiko (2010: 157), the neo- liberal model of higher education manifests into a trend of corporatisation with changes such as privatisation, academic stratification of disciplines, rise of managerialism, commercialisation of athletics, research and the education process and increased consumerism. The effect of these changes has redefined the relationship of students and academic staff; Lawless (2018: 87) describes the newly constructed relationship as one where students are the consumers and the academic staff are the service providers who sell products and, in a sense, also sell themselves. For the purpose of this thesis, the notion of consumer-service provider relationship that exists between academic staff and students shall be adopted.

It is important to note that the changes in higher education mentioned above have influenced further shifts within higher education. Of greater interest is the changes in academic staff role and responsibilities. Kandiko (2010: 158) reports that there has been an increase in the hiring of part-time academic staff, full-time non-tenure-track faculty appointments, and graduate student assistantships. Essentially, the aim of corporatizing higher education is to ensure more profits at a lower running cost, maintain staff under part time jobs and contractual employment is a means to attaining this goal. The neoliberal agenda becomes a concern for academic staff when they are required to demonstrate exceptional performance in a meritocratic system in order to remain employed (Lawless, 2018: 86). At a time where education institutions are competing on the market, the expectations on academic staff to be exceptional also grows. Lawless (2018: 86) states that the pressure and hunger for profits in higher education has created a ‘publish or perish’ phenomenon amongst academic staff in an attempt to remain relevant and valuable to the institution.

Furthermore, the marketized higher education system has seen a growth in student numbers which Kandiko (2010: 154) recognises as a ‘mass enrolment’. The ‘massification’ of higher education is at least in part a by-product of the neoliberal agenda of education institutions to increase profits; once more, this agenda comes at a cost. In the European system of higher education, Trow (2001: 304) remarks that the growth in student numbers is not followed with an increase in academic staff, the student- academic staff ratio is unbalanced in most European

systems of higher education. Similarly, Mohamedbhai (2014: 64) reports that numerically higher education enrolment in Sub-Saharan Africa has dramatically increased over the last few decades and this has equally negatively affected staffing ratios of up to 1:100. Evidently, the global transformation of higher education institutions to corporatized institutions has significantly affected the work context of the academic staff.

While it may be argued by McCrohon & Nyland (2018: 18) that a corporatized education institution provides economic benefits to the hosting nations and increases diversity from the large number of students enrolled from the local and international market, there are concerns that have been expressed regarding the impact this has on academic staff. One of the main concerns is how the academic staff are coping with the changes in their roles and responsibilities and how this affects their emotional wellbeing. Therefore, this thesis will concentrate on exploring emotional labour in academic staff prompted by the changes in the academic workplace. Prior to doing so, the next subsection will outline the changes that have occurred within the higher education system in the South African context under which this study was conducted.

### 3.1.2 Transformation of higher education in South Africa

The transformation of higher education in academia is not uniform across nations (Kandiko, 2010: 159). The South African context offers its own unique instance of the changes that have occurred within its education system, with some effects being similar to the western context. Just as globalisation affected the western countries, South Africa's economic and social reforms have also been influenced by the enthusiasm for market competition, privatisation and managerialism (Ntshoe, 2004: 137). In responding to the global changes and trying to find their place in the global education market, Baatjes (2005: 25) states that post-apartheid South Africa began the restructuring of state run public institutions as part of the ongoing transformation agenda. He goes on to state that the higher education institutions have not been exempt from the wave of the intensified neoliberal fatalism which seeks to commodify and corporatize public institutions for increased profits (Baatjes, 2005: 25).

On the subject of adjusting to the neoliberal climate, Stewart (2007: 136) observes that South African education institutions have diversified with new market strategies of running their institutions by pursuing students with diversified 'client needs' and exploring different fields for their research works. The pursuance of students using marketing strategies such as

brochures or media adverts is evidence of the neoliberal agenda of universities. These tactics are comparable to businesses that hunt for new clients. Under these circumstances, Adams (2006: 9) concedes that people are considered consumers who can rationally choose a commodity and in this case university education has been transformed into a commodity because it is paid for. Thus, Stewart (2007: 136) believes that universities, under the new structures and policies, are expected to become entrepreneurial by inculcating a business culture insofar as having a corporate approach to management. With that in mind, for one to understand the increasing marketisation of higher education in South Africa, Ntshoe (2004: 138) argues that along with corporatisation, the changes in higher education policy and practice can be attributed not only to neoliberalism but to new managerialism as well.

According to Adams (2006: 10), this new approach of corporate managerialism claims that there is nothing distinctive about education, meaning that higher education should be managed like any other service or business institution; accordingly, the South African education ministry adopted the mechanisms of quality assessment and funding. Using this logic then, academic staff are viewed as any other service employees that must be guided by certain expectations for quality and efficiency purposes. Likewise, the paying student is a consumer with expectations for the service they will receive, in view of this consumer- service provider dynamic that is formed by managerialism and corporatisation, the academic work environment has drastically changed.

Among the many changes to the South African academic work environment are the following listed by Jenson in 2004 (cited in Stewart, 2007: 137):

- *“There is a much-increased sense of the need to compete, both inside universities and with regard to competing universities.*
- *Greater vulnerability from the erosion of job security, and fears of employment equity among some whites.*
- *An increased sense of having to perform, in the context of surveillance through performance management and quality assurance systems and the institutional benchmarking of a wide variety of outputs.*
- *There is more awareness of students as ‘clients’ and as resources to be pursued”.*

Similar to the western countries, another transformation of higher education in the South African context is that of student massification. According to Lockett & Sutherland (2000: 292), the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) produced a policy report in 1996 that proposed a massification of education which would assume an absolute growth in student enrolment; massification was necessary for economic growth and would involve different patterns of teaching and learning (Lockett & Sutherland, 2000: 292). The implications of massification equally affect the role and responsibilities of academic staff as they are faced with more workload and adapting to new teaching strategies proposed by the NCHE policy report. Conventional wisdom would have it that more students would be followed by increased academic staff support, to the contrary, the corporate model education system mirrored the changes in the global north by having rapid expansion of part-time and informalized faculty (Stewart, 2007: 136).

As it was mentioned earlier, the imbalanced student-academic staff ratio is one of the concerns that arises from the transformation of higher education. According to Mohamedbhai (2014: 72), full-time academic staff have increased workloads for teaching and additional administrative responsibilities because the part-time academic staff hired may not have adequate experience in the institution. Aside from the increased work, the university higher education system remains expectant of the academic staff to still provide exceptional service and publish more, however, academic staff have little time to devote to research under the new system (Mohamedbhai, 2014: 72). Having given some background into the global and South African transformation of higher education triggered by the neo-liberal form of managerialism, corporatisation and marketisation, this study proceeds to explore the implications of this on academic staff wellbeing in relation to emotional labour.

## 3.2 Emotional labour in academic staff in the marketized university

### 3.2.1 The global perspective

As pre-empted in the preceding chapter, there has been a cost to the changes that have happened in the higher education institutions; particularly, but not limited to, the impact these changes have had on the academic workplace which in turn has affected the wellbeing of the academic staff. In reiterating an earlier standpoint, the notion that has been adopted for this thesis lies in viewing the higher education institution as a workplace operating as a corporate/business entity. The literature reviewed thus far has shown that service providers are encouraged to

manage their genuine feelings for the benefit of efficient and satisfactory service delivery (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild, 2003). When considering the academic staff as a service provider, it is necessary to apply Hochschild's (2003) theory of emotional labour in understanding the measures they go to in order to stay valuable to the education institution and the role they play in gaining the institution a competitive advantage in the global market.

Research conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA) revealed several aspects commonly associated with emotional labour among academic staff in light of the neoliberal practices in academia (Constanti & Gibbs, 2004; Lawless, 2018). In a study done on UK academic staff, Constanti & Gibbs (2014: 245) found that academic staff felt a sense of hopelessness and frustration towards managing their academic responsibilities with regard to student interactions and also towards the management of the institution. The academic staff bemoaned having to conceal their frustrations in the classroom and recognised that they suppressed their emotions for the benefit of both the student and management because it was expected of them to do so (Constanti & Gibbs, 2014: 246). In essence, academic staff are aware that under the corporatized university their actions must be customer-centric even if it has an emotional cost. Thus, this confirms that academic staff as service providers conform to the feeling and display rules postulated by Hochschild (1983; 2003) for the benefit of the organisation and the customer.

In a similar study also done in the United Kingdom, Ogbonna & Harris (2014) argued that one of the significant developments driven by the marketisation of higher education has been the desire for greater efficiency in the universities consequentially leading to an intensification of academic work. Ogbonna & Harris (2014: 1187) contend that emotional labour has increasingly become a part of the work of university lecturers due to the intensifying changes in the academic work over the years. Aside from the conventional lecturing and supervisory work that was known to be the role of academic staff, Ogbonna & Harris (2014: 1186) cite additional tasks such as research work, administrative responsibilities, student counselling and even management, "this wide range of disparate tasks require varying degrees of emotional display over an extended period". In Australia, the traditional roles of academic staff have also changed to academics having to act as entrepreneurs, facilitators, marketers and managers besides their teacher and researcher roles (Winter et al, 2000: 280). Even more, the task of adapting to these changes is even greater for the academic staff because, whether or not they are opposed to their transformed academic workplace, they are strained even further to control their genuine emotions and only depict 'work appropriate' emotions thus requiring extensive

effort to perform emotional labour. As earlier alluded, the feeling of lack of control in the workplace is bound to result in higher investment in emotional labour.

By the same token, Lawless (2018) documents a parallel account of how neoliberal ideologies have corporatized American universities and increased emotional labour among academic staff. While she acknowledges that just as Ogbonna & Harris (2014) mention work intensification in academia, Lawless (2018: 87) adds that academic staff have inherited unwritten rules that prescribe how they are to treat and serve students as customers by: “extending office hours, being on-call via email and social media, counselling the wayward and grief stricken, becoming a graduate admissions counsellor, self-disclosing personal information, and exuding warmth and approachability”. Not only does Lawless (2018) speak on the new academic roles, she also reiterates the sentiments by Kandiko (2010) that were earlier mentioned which showed that corporatized universities lean more towards offering partial or short- term contracts and thus adding more stress and workload to full-time academic staff, (Lawless, 2018: 86). According to Ogbonna & Harris (2014: 1187), the combination of escalating work-loads, long hours, increased changes in job-specific tasks and responsibilities and increased control by management has as a consequence increased emotional labour in academic staff.

