‘Exploring the emotional labour process experiences among black high school teachers in township schools: A case of Sarah Baartman District Municipality, Eastern Cape, South Africa’

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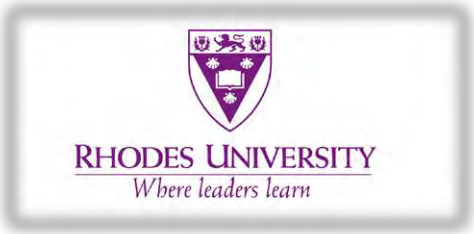

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the emotional labour experiences of township black high school teachers, building upon Arlie Hochschild's sociological concept of emotional labour. Through the emotional labour process lens, this study explores how teachers, like other service workers, perform, manage, and negotiate emotional labour within their interpersonal relationships and institutional school demands. This study focuses on the triadic relationships that shape and structure teachers' daily interactions with learners, colleagues, and the school management team. To deepen the analysis, the study incorporates key concepts from the labour process theory - including managerial control and consent, autonomy, alienation, (de)skilling, and resistance (agency) to examine how power dynamics, collegial relations, and broader school working conditions shape these triadic interactions.

While international research has increasingly examined emotional labour among teachers, few studies in South Africa have engaged critically with this phenomenon, particularly in relation to the intersections of school leadership, collegiality, and learner behaviour within township school settings. This study was conducted to contribute to this gap by exploring the emotional labour process experiences of high school teachers in township schools.

A qualitative research design underpinned by critical realism guided the study, focusing on black township high school teachers in Sarah Baartman District Municipality, Eastern Cape. Data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with eight teachers of different genders, ages (experience), and professional positions. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and thematically analysed using a qualitative critical framework aligned with the study's four subsidiary goals.

The findings reveal heightened emotional labour among teachers, shaped by three main factors: (1) teachers' gender, age (experience), and professional positions; (2) the unique socio-economic challenges of the schools and surrounding communities, which affect learners and spill over into the school context; and (3) poor working conditions, including problematic learner behaviour, lack of active parenting, school services such as counselling provided to learners, weak collegial relationships, and insufficient institutional support, all of which intensify teachers' emotional labour experiences. The study concludes with recommendations for mitigating these challenges and offers directions for future research on emotional labour within educational sociology.

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“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” Proverbs 3v5-6 (KJV)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AHoD	Acting Head of Department
ANC	African National Congress
ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BA (Hons)	Bachelor of Arts *with* Honours
B. Ed	Bachelor of Education
B. Com	Bachelor of Commerce
CAPS	Curriculum Assessments Policy Statement
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Union
CR	Critical Realism
DoE	Department of Education
EC	Eastern Cape
Employees	Workers
Emotions	Feelings
GEMS	Government Employees Medical Aid
GEPF	Government Employees Pension Fund
GNU	Government of National Unity
HoD	Head of Department
HF-REC	Humanities Faculty Research Ethics
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
L.O.	Life Orientation

LPT	Labour Process Theory
MA	Master of Arts
Med	Master of Education
Misogyny	Sexism
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teacher Organisation of South Africa
NC	Northern Cape
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PSAM	Public Accountability Monitor
Resistance	Agency
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SA	South Africa
SADTU	South African Democratic Trade Union
SBDM	Sarah Baartman District Municipality
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
USA	United States of America and or US

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Teaching is a highly demanding and stressful profession that requires physical and intellectual competence and significant emotional mastery from teachers (Benegas, 2023; Nkosi, 2020). This is particularly true in the South African education system post-1994, which has experienced a rapid increase in access to free education for all, migration to *townships*[1] and the implementation of various policies to reverse the inequalities in education established during apartheid (Botha, 2002; Pienaar & Wyk, 2006; Fourie & de-Klerk, 2024).

Although the African National Congress (ANC) and the newly formed Government of National Unity (GNU) - led democratic government attempts to address the apartheid legacies, township schools are still geographically segregated and still characterised by issues including overcrowded classrooms, inadequate infrastructure, ill-disciplined learners, unsafe working environments and the lack of institutional support, insufficient training, understaffing, amongst other issues (Amnesty International, 2020; Hendricks, 2018; Zulu *et al*., 2021). Eastern Cape (EC) township communities and schools exemplify these challenges, with teacher-to-learner ratios often exceeding the recommended 1:35 (Pillay, 2023: n.d.). Some classrooms host as many as 164 (1:164) learners, and teachers work in poorly maintained facilities (Pillay, 2023: n.d.). The province has a significant crime rate (with an index of 138 in 2018/2019), and the highest unemployment (rising to 44.6% in the Sarah Baartman District Municipality (SBDM) in 2021) (Sarah Baartman District Municipality, 2022/2023: 22). Additionally, half the population 252,000 out of 520,480 lives below the poverty line. The socio-economic instability and high crime levels contribute to school-based violence, exacerbating the poor working conditions faced by teachers in township schools and intensifying their emotional burden (Zulu *et al*., 2021; Motseke, 1998; 2005).

Teachers are exposed to various unpleasant and stressful situations and participate in complex collegial relationships in the workplace (Motseke, 2012). Despite that, teachers are still expected to serve or fulfil multiple roles: of caregivers, disciplinarians, and even social workers, as mandated by the Department of Education's Norms and Standards for Educators Act (2000), while providing support to their colleagues, and respect, and being submissive to

[1] In this study, townships are conceptualised to mean or refer to underdeveloped, segregated urban areas historically designated for native black Africans and mixed-race groups under the apartheid laws and policies (Motseke, 1998; 3005, Zulu *et al*., 2021: 209). These areas are often communities primarily comprised of black South Africans and the coloured population (Zulu *et al*., 2021: 209).

the management structures. These expectations require teachers to manage their emotional states while simultaneously responding to the needs and behaviours of learners, colleagues and the school management team (SMT). As Kalim (2022) observes, the workplace imposes emotional demands that are qualitatively different from those in the private sphere. In teaching, these demands often force teachers to suppress or transform negative emotions in favour of displays deemed professionally or institutionally acceptable (Winograd, 2003) – a phenomenon described by Hochschild (1979; 1983) as emotional labour.

As originally theorised by Hochschild (1983: 7), emotional labour is the process where workers manage and display their emotions in the public sphere of their lives - in the workplace, where this form of labour is connected to employment, thus done for a wage. While initially explored in occupations such as nursing (De Jonge *et al*., 2008), hospitality (Kerr & Brown, 2015) and call centre workers (Holman *et al*., 2008) – amongst others, the concept has gained traction in education studies, where the teacher is increasingly recognised as a service worker engaged in emotional labour within a bureaucratically controlled institution (Winograd, 2003; Doyle, 2014).

In support of this view, Yin argues that teaching clearly meets the three criteria outlined by Hochschild (1983: 147) for professions that involve or require emotional labour:

> (a) Face-to-face contact between teachers and others, especially their [learners]; (b) creation of an emotional state [i.e., joy or fear, excitement or anxiety] in their [learners] or other people around [such as their colleagues, school management, school administrators, parents]; and (c) a degree of external control over teachers' emotional labour, which usually comes in the form of cultural expectations, professional norms or in the words of Winograd (2003) 'emotional display [held about the teaching profession]. (Yin, 2015: 790)

Yin's (2015) suggestions demonstrates that teachers' emotional performances are not incidental to their roles but are integral – to their classroom management, sustaining institutional order, and fostering positive relations, interpersonal interactions between all the three primary stakeholders involved in school settings – learners, colleagues and SMT. In fact, it is arguably that teachers engage in emotional labour more often and intensively than other service workers such as retail, aviation, as the learning process itself can provoke anxiety (Tang, 2012: 59). This labour extends beyond standard working hours: South Africa, for example, teachers are officially expected to work seven (7) hours per day, five (5) days a week (Personnel Administrative Measures, 1999: n.d.). However, this is often extended through participation in extracurricular activities, weekend programmes, and holiday sessions – especially for those teaching higher grades (i.e., Grades 11 and 12) during examination periods.

Moreover, lesson preparation, marking, and administrative duties often spill over into personal time, a phenomenon exacerbated by issues such as workload, overcrowded classrooms – working conditions common in township schools.

Expanding on Hochschild's second and third criteria, scholars such as Brook (2009: 3) where he points out, school management often formalises "feeling rules", which are prescriptive norms about how emotions should be expressed and or suppressed. From this *neo-Marxist* perspective, this managerial or a degree of external control over teachers' emotional labour functions as a tool of control. It can lead to the alienation of teachers from their authentic emotional expressions, eroding a sense of autonomy and disconnecting them from both the product (education) and the process (teaching) of their labour. In this context, teachers become only curriculum delivers but also emotional labourers whose emotional expressions are subject to surveillance, regulation, and discipline.

These dynamics are intensified within the South African context, specifically within the township schools of the SBDM in the EC. Teachers operate within environments marked by structural deprivation and institutional neglect, while simultaneously being tasked with the emotional and pedagogical labour of transforming lives (i.e., learners). Yet, despite the emotional demands embedded in the profession, with international studies having sufficiently explored or paid attention to this phenomenon (Lee *et al*., 2016; Ozgen & Erdem, 2023; Yao *et al*., 2015; Kinman *et al*., 2011), few studies in South Africa (e.g., Afrika, 2022; Steinberg, 2013; 2015; Soldaat, 2019) have engaged critically with this phenomenon, particularly in relation to the intersections of school leadership, collegiality, and learner behaviour within township school settings.

This study aims to contribute to this gap by exploring high school teachers' emotional labour process experiences in township schools in the SBDM. In doing so, the study draws on Arlie Hochschild's seminal study with flight attendants in 1983 to explore how teachers manage, perform, and negotiate their emotions within the interpersonal and institutional demands of the school environment. Particular attention is given to the triadic relationships – that structure teachers' daily work, namely, their interactions with learners, colleagues, and SMT.

Furthermore, this study incorporates key concepts from Labour Process Theory (LPT) – such as managerial control, alienation, (de)skilling[2], resistance, and autonomy – to deepen the analysis of how institutional power shapes teachers' emotional experiences and strategies. Central to this inquiry is the recognition that emotional labour process has the effect of alienating teachers from their own feelings (emotions) and from the teaching process itself. As Brook (2009), writing from a neo-Marxist perspective, observes, workers are subject to managerial control throughout the course of their labour, wherein management exercises authority over the form, timing, and expression of emotional displays. These emotional expressions, once appropriated by the institution and directed towards institutional goals, customers, may (arguably so) no longer belong to the worker, thus contributing to emotional and labour alienation.

This study argues that although workers may consent to these forms of managerial control, they are not passive recipients. Rather, they actively contest, negotiate, and reinterpret the institutional expectations placed upon their emotional expressions. Often this resistance is subtly and nuanced, allowing teachers to retain a degree of agency (albeit being limited) and meaning within their work and the broader labour process.

1.1. Research goals

The **primary goal** of this study is to *investigate the emotional labour process experiences among black[3] high school teachers working in black township schools*.

To answer the primary goal, the following **subsidiary goals** are examined:

[2] The term (de)skilling, commonly used in labour studies and sociology, refers to the simultaneous processes of deskilling and upskilling. In this study, the term underscore, as Braverman 1974 (cited in Thoma, 2005) observes, that while some workers may be deskilled, others – particularly those in managerial positions – are being upskilled. These workers are increasingly expected to demonstrate managerial expertise, alongside enhanced emotional intelligence and adaptability in the performance of their roles.

[3] In this study, the term *Black* is used in its inclusive sense to collectively refer to Black African, Coloured, and Indian South Africans (Biko, 2004: 52). This conceptualization is drawn from the Bikoist tradition, which defines Blackness not merely as a racial classification, but as a socio-economic identity, class that unites all historically oppressed people of colour committed to the struggle of liberation (Biko, 2004). Within this framework, Blackness represents a shared historical (despite its variances) experience of racial oppression and a common struggle against the structural injustice. It also reflects the ongoing socio-economic hardships endured by township residents, schools, and workers – conditions that are directly or indirectly rooted in apartheid legacies and continue to shape contemporary realities of all non-whites (Kennemer & Knaus, 2019: 4).

1. To investigate if the age, gender, and position of school teachers in township high schools influence their emotional experiences and responses with learners, colleagues and school management.

2. To explore the emotional display and experiences of the township high school teachers from their own perspectives in their interactions with learners, colleagues and school management.

3. To investigate how the working conditions of high school teachers in townships (work intensification, infrastructure, safety and compensation) affect their emotional labour experiences in their interactions with learners, colleagues and school management.

4. To study how the control, consent, alienation, autonomy and resistance experienced by high school teachers in relation to management, colleagues, and learners influence emotional labour experiences.

1.2. Research method(s)

This study employed a qualitative research design informed by Critical realism (CR) and specifically used semi-structured in-depth interviews. Sutton (2015: 226), explains qualitative research as one that focuses on understanding participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences, as well as the interpretations they use to make sense of their world, which aligns well with the primary purpose of this study: to explore the emotional labour experiences of teachers in township schools. Moreover, employing in-depth interviews aligns well with this study, and this technique is often used to collect qualitative research to create a setting that allows participants sufficient time and scope to discuss their experiences related to the subject of interest.

In adopting CR as the philosophical assumption in this study, the choice is based on the understanding that teachers' emotional labour experiences and the meanings they attach to these experiences do not arise in isolation (Park & Peter, 2022; Wynn & Williams, 2012). Instead, they are shaped by working conditions, collegial relationships and management styles. Furthermore, CR was selected for this study because it acknowledges the interplay between agency and structure in shaping teachers' experiences of the emotional labour process (Fletcher, 2017; 2020: 178-179).

1.2.1. Semi-structured interviews

The research relied on semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect data, a standard method in qualitative research (Fossey *et al.*, 2002). Interviews were chosen for their ability to yield detailed, participant-specific insights (Boyce & Neale, 2006) and allow the researcher to explore teachers' emotional labour experiences in depth, which aligns more and better with the qualitative research design adopted in this study. The interview questions were developed to align with the study's four subsidiary goals, ensuring that the data collected addressed these goals comprehensively. The flexibility of the semi-structured questions allowed participants to expand on their experiences, leading to the identification of unanticipated themes during the early stages of the study, including the review of existing literature, methodological design, and interview schedule.

The interviews were conducted in person, except for two cases. One was held virtually because the participant was on maternity leave. The other interview took place on-site at a participant's school, who (as the acting principal of the school) requested to meet after school hours. In conducting the interviews, the participants were fully informed of my ability to hear, comprehend, speak IsiXhosa and write, allowing to request clarifications in their preferred language. They could respond in either English or isiXhosa, even *code-switching* (which involved using both English and Xhosa), depending on their comfort level and ability to express themselves fully. As a *native* Xhosa speaker, I translated the interviews conducted and parts where participants mixed languages into English. Each interview lasted approximately two hours and were, upon informed consent sought from the participants, audio-recorded for verbatim transcription.

1.2.2. Sampling method

The study used snowball sampling to recruit participants. Snowball sampling, often employed in qualitative research, leverages the researcher's networks and referrals to identify suitable participants to participate in the study (Parker *et al*., 2019). The recruitment process began with a student teacher who acted as a gatekeeper, facilitating contact with additional participants. This method was followed until eight participants were recruited, which was deemed sufficient (reached data saturation) for the study.

For further details on the study's sample, the relevant demographics of the participants (with pseudonyms)[4] are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

Participants pseudo name(s)	Age	Gender	Position	Entry Level	Qualification on	Subjects / Specialisation n	Grade(s)	Experience (Total)	Exp. in current school (Makhanda)	Name of the School (pseudo)	Exp. in previous school
Ms. Vuyiseka	30	Female	Teacher	Post-Level 1	B. Com & PGCE	English, Economic Management Science	Grade 8 and 9	6 years	5 years	A	1 year
Mr. Beja	30	Male	Teacher	Post-Level 1	B. Ed	IsiXhosa, Life Orientation	Grade 8 and 9	5 years	1 year	C	4 years
Mr. Rhoshee	32	Male	Teacher	Post-Level 1	B.A & B.A (Hons) Currently M.A. in African Languages	Social Sciences (History), IsiXhosa	Grade 8 and 9	5 years	5 Years	A	N/A
Mr. Yawa	48	Male	Head of Department (HOD)	Post-Level 2	B. Ed	History	Grade 10, 11 and 12	25 years	25 years	A	N/A
Mrs. Hlasa	52	Female	Acting HOD	Post-Level 1	B. Ed	Tourism	Grade 10, 11, and 12	22 years	18 years	D	4 years (Johannesburg)
Mr. Luzwathi	55	Male	SGB teacher	Post-Level 1	B. Ed	History, Geography, Mathematics	Grade 10, 11 and 12	30 years	30 years	D	N/A
Ms Tsholeka ka	35	Female	Teacher	Post-Level 1	B. Ed	Life Sciences & English	Grade 10, 11, & 12	13 years	13 years	A	N/A

[4] Assigning names – even pseudonyms – was important in this research, particularly during field work and the early stages of data familiarisation, coding and dissemination, as it helped bring participants to the and allowed a more engaged and nuanced analysis. This practice was not only essential for conducting a thematic analysis, which was the analytical approach adopted in this study, but also because the researchers' responses were, to a greater extent, deeply personal and often took the form of storytelling (although not in its strict sense), as they reflected on their work experiences and relationships with learners. Beyond this, I believe that giving *'participants'* names, even if pseudonyms used for ethical and confidentiality purposes, grants them voice and presence within the study, rather than reducing them to mere sources of information.

Mrs. Tshethe	**55**	**Female**	**Acting Principal l**	**Post-Level 3**	**B. Ed**	**Business Studies, Economics**	**Grade 10, 11, and 12**	**28 years**	**3 years**	**B**	**Other years (Western Cape, and Johannes burg)**

While the sample is not representative of all teachers in the SBDM, the participants were carefully selected for their ability to provide detailed insights into emotional labour experiences. The study included eight (8) high school teachers who have worked in township schools for the last five (5) years or more. The sample includes an equal number of male and female teachers, categorised into two age intervals of 30-35 and 46-55 years, and two teaching experience ranges (5-10 years and 11 years or more).

1.2.3. Data analysis process

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. In line with qualitative CR principles, the analysis process proceeded in three overlapping phases, where in the first instance, the process began by immersing myself in the transcripts to identify patterns or tendencies observable at the empirical level and further engaged and analysed the data collected. Secondly, in this process, a deductive yet flexible coding process was used, informed by selected theories, reviewed in this study (chapter 2) as the starting points for empirical research and to analyse the study's findings. As Saldana 2013 (cited in Fletcher, 2020: 13) cautions, overly rigid coding may lead researchers to impose preconceptions onto the data, distorting the participants' meanings of their working events and experiences. To mitigate this risk, the coding in this study remained iterative, with codes refined throughout the process and in relation to teachers' narratives. Provisional codes were adjusted as new themes and insights emerged, ensuring the analysis remained responsive to the data collected in this study.

Thirdly, in the spirit of CR *abduction* (theoretical redescription), data was reinterpreted through theoretical lenses, to connect empirical findings with broader concepts and existing literature or conversation on the emotional labour process of service workers (Fletcher, 2020: 18). The final stage of analysis was *retroduction*, which involved moving beyond surface-level descriptive responses from participants to identify deeper causal mechanisms (though not in the strict sense implied in quantitative research, for example) and contextual conditions (Fletcher, 2020: 19).

This back-and-forth engagement between data and theory allowed the researcher to transcend descriptive teachers' accounts and build more comprehensive, theoretically informed explanations of teachers' emotional labour process experiences.

1.3. Fieldwork challenges

When I began fieldwork, teachers hesitated to participate, and many sought to ensure that they would be protected throughout the study. To address this, I emphasised that their identities would remain confidential throughout the study, even in presenting data in this paper (thus, pseudonyms were used to identify participants and their schools) and ultimately secured the participation of eight teachers. Another challenge was the withdrawal of senior teachers, particularly HoDs and principals. Fieldwork was done at the time when teachers were preparing learners for trial exams – a demanding period involving intense teaching, afternoon classes for specific grades such as 11 and 12, examination invigilation, and even marking, chasing strict deadlines. As a result, some participants withdrew, while others who had already participated expressed similar concerns, particularly about the timing of the study. Thus, the small study sample size. However, as alluded to above, in most qualitative studies such as this one, sample size does not threaten the credibility of the study on its own when specific steps are taken, such as the presentation of thick description, rich data collected from participants allows the researcher to make sufficiently insights and address the research question sought to be addressed.

1.4. Trustworthiness of the study

In qualitative research, the trustworthiness of the study is fundamental, and to ensure the trustworthiness of this study, several strategies were employed, such as an audit trail, to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Carcary, 2009; Marshall, 1996: 522). An audit trail means that all the choices and decisions made throughout this study were documented and justified, from choosing participants to analytical procedures (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Carcary, 2009). An audit trail ensures the study's dependability by providing a transparent record of the research process, thereby allowing for replication and enabling the findings to be used as insights to similar contexts, such as the EC, SBDM, where this study was conducted. Additionally, the in-depth, thick, and rich qualitative data collected and presented in this study helps to mitigate the limitations associated with the sample size,

which was constrained by time (amongst other factors) – particularly the one month allocated for fieldwork within the study's overall one-year duration.

1.5. Ethical guidelines

Ethical guidelines are fundamental to any research involving human participants. Smith *et al.* (2009) further this point, arguing that the primary goal is to prevent harm to participants. Although qualitative interviews may appear relatively low risk, they can prompt participants to revisit emotionally challenging experiences, potentially causing psychological distress. Since this study asked teachers to reflect on their personal emotional experiences, which could evoke feelings of shame, trauma, or discomfort, to mitigate this and ensure that the study meets the ethical and moral standards, the researcher obtained ethical approval from the Humanities Faculty Research Ethics Committee (HF-REC) at Rhodes University prior to data collection, where all ethical considerations were thoroughly discussed and addressed (see Appendix A). This committee reviews research involving human subjects to protect participants' rights and well-being, as Appendix B shows.

1.6. Thesis structure

Chapter 1: This chapter introduces the research by outlining the context in which it is conducted. It also briefly introduces emotional labour and key concepts from LPT used in this study to explore and better understand teachers' experiences of emotional labour. This chapter also outlines, explains and justifies the research goals, design, methods and analytical procedures used in conducting this research.

Chapter 2: It focuses on the theoretical framework of emotional labour, where symbolic interactionism and dramaturgical perspectives are discussed as embedded theories within emotional labour, and further integrates the LPT within emotional labour, in particular key concepts such as control, consent, autonomy, alienation, (de)skilling and resistance (agency).

Chapter 3: The study reviews both classical and contemporary studies on emotional labour globally and within South Africa and integrates them within the emotional labour framework and the LPT. In addition, a brief contextualisation of teachers' labour has been outlined against the backdrop of post-apartheid legacies that persist in South Africa, particularly in most townships.

Chapter 4: The findings are presented and analysed, providing insights into township high-school teachers' emotional labour process experiences.

Chapter 5: The thesis concludes by summarising the research findings and offering suggestions, recommendations, and areas for future research (study limitations).

CHAPTER 2: THEORISING EMOTIONAL LABOUR AND LABOUR PROCESS

2.1. Introduction

Hochschild (1983) defines emotional labour as the strategic management of emotions to create a publicly observable display manifested through surface or deep acting. This form of labour emerges from the commodification of emotions, whereby workers are compelled to align their emotional expressions with their employers' expectations and their organisation's regulations in exchange for wages. The organisational environment and managerial strategies - particularly those involving control are strategically crafted and implemented to secure employee compliance with norms governing physical, mental and emotional labour. This often leads to the alienation of workers, while simultaneously giving rise to acts of resistance against managerial control.

This chapter embarks on a theorisation of emotional labour, drawing insights from theoretical perspectives of symbolic interactionism and dramaturgy, which were instrumental in Hochschild's development of her concept of emotional labour. Additionally, this chapter integrates concepts from the LPT, such as control, consent, autonomy, alienation, (de)skilling and resistance, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding emotional labour in the workplace.

2.2. Emotional labour conceptualised

Arlie Hochschild (1983) is acknowledged as a pioneering scholar in emotional labour. In her seminal work, "*The managed heart: Commercialisation of human feeling"*, she used the example of airline flight attendants to argue how service workers engage in what she termed 'emotional labour'. Hochschild (1983: 7) defined emotional labour as the "management of feelings to create an observable facial bodily display" of emotion that fits organisational norms performed in exchange for a wage (Hochschild, 2003: 60). In her study, she observed that airlines expect flight attendants to smile and act friendly towards customers (Hochschild, 1983, cited in Humphrey *et al*., 2015: 750-712). Hochschild (1983: 7) used the analogy of a flight attendant to explain her conceptual framework and argued that:

> "[The] flight attendant does physical labour when she pushes heavy meal carts through the aisles, and she does mental work when she prepares for and actually organises emergency landings and evacuations. But in the course of doing this physical and mental labour, she is doing something more, something I define as 'emotional labour'. This labour requires one to induce or suppress feelings in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others …".

Hochschild (1983) often used the term feeling rules, while other scholars, such as Humphrey (2015: 751), preferred display rules to describe the appropriate emotional displays and outward countenances the organisation requires from the workers in their interactions with those they serve and working within their workplaces. Wharton (2009: 153; 2022: 48) further states that any work involving interactions with others, particularly with service recipients, necessitates a certain level of emotional labour. This includes the worker's ability to interpret the emotions of others and regulate their emotional displays accordingly. Adhering to display rules, workers must assess the interaction and social context and respond with organised and socially deemed appropriate emotions. Therefore, the element of social interaction is crucial to the theorisation in this thesis, as it shapes the experiences and meanings humans attach to their environment, such as working where they interact with customers, colleagues and management (Wharton, 2009: 154).

2.2.1. Symbolic interactionist and dramaturgical perspective within emotional labour

The concept of emotional labour is deeply embodied in the framework of symbolic interactionism. Carter and Fuller (2015: 10) explain that symbolic interactionism is centred on the individual's daily experiences, interactions with others, environment, and the interpretive process they use to make sense of these interactions. This perspective becomes instrumental in this thesis, as it enables an examination of emotional labour workplace interactions governed by established behavioural norms and expectations. Consequently, individuals are perpetually engaged in the negotiation of self-perception, a process that involves distinguishing how one behaves toward oneself and others – always working out who they are, how they want to be seen, and how they feel about themselves, often in response to their social environment and relationships (Mead, 1934: 78; Blunter, 1994: 101; see also Thwala, 2021: 10; Mumba, 2020: 11). This manifestation of self assumes significance during social interactions, as emotions and feelings become attached (Goffman, 1957: 6). In this context, Erving Goffman (1959) developed the dramaturgical perspective, which conceptualises social life as a stage where individuals perform roles.

Goffman's (1959) work, "*The presentation of self in everyday life"*, offered an influential lens, influencing how Hochschild (1983) conceptualised emotional labour, particularly in her use of the terms - surface acting and deep acting. These terms describe the emotional performances required in various social contexts, echoing Goffman's (1959: 211) idea that we "act" to conform to social norms. This aligns with Hochschild's notion of "feeling rules", which dictate

how individuals manage their emotions to create impressions that meet organisational and social expectations. According to Goffman 1959 (cited in Kivisto, 2011: 300), this forms a vital part of the dramaturgical perspective, where employees engage in impression management to convey a certain image or character that the employee wants to convey and others to see. Hochschild (1983/2003), through a dramaturgical perspective, contextualised employee's interactions with customers, likening the "customer [as] the audience, the employee [as] the actor, and the work setting [as] the stage" (Grandey, 2000: 96). For Goffman (1959: 10) and Grove and Fisk (1983: 46), performance may be either cynical or sincere, wherein the former involves a fake act which the actor performs as a means to an end, while the latter entails that the actor is taken by his or her own act.

Ultimately, the end goal of this performance is to play a convincing role, whereby the individual seeks to create an impression to his or her audience using their body to instil or display certain emotions and bodily countenance (Goffman, 1959: 3-5), and this performance – the cynical and or sincere performance can also be seen through surface acting and deep acting. Indeed, throughout Hochschild's (1979; 1983; 2003) work, she has consistently argued that service workers engagement of emotional labour entails a form of performance, where the employee acts their emotions with customers and with those they work with within their workplace in accordance to display or feeling rules – rules which have become organisational and social standards that are acknowledged and established for which employees emotions must be acted or performed against (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1983; Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996). It is then, according to these displays, emotional or feelings rules, that employees perform emotional labour.

Hochschild (1983; 2003) further elaborates on the mechanisms of emotional labour or means of complying with display rules, surface acting and deep acting, highlighting how employees use these mechanisms to manage their emotions to comply with organisational display rules. The following section (2.2.2) explores these conceptual frameworks in greater depth to explore their implications, and the socio-psychological challenges associated with these mechanisms.

2.2.2. Navigating emotional labour through surface acting and deep acting

Hochschild 1983 (cited in Humphrey *et al*., 2015: 751) defines surface acting - the first means of complying with display rules - as the process where employees exhibit emotions that are not felt, thereby creating a facade of emotions that are not congruent with their internal state.

Hochschild (1983: 107) illustrates this concept with an example of a flight attendant who explained that despite experiencing anxiety during a crisis, stated: "even though I'm a very honest person, I have learned not to allow my face to mirror my alarm or fright … my voice might quiver a little during the announcements [of a crisis], but somehow I feel we could get them to believe … the best". In this way, the worker uses surface acting to project the expected emotional display, remaining calm, using both facial and outward bodily behaviour to ensure the welfare of her customers.

In contrast, deep acting requires workers to engage in cognitive processes and activities in order "to actually experience or feel the emotions that one wishes to display" (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993: 93; see also Humphrey *et al*., 2015: 751). In deep acting (Hochschild, 1983, cited in Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993: 93), workers actively suppress or evoke an emotion and a trained imagination whereby the worker uses thoughts, images and memories to generate the desired or required emotional display. While surface acting focuses on outward bodily behaviour and expressions, deep acting involves aligning one's actual feelings with the expected emotional display (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993: 93).

Furthermore, Goffman (1959) and Hochschild (2003) are critical of surface and deep acting, arguing that these emotional regulation strategies can alienate workers from their authentic selves (Hochschild, 2003: 25; Mumba, 2020: 14). Hochschild (2003: 25) suggests that deep acting, while seemingly more sincere, still entails a form of emotional commodification, where the worker internalises organisationally dictated feelings, thus alienating personal authenticity. She emphasises that emotional labour results in a one-sided enrichment where the benefits are only reaped by the organisation and experienced by customers, while costs – alienation, stress, and burnout – are borne by the worker (Hochschild, 2003; Fineman, 1993; Morris & Feldman, 1996). Some of these adverse outcomes, such stress and burnout have been consistently linked to ongoing demands of emotional management (Hochschild, 2003: 131; Mumba, 2020: 19).

However, scholars such as Ashforth and Humphrey (1983: 94; 1993: 92-93) and Morris and Feldman (1996) critiqued Hochschild's (1983) dichotomous analysis of emotions and the outcomes of emotional labour on service workers. These scholars argue that Hochschild fails to acknowledge the possibility that individuals may simultaneously experience and express genuine or the same emotions. According to these scholars, emotional regulation does not always require surface or deep acting, as workers may, in some instances, naturally feel and display the emotions expected of them without consciously modifying or suppressing their

feelings (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993: 94; Zapf, 2002: 243). Ashforth and Humphrey 1983 (cited in Mumba, 2020: 15) critique Hochschild's (1983) assumption that performing emotional labour inherently involves surface acting or deep acting. This critique led Ashforth and Humphrey to introduce a third dimension: spontaneous and genuine emotional expression (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993 cited in Humphrey *et al*., 2015: 751). This dimension recognises that service workers can display authentic and aligned emotions with organisational display rules without deliberate emotional regulation. As Ashforth and Humphrey explain, these are "natural and spontaneous emotions [that] comply with social expectations and organisation display rules such that they do not have to summon the correct emotions deliberately" (Humphrey *et al*., 2015: 751). To illustrate this, they offer the example of "a nurse who feels sympathy at the sight of an injured child has no need to act" (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993: 94), as the emotional response arises organically and is appropriate to the context.

Yet even this revision is not without contention. Hochschild (2003: 39) responds with the notion of passive concept acting, arguing that even when workers are unaware of their emotional adjustments, they may unconsciously or subconsciously align their feelings with the expectations of their roles (Mumba, 2020: 15). In this view, deep acting can occur beneath conscious awareness, thus preserving Hochschild's (2003) view that emotional labour – whether intentional or spontaneous – still risks subordinating worker authenticity to organisational control.

Despite these theoretical tensions, it is important to emphasise that workers are not passive recipients of emotional demands. Vincent (2011: 1371) reminds us of those workers still "maintain space to be themselves", thereby retaining degrees of autonomy and agency. The extraction of labour is never total or automatic. As Brook (2009) and Vincent (2011) argue, management must actively convert labour power into productive capacity, a process inherently structured by antagonism. Employers may attempt to control workers' emotional expressions to benefit the organisation and customers being served by workers, as Hochschild (1983/2003) posited, but workers also resist, negotiate, and subvert these efforts (Brook, 2009; Vincent, 2011).

The following section offers a more detailed theoretical discussion of these power dynamics, which further shape and structure the emotional labour process experienced by workers.

2.3. Situating emotional labour within labour process theory

This section of the study situates the concept of emotional labour within the analytical framework of LPT, seeking to demonstrate how workers, even in public institutions, operate in a manner akin to the private sector, where their work involves not just physical and cognitive tasks, but also the management and commodification of emotions. LPT, rooted in Marxist traditions and advanced by Braverman (1974), provides a critical lens through which to analyse the changing nature of work with an emphasis placed on the interrelated managerial control, worker consent, alienation, (de)skilling, and resistance (Brook, 2010: 3; Brook, 2009; Belanger & Thurderoz, 2010).

At its core, LPT explores how labour is organised and controlled, how workers experience their work, and how employers seek to extract maximum value from labour power. Integrating emotional labour into this framework reveals how workers' feelings are not merely incidental to work but have become an integral component of labour power, subject to managerial regimes of control and commodification (Hochschild, 1983; Vincent, 2011; Brook, 2009a, 2009b).

Plaatjies (2024: 12) notes an increasing demand for physically and emotionally skilled workers in contemporary workplaces, especially in public service domains. Emotional ability is not a supplementary asset but a core requirement, often embedded in recruitment and selection processes (Plaatjies, 2024: 12; Sturdy *et al*., 2010: 124). Managers now seek individuals predisposed to internalise organisational values and emotional displays – thus ensuring a high likelihood of compliance with institutional expectations (Sturdy *et al*., 2010: 124). This signals a shift in the forms of control from overt supervision to subtle, normative modalities that shape workers' identities and affective dispositions (Plaatjies, 2024; Brook, 2010, 2013; Sturdy *et al*., 2010). Emotional control becomes routinised and embedded in organisational cultures, formalised through contracts, codes of conduct, and professional norms (Hochschild, 1979: 551; Plaatjies, 2024: 12).

This kind of control is exemplary of normative control, where workers internalise organisational goals, behavioural expectations, and emotional display rules as their own. Consequently, even when workers feel alienated, they continue to perform such display rules due to contractual obligations and the internalised ideologies of their profession (Brook, 2013; Sturdy *et al*., 2010). Thus, managerial control, a central tenet in LPT, extends beyond the

physical coordination of tasks to encompass the emotional dimension of work, shaping not only what workers do but also how they feel.

The contemporary labour process is also marked by constant transformation as managers respond to intensified competition and evolving service expectations (Grugulis & Lloyd, 2010: 91). This leads to increased pressure to extract more value from labour-power, often through advanced control strategies such as emotional training, scripting, surveillance, and customer feedback mechanisms (Sturdy, 1998: 29; Plaatjies, 2024: 12; see also Brook, 2010; Sturdy *et al*., 2010). While these strategies can create a sense of purpose or belonging among workers, they simultaneously reinforce the asymmetry of power in the labour process. As Reid (2011: 567) observes, in the case of teaching, workers often develop a strong professional ethic through pre-service training and internalisation of norms, so overt managerial control becomes less necessary. Yet, this ethic can become a control tool, shaping how emotional labour is performed and rationalised.

Within this framework, the concept of alienation remains crucial. Drawing from Marx (1975), LPT covers four dimensions of alienation, though Hochschild focuses on two: alienation from the product and alienation from the labour process (Brook, 2009: 9). Product alienation, on the one hand, occurs when workers lose ownership and control over the outcomes of their labour – outcomes that are appropriated by the employer and used for profit (Ollman & Bertell, 1976: 144). In service work involving emotional labour, this alienation is intensified by what Brook (2009: 9) describes as a "one-sided enrichment", where clients benefit emotionally from interactions while workers bear the psychological cost.

On the other hand, labour process alienation refers to workers losing autonomy over their work and the labour process (Brook, 2009: 16). This can be further understood in two ways. Firstly, the workers have no control over the process production (Brook, 2009: 16). For Cox 1998 (cited in Brook, 2009: 16), this means that the worker has no control over "the conditions under which [they work], how work is organised, what [they] produce and the effect it has on [their] health". Secondly, Brook (2009: 16) explains that the conditions under which the workers work are hostile because employers (managers) always seek to extract more and more of the worker's labour power to achieve organisational goals. This second aspect of alienation in the context of emotional labour refers to the process where managers or organisations seek to be competitive and produce more personal service that is better than their competitors, where they hostilely press for "genuinely friendly service" (Hochschild, 1983: 125).

Such emotional demands also intersect with deskilling, another central concept in LPT. Braverman (1974) originally described deskilling as the separation of conception from execution, where management monopolises knowledge and reduces workers to executors of pre-designed tasks (Apple & Jungck, 1990: 232; see also Kesson, 2004: 54). Emotional labour, when tightly scripted and monitored, can likewise be deskilled. Workers follow predetermined emotional scripts, with little room for professional judgement, leading to a loss of autonomy and a diminished sense of self-efficacy (Apple 7 Jungck, 1990: 232).

However, LPT scholars such as Braverman 1974 (cited in Reid, 2011: 561) also recognise contradictions in managerial control. While most workers experience deskilling, some may undergo upskilling – gaining specialised competencies, decision-making roles, or influence over the labour process (Reid, 2011: 561). In education, for instance, teachers in managerial roles or positions may be involved in curriculum design, pedagogical planning, or professional development programmes and teams, thus being required to show expertise, exercise autonomy, and counteract complete alienation. This duality – of deskilling and selective upskilling – illustrates the uneven nature of labour control, where managerial strategies adapt to the needs of efficiency while managing worker motivation and consent (Reid, 2011: 567-568).

Closely tied to (de)skilling is the phenomenon of work intensification. Apple and Jungck (1990: 234) define this as the demand for more work in less time, often accompanied by reduced resources or support. Emotional labour intensifies as workers are expected to meet cognitive and instructional goals and affective demands – calming learners, managing classroom conflicts, and maintaining professional posture. This leads to emotional exhaustion, as workers prioritise speed and compliance over quality and relational depth. Over time, this intensification erodes the capacity for resistance and deepens the reliance on managerial scripts and directives (Apple & Jungck, 1990: 234-235).

However, workers are not passive. Despite the dominance of managerial control, LPT acknowledges that workers possess some form of agency and can resist subtly and overtly (Hochschild, 1983: 127; Belanger & Thurderoz, 2010: 137). Individual resistance often manifests as “misbehaviour” or “the war of smiles” – strategic compliance with emotional display rules while internally resisting their intent (Hochschild, 1983: 127; Vincent, 2011: 1376; see also Brook, 2009; Thompson & Smith, 2010: 214-215). Workers may tone down emotional intensity, fake enthusiasm, or manipulate interactions to protect their sense of self

(Vincent, 2011: 1376). Such acts of resistance are not revolutionary, but they disrupt the seamless functioning of normative control and reaffirm workers' agency.