From the above literature, it seems to appear that the effects of the global transformation of higher education are analogous in more ways than one. It can be argued that the changes in the academic workplace has seen a shift in the power dynamic in view of the fact that the customer-oriented approach has subjected academic staff to the expectations of the students (customers) thus increasing emotional labour. To support this claim, Ogbonna & Harris (2014: 1188) maintain that academics are subjected to multiple and conflicting demands from not only management but students as well. Moreover, reports by Asthana in 2008 (cited in Berry & Cassidy, 2013: 22) also show that university lecturers are struggling to cope with the rising student numbers and increased administration duties. Emotional labour in academic staff at a global level is evidently high and a cause for concern and it is therefore imperative to explore the situation within the South African context.

### 3.2.2 The South African perspective

Even though there has been a growing global recognition of increased emotional labour in academic staff in higher education institutions, there lies a gap in the literature within the South

African context as the topic is relatively understudied (Dhanpat, 2016; Macdonald, 2013). The case in South Africa is no different than in the western countries; the concerns that have been associated with emotional labour in academic staff in higher education are linked to the transformation and changes in the job roles, responsibilities and work environment (Rothman & Viljoen, 2009). According to Rothman & Viljoen (2009: 1) South African academics are under stress associated with the radical transformation of the education system along with other kinds of stress related to academic work. It goes without saying that the effects of occupational stress are detrimental to an employee's wellbeing, the standard way of thinking about stress has it that there are more negative connotations than positives ones. McDonough (2000) posits that the potential for the development of stress is usually linked to changes in the workplace and stress in turn evokes responses such as anger, anxiety and frustration (cited in Rothman & Viljoen, 2009: 2). In other words, the changes in the academic workplace are likely to evoke negative emotions in academic staff but expressing these emotions may not be acceptable in the workplace thus resulting in great investment in emotional labour.

The assertions made about academic work having transitioned from a relatively stress-free job to be a stressful occupation that is emotionally taxing are validated by Barkhuizen & Rothmann (2006). Barkhuizen & Rothmann (2006: 40) observe that the academic profession in South Africa has become complex insofar as having to engage in multiple roles to fulfil job expectations, the consequence of this is that emotions meant for one role spill over into another role. In making this comment, Barkhuizen & Rothmann (2006) are confirming that just as Hochschild (2003) states, academic staff assume roles and in doing so regulate their feelings to comply with the display rules. The academic staff roles in South Africa have been divided into teaching, research work, community engagement, and high administrative workloads (Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2006: 40). Stewart (2007: 135) also argues that the academic functions have been grossly overloaded with responsibilities such as tutoring, massive administration workloads and supervisory workloads for departments that have masters and doctoral students. Essentially, this entails that academic staff must engage in more than one role, each requiring varying amounts of emotional labour which is a recipe for emotional exhaustion, stress and burnout.

At the University of South Africa (UNISA), Stewart (2007: 133) reports that in the new academic system, discretionary powers of allocating time for academic labour by academic staff has reduced and therefore affecting the autonomy in their academic role. As introduced in chapter two, a strong correlation exists between negative emotional labour and reduced job

autonomy. Under the new managerialism in the South African education system academic staff have experienced an erosion of their job autonomy which has left them feeling powerless (Dhanpat, 2016: 577). Ogbonna & Harris (2004) noted that emotional labour is used as a coping mechanism for negative attitudes and emotions arising from reduced job autonomy.

According to Dhanpat (2016: 577), just like in the global context, academic staff in South Africa are struggling to cope with the increasing volumes of students and intensification of the work. In a study done on thirty-six (36) South African higher education institutions, Webster and Mosoetsa (2001) found that as a result of an increase in students and the changing nature of their job, academic work drastically intensified, and the academic staff complained that the students were under prepared for university and this obligated the academic staff to commit more of their time and emotions. What is more, academic staff have to be available for counselling and be more responsive to their students who are perceived as customers of the university (Webster and Mosoetsa, 2001: 13). It is, therefore, apparent that the massification of students has produced an environment that encourages the use of emotional labour on the part of the academic staff.

Additionally, Stewart (2007: 138) emphasises matters further when he writes on the decrease of staff support which seems like a retrogressive step in light of the rise in student numbers, however, as a mediating measure some universities like UNISA have adopted a vast tutor system. Tutoring entails that academic staff engage and interact with students which may require greater investment in emotional labour. According to Bellas in 1999 (cited in Dhanpat, 2016: 577), emotional labour during student interactions can happen both inside and outside the classroom when the academic staff's teaching and communication skills mediate the classroom experience or when maintaining student interactions in terms of student advisory and counselling outside of the classroom.

There is a recurring argument on the hunger for funding and grants within the context of global transformation of higher education which is just as prominent in the South African context. While the pressures from the global market continue to amplify, South African higher education institutions like most African universities are unequally equipped to compete on the international economy of higher education because they are compromised by deficient funding and low research outputs (Adams, 2006; Teferra & Altbach, 2004). The need to remain commercially competitive at a local and international level has prompted universities to increasingly put pressure on academics to publish more in order to meet the pressures of university ranking systems (Callaghan, 2016: 2). In line with this, Webster and Mosoetsa

(2001: 14) reported that academic staff felt greatly pressured to work hard and publish their research which is expected to appear only in accredited journals for the benefit of the institution. Amid these expectations by management to produce exceptional work, the academic staff are not to neglect their other roles and responsibilities. Hence, coping with the institutional demands requires the standardised display of feelings (Webster and Mosoetsa, 2001: 16).

One can rightly scrutinise the negative impact of emotional labour on academic staff as part of the transformations of higher education to corporate institutions. According to Stewart (2007: 138), research that was conducted at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and the University of Witwatersrand found that academic staff felt alienated from their jobs and because the academics have to change their “self-concepts as professional academics to units of resources and auditable bodies” they experienced increased emotional labour (Webster and Mosoetsa, 2001: 16). Thus, the increased levels of emotional labour found in South African academic staff is highly concerning, considering the negative effects emotional labour has on the wellbeing of the employee as claimed by Hochschild (2003).

In understanding the impact of emotional labour on academic staff, it is important to note that there are certain factors and variables that have been said to influence how emotions are managed in the academic workplace. In the next section of this study, the literature surrounding some of these variables will be reviewed accordingly and, in some cases, illustrations will be drawn to paint a clearer picture.

### 3.3 Influencing variables of emotional labour in academia

Grandey (2000) suggests that there are certain individual differences and organisational factors that affect how individuals regulate their emotions and practice emotional labour. It is reasonable to suggest that individuals behave differently when confronted with the same or different situation based on certain factors; it is imperative to explore which factors come into play when attempting to understand emotional labour in the academic sector. This subsection will, in no particular order, attempt to highlight some of the documented factors that influence emotional management in academic staff.

Firstly, the issue of gender is a topic of interest in many fields of study, the area of emotional labour is not exempted. In her thesis, Hochschild (1983) pointed out that gender is an important aspect of emotional labour and the emotional expectations are different for women and men,

she is of the view that women are the majority in service jobs. According to Hochschild (2003: 167), most people perform emotional labour in their workplace, but women are expected to do more of it. Within the academic sector, the emotional expectation of female academic staff by students is higher than those of male academics. The notion that women perform more emotional labour than men is widely recognised by other researchers (Bellas, 1999; Grandey, 2000; Pugliesi & Shook, 1997; Rabe & Rugunanan, 2012).

The academic workplace, like many other sectors, have seemingly adopted the same societal norms and expectations for women for how they are perceived in the workplace as well. Bellas (1999: 99) recognises that gender differences in academics behaviour and orientation show more socialisation experiences than conformity to the standards and expectations of the work role. In a recent study conducted by Lawless (2018) it was found that female academic staff take on a caretaker role where students expected to be mothered and taken care of by them, and the expectation is that female academic staff should embody these roles from the home into their workplace. It is for this reason that Bellas (1999: 99) states that students judge female professors more harshly than male professors if they are not nice.

This is not to mean that male academic staff do not perform emotional labour, Grandey (2000: 106) contends that women engage in more management situations both at home and work and by virtue of this are better at suppressing their true feelings thus emotional labour is higher for them. The gendered emotional labour has extensively affected the academic work of female academic staff. In their research on female sociologists in South Africa, Rabe & Rugunanan (2012) cited how less prestigious positions in academia are allocated to the female academics because of their nurturing nature and family responsibilities. Additionally, the female academic staff publish less than their male counterparts, instead they spend more time teaching, tutoring, performing more administrative tasks and engaging in supervisory work (Rabe & Rugunanan, 2012: 557). The aforementioned tasks require significant contact and interactions with students, frequent interaction with customers leads to emotional labour.

Secondly, just like gender, another personal characteristic that has been discovered to influence emotional labour in academic staff is employee age. According to Walsh & Bartikowski (2013: 1219), employee age has been reported to be useful for explaining job-related behaviours. Hochschild (1983) believes that how workers perform emotional labour is affected by age because older employees have broader emotional memories than younger employees therefore, they are better at deep acting (Kruml & Geddes, 2000: 24). Kim (2008) and Dahling and Perez (2010) concurred with this by suggesting that owing to the fact that they seek to reduce negative

emotions emotional experiences and maximise on the positive ones, older employees control their emotions, facial and bodily display better than younger employees (cited in Walsh & Bartikowski, 2013: 1220). Thus, Kruml & Geddes (2000: 25) hypothesised that older employees experience more emotive dissonance as a result of emotional labour.

On the other hand, a study conducted by Berry & Cassidy (2013) on UK university lecturers found that younger lecturers showed higher levels of emotional labour. The argument by Berry & Cassidy (2013: 11) is that the younger academic staff may perform higher levels of impression management (Goffman, 1959) in their academic role which requires high levels of emotional labour. Although Berry & Cassidy (2013) may not say so directly, they seem to imply that young academic staff may feel pressure to appear qualified or experienced in a role when in fact not and in doing so they suppress or manage their feelings in accordance to the feeling rules of the academic profession.

Thirdly, the years of experience of the academic staff has also been known to influence emotional labour, for the sake of this research, this refers to the duration in which the academic staff has been active in the academia profession. In highlighting the increase of emotional labour caused by intensified academic work, Ogbonna & Harris (2014) reported that long serving or older lecturers bemoaned the additional academic roles that they had acquired. They expressed frustrations and anger at how the new expectations of them had gone beyond reasonable boundaries. Despite these negative emotions, Bellas (1999: 100) emphasises that academic staff are not only expected to display positive emotions, but also to control the negative emotions by suppressing them. Having been in the academic profession for long, the changes within the higher education institutions such as the expectation to be nice, rather than professional, towards students and high research expectations are new to long serving lecturers and thus affect them more than the newly joined academics (Ogbonna & Harris, 2014: 1196). The assumption being made by Ogbonna & Harris (2014) is that academic staff with more years of experience perform more emotional labour than those with fewer years in the occupation because they have experienced more of the changes in the academic role.