Collective resistance, though less frequent, remains significant. As Vincent (2011: 1376) writes, "there is inevitably overlap between categories [of] individual and collective acts of resistance". Nevertheless, collective resistance occurs when "employees collectively ridicu[le] the consensual normative order that their employer prescribed" for them to follow, in display of their emotions, and performing physical work. Also, and more often, collective resistance can take the form of unionisation and collective bargaining and sometimes take this stand without involving a union or using formal forms available at their workplace (Vincent, 2011: 1377) and challenge the terms of their employment and seek improvement in their working conditions (Brook, 2009; Vincent, 2011).

2.4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explored emotional labour, its conceptualisation, and its relevance and implication within service professions such as teaching; Hochschild's seminal work on emotional labour, influenced by other theoretical approaches such as symbolic interactionist and dramaturgical perspective, has been pivotal in elucidating the phenomenon, highlighting its complexity and how workers manage their emotions to meet organisational objectives. Additionally, it has delineated the strategies employed in emotional labour, including surface acting, deep acting, and spontaneous and genuine emotional expression. Also, in this chapter, LPT is integrated to offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexities of emotional labour in service industries by highlighting the interplay between control, autonomy, consent, alienation, and resistance (agency) that characterise the relationship between employers (managers) and employees. Within the LPT framework, the concepts of (de)skilling further illuminate the uneven distribution of autonomy within the workplace, where managerial staff gain more control than other employees. At the same time, frontline or service workers experience alienation; their tasks are simplified so that even less skilled workers can perform their tasks, denoting deskilling.

In contrast, the latter denotes the need for the management to possess more skills to manage the organisation. Work intensification heightens these challenges, increasing emotional demands on workers and bringing experiences of stress and burnout, amongst other issues, while limiting their ability to engage meaningfully with learners, colleagues, and management.

Through this analysis, this study demonstrates (see Chapter 5) that emotional labour in service professions such as teaching is not merely a personal struggle, but a complex process shaped by broader institutional forces. This nuanced understanding of emotional labour within the LPT framework provides valuable insights into service industry workers' (teachers') emotional labour and structural conditions that shape their work and work experiences, setting the stage, so to speak, for the data collected in this study.

CHAPTER 3: EMOTIONAL LABOUR AND LABOUR PROCESS IN TEACHING

3.1. Introduction

Education has long been recognised as a cornerstone of human development, with its transformative potential frequently underscored in both scholarly and policy discourse. Okapala 2000 (cited in Afrika, 2022: 10) eloquently articulates this notion, asserting that "education is a process of tendering, nurturing, and nursing the individual to make him or her a fully pledged member of society to which he or she belongs". Within this context, the emotional dimension of teaching becomes particularly crucial in order for the education system to achieve this human development goal.

Teaching is not merely a technical activity involving subject knowledge and pedagogical efficiency but a profoundly emotional practice. Hargreaves powerfully captured this when he wrote:

> Good teaching is charged with [emotions, whether positive or negative]. It is not just a matter of knowing one's subject, being efficient, having the correct competencies, or learning all the right techniques. Good teachers are not just well-oiled machines, [but] emotional, passionate beings who connect with their [learners] and fulfil their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy. (Hargreaves, 1998: 835)

Teachers, therefore, constantly negotiate complex emotional exchanges with learners, colleagues, and management. These negotiations often involve emotional regulation and performance in line with institutional norms – activities that are not only psychologically taxing but also structurally embedded in the labour process of teaching. While Hochschild (1983/2003) and others have emphasised the psychological impact of emotional labour, particularly the risks of burnout and emotional dissonance, some scholars also note the double-edged sword dimension within the teaching profession. This chapter explores this duality by situating the emotional labour of teaching within broader global and South African scholarly debates, with particular attention to teachers' experiences in township public high schools.

3.2. Global perspectives on emotional labour in teaching

The foundational work of Hochschild (1983) revealed how emotional labour is central to service work, requiring workers to align their internal feelings with externally imposed feeling rules. These rules, often implicit, are shaped by institutional, cultural, and professional expectations and demand that workers display certain emotions – regardless of how they

genuinely feel. Teaching, a profession rooted in relational interaction and moral care, is deeply embedded in this affective regime.

Several studies have empirically demonstrated how emotional labour manifests in teaching. Winograd's (2003: 1652) autoethnographic self-study in the United States (US) and Kim's (2016: 38-39) study of South Korean secondary school teachers both highlight the emotionally prescriptive nature of teaching. Their studies reveal that teachers were expected to avoid extreme emotional displays – whether anger, joy, or sadness in favour of showing love and affection, passion for the subject, and even a sense of humour. While often disguised professional traits in the teaching profession, these emotional display norms can constrain certain teachers' emotional activities and potentially alienate performative demands placed on teachers (Winograd, 2003). Zembylas (2002b, 2005) further notes that when teachers fail to regulate or diverge from the established emotional display norms, they risk being perceived as unprofessional, even when their emotional responses are genuine reactions to challenging working conditions.

Kim's (2016) study further complicates the discussion by highlighting how socio-cultural shifts – such as the rise in divorce rates leading to single parenting in South Korean households, have expanded the emotional responsibilities of teachers. Beyond academic content, Kim (2016: 39) found that teachers were now expected to provide pastoral care, often compensating for familial gaps. Kim reports that teachers spend an average of 4.1 hours daily on learner counselling, indicating a significant emotional investment (Kim, 2016: 39). This added emotional burden is exacerbated by a broader societal devaluation of teachers' work, contributing to frustration, burnout, and emotional exhaustion.

To navigate these emotional demands, teachers often engage in surface acting. Kim (2016) and Winograd (2003) find that teachers routinely suppress negative emotions, such as frustration and stress, while outwardly displaying care and enthusiasm. Though functional in maintaining professional perception, this strategy exacts a psychological toll on teachers, reinforcing a cycle of emotional dissonance.

Acheson *et al*. (2016) in their study of language teachers in the U.S., similarly, found that the lack of institutional and community support – including from schools, DoE and parents – forces teachers to suppress their true emotions. This emotional suppression leads to a sense of disconnection from learners and undermines effective pedagogy. As Hargreaves (1998: 835)

powerfully argues, effective teaching is inherently emotional; it requires more than subject knowledge and technical skills – it demands emotional engagement, passion, and meaningful connection with learners. When this emotional authenticity is stifled, it creates what Acheson *et al*. (2016) and Kim (2016: 40) refer to an affective gap, which may diminish teacher well-being and educational quality.

Corroborating these findings are studies from diverse contexts: Lee *et al*. (2016) and Philipp and Schupbach (2010) in Germany, Hargreaves (2000) in Canada, and Kinman *et al*. (2011) and Naring *et al*. (2006) in the Netherlands. These studies underscore that emotional labour is a global phenomenon with similar patterns of expectation and consequence. In particular, they find that teachers predominantly rely on surface acting to meet institutional demands. While surface acting may help teachers conform to organisational norms, it is consistently associated with negative outcomes such as emotional exhaustion, stress and professional detachment.

Moreover, some scholars such as Kinman *et al*. (2011) adopt a more pessimistic view, pointing to the potentially rewarding aspects of emotional labour. Kinman *et al*. (2011), while acknowledging the burdensome nature of emotional performance, describe emotional labour as a *paradox* – a source of both stress and professional fulfilment. Teachers derive meaning from their work, particularly when learners thrive academically or emotionally. These findings resonate with Bolton's (2009) underpinnings and critique of Hochschild, which suggests that emotional labour can be a dual process – alienating yet enriching, depending on the context, profession and perceived outcomes. In Chinese contexts, Yin and Lee (2012) and Yin *et al*. (2019) found that emotional labour, although exhausting, can foster a sense of moral purpose and accomplishment, particularly when teachers witness learner progress. Thus, the performative aspects of care are sometimes internalised, resulting in deep acting that is simultaneously taxing and fulfilling.

This important, *albeit unresolved*, debate in the literature concerns the comparative emotional costs of surface acting versus deep acting. While surface acting is generally viewed as more emotionally taxing, some scholars suggest that deep acting – where one attempts to align internal feelings with professional expectations – may lead to emotional strain over time. However, this study does not seek to resolve these inconsistencies. Instead, it aims to explore the emotional labour experiences of teachers as they navigate the emotional terrain of teaching in challenging institutional and socio-economic environments in which township schools operate.

Yet, as Kinman *et al*. (2011: 850) and Brook (2009) argue, these sporadic moments of personal fulfilment do not and should be seen to mitigate the structural harms of emotional labour. The sense of meaning and fulfilment of this labouring falls short of serving as a reliable metric or be a full metric for assessing and gaining an insight into the toll of emotional labour, especially when burnout, stress, and mental health deterioration remain pervasive among teachers globally, as well as in South Africa (see section 3.3). Thus, emotional labour remains largely and deeply ambivalent even in its rewarding forms.

A further layer of complexity is the gendered nature of emotional labour. Hochschild (2003) posited that women perform disproportionately more emotional labour, a claim substantiated by Li *et al*. (2023) in their study of Chinese high school teachers. Their findings reveal how gendered stereotypes – rooted in misogyny (sexism)[5] and cultural prescription – position female teachers as naturally caring, empathetic, and nurturing. Consequently, women are socially compelled to engage in surface acting, often suppressing frustration or fatigue to conform to idealised feminine traits. While some women report deriving satisfaction from these caring roles, the study also documents high levels of emotional dissonance and burnout. These findings mirror Kinman *et al*.'s (2011) conclusions: the double-edged sword of emotional labour may yield satisfaction, but it simultaneously inflicts psychic harm.

In a related vein, Yin (2016) examined how teachers in Guangzhou, China, employed positive and negative emotional displays to manage classroom challenges. While expressions of affection and encouragement were essential to nurturing learner engagement, teachers also strategically employed anger or disappointment to maintain discipline and foster compliance (Yin, 2016: 10-16). However, the use of negative emotions – what some scholars call the 'dark side' of emotional labour (Ward & McMurray, 2015; Linstead *et al*., 2014) – remains stigmatised. Teachers who feign anger or enforce strict discipline risk being judged as harsh, unprofessional, or emotionally unstable. Despite its practical utility in classroom management, this form of emotional labour is often performed secretly, heightening feelings of shame and professional vulnerability (Ward & McMurray, 2015; Linstead *et al*., 2014).

Younger or early-career teachers may be particularly ill-equipped to navigate this emotional terrain. Brown (2011) argues that many novice teachers lack the training to regulate their

[5] Misogyny is defined as "[…] prejudice towards women" (Li *et al*., 2023: 1419).

emotions effectively, often learning through trial and error. Bahia *et al*. (2013) in Portugal and Nicholas *et al*. (2017) in Australia echo this concern, finding that early-career teachers are especially vulnerable to emotional burnout due to insufficient emotional training. Their studies show that the formation of a teacher's professional identity frequently occurs without adequate preparation for the affective demands of the role. Consequently, some teachers contemplate leaving the profession within the first five years, highlighting the urgency of embedding emotional competence training in teachers' education curricula.

While early-career teachers may face heightened vulnerability, the strain of emotional labour is not confined to the inexperienced. The absence of a conducive working environment affects all teachers. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011), in their study of Norwegian schools, argue that poor collegial relationships, limited administrative support, and a pervasive lack of trust exacerbate emotional exhaustion among teachers. These factors foster feelings of isolation and disconnection, reducing teachers' commitment and increasing the likelihood of attrition. Similar themes emerge in Rayner and Espinoza's (2016) investigation of English high school teachers, where public sector reforms have increased the emotional burden placed on teachers. They contend that managerial pressures – such as performance metrics and administrative compliance – compel teachers to engage in emotionally taxing forms of surface and deep acting while simultaneously balancing pedagogical and pastoral responsibilities. This dual demand, they note, often results in significant emotional strain.

Echoing these concerns, Park's (2017) study of Australian teachers highlights the importance of collegial support and trust in mitigating emotional stress. Park (2017: 853-854) likens the teaching experience to a performative "theatre", where teachers must constantly manage their emotions to benefit learners, colleagues, and SMT. The staffroom, ideally a space of emotional refuge, refuge away from learners or the classroom, often becomes another site of strain when gossip, discrimination, or hierarchical management styles undermine solidarity. Park (2017: 855) advocates for a bottom-up approach that enables teachers to reclaim agency by participating in decision-making processes – thereby reducing emotional strain, cultivating community and reinforcing professional dignity.

In addition to factors such as collegial relationships and gender, Chong (2009: 182) argues that much of the emotional labour literature rarely adopts an intersectional approach to emotional labour – one that incorporates race and its influence on worker emotional labour process experiences. Kalim's (2022) study of Black and White teachers in Canada confirms the role

race plays in teachers' emotional labour – in emotional labouring as well as their experiences. Although all teachers were found to be engaged in heightened levels of emotional labour more than their White colleagues, Black teachers in this study reported experiencing racism within schools and even in their staffroom conversations with colleagues (Kalim, 2022: 109-115). These findings resonate with Park's (2017) conclusion that staffrooms can become additional sites of emotional struggle, where teachers must manage and suppress their emotions rather than find relief. Beyond enduring these experiences, they were expected to suppress their anger, strong angered emotions, frustrations with prevailing white perspectives, and even in responses to the physical structures that had historically marginalised Black people in the Canadian community, as well as in schools (Kalim, 111-115).

Collectively, these studies underscore that emotional labour is not simply an individual burden but a by-product of institutional and structural factors (to name a few). Emotional exhaustion emerges not only from classroom interactions but also from systemic pressures and governance practices. These insights align with broader scholarship on the impact of managerialism in education.

In East Asian contexts, for example, Tsang and Kwong (2017) demonstrate how post-1970s educational reforms in Hong Kong introduced bureaucratic control and accountability frameworks that significantly eroded teacher autonomy. Centralised curricular mandates and administrative tasks such as reporting and proposal drafting increased workloads and undermined teachers' professional discretion or judgement. As teachers become implements rather than designers of educational content, many experienced a sense of alienation from their work. The encroachment of work into personal time via tasks such as evening marking, developing lesson plans during their leisure time, and holiday administration further blurred professional boundaries, intensifying stress and emotional dissonance for other teachers (Tsang & Kwong, 2017).

This process of alienation – where teachers become estranged from the substance of their labour – resonates with key insights from LPT. Braverman's (1974) analysis of deskilling and managerial control helps explain how externally imposed educational reforms displace teacher agency and disrupt professional identity. As Tsang and Kwong (2017) reveal, the imposition of bureaucratic goals reorients teachers' purpose away from learners' engagement toward administrative compliance. In response – because teachers are not passive workers – they

advocate, albeit within limitations, for systemic reforms to restore autonomy, reduce bureaucratic burdens, and promote emotionally sustainable working environments.

Other studies focus more explicitly on the emotional strategies teachers adopt in response to these pressures. Yao *et al*. (2015), in their examination of Chinese school contexts, found that positive workplace relationships – particularly with principals, colleagues, and learners – encouraged teachers to engage in deep acting. This form of emotional labour, where teachers internalise the emotions, they are expected to display, is often seen as more sustainable than surface acting and has been linked to reduced feelings of alienation and enhanced professional alignment. Similarly, Ng and Ng (2015), studying Malaysian public schools, emphasise that supportive and empathetic management fosters teacher motivation and emotional well-being by promoting autonomy and mutual respect.

Beyond coping strategies, a growing body of literature examines teacher resistance and collective agency. Contrary to early theoretical underpinnings of Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labour as uniformly disempowering, scholars such as Brook (2009; 2013) argue and take up one of Hochschild's concluding remarks in her work, where she detailed a discussion and evidence of workers misbehaviour, individual and collective resistance – often expressed through trade unionism. However, such resistance is not always formally organised; in some cases, it emerges informally, outside the structures of professional unions. This means that, workers in service professions – including teachers – are not passive recipients of managerial control. Instead, they (even if rarely so) organise through unions and professional associations to assert control, their voice over their labour process (Vachon & Ma, 2015). This resistance is not limited to wage disputes but extends to non-monetary concerns such as autonomy, professional respect, and job satisfaction (Vachon & Ma, 2015).

Vachon and Ma (2015), in their study of U.S., teachers' unions, reveal that teachers view autonomy as central to professional fulfilment. For unions, promoting site-specific knowledge and shared decision-making allows teachers to challenge top-down managerial prerogatives (Vachon & Ma, 2015). Earlier work by Jessup (1978) echoes this argument, demonstrating how New York teachers used unionisation to counter feelings of powerlessness in the face of unilateral policy imposition. Institutionalised autonomy in areas such as curriculum design, teaching methods, and material selection – highlighted in studies by Lee *et al*. (1991: 204) and more recently, Shonje (2016) in Tanzania, Jam (2016) in Nigeria, and Ozgen and Erdem (2023) in Turkey – has been shown to enhance both teacher effectiveness and job satisfaction.

Yet, this advocacy is not without its critics. Scholars such as Guthrey (2018) and Ordway (2019) caution that strong teacher unions may sometimes impede school management's ability to hold teachers accountable. Their studies suggest that union protections, while beneficial to teachers, can sometimes shield underperformance and affect administrative reforms, decisions to improve learner outcomes, and the education system in general (Guthrey, 2018; Ordway, 2019). These findings invite a more nuanced understanding of teacher agency – highlighting tensions between individual rights and institutional accountability – particularly the obligation to deliver quality education for learners.

Synthesising these bodies of literature reveals a shared concern with how systemic structures – managerialism, administrative demands, and policy reforms – intersect with interpersonal relations to shape teachers' emotional experiences. Whether situated in Norway, Hong Kong, Malaysia, the U.S., or in South Africa (as the following section will demonstrate), the research points to a complex interplay of support, control, alienation, and resistance. Emotional labour, then, should not be divorced from questions of power, structure, and identity in the teaching profession. This literature provides a critical foundation for exploring and better understanding how teachers navigate emotional demands within diverse institutional contexts – foregrounding the importance of supportive working environments, meaningful autonomy, and collective agency in sustaining emotional well-being and professional commitment in schooling settings.

3.3. South African perspective

Although there is a growing global recognition that teaching is a form of emotional labour, literature within the South African context – particularly in township high schools – remains relatively sparse. Importantly, any attempt to investigate and understand the emotional labour of South African teachers must consider the enduring legacies of apartheid. These legacies distinguish South Africa from many other contexts, particularly in terms of historical, cultural, infrastructural, and socio-economic challenges (amongst others) faced by teachers, learners, and their schools. These historical socio-economic factors, legacies continue to be felt and shape both educational landscape and the social conditions under which many township schools operate (Amnesty International, 2020: 37-38; Lemon, 2004; Gallo, 2020).

The apartheid-era Bantu Education Act of 1953 institutionalised racially segregated and unequal education systems, with deliberately inferior curricula and resources allocated to black township schools (Gallo, 2020: 15-16). The Act gave state authorities, particularly the then-

Minister of Bantu Education, extensive powers to prescribe inferior content for black schools, reinforcing a racial hierarchy that prioritised the subordination of black South Africans (Gallo, 2020: 16; Kennemer & Knaus, 2019: 4-5). Black schools received minimum funding compared to their white counterparts, resulting in disparities in infrastructure, resources, and staffing (McKeever, 2017: 118; Amnesty International, 2020: 37-38). These material inequalities school buildings – have persisted post-apartheid and continue to characterise many township schools, particularly in the EC (Amnesty International, 2020).

These structural disadvantages intensify the emotional demands placed on teachers, particularly Black teachers, many of whom are themselves products of the same township schools they now work in (Kennemer & Knaus, 2019). As Gallo (2020) notes, the post-apartheid expansion of access to basic education was not matched, even now – by adequate investment in infrastructure, teacher support, or learning resources. Consequently, township teachers often work in overcrowded, under-resourced classrooms, while supporting learners who face daily poverty, trauma, and violence. In Kennemer and Knaus's (2019) study in Western Cape township, teachers voiced frustration about these realities, questioning how effective learning can occur when learners at school hungry.

The study finds that Black teachers engage in care work that goes beyond pedagogy, often as an act of resistance to systemic devaluation and as a commitment to the uplifting of Black learners (Kennemer & Knaus, 2019: 12-13). Teachers employed culturally responsive strategies such as code-switching, not only to accommodate learners' linguistic needs but to create emotional and cultural resonance with lived realities. This caring work, as conceptualised in this study as emotional labour, infused into their teaching practices – is rooted in shared experiences of marginalisation and township life. By drawing from their own backgrounds and aligning themselves with learners' struggle, these teachers' model what in critical race theory (conceptual framework used in the Kennemer and Knaus, 2019 study) describes as counter-storytelling: asserting alternative, affirming narratives within a system that has positioned Black learners and teachers as inferior.

However, the same cultural and emotional proximity to learners – on the bases of location and race which places teachers and learners into marginalisation within the education system, while a source of connection, also intensifies the emotional burden teachers carry. They are expected to manage professional boundaries while providing psychosocial support to learners in the absence of school or educational psychologists (Kennemer & Knaus, 2019; Block, 2009;

Mojela & Thwala, 2014). In this way, teachers are positioned as marginalised emotional labourers – tasked with sustaining the system that is broke, even under the circumstances where teachers are not given the same respect as other workers in other sectors – such as banks, lawyers. Marginalisation, here, refers to the systemic exclusion of the black teachers from full recognition and support within the profession, despite their central role. Teachers are often viewed as extensions of their communities rather than acknowledged.

This caregiving role is not merely an informal expectation in SA but is enshrined in legal and policy frameworks. Section 28 (1)(b) of the South African Constitution affirms a child's right to appropriate care when removed from their family environment, while the principle of *in loco parentis*[6] holds teachers legally and socially accountable for learners' well-being (Soldaat, 2019: 78). According to the South African Council for Educators (SACE) Act of 2000, teachers are expected to maintain professional conduct, including the regulation of emotional expression. These legal and normative frameworks institutionalise emotional labour as a core component of teaching, requiring teachers to display empathy, professionalism and restrain – even in emotionally and physically charged or distressing situations.

Empirical studies have examined how these emotional expectations play out in South African township schools. Bhana *et al*. (2006), in their study of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) township schools, highlight how teachers – particularly women and L.O., teachers – routinely act as *de facto*[7] counsellors, attending to learners' issues such as abuse, illness, and poverty. These interactions necessitate emotional intimacy and the creation of trust, but also demand emotional regulation as teachers balance their formal teaching duties, and professional identity with unstructured caregiving roles. Some L.O., teachers viewed this emotional work as integral to their professional roles, identity, even employing strategies such as sign-reading to decode learners' non-verbal cues and offer timely support.

Building on similar themes, Macleod and du Plessis (2024) conducted a large-scale study involving L.O., teachers across forty township schools in three provinces: the Northern Cape (NC), Gauteng, including EC. Their findings reinforce those of Bhana *et al*. (2006) but also draw more explicit attention to the emotional toll that this labour exacts on teachers. Teachers

[6] *In loco parentis* is a Latin phrase which means "in the place of a parent" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).
[7] *De facto* is a Latin phrase meaning in "reality" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). In this study, it is used to indicate that, due to various social factors facing townships, teachers have effectively taken on roles traditionally associated with parents, social workers, and school psychologists in relation to their learners.

reported dealing with a list of learner traumas – ranging from domestic violence to sexual abuse, among other issues. The responsibility to handle these disclosures with sensitivity and without formal training left many teachers emotionally overwhelmed. The study identified three main themes: (1) exposure to learners' trauma, (2) the emotional preparation required to create safe and trusting classroom environments, and (3) the impact of prolonged emotional labour, including secondary trauma, burnout, and emotional detachment (Macleod & du Plessis, 2024: 5-9).

The phenomenon of secondary trauma, whereby teachers internalise emotional pain relayed by learners, is particularly concerning. As Oberg *et al*. (2023: 2) explain, this trauma is common in caregiving professions, yet few institutional safeguards exist to support service workers dealing with these effects. Some teachers in the Macleod and du Plessis (2024) study, in the absence of formal ways, and support in place – the reported coping through emotional suppression or disengagement – strategies that may help manage immediate stress but carry long-term psychological costs.

Both Bhana *et al.* (2006) and Macleod and du Plessis (2024) highlight how care (conceptualised to constitute emotional labour in this study) is intrinsic in the teaching profession. Despite the differences in their temporal and geographic scope, these studies underline two main key issues: (1) the persistent lack of institutional recognition and support for the emotional demands placed on teachers, and (2) the shortcoming in addressing or alleviating the emotional burdens that teachers routinely bear in these township schools.

While these studies call attention to the structural neglect of teachers' emotional needs, other scholars such as Afrika (2022) and Steinberg (2013) have examined how teachers themselves navigate and manage these demands within their daily school environments through the emotional labour perspective. Afrika's (2022) study of high school teachers in Thabong, a township in Welkom, provides a rich exploration of how emotional labour is mobilised in everyday school life by teachers. Her findings reveal that teachers consistently perform emotional displays – not only towards their learners, but also towards their colleagues by way of respect, withhold frustration and actively support each other. This performance is often aimed at sustaining order and care in classrooms as well as fostering collegial relationships in township schools – contexts that are often marked by adversity, including poor leadership. Afrika (2022: 39-40) echoes the findings of Hargreaves (2001) and Steinberg (2013), who similarly emphasise the importance of collegial relationships in shaping the emotional

experiences of teachers. In these studies, collegiality, built on trust, cooperation, and mutual appreciation, emerges as a key buffer against the emotional toll of teaching.

However, Afrika (2022) also highlights the double-edged sword nature of emotional labour. On one hand, teachers experience joy and fulfilment when their learners succeed or when they receive support from colleagues. On the other hand, they face deep emotional fatigue due to persistent structural challenges, such as poor remuneration and a lack of institutional recognition (Afrika, 2022: 56-57). Notably, her findings detail how teachers are often distressed by encounters with hostile parents and the emotional strain of witnessing the poverty their learners endure – experiences that, in some cases, result in teachers experiencing secondary trauma and burnout (Afrika, 2022: 60-63). She further argues that these stressors contribute to work-related stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, with some teachers requiring medical leave to recover.

These themes reinforce previous studies such as Steinberg (2013) where in his study conducted with senior phase teachers in Johannesburg found that learners' poor academic performance often evokes feelings of frustration, helplessness, and self-doubt among teachers – especially when teachers are emotionally invested in their learners' success. This finding aligns with international studies (e.g., Yin & Lee, 2019; Li *et al*., 2023), which illustrate how emotional labour is intensified by the personal and moral commitments teachers bring to their work. Teachers in Steinberg's study described their work as heart-consuming, suggesting a level of emotional intensity that, while potentially fulfilling, also leaves them vulnerable to emotional exhaustion (Steinberg, 2013).

A critical insight from Steinberg's (2013) study is the cyclic nature of emotional strain: feelings of incompetence lead to emotional exhaustion, which in turn undermines teachers' performance as well as eroding their confidence in their work. This cyclical pattern not only threatens teacher retention but also reinforces their sense of professional inadequacy. Palm's (2022) systematic analysis study with South African teachers further corroborates this point, showing how heightened emotional demands contribute significantly to teacher attrition, particularly among novice teachers lacking mentorship and institutional support (Palm, 2022: 163-164). While self-efficacy is not a solution, Palm (2022) argues that it can serve as a protective factor, enabling teachers to engage in deep acting and build emotional resilience. Accordingly, she calls for emotional labour training to be form part in teacher preparation programmes.

Steinberg (2013) also highlights how systemic failures within the education system exacerbate teachers' emotional burdens. Inadequate academic preparation of learners, especially entering the senior or secondary phase, intensifies teachers' feelings of despair and futility. Yet, moments of learner success offer a reprieve, affirming teachers' sense of purpose and professional pride. These accounts collectively illustrate the emotional ambivalence at the heart of teaching – where gratification and distress co-exist, and where relational bonds with learners are both sources of inspiration and anxiety.

This duality is further shaped by the material conditions of township schools. Reports by Amnesty International (2020), Hendricks (2022) and (Pillay, 2023) document the dilapidated state of school infrastructure in EC townships, including mud-constructed classrooms and overcrowding – with teacher-to-learner ratios often exceeding the recommended 1:35 (Pillay, 2023: n.d.). Some classrooms host as many as 164 – 1:64 (Pillay, 2023: n.d.), while in 2020 Amnesty International (2020: 44) reported 1:70, and teachers work in poorly maintained facilities (Pillay, 2023: n.d.). These conditions severely limit effective teaching and learning, compelling teachers to perform emotional restrain amidst chaos and discomfort.

Beyond infrastructure, the prevalence of school-based violence emerges as a critical factor shaping teachers' emotional labour. Ngidi (2018) and Fakude (2022) studies, focusing on KZN, reveal that teachers are often subjected to gang-related intimidation, verbal abuse, and even physical attacks from learners. These hostile environments require teachers to suppress fear, anger, and frustration – employing surface acting to de-escalate volatile situations or interactions with learners. Ndemka's (2021) study within the SBDM affirms these findings, highlighting how violent incidents consume instructional time and emotionally overwhelm teachers, sometimes leading to symptoms of psychological trauma and burnout.

The psychological toll of this violence is profound. Ncontsa and Shumba (2013) study in Buffalo City, EC, found that prolonged exposure to violent school environments correlates with PSTD, depression, and substance abuse among teachers. Some teachers even reported suicidal ideation, underscoring the depth of emotional damage incurred. These studies not only call attention to the immediate disruptions' violence causes but also to its enduring mental health consequences. Similarly, Snodgrass and Heleta (2009) in their study of township schools in Gqeberha (formerly known as Port Elizabeth) argue that the lack of practical conflict resolution training leaves teachers ill-equipped to manage such stress, further compounding their emotional burden.

Another theme that is prominent is the emotional toll of overcrowding and work intensification. Mandukwini's (2016) study in the Mount Fletcher district illustrates how excessive teacher pupil ratios and a lack of qualified staff heighten teachers' emotional workload. These conditions make it difficult for teachers to provide personalised pastoral care as these contexts offer little room for such work. This concern is echoed in Amnesty International (2020: 38-44) and Ncontsa and Shumba's (2013) findings, which show how overcrowding – compounded by frequent violent disruptions – not only undermines effective curriculum delivery but also compels teachers to work extended hours, thereby threatening their work-life balance.

The impact of these challenges is widespread teacher burnout, emotional detachment and reduced job satisfaction on their job and in general in their profession. Studies by Ngidi (2018) and Ndemka (2021) demonstrate how teachers routinely mask their true emotions – suppressing frustration and anger – to manage unruly learners and maintain order. This continuous emotional suppression fosters alienation and cynicism, even prompting some to consider exiting the profession altogether (Ndemka, 2021: 68).

An additional and often overlooked consequence of these pressures is the breakdown of collegial relationships. Jacobs (2014) and Bernstein and Batchelor (2022) observe that in the absence of institutional support in the South African schools, some teachers turn on their peers as a coping mechanism. Bernstein and Batchelor (2022) found that senior teachers, overwhelmed by the workload and systemic neglect, often resorted to bullying junior colleagues as a way of managing their own emotional distress. This internal fracturing within teaching staff further isolates teachers, reducing opportunities for the supportive collegiality highlighted by Afrika (2022) and Hargreaves (2001).

Moreover, a growing body of literature highlights the profound effects of managerial control on teachers' working conditions, autonomy, and emotional well-being. Both international, but more profound in the context of township schools in SA, where teaching takes place under considerable material and structural constraints, the labour process is increasingly shaped by top-down managerial techniques, educational system. These include the enforcement of performance standards, tightly structured curricula, and bureaucratic accountability measures. Such strategies often lead to work intensification, emotional exhaustion, and professional alienation. Yet, as theorised in chapter 2 of this study, teachers are not mere recipients of managerial dictates; they resist, negotiate, and assert their professional agency within these

systems of control, albeit it being limited. This dialectic of control and resistance forms a crucial lens through which to explore the contemporary South African teacher experience.

The studies by Bertram and Mxenge (2023) and Bertram *et al*. (2021) offer empirical grounding for this phenomenon. Conducted in KZN, their research on Life Sciences teachers reveals how curriculum standardisation – embodied in the Annual Teaching (ATP) – scripts the content, pace, and delivery of lessons, thereby narrowing the space for teacher discretion (see Annual Teaching Plans, 2023/24: n.d.). Novice teachers often found the ATP supportive, offering much-needed clarity and structure. In contrast, more experienced teachers viewed it as undermining their expertise and eroding professional autonomy (Bertram & Mxenge, 2023: 618; Bertram *et al*., 2021: 7). This divergence based on teaching experience highlights a recuring theme: managerial control may benefit early-career teachers through structure and predictability, but it simultaneously alienates those novice teachers and senior staff who feel disempowered, value autonomy and feel mistrusted in their professional judgement and expertise in teaching.

These patterns are reinforced by broader literature on teacher development. Palm (2022), Bahia *et al*. (2013), and Nicholas *et al*. (2017) similarly emphasise that mentorship and structured guidance improve job satisfaction and retention for novice teachers. However, such managerial structures must evolve with teacher experience; otherwise, they risk becoming rigid frameworks that inhibit professional growth and agency.

Moreover, the emphasis on managerialism in education – defined by Bertram and Mxenge (2023: 619) as a reliance on standardisation, performance targets, and bureaucratic monitoring – has further compounded these challenges. Managerialism often prioritises quantifiable outcomes over contextual responsiveness, ignoring the material and emotional realities that teachers face. Overcrowded classrooms, inadequate infrastructure, and resource shortages are systematically side-lined in favour of rigid curriculum implementation. As a result, teachers are judged not on their actual teaching efforts but on outcomes that are shaped by systemic inequalities beyond their control (Bertram *et al*., 2021: 7; Bertram & Mxenge, 2023: 618-619). This misalignment creates feelings of inefficacy and burnout.

Despite these constraints, teachers have not remained passive. Across the South African context, teacher unions have emerged as critical sites of resistance, advocacy, and solidarity. Literature examining union involvement provides compelling insights into how collective

organisation enables teachers to reassert their voice in the education landscape. Msila's studies (2014; 2022) in the EC, for example, offer a nuanced view of union involvement into the teaching profession and its dynamics. His 2014 study found that the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) and the National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA) held significant power in Ggreberha due to high membership rates. However, this dominance raised concerns among public accountability bodies such as Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM), which argued that unions needed to prioritise educational outcomes over protecting underperforming teachers (Msila, 2014: 263).

In a more recent study, Msila (2022) adopts a more optimistic lens, showing how unions in township schools have played an empowering role by facilitating teacher collaboration, fostering parental engagement, and enhancing institutional accountability. He found that when teachers are given a voice in school governance and receive peer-based professional support, they experience higher motivation and a greater sense of self-actualisation (Msila, 2022: 274-275). This framing positions unions not merely as defensive organisations but as proactive agents of school improvement and teacher empowerment.

Mafisa's (2017) mixed-methods research in the Tshwane South District of Gauteng complements Msila's work. Surveying 138 teachers across five high schools, including union leaders, Mafisa found that teachers often felt neglected and undervalued due to poor working conditions and limited consultation in decision-making processes. He argues for more inclusive and participatory policy-making, especially in curriculum reform and pedagogical approaches (Mafisa, 2017: 10564). His findings point to the critical need for building trust between teachers, unions and the state – an essential step toward strengthening educational systems and aligning the interests of all stakeholders.

Taken together, these studies offer a multi-layered view of teachers' labour conditions in South Africa. Managerial control, while offering some benefits for novice teachers, often comes at the cost of professional autonomy and emotional well-being, especially for experienced teachers who value independence, and trust that is proven by their years of service in the profession. Simultaneously, unions play an ambivalent but potentially transformative role. On one hand, they have been criticised for protecting inefficiency; on the other, they offer a platform for teacher voice, collective action, and system-wide reform amid the neglection of this profession, unions being one of the vehicles for teachers that they can rely on making their

heard. These tensions and possibilities highlight the ned to understand teachers not as passive implements of policy, but as active agents navigating and reshaping their work environments.

Ultimately, the reviewed literature underscores the important of contextualising teacher experiences within the historical, institutional, and political frameworks. It also calls for a reimagining of education reform – one that must value teacher expertise but supports them emotionally (both the need to manage their emotions in relations to their labour, and well-being). For researchers, these findings underscore the importance of contextualising teacher experiences within broader systemic and institutional frameworks. They offer valuable insights that can inform a range of educational decisions, and planning processes, including – but to not limited to policies that enhance teacher satisfaction and performance.

3.4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the emotional labour performed by teachers is not incidental but integral to their professional responsibilities. This labour – encompassing the regulation of their own emotions as well as those of learners, colleagues, and SMT – is essential to functioning of educational institutions. Teachers, much like other frontline service workers, engage in emotional labour not primarily for their benefit, though there are inherent, albeit limited, benefits in engaging in this labour, but in service of institutional goals. The primary beneficiaries of this labour are often the learners and the broader school community, while the emotional costs borne by teachers themselves remain less acknowledged.

This chapter has critically reviewed the literature on this phenomenon within the teaching profession, drawing on global and local studies to illustrate how emotional management has become both an expected and embedded component of teachers' work. It has demonstrated that while emotional labour may foster positive relationships and learning environments, it also generates significant strain, particularly when unsupported or unrecognised. The literature further underscores that emotional labour is unevenly experienced, shaped by factors such as teachers' age, gender, experience, working conditions, and institutional contexts.

Despite the growing international interest in the emotional dimensions of teaching, research in SA – particularly within historically disadvantaged black township high schools – remains limited. This gap calls for the need for context-specific scholarship that not only documents teachers' emotional labour but also interrogates how it is shaped by structural inequalities and systemic pressures. In contributing to this gap, this study seeks to contribute to the evolving

scholarship on emotional labour in education by exploring the experiences of teachers in the SBDM, EC. It also aims to inform contextually appropriate support mechanisms that can assist teachers in managing the emotional demands of their work more sustainably and equitably.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction:

This chapter analyses the emotional labour experiences of township high school teachers in SBDM. It focuses on how teachers navigate their interactions with learners, colleagues, and SMT (school principals, HoDs, and school or district school administrators). This chapter applies Hochschild's theoretical framework: emotional labour, Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective, and key concepts from labour process theory (LPT)—notably control, consent, autonomy, alienation, (de)skilling and resistance (Marx, 1975; Braverman, 1974; Brook, 2009).

The chapter is structured around five themes where the first theme (4.2) - titled '*teaching as an emotional practice'* is dedicated to highlighting and briefly outlining the teacher's tasks, which are inherently an emotional practice. The subsequent themes align with the study's four subsidiary goals. The second theme (4.3) examines how teachers' age, gender, and positional roles influence their emotional labour, shaping their interactions with learners, colleagues, and school management. The third theme (4.4) delves into teachers' emotional displays and consequences in these interactions, focusing on surface acting, deep acting, and genuine emotional engagement. The fourth theme (4.5) explores the impact of working conditions—including infrastructure, work intensification, wages, and safety—on teachers' emotional labour. The fifth theme (4.6) investigates how control, consent, alienation, autonomy, and resistance influence teachers' emotional experiences in the school environment. These themes underscore that teaching is a profoundly emotional profession, impacting teachers' well-being and shaping the educational environment.

4.2. Teaching as an emotional practice

It is important to argue that there is strong evidence suggesting that teaching is a service profession where emotional labour is integral to daily work (Li *et al*., 2023; Yin, 2015; Steinberg, 2013; Hargreaves, 1998; Hochschild, 1979: 551). More than many other professions, teaching demands sustained emotional engagement due to the intensive and ongoing interactions teachers have with learners (in classrooms, and even outside these spaces), colleagues and SMT. According to the Personnel Administrative Measures (1999: n.d.), teachers are officially required to work for seven hours a day, for five days a week. However, findings from this study reveal that teachers often exceed this duration, spending up to eight

hours on teaching alone. This excludes additional time spent on extracurricular duties and extra classes – typically held during exam periods or weekends – to revise content assisting learners or complete an overloaded curriculum. These extended engagements means that teachers, arguably worse than other service workers – engage in interpersonal interactions with learners. The findings in this study further reveal that the emotional intensity of teachers' labour is heightened by the unique challenges of their environments, being their schools situated in townships. Here, working conditions—including overcrowded classrooms, inadequate resources, learner indiscipline, poverty, and a lack of parental involvement, amongst other factors—exacerbate the emotional labour.