On the contrary, Kruml & Geddes (2000: 25) argue that employees with less experience are more likely to feel role uncertainty and therefore use more effort in their performance which may lead to emotive dissonance and burnout. Similarly, Berry & Cassidy (2013: 11) suggested that longer serving or more experienced university lecturers perform lower levels of emotional labour compared to less experienced university lecturers. These assertions harmonize with Hochschild in 1983 (cited in Kruml & Geddes, 2013: 25) when she observes that employees'

sense that the organisations feeling and display rules are what they must conform to rather than the automatic emotions felt when they are uncertain of the job role. The academic staff who have little experience in academia usually lack job autonomy and are by virtue of this more disposed to higher performance of emotional labour.

Lastly, another important work-oriented variable that is worth exploring is the position held by the academic staff in the institution. The literature on this variable is scarce and not as vast as other variables such as gender; in fact some scholars such as Berry and Cassidy (2013) found no significant differences in the levels of emotional labour among academic staff with different academic positions, while other scholars such as Ogbonna and Harris (2014) reported that levels of emotional labour differed in terms of junior staff being more susceptible to negative effects of emotional labour than senior academic staff.

Owing to the adoption of new managerialism and global market strategies in the higher education institutions, there have been noticeable changes in the job structure of universities at a global level (Kandiko, 2010). Academic staff positions include, but are not limited to, professor, associate professor, senior lecturers, and lecturers. According to Ogbonna & Harris (2014: 1197) the new managerialism of higher education institutions has seemingly led to senior academic staff exerting more power on the junior staff with the view of shifting more of the academic workload on their subordinates. In other words, the junior academic staff have more academic responsibilities and roles than the senior staff thus are more likely to perform more emotional labour.

### 3.4 Conclusion

The emotion work that academic staff perform is integral to the academic staff – student relationship and this affects the overall functioning of the university institution. Based on the literature previously reviewed, it can be argued that academic staff, like other service providers, perform emotional labour for the benefit of the university institution and the customer (student). In line with this, the chapter above provided a synopsis of the contextualisation of emotional labour in the academic scope, reviewing the global transformation of higher education in academia and narrowing it down to the South African context to create a clearer picture of how emotional management is now a part of academic staff job expectations. The chapter followed by exploring some of the known variables that influence the impact of

emotional labour in academic staff which included both personal characteristics (gender and age) and work-oriented characteristics (years of experience and position held).

However, in spite of the growing interest and studies in this field, it can be noted from the above chapter that there is a limited body of research that has investigated the role and nature of emotional labour in academic staff within the South African context. The gap in literature thus presents the foundation for deeper inquiry into the negative impact of emotional labour in academic staff. The next chapter will delve into illuminating the findings that support the argument that academic work is an emotional practice.

## CHAPTER 4: ACADEMIC WORK AS AN EMOTIONAL PRACTICE

### 4.1 Introduction

By its nature, academic work can be characterised as an occupation that encompasses emotional work; it is paramount to illuminate on the causes and aspects of this work that evidence the emotional labouring of academic staff specifically in regard to their relationship with students. This chapter presents an analysis and interpretation of the data collected from full-time permanent academic staff in the social sciences department at Rhodes university which is located in Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Furthermore, the chapter offers discussions relating to the highlighted research objectives from the introductory chapter.

The interpretations of the research findings are informed by the reviewed literature and using the theoretical lens of Hochschild (2003); the study also draws inferences from Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy theory and the theory of alienation by Marx (1975). This chapter is arranged in four themes that provided the basis for addressing the set objectives of the research in each theme. Firstly, the researcher set out to establish how the tasks and responsibilities performed by academic staff affect their emotions in the workplace (in relation to their work with students). The results are later outlined by evidencing the manner in which academic work is encompassing of emotion work. Secondly, the findings highlighted the extent to which age, gender and years of experience influenced the propensity of emotional labour in academic staff. Thirdly, the findings narrowed down the emotion variables to focus particularly on whether the academic position was a factor in emotional labour. Finally, the chapter closes by exploring the overall perceptions of the impacts of emotional labour by providing the opinions of the research participants in that regard. These themes provide the purpose to draw conclusions from the findings about the negative consequences associated with emotional labouring which is the main aim of the current research.

Prior to delving in, it is important that the study provides a short contextual background for the research focus area; the purpose of doing so is to provide the reader with an insight of the university and, therein the participants of this research. The university is a public owned university that was established in 1904 and has a population of just over 8200 students and a staff population of 1373 as at 2018 (Rhodes University Statistics, 2019). The statistics show that there has been a gradual increase in student enrolment over the last decade by over 2000 students. This spike speaks to the effects of the corporatist agenda that envelops the South

African higher education. From the above figures, one may infer an imbalance in the staff - student ratio, as highlighted by Mohamedbhai (2014: 72). Nonetheless, in borrowing a tactic from the business ethos, the Rhodes university website boasts of having the most 'favourable academic staff to student ratio among South African universities.

#### 4.2 Emotion work and academic work

There is a strong argument that academic staff are exposed to emotionally tasking responsibilities and that the level of emotional labour is increasing at a sporadic pace (Constanti & Gibbs, 2004; Ogbonna & Harris 2004). Since this thesis has adopted the notion that academic staff are service providers to students (consumers) in the corporatized university (Gibbs, 2002; Constanti & Gibbs, 2004), it was of great significance to not only determine the nature of the service that is being provided but also examine the dimensions of this work. In doing so, the researcher sought to investigate the responsibilities and tasks that are undertaken by the academic staff and also to explore whether these responsibilities constituted emotional labouring.

Considering the premise of Hochschild (2003: 7) that stipulates that jobs which involve face to face or voice interactions with the public were the prerequisite for emotional labour, it became abundantly clear that academic work was in every sense epitomising this criteria. From a surface perspective, one can observe that the nature of work that academic staff do on a regular basis entails constant contact with students through tasks such as lecturing, tutoring and supervising. The findings of this research revealed that there was more to academic work than these three tasks; one of the academic staff that was interviewed stated that his duties included:

*“Undergraduate teaching, Postgraduate teaching, supervision of Honours, Master's and PhD theses. Counselling students that have problems and helping students. When you teach in a specific course you always have a lot of students coming to speak to you. So that's quite an important thing. I have to make time for that. I find more and more, and I don't know why it is that I have students who have psychological and emotional problems that I have to deal with. Academics are being called on to deal with psychological and emotional problems that students have which didn't used to happen as much 10 years ago”* [65 year old male associate professor].

According to Ogbonna & Harris (2004: 1186) and as seen from the previous comment from the professor and other academics like him, academic staff perform a wide range of additional

tasks and responsibilities that require varying degrees of emotional display. One must add that the aforementioned tasks are limited to the student development aspect of academic work; outside of student development, academic staff also have other responsibilities that are essential to their role which included community engagement, administrative work and sitting on various committees such as plagiarism committee, disciplinary committee, ethics committee and other academic boards within the university. Evidently, these responsibilities are unconventional from the traditional roles that only required academic staff to lecture and supervise. The reality of academic staff having to perform administrative duties and sit on numerous academic boards speaks to the observations made by Stewart (2007: 136) where the university structure and policies have inculcated a business culture, one can agree that such working structures are the makings of a corporate model thus proving that Rhodes university is not an exception. Under these circumstances, these tasks may be considered as a service that is being provided and through the lens of Hochschild (2003), emotional labour is likely to be present on this basis as can be seen from the discussions to follow.

In terms of the extent to which emotional labour is central to the academic work process of academic staff, interesting results emerged from the data. The findings indicate that a large majority of the academic staff claimed that lecturing and supervisory work were the main tasks that require emotional engagement. With particular emphasis on supervisory work, it was reported that the one on one interaction with students during this process involved assuring the student that they were on the right track and often times students opened up about their personal emotional challenges at this point.

Although most of the academic staff cited emotional engagement in their work, it was interesting to note that male academics looked at emotional engagement in terms of student's emotions and ensuring that they incited certain emotions in the students. One of the male senior lecturers pointed out that:

*"I like it when I see that students don't just get it cognitively and you can see it in their face that they are engaged in what you have taught. Part of it is focusing on individuals but it's difficult when you have 200 students in class. I try to get them excited about the class and try and make it funny and make it mean something to them"* [40 year old male senior lecturer].

The female academics on the other hand also focused on the student's emotions but admitted to being emotionally affected themselves by their work in the sense that some situations

triggered their personal emotions in a negative way, or they found themselves internalising the student's problems. One female lecturer cited feeling anxious and distressed about supervision work while another female senior lecturer also claimed to struggle dealing with some of the emotional problems that students present to her during supervision. For example, a female lecturer shared that:

*“Lecturing and supervision and basically any contact work I do with students requires me being sensitive to the student’s emotional perspective. I have to exercise a sort of emotional detachment because sometimes I can have emotional conversations that affect me as well, but I cannot make my perspective apparent because some students may not be able to speak their truth if they thought I will judge them”* [31 year old female lecturer].

From these findings it is evident that whilst performing their roles and responsibilities, emotional labour has increasingly become a part of the academic staff's work as postulated by numerous scholars (Dhanpat, 2016; Lawless, 2018; Rothman & Viljoen, 2009). Despite the reported gender differences on how their academic work involved emotional engagement, Hochschild's (1983; 2003) theory explaining how employees act a certain way to create an emotional connection with the customer holds water to these findings in the sense that both female and male academic staff feel the need to create or incite desired emotions in the students (customer) whilst lecturing or supervising, in doing so, academic staff perform emotional labour. A more detailed discussion on the existing gender differences in emotional labour is provided later in this chapter.