As Hochschild (1983: 7) argues, jobs that involve emotional labour generally encompass three characteristics:

- Face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with the public;
- The inducement or suppression of emotional states, whether positive or negative, in others; and
- External control over emotional expressions by the organisation and or management.

Teaching aligns with these characteristics. Although, on the surface of it, public interaction in the form of face-to-face or voice-to-voice engagement with learners can be viewed as a core element of teaching, the findings of this study reveal that emotional labour in teaching extends far beyond these traditional demands and or expectations. In outlining key responsibilities, Mr.

Luzwathi expressed:

> "As a teacher, I am not just a teacher, giving learners knowledge, but I must step in as a parent…".

Mrs. Hlasa added:

> "My primary responsibility is teaching and ensuring that learners grasp the subject content. But teaching in a township school means going beyond the curriculum. Many learners come from difficult backgrounds, so I often find myself stepping into roles that feel more like being a social worker or counsellor. Learners come to me with personal problems—sometimes severe, like cases of abuse or assault—and I must decide whether to escalate the issue to school management or the social worker".

In addition to these parental and pastoral roles, other teachers added that the scope of teachers' roles frequently includes not only academic duties but also various extracurricular responsibilities; tasks that further place teachers, learners, and colleagues, even the SMT sometimes into close contact, needing them to interact and work together. In these interactions, teachers need to perform emotional labour because these interactions are inherently charged with a range of emotions, where ultimately emotional rules and or organisational feelings are to be adhered to by teachers, thus increasing teachers' emotional labouring. Other teachers added:

> "My responsibilities revolve around both academic and extracurricular activities... In the classroom, I focus on lesson planning, teaching, assessing learners' work, and managing their behaviour" [Mr. Rhoshe, 32-year-old, 5 years of experience];
>
> "Compile reports, distribute reports to the learners' parents, compile a report on learners' pass rate… I am also involved in committees such as maintenance, sports, and Information Computer Technology (ICT)" [Ms. Vuyiseka, 30-year-old, 6 years of experience].

These accounts illustrate how teachers in township high schools perform numerous duties that require emotional regulation, encompassing both traditional pedagogy and a wide array of supplementary roles that are still essential in teaching, roles that, in nature, encompass emotional labour, thus making teaching an emotional practice.

4.3. Intersectionality of factors contributing to teachers' emotional labour experiences

Despite the wide scope of tasks performed by teachers, as outlined in the first theme (4.2) above, it was also evident, throughout their responses, that their responsibilities often aligned with expectations based on gender, age, and position. Accordingly, this study explored how variables such as gender, age, and position shape teachers' emotional labour experiences, particularly in terms of the kinds of tasks they are assigned or expected to perform, how they are perceived, and how they respond and interact with learners, colleagues, and SMT.

Against these three variables that are explored in this study, several scholars, such as Hochschild (1983, 2003) and Yin (2016, 2019), have observed that gender significantly influences emotional labour expectations, with a tendency for women to perform more nurturing or 'feminine' roles compared to men.

The findings of this study echo the above-mentioned perspective, as many participants expressed that gender deeply influenced the nature of the responsibilities they undertake and how they interact with all learners, colleagues, and SMT. For example, Ms. Vuyiseka – one of the female teachers frequently described being expected to adopt motherly roles:

> "[My learners, colleagues, and even the parents] expect you to also be a mother figure to your learners, something I have also felt, like the need to adopt a motherly role to my learners... to be a mother figure".

This expectation also shaped even task allocation and class teacher allocation within the school. Ms. Vuyiseka, during the interviews, when asked on this aspect, suggested that female teachers be assigned to Grades 8 and 9 as class teachers. To substantiate her view, she cited that these learners are still in the adolescent developmental stages, and they need nurturing figures during these challenging years, needing female teachers to address their emotional and social needs. It can be inferred that her sentiments align with Kruml and Geddes (2000: 24), who assert that women are perceived to be better in exhibiting attentiveness to the emotional cues of others, such as their learners. They view female teachers as skilled and better placed in performing this role than male colleagues. Along this notion, women are further expected to be more responsive to emotionally charged situations than men and respond to the call to manage emotions at work (Kruml & Geddes, 2000: 24). Other female teachers shared similar sentiments:

> "Being a woman has meant that I often take on a mother role with learners. Many learners confide in me about their personal issues, likely because they see me as both a mother and a friend" [Ms. Hlasa, 52-year-old, 22 years of experience];

> "Looking at learners, they like to come to me with their stories, even my colleagues. I have seen them often send learners to us when they talk about personal issues, maybe about female's issues they experience and need help about" [Ms. Tsholeka, 35-year-old, 10 years of experience].

When male teachers were asked to comment on their roles and the influence of their gender, they expressed that:

> "Yes, definitely female teachers in my school perform more emotional labour… This might be due to the stereotype that women are more empathetic and nurturing" [Mr. Bheja, 30-year-old, 5 years of experience].

> "Female teachers seem to take more on emotional labour, especially when dealing with learners and their problems …" [Mr. Luzwathi, 55-year-old, 29 years of experience].

Mr. Rhoshe attests to these differences, these gender stereotypes to be occurring in the workplace (in schools), where he remarked that

> "[I am] often expected to take on responsibilities that align with traditional gender roles, such as disciplining learners or handling physical tasks".

Mr Luzwathi's excerpts highlights the perceived differences in emotional engagement among teachers. He asserts that *"it's hard for [female teachers] to disconnect from their emotions …",* whereas *"male teachers in general are less emotionally involved …"* where he further attributed this not necessarily to inherent traits, but *"to societal expectations".* This observation aligns closely with Hochschild's (1989) conceptualisation of emotional labour as gendered labour, and socially constructed, shaped by broader societal norms and cultural expectations about what is appropriate emotional expression for men and women.

Hochschild's (1989: 182) famous assertion – that "the world turns to women for mothering …" underscores how feminine – coded emotional traits (nurturing, caring, emphasising) are not only expected of women in society but are also embedded in the structure of specifics professions, like teaching. Hochschild further argues that even when men and women occupy the same professional roles, women – as Mr. Luzwathi asserted, are expected to perform additional invisible emotional tasks, such as comforting distressed learners, mediating conflicts, or showing empathy, which are often taken for granted and constitute unpaid labour which women are mostly perform both in institutions of their work (i.e., schools) as well as in their families.

Importantly, Mr. Luzwathi's comments, as well Mr. Bheja reflects not only personal views or belief, but a broader division of emotional labour along gender lines, where in this case, this creates a dual burden for female teachers where, in additional to their traditional pedagogical duties, they must also engage in intensive emotional labour – again, often without recognition or even institutional support.

These findings resonate with the existing literature reviewed in this study. For example, Yin and Lee (2012: 63) and Li *et al*. (2023: 1419-1421) similarly found that female teachers are more likely to engage in emotionally supportive roles, often seeing themselves as maternal

figures to their learners. In contrast, male teachers were more expected to embody authority, assertiveness, and emotional restraint which also constitute another form of emotional labour.

After exploring how gender affects teachers' emotional labour, this study further explores how age a professional experience shape teachers' emotional labour practice. Hochschild (1983: 133) further posits that emotional labour is not only gendered but also influenced by an individual's experience and ability to navigate institutional feeling rules. For Hochschild 1983 (cited in Kruml & Geddes, 2009: 24), "older employees have broader emotional memories to draw from than younger employees", and this equips these older employees to better create or display necessary and appropriate emotions, that is, "to actively [engage in] deep act[ing]" and having the ability to "put on a face" when they are unable to demonstrate or stir appropriate emotions.

Also, in this study, younger teachers frequently reported difficulties with emotional labour to the extent that some reported experiencing stress and anxiety, and this was due to the fact that these young teachers did not know how to handle their tasks, particularly those that were emotionally taxing for them, and were constantly worrying about their ability to demonstrate correct emotional management. Ms. Vuyiseka, when she was asked to share how her age and experience have had an impact on her in managing emotionally taxing interactions with her learners, colleagues, and or SMT, shared that she would *"constantly [be] worrying if [she is] doing something right and enough"*, which for her also became *"stressful and causes anxiety"*.

In this case, as Kruml and Geddes (2000: 25) suggest, may not yet fully internalise workplace feeling rules and instead perform emotional labour through surface acting, which this often results to emotional exhaustion, dissonance, stress and even burnout.

The implication of age and years of experience is that these teachers felt the need to prove themselves when they felt like they were not given the same respect and recognition as their senior, older colleagues. Ms. Vuyiseka remarked that she has *"felt undermined"* by a learner and *"felt [that this was] because [she is] young",* and in response to this, she stated that she would *"work twice as hard in order to earn respect and recognition... from my learners"*.

Young teachers also felt like this even when they were working with their colleagues and SMT. For example, she further remarked on how they are treated by their senior colleagues and SMT during staff meetings:

> "Our voice and input during staff meetings are not taken as seriously as those of older teachers... We even feel like we are not supposed to be in these meetings, so we keep quiet as young teachers because it seems our input is not needed".

The pressure on young teachers is often supplemented by other additional responsibilities. Another teacher, Mr. Rhoshe, shared how his age and gender played a role in task allocation:

> "As a younger teacher, I often find that additional tasks are assigned to me, perhaps because I'm perceived as having more energy or being more adaptable. This can be an opportunity for growth but also a source of pressure. My gender also plays a role—being male, I'm often expected to take on responsibilities that align with traditional gender roles, such as disciplining students or handling physical tasks. This makes me feel like I'm being taken advantage of, expected to fulfil roles that go beyond my job description".

The additional tasks assigned to younger teachers often reflect and or stem from assumptions about their physical and emotional resilience, relatability with learners. These assumptions often lead to frustrations among young teachers who perceive tasks allocation as unfair and experience increased workload. These frustrations are exacerbated when they must juggle between their core pedagogical duties alongside extra duties. These challenges align with findings by Bahia *et al*. (2013) and Nicholas *et al*. (2017), who argue that younger teachers frequently struggle in their early careers to integrate the multiple roles expected of them within their schools.

However, this study's findings reveals that the challenges face by younger teachers are not only due to lack of experience. Rather, they are also structural challenges – specifically, the disproportionate expectations placed on them to assume multiple roles compared to their seniors, more experienced colleagues, often with lack, if any form of institutional support, mentorship by their seniors. These unequal and unfair expectations contribute to emotional strain and hinder their capacity to manage emotionally demanding situations. Therefore, the dynamic between novice and veteran teachers, in this study it is argued that must be considered when evaluating teachers' emotional labour and their ability to manage such demands.

In their responses, all teachers – particularly younger ones – emphasised the need for the following:

- Increased departmental support;
- Workshops and professional development programs to help teachers develop emotional regulation skills;
- Strong internal and collegial relationships to foster a supportive work environment; and
- Psychological services for learners to address emotional issues that often affect teachers.

Teachers stressed the importance of these services i.e., psychological counselling – not just for learners but also for teachers – to prevent cycles of stress and trauma. Macleod and du Plessis (2024: 8-9) similarly found that teachers often experience secondary trauma after being exposed to learners' distressing experiences or offering them emotional support in close interactive settings.

To manage these experiences, such as avoiding experiencing secondary trauma, some young teachers expressed that:

> "Over the past years, I have gained the ability to let certain things go and avoid conflicts at work, especially when dealing with management" [Ms. Vuyiseka, 30-year-old, 6 years of experience].

> "I have learnt to defuse situations, shut down misbehaving learners, and selectively engage in conflicts, which has reduced my stress" [Mr. Bheja, 30-year-old, 5 years of experience].

Although these strategies suggest emotional management, they also reflect a tendency among young teachers to withdraw from challenging interpersonal engagement with learners, colleagues and SMT. Macleod and du Plessis (2024: 9) found that emotional detachment can result in emotional dissonance – a psychological strain that arises when outward emotional expressions conflict with internal feelings.

However, not all teachers used this approach. Some like Mr. Rhoshe, rather than *"diffus[ing] situations … avoiding some situations"*, implemented a classroom *"constitution"*, *"fostering a respectful environment"* that mitigated *"disciplinary issues constructively"*. This approach not only promotes healthier teacher-learner interactions but also mitigates emotional dissonance, which is known to negatively impact teacher well-being (Li *et al*., 2023: 1420).

Also, Mr. Rhoshe emphasise the value of delegating complex issues to more experienced older colleagues, a practice supported by findings from Macleod and du Plessis (2024), Bahia *et al*. (2013), Nicholas *et al*. (2017), Palm (2022), and Mofokeng (2023). These studies underscore the value of mentorship, collegial support, and teamwork in helping novice teachers manage emotional challenges.

In contrast to younger teachers, experienced teachers demonstrated that the accumulated years of service contributed significantly to their ability to navigate emotional labour experiences, tasks, or challenges with greater confidence. Mr. Yawa explained:

> "My experience has trained me to remain calm and use emotional intelligence when dealing with certain cases in the school. I draw from previous experiences, particularly methods and decisions I have used to handle similar cases".

Similarly, Mrs. Tshethe shared:

> "My diverse teaching background across provinces has equipped me to handle various challenges calmly and assertively. Having faced severe issues like drugs and gangsterism in the Western Cape, I feel prepared to manage similar but less intense problems at her current school. My extensive experience has built me emotional resilience, allowing me to address challenges without being overwhelmed, approach situations with perspective, and handle the job's emotional demands with ease".

These accounts above show how experience and seniority influence how teachers manage emotional labour. While such exposure can be challenging, it also equips teachers to better regulate their emotions, demonstrating mastery of emotional labour through reflective practice and learned strategies over the years working as a teacher.

In sum, while on the one hand, young teachers often face heightened emotional challenges due to perceived inexperience and lack of respect, on the other hand, senior teachers leverage their experience to manage emotional demands more effectively, benefiting from increased strategies and established authority. This research suggests that a supportive environment, mentorship, and equitable task distribution are essential to helping young teachers navigate emotional labour successfully.

Finally, the third variable – teachers' professional position is critical in examining emotional labour among township high school teachers, especially in roles associated with seniority such as HoD, deputy principal, or principal. These leadership roles in educational settings carry unique emotional labour requirements, as leaders influence not only organisational norms but also the emotional tone of their schools (Humphrey *et al*., 2016: 8). This means that one must possess an awareness and understanding of emotions (as they occur), the ability to manage one's emotions, and the ability to express emotions appropriately, given the context, are regarded as critical to effective school leadership. Humphrey *et al*. (2016: 8) further note that leaders and followers alike in schools face emotionally challenging situations; leaders such as principals, HoDs, and teachers operate within enclosed classroom environments often filled with emotionally charged interactions.

While emotional labour affects all teachers, the demands vary significantly based on position. In this study, there are two identified primary dynamics regarding positional influence on emotional labour:

- Leaders perform more emotional labour due to their interactions with a broader array of learners, colleagues, and responsibilities. They are expected to lead by example and meet higher emotional and professional standards that add layers to their emotional labour burden.
- Leadership styles influence junior teachers' emotional labour experiences, either buffering stress or exacerbating it.

This is also argued by Humphrey *et al*. (2016: 8) that effective leadership requires emotional regulation that is at a higher level, where they are expected to balance authority with empathy, and ensure a supportive yet disciplined school environment. This study aligns with this assertion, as the findings from this study reveals that leadership styles - whether authoritative, unsupportive, democratic - significantly shape teachers' emotional experiences by either fostering emotional resilience to teachers or perpetuate emotional strain on them. As it will be evident from teachers' testimonies below, emotional labour experiences of teacher's positions are also deeply intertwined with their gender.

To evidence the above assertion, when Mrs. Tshethe was asked on the performance of emotional labour and how this intersects with her gender, as well as the role she holds in her school, she remarked:

> "There's …an element of gender dynamics at play. As a female in a leadership role, I sometimes have to assert myself more to ensure I'm taken seriously by male colleagues. However, I've found that by consistently demonstrating competence and leading by example, I've earned the respect of my team… It does require emotional resilience to navigate these dynamics without letting them affect me personally".

Moreover, Mrs. Tshethe, added to the previous statement reflecting on her position:

> "[Sometimes] there are challenges when it comes to working with colleagues, especially younger teachers and male staff members. Sometimes there's a sense of being undermined or disrespected by younger staff, particularly when they don't follow through on tasks or deadlines. I often have to lead by example to set the standard... It can be emotionally draining to shift between being nurturing with learners and assertive with colleagues, but it's a necessary balance in my role… While I may prefer to be light-hearted and easy-going, there are times when I need to present a more serious, no-nonsense persona, particularly when dealing with disciplinary issues or ensuring accountability among staff. This balancing act can take a toll on my emotional well-being".

This principal's response underscores the duality of leadership- maintaining authority while being emotionally available, which intensifies her emotional labour. The principal's role, as evidenced on the excerpt above, involves constant shifts between different emotional displays to manage relationships with colleagues and learners to ensure the functionality of the school, a dynamic consistent with Hochschild's (1983) concept of 'one-sided enrichment' wherein the organisation benefits from the leader's emotional labour, often at the leader's expense (see also Brook, 2009: 15).

More importantly, leadership styles also affect followers' emotional labour. While emotionally intelligent leadership can foster emotional resilience, authoritative or emotional neglecting leadership often leads to emotional strain. However, leaders with effective emotional labour in township schools are scarce to find. Teachers interviewed in this study generally shared that most leaders are insecure, lack of emotional competence, use power coercively, creating a toxic climate. As Soldaat (2019: 84) notes, such leadership can lead to a counterproductive atmosphere where teachers feel disrespected, not appreciated, and unmotivated to perform their work, especially in undertaking 'non-work' duties.

This is echoed by Ms. Vuyiseka:

> "In my previous school before I went to teach at my current school, the principal treated me so badly to a point where I did not look forward to going to work because I did not have good experience of work or at work. I would not want to go to school to face him, and even my passion for the sector got discouraged as the results of this experience of being a teacher".

In her current school, the challenges persist, where she also remarked that:

> "My principal is very rude, and she does not talk nice with us, and sometimes I feel like she does not like me. I do not know how to handle this; I just went outside her office and cried; other teachers—my colleagues comforted me, and then I moved on".

Her accounts illustrate how unsupportive leadership can lead to emotional distress for junior teachers like Ms. Vuyiseka. Although she also remarked to have relied on peer support, this is also often limited in these schools.

Other teachers shared similar sentiments:

> "I tend to keep to myself to avoid conflict. In the past, I've had issues with male colleagues, in particular my now-ex-former principal, particularly those in management positions, who didn't value my input or saw me as a threat …" [Mrs. Hlasa, 52-year-old, 22-year of experience, AHoD].

> "Most issues arise with management. Our school management team (SMT) is practically non-existent when it comes to resolving conflicts. We're often left to sort things out on our own. The former principal, in particular, was a source of many of these problems, using his position to dominate junior staff" [Mr. Luzwathi, 55-year-old, 30-years of experience].

To cope with this, teachers often navigate emotional labour by withdrawing from conflicts to protect their mental well-being, indicating a lack of supportive leadership structures. This further illustrates how ineffective the leadership of their schools, and their behaviour can be, which often fail to use emotional labour practices that could foster or motivate and inspire teachers. Instead, these leaders create environments that heighten stress and alienation. By

demonstrating poor emotional regulation, they contribute to job dissatisfaction, negative job attitudes, and, in some cases, a desire among teachers to leave the profession.

To put it succinctly, the findings from this study indicate that gender, age, and position shape teachers' emotional labour experiences. Divisions of labour in schools align along these demographic factors, conditioning teachers to different emotional labour expectations. Ultimately, teachers must master these emotional labour expectations. This study emphasises that teachers are expected to demonstrate care and professionalism, balancing compassion with discipline in their interactions with learners, colleagues, and management. Emotional labour demands are extensive, requiring a consistent application of emotional skills across varying roles and responsibilities in the school setting.

Despite the above-discussed difficulties teachers face daily in their schools, they are expected to demonstrate proficiency in the emotional labour responsibilities assigned to them. This study anticipates that teachers are required to convey care and warmth in accordance with prescribed emotional norms when engaging with learners, colleagues, and school management. This is the case or expectation from teachers even in the most challenging classroom settings, and to maintain respect and positive behaviour, even when interacting with difficult or disrespectful colleagues and administrators, regardless of their true feelings. The next section expands on these emotional expectations by drawing on Hochschild's framework, specifically the concepts of surface and deep acting, alongside Ashforth and Humphrey's (1993) addition of spontaneous and genuine emotional expression.