Apart from responsibilities that transpire within the confines of a lecture room, other distinct tasks that still relate to their student responsibilities were discussed and it was found that these tasks also require a degree of emotional engagement which incited negative emotions. Despite being aware of these emotions, academics do not feel that these were appropriate emotions to display in the workplace. The results showed that responsibilities such as lecture preparations caused academic staff negative emotions such as stress, anxiety and fear as to whether they fully grasped the material enough to disseminate it. This was true particularly for younger and less experienced academics who relayed that lecture preparations are a difficult task for them because they found it extremely stressful to find ways of making the content interesting. To illustrate this, a relatively young female senior lecturer stated that:

*“The lecturing schedule at Rhodes are intense, we are expected to lecture 4/5 days a week, public facing is a lot for me. I get good feedback from my lectures, but it takes a lot from me being in the spotlight. There is no adequate time for lecture preparation and there is no proper mentoring on how to do it and this causes me massive stress, I have to be up until late at night and wake up really early in the morning preparing for the lecture, it’s insane how many lectures we have to do. Sometimes my preparations are for nothing because the lecture room equipment fails and that adds to the immense stress. Students love my lectures but that is because I put a lot in the preparations”* [41 year old female senior lecturer].

Part of making the lectures interesting for the students involves the use of impression management techniques such as showing emotions like enthusiasm and excitement for the content, this narrative speaks to the symbolic interactionist theory in which Blunter (1994: 101) explains that individuals act in a certain way or portray themselves in a manner that may yield a desired response from the people they are interacting with. In other words, academic staff put on a show. In light of this, one male senior lecturer recognised that their job is sort of a performance on a stage for the students as they expect him to be enthusiastic and lively. Although not using the word performance, few other academics also shared how students expect them to keep them interested during lectures which adds to the pressure during preparations. Such exhibitions of emotions by academic staff support Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical perspective upon which Hochschild (1983; 2003) conceptions of emotional labour are based. Thus, these findings lead to the claim that by providing the academic service, academic staff as service providers perform emotional labour through impression management and feeling regulation.

However, it is worth noting that these results were mostly found in young academic staff, older and much more experienced academic staff find lecture preparations to be an easy task and attribute this to their experience in academia. Regarding this a professor shared that:

*“I’ve done it for long enough, I find preparation easy and I’m always prepared for my lecture. Some students enjoy my lecturers, and some don’t, but I try and make them fun and entertaining”* [60 year old male professor].

In this regard, the research findings showed that emotional labour is higher in younger academic and less experienced staff which confirms the arguments of Berry & Cassidy (2013:

11) that suggest that older and more experienced academic staff experience less emotional labour than younger academic staff.

An interesting point was made out that greatly concurred with the findings of Ogbonna & Harris (2014: 1186) with regard to every performed task requiring varying levels of emotional engagement. A lecturer's sentiments described his work experience as:

*"I do feel tired some days because of the emotional strain in moving between so many different tasks in a day like doing a seminar then heading to a meeting and then supervising a student, the shift from one task that is different from the next task is emotionally draining. I have worked in other careers where you do the same task and that was not as emotionally exhausting"* [40 year old male senior lecturer].

These sentiments epitomise Hochschild's (2003) notion of emotional labour where the expression of emotion becomes a market commodity and more so that doing this has negative consequences. The transitioning between roles within the academic sphere evidences the assertions by Goffman in 1959 (cited in Kivisto, 2011: 300) which describe the multiple roles that employees must assume as part of the organisation life. By assuming a role in the organisation, the academic staff are prompted to abide by the display rules that seem appropriate for that particular role (Hochschild, 2003: 74). Moreover, each role demands different emotional capacities for instance, supervising may require empathy for when students open up, lecturing may require enthusiasm to encourage students to be engaged and so on. Hence this study posits that by virtue of transitioning between roles, emotional labour predominates in academic staff.

Consistent with the suggestions of Lawless (2018: 86) that caring, emotion work and pastoral roles have become part of academic work, evidence was found showing that in adhering to the neoliberal agenda of the corporatized university, academic staff are expected to 'serve their customers by providing them with some form of emotional support as part of their responsibilities. There was an overwhelming response to how academic staff reported having negative emotions towards offering support to students, although they recognised that this task is not a main responsibility of theirs but more of a support role, they have seemingly taken it up as a main task in their interactions with students. Slightly more than half of the academic staff revealed that offering emotional support to students for issues to do with mental problems, emotional problems and family crisis was emotionally exhausting and affected them negatively. The research found that when students disclose deep emotional problems to the

academic staff it results in them feeling emotions such as anxiety, frustration and fear that they may offer the wrong advice which may lead to the student's self-harm. A senior lecturer described her reaction to such responsibilities:

*"I have dealt with family crisis and mental breakdowns, students come to me with these issues and I am not qualified to deal with them, not being able to adequately help weighs me down. I am often scared that I can make the situation worse if I say the wrong thing. When someone presents me with serious problems, I get serious anxiety about how to handle this information. It is challenging to be sort of counsellor without a proper framework"* [41 year old female senior lecturer].

Responsibilities such as the ones described above possibly warrants an emotional reaction from the academic staff. In what was described as an "all about me" culture, the results concurred with the findings of a similar study by Tunguz (2016: 4) who found that through the use of emotional labour, academic staff were coping with a crop of entitled students. It was revealed that under the customer-service provider dynamics, students have become more expressive of not only their academic needs but the need to be cared for which poses an unrealistic expectations of academic staff. There was a consensus among academic staff that students have become more demanding, expectant and entitled for good marks without putting in effort. The majority of the academic staff expressed anger, annoyance and dislike at how students have a 'Me-culture' where everything should be about them and how they want to feel. These findings imply that emotional labour is higher when dealing with an entitled or difficult customer, as is the case for academic staff. These findings are congruent with those of Tunguz (2016: 7).

Within the South African context, the transformation of higher education, particularly the university system is understood in various ways by academic staff. Moreover, most of the detailed transformations fell under the wide umbrella of corporatisation and marketisation of the university system and the many ways in which the university is pushing a corporatized agenda. Just as Gibbs (2002: 326) described for the European university system and Stewart (2007: 136) for South Africa, the majority of the academic staff who were interviewed in this study noted that are aware of the increased pressure from the university to gain funding or subsidies by pushing for more article and book publications from the academic staff. The other responses describing a corporatized university was that there is a new focus by management to retrieve feedback from students through student evaluation forms, creation of new managerial positions such as 'executive dean', increasing student numbers, demand for presence and more

contact hours with students in terms of more lecture hours, tutorials and consultation hours. A senior lecturer explained that:

*“I came out of a corporate job to get away from management so I understand the collegial approach and corporate life and I can see how the university is taking that corporate stance. I know there has been a move to positions like executive deans and so on, there is also pressure to get funding and increased student numbers to get through-put. I understand that the pressure has increased and will accelerate as the business pressure gets to the institution, there is something coming from CHERTL (Centre for higher education research, teaching and learning) now on course evaluation standards, it was introduced two weeks ago and that is step 1 they will catch us like that and claim it is just a guideline until they want us to show proof of how we performed which will soon become a quality system that is more corporatized”* [51 year old male senior lecturer].

Additionally, it was noted that the university is more concerned with its branding image and reputation to the public in terms of how it handles many crisis’ in the institution with what was termed as ‘window dressing’. The transformed university system was interestingly likened to a conveyer belt in that there is a tension to keep producing graduates for industrialism, ‘students in and graduates out’. Such practices are deeply rooted in the corporatist agenda to increase profits for the university, just as Kandiko (2010: 156) states, increased enrolment and graduates equals to increased external funding. Based on this analogy and described characteristics, this research established that these changes in the higher education system has redefined the nature of academic work to become more profit oriented through the publication of articles and production of graduates, auditable by students through evaluation forms, more demanding of additional duties and thus rendering academic staff as emotional labourers.

Consistent with the suggestions of Hochschild (1983; 2003), evidence was found to suggest that the management of emotions was exhibited during the execution of duties by academic staff. The majority of the interviewed academic staff were open in saying that they were generally unhappy with many of the transformations and its effects on the learning process. The responses to whether the university transformation had affected academic staff tasks and responsibilities were mostly affirmative and the findings showed that academics are mainly frustrated, unhappy, stressed and anxious about the changes. Some of the challenges brought by the transformation included intensified administrative work, increased pastoral care with no

proper referral system, intensified workload and most of all was an increased sense of entitlement which has been ignited by the notion of the student being a customer.

Academic staff, along with performing their responsibilities are now faced with the challenge of coping with these transformations. Similar to the findings of Ogbonna & Harris (2004: 1200), this study found that emotional labour is used as a coping mechanism by academic staff to mask the negative emotions catalysed by transformation of higher education. Speaking on how the transformations affected him, one professor said:

*“The lack of clarity in these transformations puts a strain on me and there are contradictory decisions that are made by management because different stakeholders want different things which shows the lack of clear leadership in the university. The increasing bureaucratisation is upsetting. The lack of funding for universities puts a huge strain on academics because now we have to deal with few staff against higher student volumes. Not only that, the number of students being enrolled is over the top, the number of applications for post grad students alone is so large that we have to turn them down because we lack resources as a university so that political and economic uncertainty is strenuous on us, no one in the university can be sure that in 5 years’ time they will still have a job” [65 year old male professor].*

Despite experiencing such emotions, the academic staff do not display their frustrations to the students. For instance, when asked if she was free to express these emotions towards the student one female lecturer responded:

*“I don’t express my personal emotions, I only allow emotions that are related to the things in the classroom. Students don’t care about my personal issue, they simply expect me to be prepared for lectures and give them answers to all their questions. There is the assumption that we are service providers so just the same way if I go to Pick n Pay and ask an employee where cooking oil is and expect them to know is the same way students ask questions in class and expect me as an expert to know/have answers” [31 year old female lecturer].*

Thus, supporting the claims made by Dhanpat (2016: 577) that for the purposes of delivering an effective learning experience (a service) for the students (the customer), academic staff (the service provider) ensure that they control their emotions and thereby perform emotional labour. Taking this into cognisance, this research holds claim that by assuming a professional role, academic staff become actors in a performance towards their audience in what can be

understood through Goffman's (1959: 11) 'cynical' performance or Hochschild's (2003: 25) 'surface acting' wherein the academic staff create an intended impression on the student for what they consider to be a benefit to them and a requirement of their job as academics. Having illuminated that academic work is demanding of emotional investment, this study found that the tasks and responsibilities performed by academic staff have an impact on their emotions.

#### 4.3 Contributing factors related to emotional labour in academic staff

In order to capture the extent to which emotional labour is prevalent among academic staff, it was essential to explore some of the key variables that pertain to understanding the multi-dimensional nature of emotional labour. This section of the research highlights the findings relating to three variables being age, gender and years of experience that have been reported to influence how emotions are managed (Bellas, 1999; Ogbonna & Harris, 2014; Walsh & Bartikowski, 2013).

The findings relating to age were unequivocal in that all the participating academic staff believed that age plays a significant role in the way they manage their emotions. The overall perception was that the older they got, the more emotionally mature they become because of their experience in different situations. The evidence agreed with Hochschild's (1983: 133) claim that older employees are more adept to controlling their emotions but opposed to her view that they perform more emotional labour and are more susceptible to emotive dissonance as hypothesised by Kruml & Geddes (2000). This prompts a concern as to what extent this mastered skill of emotional management by older academics impinges on their critical minds to challenge the status quo. It also begs the question of whether emotional labour in academia fosters an attitude of flaccidity and passiveness among academics who are entrusted to mould students into critical thinkers. This research proposes future inquiries into these concerns. Otherwise, this research found that for the reasons listed below, younger academic staff perform emotional labour;

- They are not respected as much by students because they are and look young.
- They are pressured and battle with the expectation to publish, teach, finish their PhDs and do a catalyst course to prove their abilities. They feel the need to perform and prove themselves.

- The ones who were previously in the department as students feel obligated to agree to everything asked of them even if it piles up because they feel they have been done a favour.
- They are new to the pastoral support that is expected of them and their lives are more involved in the university system.

To back these claims, a professor stated:

*“The younger academic staff in the last 10 years are mostly dealing with the turmoil of fees must fall, the anti-rape campaigns, the university shut downs and financial problems has had a huge impact on them. They take on jobs such as being a warden so their contact with students is 24/7, their lives are usually invested in the university. Also, they are under pressure to finish their PHDs”* [65 year old male professor].

A young lecturer added:

*“The university has changed in that the academics at the higher end of the hierarchy are the ones with the most agency and they create the requirements. The corporatized university now has higher standards for who to employ, older staff don’t have to have doctorates, but they expect that of younger staff”* [34 year old female lecturer].

The implications of these findings are that, coupled with the pressures that are associated with the corporatized university such as pressure to publish and additional pastoral care, and also the challenges relating to the early stages of career and reputation building, younger academic staff experience higher levels of burnout, emotional exhaustion and job stress. These findings are consistent with the conclusions of Lackritz (2004: 722) and Berry & Cassidy (2013: 31) given that older academics have been found to be more experienced in balancing their work demands than younger academics who often have limited teaching experience prior to their lecturing careers. Henceforth, age was found to be a significant determining variable for the performance of emotional labour.

Along similar lines with age is the aspect of years of experience within academia; this research took the opportunity to explore the manner in which years of experience influences one’s ability to manage their emotions as proposed by Kruml & Geddes (2000: 25). The results were explicit in that each lecturer contended that their experience or lack thereof played a huge role in how they handled certain situations that demanded emotional management. The findings showed that all the academic staff with more than 5 years of experience, whether young or old, attested to experience helping them to develop more confidence and a reduced desire to prove

themselves as much as they did when they had just begun their careers in academia. The much older academic staff admitted to having been more emotional when they had just started out but over the years learnt how to act more professional, contained, grew the ability to show a range of appropriate emotional responses and overall thick skin. The younger academic staff with significant experience also reported having learnt to manage their emotions better over the years. A lecturer with a relatively long length of service stated:

*“I think there is less at stake in terms of my personal ambition whereas when I was younger it was so stressful because I thought everything hung on how I performed my job not now with experience I am more at ease and little bothers me in that sense”*  
[59 year old male lecturer].

On the other hand, the few academic staff with less than 5 years of experience in academia confessed that they lacked the emotional intelligence for certain situations because they were still learning how to tackle certain hurdles that were new to them. It is noteworthy that even though one of the academic staff with less experience was a man slightly over 50, he too admitted that his lack of experience in academia did make it challenging to manage his emotions in certain instances that he has never experienced outside of academia. A less experienced lecturer expressed her opinion by adding:

*“Having a lack of adequate experience, I have to learn on the job on how to tackle certain hurdles, so I have to say I don’t have that privilege or emotional intelligence for certain situations like the much older guys do”* [31 year old female lecturer].

As was pre-empted in the earlier discussion regarding the negative emotions felt by less experienced academics in certain tasks such as lecture preparations, this research noted a consistency with Hochschild’s (1983: 132) assertions that emotional labour is higher in less experienced staff. The proposition is made that, in not having adequate emotional intelligence pertaining to certain academic scenarios or a memory to draw from, less experienced academics opt to express themselves in a manner that they perceive is expected from them as a professional. This coincides with Goffman’s (1959: 2) theory of impression management whereby the academics expression of emotions is influenced by their concern of how they are perceived in this way, they perform more emotional labour. It is worth noting that similar observations and conclusions were previously noted by Berry & Cassidy (2013: 31).

However, the evidence also shows that more experienced academic staff exert less emotional effort and that performing emotional labour is like second nature to them. Thus, this research

finds that more experienced academic staff regulate their emotions through another means of emotional labour which Hochschild (2003: 39) termed as ‘passive deep acting’ whereby the employee is unaware that they are acting in order to fulfil the emotional requirements of their role. In either case, it is evident that academic staff, as suggested by Ogbonna & Harris (2014: 1197), are using emotional labour as a coping mechanism to adapt to the intensified workloads spurred by the transformations occurring within the higher education system.

There was an overwhelming response from majority of the academic staff who believed that their workload had significantly increased over the recent years. Similar to those reported by Kandiko (2010: 154), the intensifications included increased student numbers which resulted in more assessment work and marking for academic staff, more students to lecture and supervise and a frequency in the lecture hours. These changes promote the consumerism culture which entails higher demands for emotional labour.

Consequently, a few of the older and more experienced academic staff disclosed that there weren’t too many academic staff with PhDs in their departments thus adding to their workload as they took on more PhD students to supervise which is a source of additional stress on their part. The implication of this would be that more experienced academics perform more emotional labour because they have increased interactions with students. This interpretation was contended by a few less experienced academic staff who argued that there is no way to effectively compare who does more work than others because the ratio of students to academic staff is uneven therefore all academic staff are affected by too much work. To describe how the work intensification affected him emotionally, one academic with few years of experience said:

*“There has been a change of staff and vacancies so there has been a high demand of how much I need to do. I have some resentment towards how much my work has intensified, the department has a system that weights in how much you have to do and there are more demands on how much work you have to do but I cannot compare lecturing undergraduates and lecturing post graduates in the same way so I have resentment on how that weighting system is not fair. The marking and supervision have incrementally gone up over the years with more responsibilities, it’s overwhelming” [44 year old senior lecturer].*

These findings validate the assertions that performance of emotional labour is crucially influenced by how much experience one has in their work role. The research supposes that one

is better suited to regulate their emotions efficiently if they have previously experienced a particular situation or have had similar encounters.

Last but not least, this research endeavoured to understand the very contentious dimension of gender within the academic paradigm in order to ascertain the role it plays in the emotional labouring of academic staff. Previous research (Bellas, 1999; Rabe & Rugunanan, 2012) has found that the levels of emotional labour found in males and females differ greatly and are skewed towards female academic staff. As will be discussed below, this research contends that emotional labour is higher in female academic staff due to the patriarchal structures of the South African higher education system and also the gendered expectations that are born from it. To explore this issue, academic staff were asked to give an opinion on whether they thought the expectations from students and the university in general differed for male and female academics.

According to the responses given, most of the academic staff feel that the expectations from students are different for female academic staff than those for male academic staff. The overall perception was that female academic staff are not seen as equals or to be as good as male academic staff and therefore have to work harder at proving themselves. The interviewed academic staff confessed that South African university system is deeply patriarchal and disadvantaging towards female academic staff. This is evident from how female academic staff are expected to be nurturing, friendlier and motherly towards students while male academic staff are expected to be detached from their emotions. The issues of patriarchy validate Rabe & Rugunanan's (2012: 557) claim that South African university system is riddled with gender disparities and not conducive for female academics. In expressing her opinion, one female lecturer responded:

*“Men are assumed to be intellectually more superior so they are questioned less and are expected to be emotionally detached so there is no expectation that a male academic would be sensitive about emotional issues affecting students. Male lecturers are expected to be less detail oriented so when there are errors in their work students assume the secretary didn't do their work properly for them. There is an expectation for female lecturers to be more nurturing, some student once said to my colleague that she would look much nicer if she smiled. Something like that would not happen to a male academic, besides what does smiling have to do with our ability to teach?” [31 year old female lecturer].*

The sentiments above suggest that the display rules for females are different from males in that for the purposes of customer satisfaction, they are expected to provide a “service with a smile”. Such expectations coincide with what Hochschild in 1983 (cited in Bellas, 1999: 103) emphasized that women are expected to exhibit facial displays of emotion, while men are not. The consequence of this is that it places greater demand for emotional labour on female academic which leads to dissonance and burnout. However, the findings showed that this was not particularly the leading cause for the negative effects of emotional labour in the participating academics. It was interesting to find that even though female academic staff were aware of the expectations of them by students, most of them do not feel the need to portray themselves in any particular way. The majority of the female academic staff have the approach that it is not their responsibility to change the perceptions of others about them but focus more on doing their job; it is for this reason that these particular findings related to the expected display of emotion did not affect the emotional labour in academics.

Instead, what stood out and posed a significant influence on emotional labour was that the gendered expectations for female academics to be nurturing and caring has fostered a preference for students to approach female academic staff with their personal problems than the male academics. As already established earlier in this chapter, pastoral work and caring has become an apparent part of the academic role under the marketized university. These roles have seemingly been reserved for female academics. By virtue of this, the contact/ interaction with students is higher for female academics. The inevitable outcome of this is that female academics perform higher levels of emotional labour in comparison to male academics which has reportedly led them to experience more emotional exhaustion, increased stress and even depression. Some of the responses from female academics exemplified this:

*“Many students have gone through traumatic experiences, so we are tasked with providing emotional support to them, and it’s mostly us as female academics that are usually approached for such things. Being sensitive to these realities is stressful for me because it affects how I teach my work and most of my coursework is sensitive material such as gender and violence. This gives me anxiety, having students come to me with problems that I do not have answers to” [31 year old female lecturer].*

Another stated:

*“It’s emotionally taxing for me when I have a student come to me with a problem that I can’t help them with, the frustration leaks into that because I have to downplay how*

*I am feeling because I don't want them to feel worse than they are feeling. The problem is that that frustration stays with you afterwards and you have to deal with it on your own that it becomes depressing” [34 year old female senior lecture].*

Nevertheless, this was not to say that male academic staff do not perform emotional labour in adherence to display and feeling rules. A few male academics had a recurring response that they tried to not be seen as sexist, homophobic, ageist or racist while the majority of males were not bothered about how they were viewed by others or what was expected of them by students or management. Supposing that all academic staff felt inclined to not appear homophobic or racist, even female academics, this research concluded that the emotional effort required in academia was seemingly more for females than males.