4.4. Teachers' emotional labour displays and consequences

4.4.1. Surface acting

As discussed earlier and corroborated by this study's findings, teachers frequently perform emotional labour by managing both their emotions and those of others to maintain positive interactions – not only with learners but also with colleagues and SMT. Within the teaching profession, emotional labour unfolds in a triadic framework: teachers are expected to display love, care, and interest toward learners, while maintaining patience, respect with colleagues and senior or SMT. However, this study reveals that the emotions teachers demonstrate often diverge sharply from their true emotions, particularly when teaching disengaged or disruptive learners, unsupportive colleagues and SMT.

Dealing with disruptive, disengaged and even learners who are emotionally and socially vulnerable is more prevalent in township schools, challenges that are well documented in existing literature (Macleod & du Plessis, 2024; Soldaat, 2019; Mofokeng, 2021). To cope, and teachers align their emotional and outward behaviour with the establish behavioural and emotional rules of the profession, this study finds that many teachers adopt surface acting as an emotional strategy – an outward display of expected emotions (i.e., enthusiasm, concern) that are not genuinely felt (Hochschild, 2003: 25). Surface acting deceives the audience – learners, colleagues or SMT into perceiving harmony and emotional alignment that the teacher do not truly experience (Hochschild, 2003: 33; Steinberg, 2013: 28).

For instance, Ms. Vuyiseka expressed her frustration with a learner who struggled with basic literacy skills and exhibited an uncooperative attitude. She stated:

> "In my class, I had a learner who could not write or read, and I felt a sense of attitude from the learners, even when asking my work for marking and to submit his marks. This situation frustrated me... But what made things worse was the lack of support from colleagues and school management, and even the management demanding these marks even when I do not have them".

Ms. Vuyiseka's account highlights teachers' challenges when emotional labour expectations clash with their true emotions. Despite feeling unsupported and frustrated, teachers are expected to refrain from expressing negative emotions, such as anger, toward learners, colleagues, or management. This agrees with Winograd's (2003), and SACE, 2000 assertion that teachers engage in emotional labour strategies like surface acting—masking their true feelings to project a compliant and positive attitude and appearance.

Ms. Vuyiseka further recounted an incident where she had to manage her emotions. She explained:

> "I can say sometimes I do show genuine emotions, and sometimes I manage them so that they are those that are expected of me to show, and I would also judge based on the situation that I am faced with and demonstrate emotions based on that situation. There was a case in my school where one learner was insulting one of my older colleagues, and I knew and felt that this learner was totally wrong to insult a teacher and an adult. However, because this learner was also crying, I thought and felt the need to not show how I feel, meaning that I faked my emotions and comforted her to avoid this situation

> escalating. Even when I am having conversations with management, my management is always rude, and they gossip behind your back, but when I am in front of it, I would be all happy and smile when they are talking so that they can view me as being respectful towards them".

Ms. Vuyiseka's response demonstrates the calculated management of emotions based on context – a performance shaped by audience expectations (learners, colleagues and SMT), aligning with both Hochschild's (2003: 25) concept of surface acting and Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective. As Hochschild (2003: 229) asserts, workers are often conscious of their emotions and the efforts they put in, managing the emotions they display in the work setting (school). Similarly, Ms. Vuyiseka's response, admitting that sometimes she *"shows genuine emotions"* but sometimes *"fakes"* them to meet expectations, even with her colleagues and management - *"smile"* and appear *"respectful",* even when these feelings were not genuine, revealing a form of emotional dissonance teachers experience in the process of performing emotional labour. Her testimony also reflects Goffman's (1959: 11) notion of 'cynical' performance, where he makes the same argument that workers act with an aim to meet the expectations of their audience.

Moreover, Mr. Luzwathi, explained how he consciously separates his personal emotions from his professional responsibilities:

> "I will leave personal stuff at home and be happy at school so that I can be able to teach. Learners do not know what I went through in the morning at home as a family man".

Similarly, Mr. Bheja, recalled:

> "Another time was when I was going through a relationship breakup—which is my personal life—and now I was not always in my good or best mood. However, when I get to school, I have to kind of act fine, happy, and even enthusiastic when I am teaching in classrooms (whether I am feeling that way or not) because it is expected of me to be, but I also personally believe that this is important if you want learners to pay attention to you and to the content being taught and perform well".

The above narratives from both teachers echo Goffman's (1959: 32) idea of the 'front stage' versus 'backstage': at home, teachers can express their true emotions; at school they perform a role. For both teachers, emotional performances were necessary to ensure effective teaching

and maintain learner engage – even when these emotions were not authentic (Hargreaves, 1998).

Notably, Mr. Bheja also shared a less commonly discussed form of emotional labour in the teaching profession:

> "There are few occasions where I had to be harsh to some boys and intimidate them through body expression and even use strong words, even street language that I know is not formal to use as a teacher, and also I am not that person in general".

Mr. Bheja's excerpts reveal a form of surface acting, where teachers consciously display emotions, they do not feel—such as anger, intimidation, or sternness—to maintain discipline and classroom order. Unlike the more commonly discussed positive emotional labour, such as projecting friendlessness or care, this approach involves deliberately displaying negative emotions. As Mr. Bheja demonstrated, these displays are at odds with his natural attitude, highlighting the tension inherent in this form of emotional labour.

Similar practices have been observed in other cultural contexts. For instance, Yin (2016: 12-14) highlight how teachers in China often adopt a stern emotional display to manage disruptive learners. This practice may be argued to be reflective of the *'dark side'* of emotional labour – a concept referring to an emotional taxing, stigmatised performances emotional labour undertaken reluctantly or in secrecy (McMurry & Ward, 2015: 59; Linstead *et al*., 2014: 166). In such cases, teachers engage in emotionally difficult and sometimes morally and or socially, and institutionally questionable performances, at least in educational institutions such as school - to enforce compliance, order, and discipline in learners. The findings of this research suggest that male teachers, in particular, may occasionally resort to such intimidating performances when conventional disciplinary strategies prove ineffective.

As noted earlier that the emotional labour in the teaching profession is a triadic relationship, Ms. Hlasa reflected on the emotional burden she experienced with her principal, whom she explains as lacking empathy, support for his teachers, and recalled when he failed to express compassion following a personal loss of her brother.

> "[There was a period last 2023 when I lost my brother] the principal [who is now her ex-principal] showed a lack of compassion... His indifference caused me to feel anger

> and frustration... However, I knew I had to respect him, be professional, and to do this, I had to pretend".

Ms. Hlasa's experience with her principal shows that emotional labour performance extends beyond interactions with learners, underscoring Hargreaves 2001 (cited in Steinberg, 2013: 28) assertion on the critical role of collegial relationships in shaping teachers' emotional labour. He argues that while learner interactions are significant, relationships with colleagues and leaders are equally central to teachers' emotional well-being. When these relationships lack personal support, emotional labour demands intensify (see also Steinberg, 2013). Hargreaves further suggests that such conditions can prompt psychological withdrawal and deteriorate collegial relations, ultimately undermining effective collaboration.

As that may be – teachers often engaging in surface acting. For some teachers, surface acting can also be at odds with their personal values, where instead of faking – they prefer to be authentic with their emotions. As Mr. Rhoshe explained:

> "I believe in expressing my true feelings, even if they are negative because authenticity is important to me".

Nonetheless, the emotional demands of his role and institutional expectations often compel him to conceal his genuine emotions to fulfil his professional responsibilities. Hochschild's (1983) foundational work on emotional labour illuminates this emotional congruence, asserting that emotional labour can alienate workers from their authentic selves, from their work, and from labour process itself. This theme – central to the thesis of this study – will be further explored in more detail in section 4.5.

4.4.2. Deep acting *or Is it* Spontaneous and genuine expression

Hochschild (2003: 33) defines deep acting as "deceiving oneself as much as deceiving others" about one's true feelings. Unlike surface acting, where employees simulate emotions without internalising them, deep acting involves internal efforts to align one's feelings with required emotional displays. Hochschild 2003 (cited in Steinberg, 2013: 74) identifies two ways to engage in deep acting: (1) "directly exhorting feeling" and (2) "making indirect use of a trained imagination". Through this process, employees use their memories, body, and imagination to block out initial, undesirable feelings in favour of genuinely embodying the appropriate emotions (Hochschild, 1983; 2003: 33; Steinberg, 2013: 74-75).

Evidence from this study indicates that teachers engage less in deep acting than surface acting, especially younger teachers who often rely more on surface acting. This finding aligns with Hochschild's (2003: 25) assertion that young, less experienced employees face challenges in managing both their emotions and those of others, including learners, colleagues, and management, and for them, using surface acting is relatively easy compared to deep acting.

This section explores the interplay between deep acting, and spontaneous and genuine expression. Guided by theoretical contributions from scholars like Ashforth and Humphrey (1993), the section title – "deep acting or *is it* spontaneous and genuine expression?" – reflects the nuanced overlap between these emotional strategies or forms of acting as proposed by Hochschild.

Instances of deep acting were evident in the study, as illustrated by Mr. Yawa's response when asked if the emotional labour he displays reflects his genuine feelings or is merely an act. He stated:

> "[Dealing with the variety of stakeholders—staff members—that can] take much from you, [because] it means [you] must constantly think deep and refocus your mind and emotions …".

His verbatim words, such as *"think deep"* and *"refocus [his] mind and emotions",* underscore the cognitive processes that he engages in when dealing with staff member issues, a process that denotes deep acting. Similarly, Mr. Bheja noted how overcrowded classes initially:

> "Frustrate [me]" but described how [I] manage [my] emotions by reminding myself of my role: "As a teacher, you need to still remain professional... be patient with learners".

Like Mr. Yawa, Mr. Bheja's use of phrases such as *"initially being frustrated"* and needing *"to remind myself"* illustrates deep acting, where both teachers, rather than merely pretending to feel the required emotions, engaged in the cognitive process, putting in an effort to alter their initially felt emotions and to generate appropriate emotions, emotions that align with their professional responsibilities and expectations, that is to be *"patient with learners"*.

Mr. Yawa's response is also consistent with Humphrey's (2012) writings, where he argues that leaders who engage in genuine emotional labour are often more effective in fostering trust and respect among their followers as they can rely on their lead. Conversely, Mrs. Tshethe, an

acting principal, shared a different aspect of emotional labour, describing how she often feels empathy toward learner's struggles:

> "I would cry when learners come to me with their struggles... but soon I would stop and look strong, because I need to discern the situation and find the solution".

The initial part of her response - crying - suggests spontaneous and genuine emotional expression, displaying natural empathy and compassion, which Hochschild (1983) links to the femininity often associated with caregiving roles. However, the latter part of her response shows a shift to deep acting as she actively suppresses her initial emotional reaction to embody professionalism and the need to resolve issues or concerns brought to her as the head of the school. This transition from spontaneous and genuine emotional to controlled display highlights the complexity of emotional labour for teachers, particularly senior staff, who must balance authentic responses with the demands of their leadership roles, jobs, or leadership demands that may sometimes even require them to be firm and assertive in their approach, even if it means having to embody a different persona.

A further instance of this duality is evident in Mr. Bheja's account of supporting a suicidal learner:

> "I have had to show love and care to one of my learners. She came and narrated her story of being suicidal when she is at home, and I did not do much about the situation—I felt a deep sense of pain and concern. But as I say, that was all that was happening to me. But then I decided to show care—that there is someone who cares about you... I would sometimes specifically decline other learners to assist me, for example to carry books to the staff room... so that I can politely ask how she is doing, so that she can see that someone cares".

The initial expression of emotional pain indicates spontaneous and genuine emotional expression, while the deliberate actions that follow reflect deep acting – purposeful emotional engagement shaped by profession intent.

In this paper, the phenomenon of teachers engaging in spontaneous and genuine emotional expression, only to quickly shift into deep acting, the researcher argue, may align with what Hochschild 1983 (cited in Zapf, 2002: 243) describes as "passive deep acting". This concept was developed by Hochschild in response to critiques from Ashforth and Humphrey (1993)

regarding her framework of surface and deep acting. According to Hochschild (1983, 2003, as cited in Zapf, 2002: 243-244), employees may engage in passive deep acting when they unconsciously manage their emotions to display feelings that align with professional expectations and emotional norms.

4.4.3. Emotional labour - the *'double-edged sword'*

The findings of this study align substantially with Hochschild's (2003) assertion that emotional labour can lead to significant psychological impacts for those in service-orientated roles (such as teachers), resulting in stress, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation or emotive dissonance, and burnout (see also Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993: 98). In this study, the researcher further took the opportunity to examine the outcomes associated with emotional labour that is undertaken by teachers under the theme of emotional labour as a double-edged sword, a concept that underscores both the challenges and the potential benefits of emotional labour within the teaching profession. Thus, teachers' emotional labour indeed functions as a complex, dual-faceted phenomenon.

On the negative side, emotional labour can be particularly taxing. Mr. Bheja shared how the emotional demands of his role particularly affected him in his early years of teaching. He recalled:

> "I think for me in the early years of teaching these [tasks] used to affect me [the emotional tasks and having to remain professional, demonstrate love and care to even misbehaving learners and in challenging situations] in the sense that I would be stressed and not know what to do, and this affects me alone".

Over time, Mr. Bheja found that his levels of stress lessened, explaining:

> "But now I have realised that there are things that I will not be able to do…".

However, the reduced levels of stress, for example, are not to be analysed as that he has necessarily developed mastery of emotional labour skills, but rather that this shows a degree of emotional detachment, a coping mechanism to handle stressful situations, and this is a theme that was found to be dominant for young teachers in this study. As Mr. Bheja expressed it:

> "I think I would say I have detached my emotions—not feel too much and take everything to heart".

This emotional distancing, while it may reduce immediate stress, also underscores the toll that sustained emotional demands can take on teachers' well-being.

Furthermore, Mr. Bheja noted that the need for both surface and deep acting in his role—has often made him feel inauthentic. He stated:

> "This role of changing what learners and situation require from me makes me feel like I am not myself sometimes at work, which worries me even after work—even emotionally weighing on me; hence I would be happy when my day at school ends".

The above response reveals the experience of alienation; a concept often associated with emotional labour in the service sector. Teachers reported feeling compelled to suppress their authentic selves to fit institutional expectations, frequently resorting to surface acting to appear professional while performing their pedagogical and extracurricular activities – thereby becoming alienated from their true emotions.

Hochschild (cited in Brook, 2009: 6) argued that such compliance with institutional feeling rules results in emotive dissonance – one that is caused by the congruence between genuine and the emotions one is expected to display. This was a recurring experience among participants, especially when performed over prolonged periods. Another teacher, Ms. Vuyiseka, revealed how emotional labour contribute to burnout, particularly in certain working conditions, such as in an overcrowded, chaotic classroom. She shared:

> "Yes, continuous interactions with these stakeholders, especially with learners and management, sometimes make me so drained and tired, and I will be looking forward to going home and resting".

Hochschild (1983) emphasised the emotional cost of service, and Maslach *et al*. 2001 (cited in Barkhuizen & Rothman, 2006: 440) linked this to emotional exhaustion. This was evident in Mr. Rhoshe's account:

> "It also leaves me feeling mentally exhausted, as the suppressed emotions linger and affect my mood throughout the day".

Of additional interest was also that the impact emotional labour often beyond the classroom. Teachers such as Ms. Vuyiseka and Mr. Bheja reported that emotional and physical exhaustion affected their ability to engage socially. Ms. Vuyiseka reflected:

> "It is exhausting sometimes for me, and I will get home so exhausted".

She further elaborated that emotional suppression undermined her job satisfaction and commitment:

> "Suppressing your own emotions, of which I have done that several times, definitely has an impact on my job performance because now I am not satisfied with my job, and I need to suppress my own emotions and how I feel to accommodate others… In this way, I start to disconnect or disengage with my work… Sometimes you don't even want to wake up going to school because you are discouraged".

For Ms. Vuyiseka, the emotional strain has been significant enough to lead her to take sick leave, even when she was not physically ill, simply to recover from the emotional exhaustion. Yet not all emotional labour is inherently detrimental. In line with Bolton's (2009) critique of Hochschild's (1983/2003) analysis which views emotional labour as a 'one-sided enrichment' labour. For Bolton 2009 (cited in Tsang & Wu, 2022) emotional labour can be rewarding, something that this study also found, where some teacher reported feelings of purpose, accomplishment, and job satisfaction, echoing findings by Kinman *et al*. (2011). Despite its challenges, emotional labour can serve as a sustaining force in the teaching profession, keeping teachers in the profession due to the deep connections they form with learners. Mrs. Tshethe's reflections illustrate this bright side:

> "[supporting learners and managing your emotions and learner's emotions] … It can also be emotionally taxing because I take on their struggles, becoming mine, stressing me at times. Yet, I believe this nurturing role is essential… I love doing this to an extent where I wish I could be a mother to all of my learners".

Mr. Rhoshe further added:

> "On a day where a learner comes to you and opens up to you, assist the learner—that makes your day and you feel happy that you were able to be an ideal teacher supporting learners and assisting your learners. This, I can say, does give you pride, a sense of fulfilment about your job, where now you get a chance to support the learner, for me—to advise young boys about school and their lives and instil hope, discipline, and encourage them to become better people in society".

In this way, emotional labour in teaching emerges as more than a transactional exchange; it carries a profound value, as Bolton 2009 (cited in Tsang & Wu, 2022) describes, creating meaningful connections between teachers and their work that go beyond financial reward. To this end, Mrs. Hlasa, an L.O. teacher, shared:

> "My background as a former life orientation teacher has been invaluable in this context. This subject encourages discussions about personal and social issues, which many male teachers might shy away from. I use the content from the curriculum as an opportunity to connect with my students on a deeper level, allowing them to share their experiences and concerns. This approach not only helps me understand them better but also enables me to offer relevant advice and support. Engaging in these discussions requires emotional resilience, as I strive to balance my role as an educator with the emotional needs of my learners".

These excerpts resonate with research by Bhana *et al*. (2006) and Macleod and du Plessis (2024), which found that teachers often embrace emotional labour as part of their role. However, as Kinman *et al*. (2011) caution – and as this study affirms – the positive outcomes of emotional labour can be limited and not significantly offset its emotional cost.

Nevertheless, this study aligns with the critique by Humphrey *et al*. (2015: 750), who argue that much of the existing literature on emotional labour has, so much so, focused on its negative aspects, often neglecting the potential – albeit limited – benefits this labouring it can yield for teachers. By adopting a more balanced perspective, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of emotional labour in teaching. Furthermore, for Humphrey *et al*. (2015: 750) assert that emotional labour tends to be most harmful when carried out in the workplaces that deny workers a valued professional identity, in poor working conditions – particularly where there is a lack of autonomy in how emotional labour is performed, conditions which were explained by teachers interviewed in this study. In other words, it is not emotional labouring itself that is inherently damaging, but rather the context in which this labour is being rendered that determines the emotional cost.

The next section (4.5) builds on this analysis by exploring in greater depth how the specific working conditions in township schools shape and intensify the emotional labour experiences of teachers.

4.5. Impact of working conditions on teachers' emotional labour

The working conditions of township schools are integral to understanding the emotional labour experiences of teachers. This study's third subsidiary goal explores four key variables shaping these conditions: work intensification, infrastructure, safety, and compensation (both monetary and non-monetary compensation or incentives). These variables are critical, as teachers often face increased workloads, inadequate resources, poorly maintained working conditions and compensation (incentives). Despite challenges, they are expected - as pre-empted and shown throughout this study - to display calm posture towards their learners, colleagues and SMT.

Apple (2004: 25) notes the phenomenon of work intensification in teaching, pointing to "considerably heavier workloads" intersecting with certain targets or demands teachers must meet. This intensification often occurs in environments where support and resources are scarce, subjecting teachers to meeting incredibly difficult job demands. What also appears in teachers' work, which signifies work intensification, is that they work for long hours and are pulled into different directions, where they perform competing or contradictory tasks within a short period of time.