In view of the marketisation and corporatisation of the university, the interviewed academic staff proposed that, based on these differentials that have been discussed in this section, some groups were more affected than others. It was agreed by most that females and young academic staff were the most affected. A lecturer summed it up:

*“I think female academics are more affected because the increased workload makes it harder for them to do caring responsibilities at home as mothers. I am also concerned about how this corporatisation thrives at the cheaper labour of others and these are mostly younger academics who rarely get permanent positions and are set in contract jobs for long periods because it is cheaper for the university. I have learnt more to suppress how difficult it is to take care of my family and do this work at the same time, I am exhausted by talking and complaining about it which is something that I did a lot when I first joined academia and it feels like it will depressingly not change enough because the workload continues to grow” [44 year old female senior lecturer].*

To put it succinctly, having investigated both individual and organisation factors, the evidence revealed that age, gender and years of experience are relevant ‘emotion’ variables that affect the propensity of emotional labour in academic staff. Similar findings were reported in studies done in academia (Ogbonna & Harris, 2014; Rabe & Rugunanan, 2012).

#### 4.4 Emotional labour and academic position

One of the major aims of this study was to establish whether the academic position of an individual has an influence on their emotional labour. It was worth noting that this research

found that the previously discussed variables greatly informed the findings associated with academic position, there lies an existing interrelationship by which each variable illuminates the significance of one's position in their ability to manage their emotions.

Firstly, the literature explored in the previous chapters has shown that emotional labour is higher in employees when they frequently engage in interactions with customers (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Morris & Feldman, 1996); using this concept, this study noted that even though academic staff seemingly perform similar tasks which allow them the same contact hours with students, academics in initial positions may in fact interact longer with students. This was inferred from the observations that academics in higher positions often sit on committees that seldom engage with students and perform in more managerial roles, while the academics in initial positions take on roles such as wardenship and are more involved in committees that have direct access to students. A lecturer explained her role as:

*"I sit on five committees that involve students. On one of these committees, we speak to students and listen to their stories about their troubles and challenges and that requires being open with them at an emotional level..."* [34 year old female lecturer].

Taking this into consideration, the interactions with students under such circumstances are more likely to demand that academics take on caring roles which, as have already established, are more emotionally tasking thus leading them to perform higher levels of emotional labour. Whilst on the matter of pastoral caring roles and having already established that these tasks are usually expected from female academics, this study ironically noted a concentration of females in initial positions. This verifies the assertions that the South African higher education system maintains a skewed gender distributions of academic staff with women occupying lower ranks as highlighted Rabe & Rugunanan (2012: 557). Therefore, a significant link is established between gender and academic position in that both these variables entail a frequency with which academics will engage in roles that demand for emotion work during their interaction with students. This association between gendered expectations, pastoral care and lower ranking in academia may cause the academic staff to experience a substantial amount of emotional labour in comparison to a more senior male counterpart.

This placement of females in initial positions is perceived as one of the disadvantages of the transformations of the university system, which led one lecturer to comment:

*"There are gender transformations that are happening, but it is just new wine in old bottles, these are only superficial transformation. The discrimination against women*

*continues and the social injustices are even more now. I don't know about the full extent of marketisation of Rhodes, universities want to position themselves as global institutions in line with global norms, but we are not ready, and this has happened prematurely. Most of the changes are cosmetic but with real consequences on academics such as the power dynamics and exclusion” [54 year old female lecturer].*

The implications of this are consistent with Ogbonna and Harris' (2014: 1195) claims, academic staff in lower positions are more likely to perform higher emotional labour. The referencing of power dynamics in the sentiments above speak to the concerns of agency and hierarchy that were shared on page 11 by the 34-year-old female lecturer. The hierarchy system and new managerialism in South African universities (Ntshoe, 2004) subtly manifests itself in a manner where academics in initial positions often take on extra workloads and responsibilities that would ordinarily be done by senior academics. The reason for this is that they are hesitant to speak their opinions because they feel they have no leverage to decline or contest issues they may be unhappy with. Age is significant here as it was noted that initial positions are mostly held by younger academic staff. To emphasise this relationship, one lecturer observed that:

*“The younger academics, especially those who are a product of a particular department are more likely to experience emotional labour. They tend to feel they were done a favour and therefore they have not relinquished that role of having been a student, they feel obligated to agree with everything even when they don't and by the time they are coming into their personalities as lecturer then it is too late” [54 year old female lecturer].*

This simply implies that because of their need to prove themselves professionally and not appear confrontational or unteachable, academic staff in initial positions might perform higher levels of emotional management. The managing of their emotions for the satisfaction of senior staff or management is not only a concern for whether it impinges on the critical mind of the academic to be able to challenge such imbalances especially for those in the social sciences but is also that it is likely to result in job dissatisfaction, which according to Dhanpat (2016: 577) has increased among South African academics. This study argues that this sort of conformism to the status quo benefits the corporatist agenda in that it perpetuates the principles of bureaucratisation within the academic sphere and this may be detrimental to the academic process and the distribution of critical knowledge in general. Indeed, even Constanti & Gibbs (2004: 244) speak on how such corporatist practices are being used as a means to control academics and acknowledges that this promotes the frequent use of emotional labour.

The literature on emotional labour makes an emphasis on the significance of autonomy as a contributing factor to emotional labour. Hence, it was imperative that this research investigates the role this plays for academic staff. The findings revealed that all the academics admitted to having ample autonomy in their roles and as a result of this, the increase of emotional labour and growing stress levels were in a sense mediated. This harmonises with Pugliesi (1999: 140) who argues that the lack of autonomy leads to job stress which eventually leads to high emotional labour. One lecturer responded:

*“I have autonomy in terms of my time which is nice, I also have autonomy on my research areas which is good as well and also in teaching, generally academics have autonomy. I think if you have a sense of being autonomous and independence it does feel more meaningful and makes things more bearable and tolerable”* [44 year old male senior lecturer].

The general view was that as long as the academic staff meet their lecturing commitments, published articles and students did not complain then they are basically free to do as they please. In light of these findings, this study questions the claims by Ogbonna and Harris (2014: 1200) that academic staff experience low levels of autonomy which has prompted the increase in emotional labour; the opposite seems to be correct for this study.

Nevertheless, having autonomy does not take away from the other challenges that academics face being at the front line of emotional labour. The association made by numerous scholars (Dhanpat, 2016; Hochschild, 2003; Pugliesi, 1999) of stress as a catalyst and by product for emotional labour became apparent in the findings of this research. With the South African higher education system operating under the paradigm of corporatisation and marketisation, the role of academics has become more stressful and more emotionally tasking as already outlined in the previous discussion. It was found that the key main stressors consisted of increasing administrative duties, challenges in juggling the intensified workloads and most particularly, excessive pressure from marking caused by the high student volumes. When asked what brought her stress in her job, one lecturer responded:

*“The amount of labour I put in being physically present marking and preparing the work especially for a class that has over 300 students. I am stressed by how many scripts I have to mark in a short space of time. Also, dealing with student emotional problems is very stressful in trying to balance what I think is my obligation to the*

*students and what is expected of me by the university” [31 year old female lecturer, 2019].*

This response expresses the sense of feebleness felt by academic staff instigated by stress which often has to be masked in front of the students, thus in changing their outward appearance to appear professional and not stressed the academic staff perform emotional labour. In the same way, increased emotional labour was found to lead equally to increased stress. To illustrate this an academic shared:

*“When I first started lecturing early last year, my bowels would literally collapse because it’s like you are on a stage and performing when people have their eyes on you with a lot at stake. This made lecturing stressful on so many levels mentally and physically” [41 year old female senior lecturer].*

The stress induced by emotional labour escalated into other mental, emotional and physical problems such as migraines, emotional exhaustion, body and joint aches and irritable bowels. A female lecturer recounts:

*“I don’t deal with stress well because I burnout, I can create two days in one by sleeping for four hours then waking up to do the work. Because of this, I suffer from severe migraines where I am unable to see properly. I am unable to do my work when I get this way” [31 year old female lecture].*

The results also showed that apart from stress, there are other unfavourable consequences of emotional labour in academic staff. Most prevalent was emotional exhaustion and burnout; upholding Maslach & Jackson’s (1986: 193) claims, burnout rippled into its own dysfunctional effects such as insomnia and depression. Regarding this, a relatively young lecturer stated:

*“I’ve always had difficulties handling my emotions and I get depressed, I am on anti-depressants so that helps... I think students that come and tell me things because I am open and vulnerable. Even though I am happy to help, it’s affecting me, and I sort of wish it was much less now because I have my own stuff. I have stress from work and sometimes I lose weight and get migraines from it and most of the work is not even in my job profile or only captured as ‘support’ in the job profile” [37 year old female senior lecturer].*

Upon analysing these responses, it was observed that they were mostly prevalent in younger, less experienced female academic staff; furthermore, these academics held positions of lecturer and senior lecturer at the most. The correlation of these variables once more brought to light

that even though the interviewed academic staff did not explicitly declare that academic position is central to the emotional labour argument, the findings suggest that it may in fact be a determining factor. These findings coincide with those purported by Ogbonna and Harris (2014: 1195) in that the power structure of the university system often places females at the bottom of the hierarchy thus suggesting that their academic position underpins their emotional management

Accordingly, the above discussion presents evidence supporting the claims that not only do academic staff perform emotional labour, but that this also has a negative impact on their general wellbeing. More so, the nature of the academic profession in general requires emotional demands which have visibly contributed to increased work- related stress as well as other negative outcomes which Hochschild (2003) cautions about.

#### 4.5 Perceptions of the consequences of emotional labour

The main aim of this section is to give an overview of the findings that relate to the perceptions and opinions of emotional labour by academic staff. It seeks to explore the awareness surrounding the effects of emotional labour. In support of Hochschild's (2003: 229) assertions regarding the conscious management of feelings, majority of the interviewed academics are indeed aware that they perform emotional labour in their academic role in that they noticed that their private emotions would change according to the environment. Some of the academic staff even referred to this change as a performance to appear a certain way even if they did not feel like it on the inside. The transformation of private emotions is generally viewed as the principle of being in the workplace and that one must adapt to the environment to a more professional persona in order to facilitate the learning process; once more depicting how academic staff exchange their emotions for a successful delivery of service. Regarding this change in private emotions, one lecturer added:

*“Yes, I recognise that I have to put on a performance when I am here, sort of like being an expert at my job and sometimes I get home and I feel empty and like I have nothing left to give”* [41 year old female senior lecturer].

The feelings expressed by this lecturer are a characteristic of burnout which Maslach et al in 2001 (cited in Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2006: 440) presumed to be a consequence when educators work too hard in order to achieve the high expectations of them. The South African

higher education system has high expectations from academics, as we have already established in the previous sections, hence burnout was a likely outcome.

Along the same lines, this research found that the excessive emotional suppression led to emotional outbursts which are often harmful for the people around and usually happens at home thus affecting the home life and relationships in the private life. One male lecturer said that sometimes he finds himself taking it out on his dog, and another female lecturer said that she sometimes lashes out at her children and realises how work is affecting her personal relationships. In as much as there was a consensus regarding the usefulness and necessity of emotion management in the workplace, the academic staff still feel that there are negative consequences associated with it that impact their general wellbeing.

Although not very widespread, a few other consequences were found in individuals such as job dissatisfaction that arose from a frustrating period when the lecturer was not allowed to be an activist. Using business principles, the university is aware that certain practices such as protests may reflect poorly on the global market or disadvantage them from receiving funding if the stakeholders are unhappy. These transformations evidently pose a unique set of emotional challenges for academic staff.

Having already outlined some of the reported negative consequences of emotional labour in the discussions above, there is the aspect of alienation that requires addressing. This research has clearly outlined the manner in which emotional labour is performed by academic staff, going by Hochschild's (2003: 136) claims, the propensity of emotional management is bound to lead to alienation. With regards to whether academic staff experience feelings of estrangement caused by their academic role, the responses were evenly shared as yes and no from the respondents. While half of the academic staff claimed that they were not completely their 'true selves' in the workplace, the other half claimed that they were the same person in their private life as they were in the workplace. The argument for the latter was based on the fact that they really enjoyed their work and believed that if you really love academia then there is likely to be a consistency and seamlessness in how you move between the work and home spaces. One academic expressed her opinion as:

*“I really enjoy being an academic, it is far more the real me and I am here because it is something that I want to do and not because I need to. I think it is different for me because I am not doing it for money but more for the love it”* [65 year old female associate professor].

This viewpoint rules out the chances of alienation of self and sides more with the criticisms of Bolton and Boyd (2003: 293- 294) in that if the employee is happy and satisfied in their role then it implies that they are in control of how much emotion they invest whilst emotional labouring. Furthermore, if the basis of Marx's (1975) alienation is 'one-sided enrichment' then this argument falls short in the case where academic staff feel a sense of fulfilment in performing their role, especially if they are not doing it for the money as is the case for the academic above.

Contrastingly, the opposing half expressed that it is sometimes very difficult to distinguish their 'true selves' from their work persona's and even their family members would notice that they were being their work selves towards them, these results were particularly common in the younger academic staff with less than 10 years of experience. One of them responded:

*"Sometimes my family notice that I am being more of my lecturer self than who I really am. In this stage of my life, my job fulfils almost my whole entire understanding of myself, I don't know how to think of myself outside of my job because it orders my choices and how I spend my time. I have a hard time conceiving/ perceiving myself away from my work self because it is a very predominant part of my life"* [31 year old female lecturer].

The above feelings allude to notions of 'estrangement and alienation of self' as described by Hochschild (2003: 136). Moreover, the increase in contact hours with students and the additional workloads for academics creates a situation where they are required to work longer hours and spend more time in their role for the purposes of profit making on the part of the university institution. These dynamics coincide with what Brook (2009: 16) described to be the labour process alienation. The results also showed that even a few older academic staff felt that they were a different person at work from who they were outside their academic role. Hence, it can be concluded that there exists a strong possibility of alienation among academic staff as a cost of emotional labour and also that younger academics are more susceptible to it due to their minimal experience in emotional management within the academic sphere.

Cognizant of the importance of feeling regulation in the workplace, it was imperative to establish the type of emotions that are perceived to be inappropriate to be displayed in front of students. The responses to which feelings academic staff think are not appropriate to be displayed in front of students were quite varied from each individual. There were two particular responses that were shared by more than half of the respondents which is feelings of excessive

anger and any sexual feelings towards students. The other inappropriate emotions mentioned included impatience, contempt, disgust, visible dislike of a student, lack of empathy, showing homophobic, racist or sexist emotions, rudeness or any emotion in excess. The agreement was that at all times, academic staff must show professionalism and not be too emotional especially if it was of no benefit to the students and if harmful to others. From these findings, it may be inferred that the university management implicitly enforces display rules on academic staff through notions of professionalism; based on this, questions arise as to what constitutes professional behaviour. This study contends that because ‘being professional’ is subjective to each employee (Cruess, 2006: 184), it leaves room for ambiguity in the workplace which may create further uncertainty and negative emotions due to lack of clarity, this may be particularly triggering in the ongoing process of higher education transformation.

This study therefore, supports the claims of Ogbonna and Harris (2014: 1199) that the propensity of emotional labour in academic staff is fuelled by the organisational expectations which are hidden under professionalism. Furthermore, because of the lack of explicit feeling and display rules, this study borrows Meads (1913; 1934; 1964) symbolic interaction theory to suggest that academic staff react and respond to situations based on the meanings they attach to work which for them is characterised by ‘being professional’ at all times.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

In closing this chapter, this study suggests that the full-time academic staff in the social sciences department at Rhodes university perform high levels of emotional labour in their everyday working lives. The chapter presented empirical evidence supporting Hochschild’s (1983; 2003) claims that emotional labour is harmful to the wellbeing of the employee and on the other end beneficial to management and the customer. Based on the findings discussed, it can be argued that the transformations that have materialized within the South African higher education system have for all intents and purposes formed a customer – service provider dynamic between students and academic staff.

Even in the absence of explicitly written down or enforced display rules, the academic staff have been found to adhere to implicit rules and perceived organisational expectations of how they must conduct themselves professionally at all times in the workplace. The results showed that not only did academic staff regulate their emotions in accordance to these rules, they were also challenged with coping with the intensified workloads, increasing demands for pastoral

care and also pressures to execute exemplary work. All of these demands circled back to the broader discussion of the embracing of neoliberal tendencies by the university institution resulting in increased emotional labour in employees. Given the fact that the academic staff thought that it was necessary to manage their emotions as a means to deliver effective learning practice, this study found that much like the study done by Ogbonna & Harris (2004), academic staff equated the performance of emotional labour with professionalism. One can argue that although some aspects of emotional labour may appear to be synonymous with professionalism, this study has shown that this concept is indeed multi-dimensional and has real life implications on those that engage in it. It is therefore paramount to conduct further studies such as these to bring light to this important aspect of the service delivery sector.

What is also underlying is that for the sake of “professionalism” academic staff are accepting the existing conditions under the university marketisation and corporatisation. Instead of producing scholars who can boldly criticise this process and initiate relevant dialogue within the university institution, the reality is that they are confining themselves to “individual” discontent subsequently alienating themselves from the labour process and from their ‘self’ (Brook, 2009; Hochschild, 2003). Thus, through their passive and non-confrontational attitude academics are embracing emotional labour as professionalism and conforming to the neoliberal agenda of the university system which may pose a serious threat in the pursuit of knowledge and excellence.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the negative impact of emotional labour in full time permanent academic staff in the social sciences at Rhodes university. Specifically, the study investigated the following aspects: (1) If the tasks and responsibilities performed by academic staff affect their emotions in the workplace, (2) if the academic position held by the academic staff influences the management of emotions in the workplace, (3) if the years of experience, gender and age of the academic staff influences the management of emotions in the workplace and (4) the perceptions and opinions of academic staff in relation to the consequences of emotional labour in the workplace.

This last chapter is aimed at providing an entire synopsis of the chapters of this research and their critical arguments, it seeks to offer a summary of the findings and wider implications of the research. The concluding chapter presents a brief outline of how this thesis has contributed to the existing literature on emotional labour in academia.

### 5.2 Reflections on the thesis objectives

In chapters two and three, this study brought to light the concept of emotional labour and all the important aspects of theorising it. The conceptualisation of emotional labour in this study was based against the backdrop of Hochschild's (2003) work and also highlighted on the works of other theorists such as Mead (1913; 1934; 1964), Marx (1975) and Goffman (1959) which aided in adequately painting the picture of the key areas that develop the emotional labour concept. The chapter set out to show that in the wake of the global and South African transformations within the higher education system, academic staff are prompted to perform emotional labour for the benefit of management and their customers (students).

Chapter four empirically addressed the objectives that have been outlined above and the themes that were developed aid the understanding of the extent to which emotional labour is prevalent in academic staff in the social sciences at Rhodes and illuminating on the variables that affect this increase. The current study suggests that academic staff engage in emotional labour whilst performing in their academic roles, it argues that the nature of tasks they perform require varying levels of emotional engagement. Numerous complexities have arisen from the transformations that have been occurring within the South African higher education system;

changes such as the increased student enrolment, increasing pressure to publish, increasing workloads and administrative duties and other changes that align with the switch to a more corporatist model have posed a unique set of challenges for academic staff. These changes have radically transformed the nature of academic work to what this study proposed to be ‘emotion work’.

Regarding the first objective, it was found that under the corporatized university system, performing emotional labour is required for the successful delivery of the service to the customer (students), the nature of academic work has transformed from the conventional roles of merely lecturing and supervising to embrace more customer- centric approaches which include pastoral care and increased contact hours. This customer focused model has created a crop of entitled students and generally increased the work expectations from academic staff. Adding to this, there is a demand from management for academics to publish more articles, sit on committees, community engagement and other tasks that may attract funding from stakeholders and yield profit for the university. It is in adhering to these expectations and demands that academics admitted to emotional management. The feeling regulation in conjunction with the multiple roles that academics play in performing their responsibilities revealed that they are emotional labourers.