This emotional toll that is influenced by the working conditions is clearly reflected in the teachers' experiences. Ms. Vuyiseka, for instance, shared:

> "[I] spend time, about 7 to 8 hours a day actively teaching... delivering the lesson", and "in between teaching hours, I also have other duties to do, such as to make sure that during the break, I dish up for learners and monitor them to eat peacefully. Also... attend meetings, such as parents' meetings, and also meetings on the committees that I am part of, mark books, tests, set exams, compile reports... arrange meetings with parents, address the progress of their learners, and report to the district as well... and sports—I coach learners in sports, train them and organise sports events, and coordinate these events with other schools; attend the events that extend beyond regular school hours".

This workload not only induced stress and frustration for some teachers, such as Ms. Vuyiseka, but also conflicted with their personal lives. Ms. Vuyiseka further explained:

> "Even after school, I'm still a teacher. I spend evenings preparing lessons or marking. The workload is overwhelming during exams, and extracurricular activities extend into

late hours. It's exhausting, and when I finally get home, I'm too tired to engage with my family. I feel isolated from my own life".

Her account shows how work intensification contributes to feelings of emotional exhaustion and alienation. Other teachers (Rhoshe, and Ms. Hlasa, for example) echoed similar sentiments:

> "[. . .] The stress from these added responsibilities inevitably affects my interactions with colleagues, making me less patient and more irritable".

> "These responsibilities often leave me feeling overwhelmed. The sheer volume of tasks, combined with the emotional weight of supporting students facing serious issues, impacts my interactions with both learners and colleagues. I sometimes find myself feeling stressed and emotionally exhausted, which can hinder my ability to connect effectively with others".

Despite this pressure, research by Philip and Schupbach (2010: 494), Winograd (2003), and Afrika (2022), affirms that teachers are expected to mask their emotional strain and project care, patience, and professionalism toward learners, colleagues and SMT, and even more demanding – interest in their job.

Work intensification also forces teachers to make difficult trade-offs, which often results in emotional disengagement. Mrs. Tsholeka highlighted this and associated with time constraints where she revealed that sometimes she unable to teach comprehensively or plan thoroughly. She confessed:

> "I would often engage with my work on a surface area level just so to satisfy formal requirements, by just relying on a scripted work, adhering to the curriculum, annual teaching plan".

Apple 1992, 2000 (cited in Thoma, 2005: 70) aptly captures this tension, observing that work intensification leads teachers to cut corners, accomplishing only what is essential. As a result, quality is sacrificed for quantity.

The emotional burden of work intensification was particularly prevalent for younger and female teachers. As discussed in theme 3 (4.4.1), younger teachers were more likely to rely on surface acting as a coping strategy. When asked how they managed their workload, many

described ignoring broader pressures and focusing narrowly on immediate tasks while maintaining a professional facade.

In addition to work intensification, the lack of adequate infrastructure further exacerbates emotional labour. Many teachers reported that inadequate resources, overcrowded classrooms, and poor school facilities heighten their stress levels and emotional exhaustion. As one teacher shared:

> "In overcrowded classrooms, I have to constantly shout to be heard. I feel drained by the end of the day because controlling 50 learners in one classroom takes all my energy. The lack of resources adds to the frustration, as I have to spend personal time creating materials that the school cannot provide".

Similarly, Ms. Vuyiseka described the structural deficiencies in her school:

> "Yhoo, the infrastructure and facilities at my school are so bad. There is literally a shortage of everything—desks, teachers, textbooks, poor playgrounds, printing paper, to name a few. We have a high number of learners—around 55 per classroom. Even the teaching materials are not enough; sometimes there are only 10 textbooks for 55 learners, and even those textbooks are outdated. It becomes difficult to work in such a school because there's a lack of support from management and even from the Department of Education—they have neglected our schools...".

Mr. Bheja echoed similar experiences:

> "In my previous school, many classrooms were in a state of disrepair, with broken windows, missing tiles, and no ceilings. Some classrooms even lacked electricity, making it nearly impossible to conduct lessons effectively … The poor state of these facilities directly impacts my ability to teach effectively and maintain a positive emotional state".

These findings echo Skaalvik and Skaalvik's (2010) research, which links poor working conditions to emotional exhaustion and professional disengagement. Moreover, in this study, the convergence of work intensification, resource shortages, and lack of institutional support is similarly argued to contribute to deskilling – a process through which teachers' work becomes increasingly mechanical, repetitive, teachers being separated from conception of task, erosion

of teachers' autonomy (Braverman, 1974 as cited in Thoma, 2005: 68), and emotionally superficial due to excessive workloads, and inadequate resources. This process is evidenced in the following account by Mrs. Tsholeka:

> "The lack of resources forces me to constantly adapt my teaching. However, that is only what it requires me, while on the other hand what is practical more than often for me, due to workload – my teaching has now been reduced into mechanical instruction, became repetitive, limiting my ability to engage meaningfully with my learners".

Mrs. Tsholeka's account also shows how teachers teaching autonomy or agency, such as fostering creativity and deeper engagement with their work and learners, is being constrained by systemic workplace challenges. As a result, teachers are often pushed toward standardised, decontextualised teaching methods that stifle their capacity to apply their emotional and intellectual skills. In this way, deskilling occurs not only as a technical constraint but also as an emotional one.

However, this study also identified forms of upskilling, where teachers develop innovative strategies to cope with their difficult environments. For instance, both Ms. Vuyiseka and Mrs. Tsholeka reported forming learner study groups in their classrooms, particularly when lessons required textbook use. This practice served as a coping mechanism to address the issue of shortage of textbooks and helped them to manage large, overcrowded classes. Teachers explained that their professional training had not adequately prepared them for such conditions, and thus they are frequently required to develop adaptive strategies independently.

Moreover, upskilling was also evident among HoDs, and principals, who are increasingly expected to exercise managerial control over teachers – supervise them in their work, engage in curriculum planning, and contribute to curriculum implementation at both school and district levels – albeit this is often limited still.

The findings suggest that the intersection of work intensification and inadequate infrastructure significantly intensifies the emotional demands placed on teachers. While some respond through surface acting, others developed emotional resilience and problem-solving strategies. Nevertheless, most teachers reported that these working conditions negatively affected not only their capacity to teach, but also their well-being, job satisfaction and interpersonal relationships – with learners, colleagues – often resulting in frustration, emotional strain, and conflict within the school.

Moreover, teachers' working environments are not safe, for them as workers as well as for their learners, and this is a concern for these teachers. In this study, it was found that, although interviewed teachers in this study have not been victims of grievous bodily harm or have sustained bodily harm as the result of school violence, either from their learners or their schools, they remain in fear and constantly have to tread carefully when interacting with their learners and in their working spaces. Teachers revealed that there are times where they would feel some sense of fear in their schools, particularly in Mrs. Hlasa's school, where she revealed that her school is not necessarily safe because their learners use drugs and they become intoxicated, her to be fearful. For example, she expressed:

> "The school isn't always safe. There are constant fights among the learners, and some of them smoke weed, making them unpredictable and dangerous... Fights happen regularly, and learners often use pencils as weapons to stab each other".

Mr. Rhoshe added:

> "The school premises are only partially fenced... Last year, a fight between community members broke out on the premises, with people brandishing weapons, and students were exposed to this violence. These incidents have left me feeling unsafe and constantly on edge at work. It's difficult to focus on teaching when you're worried".

Mrs. Hlasa, as a woman, revealed this becomes prevalent for her, thus adding additional layers of fear and anxiety:

> "As a woman, I fear for my safety. When learners fight, I usually scold them from a distance and send them to the office for disciplinary action rather than dealing with them directly".

School-based violence significantly impacts teacher's emotional labour. As Mrs. Hlasa describes, despite experiencing fear and anxiety, she must still display enthusiasm and affection toward the very learners who are causing emotions of fear, anxiety in them. To maintain a professional attitude and posture, she indicates to have engaged in deep or surface acting, suppressing her fear to appear as if she is not affected. This aligns with Ngidi (2018), who revealed that township secondary teachers in KZN, fearing their learners, had to manage their tone to avoid provoking violence while maintaining a neutral attitude to conceal any vulnerability.

When teachers face these working conditions (work intensification, lack of infrastructure, safety concerns) in addition to the lack of support from colleagues and SMT, teachers start to withdraw their emotional engagement with learners, with their work and in school-related activities. Ngidi (2018) found out in his study that some teachers withdrew their emotional engagement, particularly those who were on the verge of going to retirement age. For young teachers such as Ms. Vuyiseka, this would lead to absenteeism:

> "Sometimes I skip school or take sick leave because it gets too much".

Ms. Vuyiseka raised strong concerns about the state of the education sector, where she emphatically expressed that their safety as teachers is not a priority, but their learners and the learner's well-being prioritised. Her coping strategy shows that she has lost hope in receiving adequate support from, for example, the DoE as the teacher's employer; thus, she has resorted to the above tactics – bunking school or work.

In this study, it was also important to look at the teacher's compensation, exploring how their compensation impacts their emotional labour experiences. Teachers revealed that sometimes the amount of emotional labouring they are doing is significant, yet this labour is not adequately compensated nor recognised in society (by their learners, employers, the department of education, the state, as well as the community). Afrika (2022: 56-57) revealed that, teachers attested to the beneficial aspect of emotional labouring, such as supporting their learners, engaging them from a deep emotional level, and witnessing them succeeding, and for those colleagues who are supportive, this was found to be gratifying for teachers. However, the reverse is possible, and the findings from this study reveal the consequences of this lack of support and appreciation. This becomes more significant where teachers not only face safety concerns and potential threats to their well-being but also receive inadequate compensation for their work - emotional labour required in their roles. For example, when teachers were asked about their compensation, Ms. Vuyiseka expressed:

> "[As teachers] we are required to work for about 8 hours a day—that is the working hours we work at school, and [this is for teaching only]. [However], you still need to do lesson preparation, mark classwork, examinations, and other administrative duties. [But] we are... paid according to the [official working hours and] this is not far [because sometimes] I work even after school … Even my family tells me that you are working too much, and the schools that we work in are not safe spaces, and they say it's not

> worth it, [even my] mental health is comprised, and there is no financial stability or getting paid for your work, they even essay I cannot be a teacher forever".

Ms. Vuyiseka further expressed:

> "Even myself I know this, and my job satisfaction is also impacted in the sense that, even when I need to take these long-extended hours, such as having to prepare during weekends and when I'm at home having to work. I keep asking myself if it is worth it to continue working such long hours while I am not paid well. For example, I am in need of greener pastures; if I were to get an opportunity, I would stop teaching because I am not happy in this profession. This further has an effect on my job performance because if I do not prepare for the week, I will not do my utmost best when I am teaching, and also the passion is not there".

Ms Vuyiseka's response shows that she is unsatisfied with her financial status as a teacher or her remuneration, and further notes that for her to even be exposed to an unsafe working environment and experience mental health issues, it is not worth it. Her response demonstrates the connection between these variables and how they further even lead to her not being able to continue engaging with her work as she should, where she even remarked to have *"I keep asking myself if it is worth it"* and even considering leaving the profession, where she remarked, *"I am in need of greener pastures"*.[8]

When Mr. Rhoshe was asked the same question, he passionately and even ridiculed his response and echoed Ms. Vuyiseka's sentiments, expressing:

> "I'm glad you asked this because it's a major issue. To be blunt, the wages we receive as teachers do not reflect the amount of work [or even the emotional and physical toll it takes]. The workload is heavy, involving not only classroom teaching but also extensive administrative duties, after-hours preparation, and marking, most of which are done at home without any additional compensation. The disparity between the work we put in and the compensation we receive is demoralising. Despite holding an honours degree, I earn the same salary as someone with only a diploma or even a lesser qualification. There's no incentive for professional development because, regardless of

[8] Indeed, earlier this year –2025, Ms. Vuyiseka informed me that had she had, in her words, found "greener pastures" and has since left the teaching profession. She is now working in Pretoria, making use of her Commerce degree, which she obtained prior completing the PGCE that had qualified her to teach.

> furthering my education, the salary remains stagnant. This lack of financial recognition and reward is a significant factor in why I, like many others, am considering leaving the profession. The pay is simply not enough to sustain a decent living in today's economy. Often, my salary is depleted within the first few days of being paid, leaving me stressed and struggling for the rest of the month".

Another old, senior teacher, Mrs. Hlasa, expressed:

> "Yes, definitely. The inadequate compensation impacts my motivation. It's hard to stay emotionally engaged when I feel like I'm not being properly rewarded for all the effort I put in. There are moments when I question if all the hard work is worth it".

Teachers' sentiments are consistent with Mafisa's (2017: 10563-10564) study, where he found that "teachers find themselves being taken for granted by the state, which is generally reflected in unfriendly approaches to the teachers' terms of unfavourable working conditions and scanty benefits". This is confirmed in these findings, where this study revealed teachers being subjected to overcrowded classrooms, increased workload, safety concerns, poor compensation for their labour.

Furthermore, Mr. Rhoshe revealed that even the non-monetary incentives the education sector provides for teachers are not decent enough for the work and work experiences they undergo as teachers. He expressed:

> "This financial strain, combined with a lack of social security benefits such as adequate medical aid and a laughably small housing allowance, makes it hard to stay motivated. For example, the Government Employees Medical Aid Scheme (GEMS) is notorious for delays and poor service, adding another layer of stress. The housing allowance of around R1,780 is a drop in the ocean when you consider the actual costs of owning or even renting a home. It's disheartening to see that while other public servants receive substantial benefits, teachers are left with so little. This ongoing frustration is leading me to seriously contemplate leaving teaching for a role where my qualifications and efforts are better recognised and compensated".

Even Ms. Vuyiseka shared her dissatisfaction with these incentives when she remarked:

> "There is social security; we have three of them: GEMS, Housing Allowance, and Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF). But I think the two of GEMS and housing allowance are ridiculous. That is an insult to teachers because GEMS is the bare minimum of the medical aid schemes—the service provider has poor services given to teachers... These things are discouraging, and even the way I am saying it even now means that I am discouraged, and I feel like I deserve better".

The above teacher's excerpts show how compensation (both monetary and non-monetary incentives) can impact teachers' emotional labour experiences of their job, whereas the results of poor compensation and incentives, teachers start to feel that they are overworked and emotionally strained; thus, this leads to them starting to withdraw their labour power, and emotions, and this has further impact on their performance, as Ms. Vuyiseka remarked that when you are not emotionally engaged with your work, that reduces your performance.

Theoretically, teachers' responses to their work, where they remarked to have started to withdraw their physical, mental, and emotional labour, can be analysed through Hochschild's "identification of emotional labour as [some form of] labour power [which is compatible] with

LPT, which is primarily concerned with the transformation of labour into capacity to work" (Brook, 2010: 7; Thompson & Smith, 2010: 919). In other words, teachers, in response to the unsatisfactory working conditions, withdraw their labour (by not preparing enough, engaging in their work mentally and emotionally with their learners), thus showing that, as much as their employer (school management) expects and requires teachers to show emotional engagement, emotional labour is not a complete, ready labour that teachers sell to the state (employer) in exchange for wages (Brook, 2010: 7). But labour power - "exist[s] in an ongoing, uncertain relationship to their employer" (Brook, 2010: 7). So, what this means is that, for teachers, to completely discharge their physical, mental, and emotional labour, they must be, for example, employed and work under certain working conditions where they are supported, feel protected, and are compensated adequately for their labour.

The findings of this study demonstrate significant connections among variables such as work intensification, inadequate infrastructure, safety concerns, and insufficient compensation. These factors cumulatively contribute to teachers feeling undervalued in their profession and perceiving their work as lacking intrinsic value. Younger teachers, and one older, senior female teacher (Mrs. Hlasa), clearly expressed dissatisfaction with their working conditions and

compensation. This dissatisfaction aligns with Tsang's (2018) findings, which revealed that younger teachers often perceive their labour as devoid of value and merely a means of earning a livelihood, rather than a source of self-fulfilment. As Tsang (2018: 342-344) notes, younger teachers frequently described their work as making them feel "miserable and helpless rather than intrinsically rewarded".

In contrast, while acknowledging the need for improvements in working conditions, older, senior teachers conveyed a more positive perspective regarding their professional experiences. Consistent with Tsang (2018: 342-343), this study found that teachers with over 25 years of experience tended not to feel self-estranged. Instead, they perceived their work as intrinsically rewarding, finding fulfilment in the positive impact of their teaching efforts on their learners' lives. These findings are further supported by Kennemer and Knaus (2019: 10), whose study observed that senior teachers, especially those in leadership positions, often reminded their colleagues that despite challenging working conditions, "we are here for the learners, so lets remind ourselves of this. The rest we cannot fix today". Teachers in their study – many of whom had themselves been learners during the era of Bantu Education, embodying some sense of marginalisation as far as education is concerned – were acutely aware of the historical legacies of racial inequality in South African education which still continue to shape our schooling system today, at least more profound in township schools. As Kennemer and Knaus (2019) observed, some teachers openly noted that schools were designed to foster inferiority in Black learners, a history which fuels their continued commitment, encompassing emotional labouring (care, passion) towards their learners, seeking to ensure educational upliftment of black children in under-resourced township schools, another labour that is often, than not – marginalised in the sense that, this labour is less recognised, and this labour is performed in precarious schooling conditions.

Teachers like Mr. Luzwathi in the present study echoed these sentiments, acknowledging the harsh conditions while articulating a deep emotional and professional commitment to teaching:

> "To be honest, teaching for me is more than just a job... [more than the] money—it's a passion. Even though the wages and benefits are not great and the conditions could be better, I still love my work. The pay doesn't reflect the effort I put in; it does not change how I feel about my job, and many of the social security benefits are lacking. But my passion for teaching keeps me going, and I'm as committed as ever to making a

difference in my students' lives. What matters to me is that my learners succeed, and I focus on that".

Similarly, Mrs. Tshethe remarked:

> "[While] there is a significant imbalance between [the work I have to perform] and the compensation I receive, [and being dissatisfied] ... over time, I developed a passion for my learners, and that passion motivates me to invest extra time and effort, despite the lack of recognition or adequate pay … [I am] committed to the profession based on the difference I make in the lives of my learners, which keeps me motivated to do more, increasing my work performance... In teaching, we accept that the pay is often low, and I find fulfilment in our impact on learners' lives. You learn to adjust your expectations regarding financial rewards and focus on the intrinsic rewards of teaching".

These testimonies demonstrate how some teachers, despite facing poor remuneration and challenging conditions, choose to centre their emotional labour around learner success and derive intrinsic rewards from their work – what may be conceptualised as a form of 'hidden compensation'. This echoes Tsang's (2018: 344) observation that emotional experiences such as alienation, stress, and diminished self-worth in teaching are mediated by years of service. Senior teachers, who have witnessed learner growth over time, often draw on these movements as sources of professional satisfaction and self-affirmation

Their responses can be further analysed through Bolton's in 2009 (cited in Tsang & Wu, 2022: 2) perspective on emotional labour, positing that emotional labour in teaching is grounded in "use value" rather than "exchange value", with "love" positioned as the core of that use value. According to Bolton, this framing enables teachers to view emotional labour not an alien or externally imposed, alienating them from their emotions, work, but as an avenue through which they can embody and express their professional identities.

Importantly, learners were consistently at the heart of these expressions of emotional labour. The passion and commitment shown by teachers such as Mrs. Hlasa, Mr. Luzwathi, and Ms. Vuyiseka were further fuelled by their proximity to the learners – they live in the same township communities. This shared context not only deepens their understanding of the social issues affecting learners but also strengthens their emotional investment in supporting them through education. In doing so, these teachers willingly perform emotionally taxing labour, often without adequate support or recognition. This resonates again with Kennemer and Knaus

(2019: 13), where a teachers remarked, even though it is tiring, we must not complain because we need our learners to be educated – because to them, education is economic emancipation.

These findings highlight the interplay between age, seniority, community proximity, and emotional labour in the teaching profession, underscoring how generational and contextual factors shape teachers' perceptions of work, their sense of value, and the emotional investments they make in their learners' futures.