In order to enhance the understanding of emotional labour, the study attempts to highlight the relevant contributing factors that pertain to academic staff, in doing so, it suggested that age, gender, years of experience and academic position are significant influences for the increasing levels of emotional labour. It was found that some academics are more prone to emotional labour than others, particularly younger academics with few years of experience and female academics. The findings revealed that senior academics are least susceptible to negative consequences of emotional labour because they seemingly have more agency and have mastered the skill of regulating their emotions over the years. However, the lack of adequate emotional experience in academia and limited leverage for younger staff puts them in an unfavourable position to experience the negative consequences of emotional labour. Further, the patriarchal culture of the South African education system was found to be at the centre of the gendered expectations from students and the skewed gender distribution in academic fields of which was a source of higher emotional labour in female academic staff. It was apparent from this study that female academics were expected to adhere to display rules such as smiling more and appearing approachable, as well as feeling rules where they are expected to be more caring and nurturing than their male colleagues.

An important finding of this study is that academic position was identified to be a multi-faceted factor that was interlinked to the other variables mentioned above. The findings revealed that gender disparities could not be separated from the imbalances found in academic ranking; the dominance of older male academic staff in senior positions appeared to have ignited a sense of dissatisfaction and discontent among female and younger academics, such emotions were not found to be openly expressed but instead masked and concealed through the use of emotional labour. The existing literature on emotional labour in academia offers very scarce information regarding the influence of academic position, the findings of this study provide an impetus for further research into this critical aspect.

Regarding the final objective of this research, the current study supports the suggestions made by Hochschild (2003) that emotional labour has a negative impact on the wellbeing of the employee and observed that academics are cognizant of these consequences. The findings illustrated the implications of engaging in emotional labour as, among others, burnout, increased stress levels, job dissatisfaction, and in extreme cases alienation and estrangement. The severity of the emotional labour impact was especially concerning for the future of academia and whether the teaching effectiveness of academics is gradually being compromised and subsequently the impact this may have on the students. Interestingly, the interviewed academic staff believed that performing emotional labour is an essential part of their work life and equated it to being professional. The idea of professionalism in the work environment was an important argument to this study, in maintaining professionalism academics seemingly formed self-imposed display rules, a finding that was consistent with Ogbonna & Harris (2014: 1199). The implications of this are that academics appear to be more concerned with the successful delivery of their service and often maintain their professionalism which entails the use of emotional labour.

Finally, the study established that most academic staff are discontented with the increasing workloads and higher demands from students, management and other stakeholders under the corporate university model but masked this with emotional labour which was disguised as professionalism. As a result of this, a critical question arose whether the conformity of academic staff to the status quo was detrimental to the proper functioning of the workplace and the adequate distribution of academic and critical knowledge in general.

### 5.3 Suggestions and recommendations

The findings of this study support the notion that emotional labour exists in the daily work of academic staff, but it also noted a lack of official feeling/ display rules stipulated by the university. Given the ambiguity and subjective nature of academic staff perceptions of 'professionalism', this study proposes that along with relevant stakeholders, the university should formulate standardised emotional rules that may be modified and updated every so often for the mutual benefit of all the parties involved. This study suggests that communicating the standard display rules expected in academia may play a pivotal role in mediating certain practices such as gendered expectations and even though it may be a challenge to implement these rules, it is not impossible.

Furthermore, in light of the negative consequences that have been highlighted as a result of emotional suppression, it is important that issues pertaining to this are confronted and addressed rather than left to be dealt with in their individual capacity. Thus, it is strongly recommended that safe spaces and adequate channels are established for academic staff to voice out and express their grievances or thoughts on the issues that are affecting them emotionally in the workspace.

Lastly, as the neo-liberal agenda continues to accelerate globally and locally, it is imperative that the university is cognisant of the implications of the transformations in the higher education system. As demonstrated in the literature and research findings, the impact of these changes poses a high risk to the academic's general wellbeing, work performance and may eventually affect student performance. Hence, this study also emphasises that management take a keen interest in the wellbeing of its employees and innovate ways to cushion the effects of these changes.

### 5.4 Areas for further study

The current study addresses the gaps in literature that investigates academics as emotional labourers in South Africa. Moreover, further research is recommended to establish the link between emotional labour and professionalism, this study is of the view that it is imperative to establish the clear differences between the two concepts as they are notably being used interchangeably within the context of how one must manage their emotions in the workplace. While this study contributes to the body of knowledge specific to the social sciences department, it is clearly of great importance to extend such research to all areas of the university

system on the premise that academic work is meeting all the requirements for emotional labour regardless of one's specialisation.

The study of the impact of emotional labour on the wellbeing of the employee alone is not enough. The possibilities of how widespread these impacts may extend have been precluded in this study, however the future research into this can concentrate on bringing to the surface dimensions of emotional labour that affect the home life and society in general, this information would enrich the existing literature and move us towards a clearer understanding of the concept of emotional labour.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Semi-Structured Individual Interview Schedule

**Objective: To establish if the tasks and responsibilities performed by academic staff affect their emotions in the workplace (in relation to their work with students).**

1. Can you list the responsibilities you have as an academic with regard to student development in general?
2. Are your responsibilities with the students equivalent to the tasks you perform? Please explain if you have more/ other tasks to your essential responsibilities.
3. What do you understand by emotional engagement with your students?
4. Do your responsibilities in your work with students require your emotional engagement? Please, elaborate if yes or not.
5. Does your work involving students cause you strain or leave you emotionally drained? Give details on which work and how.
6. Does the lecture preparation cause you stress, anxiety or any other negative feelings? Do you feel you are prepared enough when you arrive to the classroom to give a lecture? How do you perceive students' responses to your lecture? Do students participate in classes or are passive? Please, elaborate
7. Outside of the lecture room, are there any student related responsibilities that cause you to have negative emotions? Which one's? why do you think this is so?
8. In your interactions with students, are you free to express your emotions or do you restrain yourself in general? Do you feel students have certain expectations of how you must perform your job? In what instances? Does this affect you? How?
9. Are you aware of the transformations in the university system? Please explain what you understand by it.
10. Has the process of university transformation affected your job tasks and responsibilities? Have you adapted to these transformations? If yes, how? If no, what has been the biggest challenge in adapting and how has this affected you?
11. Has the university transformation process affected you emotionally? Are you happy or unhappy with the changes?

12. Can you illustrate with examples some difficult experiences with students that brought you emotional stress?
13. Are there any aspects of work that you dislike/ find difficult/don't agree with? Please explain.

### **Academic Position and Emotional labour**

- **To search if the academic position held by the academic staff influences the management of emotions in the workplace.**
14. What is your academic position in your department? How long have you been in this position?
  15. How often does your academic position allow you to interact with students? Give details. Can you tell me what courses and years are you teaching? Are you engage more with undergrad or postgrad? Which one you prefer to teach and why.
  16. Do you think that there are specific rules or protocols associated with your position/role in how you are to act/ portray yourself in front of students? If yes, elaborate.
  17. Do you think your academic position influences how you manage your emotions in front of students? explain
  18. Do you feel that different academic positions in the department require different levels of emotion? Does your academic position require more or less emotional labour than your colleagues? Explain why
  19. From your point of view, which academic position do you think performs more emotional labour? Why?
  20. How much autonomy do you feel you have in your current position? Do you feel your sense of control/ or lack thereof has a bearing on your emotional labour?
  21. What do you think are the current key stressors in your role (if any)?
  22. Has your current position caused you any physical, mental or emotional pain? If yes, please explain the type of pain and what caused it. How have these feelings affected you at work?

## Academic staff variables

- **To investigate if the years of experience, gender and age of the academic staff influences the management of emotions in the workplace.**

23. May you please tell me your age?

24. How many years have you been working in academia? And, at Rhodes university?

25. Do you think that your age plays a role in how you manage your emotions in the workplace? Give details.

What do you think are the expectations associated with your age in the workplace? How does this make you feel?

26. Do your years of experience in academia affect your job and the emotions that you feel?

27. In your opinion, who do you think performs more emotional labour: older or younger academic staff? Please give reasons

28. Do you think the job expectations for male and female academics are different? If yes, Why? explain.

29. As a male / female is there a persona you feel you need to portray when working with students? How does this affect you? Give details.

30. In your experience, do you think the performance of emotional labour is higher or lower for women / men? Why? Give details.

31. Do you think that the way you manage your emotions now has changed based on your years of experience in academia? Please give details/ examples on how this is so.

32. Has your work load intensified or decreased the longer you have been in academia? How has this affected you emotionally?

33. Please describe the roles you have had to assume when interacting with students based on your age, gender and years of experience? (if any) e.g. a parental role, friend, advisor

34. Has the university transformation emotionally affected more the job of male or females? Does this affect more the younger or older academics? Do your years of

experience in academia help you to confront the university transformation? If yes or not, explain.

### **Perceptions and Opinions of Emotional labour**

- **To investigate the perceptions and opinions of academic staff in relation to the consequences of emotional labour in the workplace.**

35. Do you think emotional labour negatively affects your wellbeing in the workplace? Give details. Are your relations at work being affected because of it?
36. Do you think that your academic job affects who you are in your workplace and beyond it?
37. Are you aware that your private emotions at work and among students are transformed according to the environment?
38. Are there any feelings you think are not appropriate to be displayed in front of students by academic staff? which one's? Why?
39. From your personal experiences, what do you think are the consequences of emotional labour in the workplace? What are the consequences of emotional suppression in a time of university transformation to corporatism and marketisation?
40. How do you describe the emotional display rules towards student's expected of you by the university institution?
41. How do you deal with these rules and requirements? What coping mechanisms do you use?
42. Do you think that academic staff must manage their emotions according to the expectations of the workplace or should they openly express how they genuinely feel? In what spaces can they express their feeling? Please, give reasons for either answers
43. You have heard the questions I have asked, is there something you feel I haven't covered?

## Appendix B: Consent Form



**RHODES UNIVERSITY**

*Where leaders learn*

### **Participant Consent form (Interviews)**

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PO Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140, South Africa  
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[www.ru.ac.za](http://www.ru.ac.za)

Name of researcher: Lomadinga Mumba

Brief description of the research topic: The aim of this research is to investigate the impact of emotional labour on permanent full-time academic staff in the social science faculty at Rhodes University.

### Declaration

1. I confirm that the purpose of the research and the nature of my participation have been explained to me verbally or in writing.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason - however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
3. I understand that data collected during the study, will be used by the researcher and that my personal details gathered during this research, especially my name or identity, will be kept private.
4. I agree to be interviewed and to allow audio or video recordings and transcriptions to be made of the interview.
5. I have been informed by the researcher that the tape recordings will be erased once the report is written. OR
6. I give permission for the tape recordings to be retained after the study and for them to be utilized for academic purposes only.

**Name of Participant**

**Date**

**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Researcher**

**Date**

**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