4.6. Impact of work dynamics and power relations on teachers' emotional labour

In educational institutions, management plays a central role in shaping workplace practices and transforming the potential of teachers' labour into productive outcomes. As part of their duty, management integrates resources through directing, planning, controlling, and coordinating workplace activities to ensure employees contribute towards achieving organisational goals. Similarly, Thoma (2005) argues that teachers in public schools—like workers in other sectors—sell their labour power and are subject to the authority of their employer, the state, which is represented by school principals, administrators, and subject advisors. In this sense, school management structures serve to control and monitor teachers' work, aligning it with institutional goals, emphasising quality of education, and accountability from teachers in ensuring learner development (Tsang, 2014: 242-243).

LPT provides a useful framework for analysing how teachers' emotional labour is shaped by the dynamics of control, consent, autonomy, alienation, and resistance (Brook, 2009), and it is also important to note that control and supervision are used interchangeably in this research, particularly that teachers viewed control and understood it to mean or refer to supervision.

While Hochschild's (1983: 3) emotional labour framework captures the commodification of emotions in the workplace, it has been criticised for underestimating the complexity of worker experiences (Brook, 2009: 3). LPT adds nuance by highlighting the tension between managerial control and teacher agency, suggesting that teachers may consent to managerial expectations while simultaneously resisting or negotiating them to maintain some sense of autonomy. In this study, the interplay of objective and subjective aspects of teachers' work is explored: while management structures enforce external control through curriculum mandates, teachers actively negotiate their emotional engagement, drawing upon both surface and deep acting to navigate the demands placed upon them.

Teachers consent to management's oversight or control. Teachers, Ms. Tsholeka, for example, alluded that part of the reasons for them to submit to managerial control is to ensure job security.

> "As a teacher, I am supposed to follow what the contract says, and also respect the decisions, directives from my principal, HoD, and District office. Not because I want to, but sometimes only to keep my job, agree to things even when sometimes it is not what I would agree to if it was not for the sake of keeping my job".

Teachers in this study revealed that consent was as far as showing respect to the management and securing their job, giving due regard to employment laws, which makes it grounds for dismissal to defy or breach the contents of their employment contract. While some younger teachers embrace supervision as a form of mentorship, more experienced teachers seek autonomy and push back, although limitedly and subtly as they are and do, they push back against overly rigid oversight. Ms. Vuyiseka explained:

> "Yes, we are supervised in our school, but this supervision comes from colleagues and school management... A peer teacher often comes to my class to observe while I am teaching, checking the topics, teaching strategies, and effectiveness. I have to submit my lesson plans and learners' books so the HoD can assess progress and quality".

Although structured as it is, this type of supervision by peers and SMT wrests teachers' autonomy over their work and labour process but – it is still valued by some teachers, particularly young teachers for the support it offers. Ms. Vuyiseka also expressed:

> "I am fine with this supervision, especially from my peers, because they can suggest effective ways to teach... This observation allows us to share teaching tips, and I think it is helpful".

Ms. Vuyiseka's view and experience on control or supervision show that control in teaching is necessary to a certain extent. Particularly when this control is collaborative, it tends to foster professional development. However, not all teachers perceive supervision positively. Mr. Rhoshe remarked:

> "The HoD closely monitors lesson plans, teaching and teaching methods I use in my classrooms, assessments, and marking... While … this supervision is a standard part of

> the HoD's job description, but it can feel exhausting … emotionally, it sometimes drains my engagement with the work".

Mr. Rhoshe's excerpts show that strict control and supervision from the management can lead to alienation - denoting alienation from the labour process. His sentiments reveal that some teachers lack autonomy in both how they carry out their work and the organisation of their tasks. Instead of being given freedom to design and apply their professional judgment, skills in assessing their work, they are subjected to rigid oversight. This ultimately results in some teachers experiencing a sense of alienation, where they become detached from their own labour, even where the most beneficiaries of their work are the learners, while teachers themselves feel less personal or professional fulfilment from the labour they perform.

Further, these research findings show that Curriculum Assessments Policy Statement (CAPS) also alienates teachers from their work and labour processes, and it is also frustrating to teachers. As teacher's say, this sequencing and pacing does not even take into account the educational needs and struggles of their learners and also of teachers who are teaching in schools situated in townships where their learners experience issues such as poor ability to read and write, which delay teachers in keeping up with the CAPS. More often, teachers are forced to adhere to external control, demands and expectations. This often means that teachers leave other learners behind and administer lessons and assessments to tick the 'box', particularly for performance evaluation of their work. As a result, for some teachers, such as Ms. Tsholeka, expressed that this:

> "Takes away the true purpose of teaching and learning. It takes away from me the opportunity to engage meaningfully with my learners, particularly as a former L.O. teacher, where I needed more time with my learners, and teach them what I deem to matter and relevant for them".

Other teachers – Ms. Vuyiseka, Mrs. Hlasa, Mrs. Tshethe - also expressed their frustration with the curriculum imperatives and how they are policed:

> "[This limitation on being innovative] can actually diminish passion and make you feel like you are not able to relate to your work because you don't agree with the content and how it must be taught.

> "I had to follow the ATP to some extent because my work is ultimately evaluated based on how well I adhere to it".

> "When I began teaching, we had to follow the prescribed curriculum, which is already paced for you. It tells you what to teach and how to teach it. As much as it can be helpful, it can also be overwhelming, especially if you have a difficult HoD supervising you".

The excerpts from teachers demonstrate labour product alienation, which occurs when teachers, like other workers, are alienated from the outcomes of their labour, which occurs when management controls the disposal of their labour (Brook, 2009: 15). Thus, resulting in a situation where "the product of [their] labour [being] objectified and appear as external to [themselves] rather than as an affirmation of [their] species being" (Brook, 2009: 15).

This alienation in teaching is exemplified by a case in Mpumalanga which reached the labour court, where the teacher in question refused to accept a curriculum package from the school administrator, principal and HoD, where the teacher cited that this package was unhelpful and not meaningful (Masilela, 2024). As a result, the teachers were successfully charged with insubordination and suspended without pay (Masilela, 2024). This case mirrors findings from this study, where teachers expressed a lack of meaningful autonomy or a meaningful voice over the curriculum: (a) design and (b) even meaningful implementation. Teachers in this study revealed that, despite their professional expertise, training of four years in the university and experience of teaching, they are expected to comply with rigid management directives, even when these managerial and curriculum directives are ineffective and not even aligned with their teaching needs, and educational interests of their learners.

This form of alienation extends beyond the curriculum to reflect a broader reality of teachers where teachers invest their time and energy into teaching, not only to meet academic standards as set by the management and the state but, for teachers, primarily with the hope of meaningful contribution to their learner's holistic development. In spite of this, their labouring remains a "one-way relationship", and "one-sided enrichment" (Brook, 2009: 15; Ollman, 1976: 144), due to, as alluded to - the rigid managerial directives which are not in touch with the needs of teachers and learners, with their labour rewarded with wages rather than professional fulfilment which is important for some teachers.

Closely related to product alienation is labour process alienation which denotes workers' lack control over the process of their labour, which includes how their work is structured or organised, what they produce, and the emotional toll it takes on them (Brook, 2009: 15). In this study, findings suggest that teachers experience some loss of autonomy over their work, labour process as their work is externally organised and dictated by CAPS, ATP. Some teachers in this study reported that CAPS and ATP enforce rigid sequencing, pacing and standardised teaching methods without, as alluded to – giving due regard to or giving them some strong form of autonomy to use their professional knowledge and discretion.

As a result, in this study, I argue that this form of alienation (through curriculum standardisation and centralised control residing with the state, school administrators, and HoDs) also contributes to deskilling, explained as a process where "teachers [are] unable to define and design what they do at work" (Tsang, 2016: 152). This process, according to LPT, emerges as the result of states attempting to increase control over teacher's work with the aim of promoting a high quality of education, which in turn supports the development of the state (Tsang, 2016; Smyth *et al*., 2000), particularly for states such as South Africa where – as alluded to, amongst of the reasons for this is to ensure quality education across the county, redressing the legacies of apartheid. The standardisation of teaching under CAPS limits teachers' ability and even a need to exercise creativity since the curriculum is already pre-packaged, the contents, materials, teaching plan and even how learners are to be examined and assessed. This aligns with Apple and Jungck's (1990: 20) argument that, in this way, teachers' job reduces the need for them to utilise their mental and intellectual skills as their "work and their daily lives in classrooms have become] ever more controlled and ever subject to … processes of teaching and curriculum".

However, it is important to acknowledge that contradictions exist within this process. While some teachers experience deskilling, some teachers, particularly those in managerial positions such as HoDs and principals, may undergo the upskilling process due to their supervisory or managerial professional demands. The roles include the need to monitor and supervise teachers regularly, work to improve curriculum courage and address curriculum-related challenges (Bertram *et al*., 2021). In this regard, teachers in these positions are required to utilise their skills.

Moreover, the teachers' limited autonomy, the lack of or the ability to innovate and exercise autonomy in teaching, has profound implications on teachers' job satisfaction, performance, and commitment. Research shows that teachers who enjoy creative freedom are more engaged,

motivated, and emotionally connected to their work, while those constrained by rigid policies often experience alienation (Tsang & Kwong, 2017). Mr. Luzwathi evidenced this when he shared that:

> "Yes, I'm quite innovative in my teaching. For instance, when I teach mathematics, I make it practical by relating it to everyday activities like counting money or managing payments. This helps engage the learners and make the subject more interesting. I think this creativity keeps me motivated, and it improves both my job satisfaction and performance".

This quote highlights how the autonomy that teachers have over their work can foster intrinsic motivation and enhance educational outcomes. The teacher's ability to design lessons that connect with learners and draw their attention to the subject matter is essential in teaching. This also mirrors Hargreaves' (1998) view that a good teacher is one that is able to make the lesson joyful and draw the attention of their learners, denoting emotional labour. When teachers are able to do this, like Mr. Luzwathi, this helps them to connect well with their learners, and to gain learners' interest and attention to the work, and thus they also become less chaotic in class. In other words, it can be inferred that there is a relationship between the emotional labour and LPT, in the sense that when teachers do not have room to be innovative, this limits their engagement in the necessary emotional labour required by good teaching, making the class and or lesson less interesting.

The findings suggest that senior or experienced teachers such as Mr. Luzwathi are bold enough to deviate subtly, from the structured curriculum in order to make their lessons in classrooms meaningful, and interesting for their learners; this also denotes their agency over their work and labour process. However, Bheja as one of the young and relatively less experienced teachers showed fear of doing this, preferring to strictly follow the curriculum.

> "... When you do not follow the teaching rules, and what the curriculum tells you. You are regarded as not competent, especially as a younger teacher. That is as a young teacher or maybe let me speak about me - that is why I would strictly follow the teaching rules and the curriculum to make sure that I am not put under review and my work by my HoD, and the district".

Part of this is based on their years of experience, because senior, and experienced teachers, for example, Mr Luzwathi and Mrs. Hlasa indicated that:

> “Supervision doesn’t happen often for me, especially now that I’ve been teaching for many years. The last time I recall being supervised was when I started teaching mathematics, which I didn’t major in”.

> “I don’t feel heavily supervised... The former principal would only check my learners' marks and make complaints”.

Thus, in this study, we argue that autonomy is not experienced uniformly by teachers, and structural factors such as curriculum guidelines and management pressures shape teachers’ ability to be innovative. Mr. Luzwathi further observed that younger colleagues struggle with creativity, stating,

> “[From] what I’ve observed, younger teachers don’t seem to be as innovative...”.

This disparity should not be, we argue in this paper, attributed to a lack of creativity for young teachers, but to limited autonomy, experience, confidence, or fear of deviating from prescribed curricula. Research by Lortie (1975) and Kelchtermans (2009) suggests that novice teachers often feel constrained by top-down policies, which hinder their ability to engage deeply with their work. Ms. Vuyiseka, the younger teacher, shared:

> “The guidelines or the curriculum limit me from being creative and innovative and me adjusting the content to meet and fit the needs of my learners. This limited autonomy [...] does have an impact on my work”.

The same teacher, Ms. Vuyiseka, remarked and said,

> “Even how topics are being arranged, I rearrange them so that they can link and be more organised”.

Ms. Vuyiseka’s statements refute Mr. Luzwathi’s view that younger teachers seem not to be innovative in their teaching or work, in the sense that these teachers acknowledge the need to be innovative and they want to be innovative in their work. However, since they perceive the curriculum to be rigid and fear deviating from it, they are viewed as less or not innovative.

Conversely, teachers with greater autonomy report higher job satisfaction and performance. A younger teacher, Mr. Rhoshe, similarly shared,

> "I am given the space to be creative and innovative in my teaching, which has a positive effect on my job satisfaction and commitment".

These contrasting experiences demonstrate that emotional labour is shaped by the degree of autonomy teachers experience, with some able to engage with their work while others are forced into forging their emotional engagement to meet expectations – and that this has to do with their years of experience.

Moreover, the emotional labour experienced by teachers also relates to how well schools—the school management—address conflicts and grievances. Unresolved conflicts exacerbate emotional strain and alienation, while effective conflict resolution promotes job satisfaction and collegiality. Mr. Rhoshe shared a positive example of conflict resolution:

> "From my experience, management is open to hearing our concerns, and they make a genuine effort to address them. For instance, when we've had issues with outdated textbooks or inadequate facilities, management has been responsive".

In this case, open communication with management alleviates emotional strain and supports teacher well-being. However, not all schools offer such support. Another participant, Ms.

Vuyiseka, reflected on the absence of conflict resolution processes:

> "In my school, there is no conflict resolution process, and the management is not approachable either".

Similarly, Mrs. Tshethe reflected on the negative impact of unresolved tensions*:*

> "Unfortunately, there isn't a proper process in place to address staff issues [...] This makes it difficult to resolve conflicts, and it does affect the work environment negatively".

The absence of conflict resolution mechanisms increases emotional labour, forcing teachers to suppress emotions and maintain professionalism under challenging circumstances. These experiences align with research by Diefendorff *et al*. (2009), which suggests that unresolved conflicts contribute to burnout and emotional detachment among educators.

However, as pre-empted in this study, teachers are not passive workers; instead, they show their agency, as subtle as it is, by employing resistance strategies to manage emotional strain

and regain some form of control or autonomy over their emotions, work, and the labour process (Vincent, 2011). The findings from this study suggest that while managerial control is exercised in all aspects of their work (to the emotional labour displays – what ideal emotions to display), including the need to adhere to the curriculum. Instead, their agency was more evident in how other managerial decision, such as the expectation to work during school breaks.

Ms. Vuyiseka described a collective act of resistance, remarking that,

> "We boycotted the everyday morning briefings with our school management because we were not happy with how the principal and other HOD teachers spoke to us and showed no respect in front of our learners".

This example reflects the agency that teachers exercise through collective action, challenging oppressive working conditions and managerial control (Vincent, 2011). However, resistance is not always successful, as some teachers reported that management divided staff into competing factions, weakening their collective power. It can be inferred that when the school management uses the rule of divide and conquer, the management seeks to maintain control over teachers. Ms. Hlasa remarked and said the following:

> "The school environment is toxic. Management often divides the staff [...] This division creates tension and stress at work".

These accounts highlight the complexities of the emotional labour process in environments where teachers must navigate both compliance and resistance. The fear of being labelled insubordinate or dismissed often compels teachers to comply with management directives, further intensifying emotional strain.

For teachers to exert more of their resistance and or agency, they often join and participate in trade unions, which provides some sense of power and protection. Teachers' participation in trade unions plays a crucial role in mitigating the emotional challenges they face. In this study, teachers revealed that joining SADTU is advantageous for them because this union has a high number of teachers, denoting that, in their view, it also possesses some bargaining power and influence, making it a better union to represent these teachers. For these teachers, unions offer protection and a platform to voice grievances. Ms. Vuyiseka explained,

> "I joined SADTU in order for the union to protect me from the employer (the state and school management) and to fight for our interests and rights as teachers".

Mr. Rhoshe added:

> "Being part of a union still provides a degree of protection and advocacy that would otherwise be lacking".

However, while union membership provides a sense of security, some teachers expressed concerns about the effectiveness of unions in addressing key issues. Mr. Rhoshe further reflected

> "While unions like SADTU are meant to advocate for teachers' rights and well-being, there have been instances where I've felt they didn't fully live up to this responsibility, particularly regarding salary negotiations".

Another teacher shared their frustration with union responsiveness, remarking,

> "SADTU failed us because [...] we have tried to call the representatives to address our concerns, but they never come unless it's the management complaining" [Mr. Bheja, 30-year-old, 5 years of experience].

Despite the criticisms, teachers also shared contradictory views and feelings about unions. While most teachers acknowledged the importance of union membership for providing advocacy and protection which aligns with findings from Pienaar and Wyke (2006). In this study, they found that teachers who were unionised in the Free State, South Africa, felt some sense of protection and power and could even negotiate better working conditions. However, in this research, most teachers revealed that, as much as they felt some sense of protection and power; on the issues they have raised and needed the assistance of their unions, they have not had victory thus far. As indicated through teacher's testimonies: they indicated some strong sense of SADTU failing them to negotiate their working conditions, such as the duty during break times that teachers revealed to be performing in their schools. It is perhaps on this ground that teachers had some criticism against SADTU, which is the majority union here in SBDM schools.

The findings of this study reveal that emotional labour in township high schools is shaped by the interplay of autonomy, conflict resolution, and union support. Resistance strategies, both

collective and individual, reflect teachers' agency in coping with challenging working conditions, although these efforts are not always successful. The variability in emotional labour experiences underscores the importance of supportive management practices and effective conflict resolution mechanisms. Furthermore, while unions play a critical role in protecting teachers' rights, findings suggest that there are concerns about their responsiveness and effectiveness in addressing workplace grievances. These findings align with existing literature on emotional labour, control and consent, autonomy, alienation and resistance in education, highlighting the need for policies that foster creative autonomy and ensure adequate support for teachers in township schools.

4.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights that township high school teachers engage in complex and significant levels of emotional labour an integral part of their daily professional lives. The empirical evidence presented herein supports Hochschild's (1983/2003) claim that emotional labour adversely affects workers' well-being while simultaneously benefiting the organisation (the school) and its clientele (the learners). However, this research contends that in the context of teaching, in particular – township high schools, emotional labour operates as a double-edged sword, even though the positive side of this labour was found to be less significant. As scholars such as Bolton 2009 (cited in Tsang & Wu, 2022), Kinman *et al*. (2011), and Soldaat (2014) have argued, emotional labour also possesses use value, contributing meaningfully to the professional identity and intrinsic motivation of educators.

The use value inherent in emotional labour was also evident in this study, as most teachers acknowledge – and even appreciated – the expectation to work beyond their officially remunerated hours, albeit not without complaints or concern. This willing was particularly apparent among senor teachers who possessed some degree of agency to negotiate for better wages or to halt teaching to assert their demands. Yet, this form of agency has not emerged as their primary concern. Rather, across their narratives, teachers consistently emphasised the significance of material working conditions and the labour process, which they identified as key barriers to achieving meaningful educational outcomes. This suggest that teachers derive a sense of purpose and professional fulfilment from their roles, indicating that emotional labour in education cannot be reduced to its exchange value alone.

Nevertheless, while the use value of emotional labour is evident, the challenging conditions within township schools intensify its demands, ultimately undermining the very sense of purpose that motivates teachers. Persistent issues such as administrative overload, lack of appreciation from school leadership and communities, and inadequate systemic support contribute to high levels of stress, burnout, and a weakened professional identity. The findings suggest that, although some teachers at time willingly engage in emotional labour, they are deeply concerned about a labour process that requires excessive responsibilities and imposes unrealistic performance targets. These pressures are particularly prevalent in schools serving large numbers of learners from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, where systemic inequalities constraints teachers abilities to meet academic expectations and realise their professional aspirations.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER STUDIES

5.1. Introduction

This study sought to explore the emotional labour process experiences of township high school teachers in the SBDM. To address the primary goal, four subsidiary goals were examined: (1) to investigate whether teachers' age, gender, and position influence their emotional labour experiences and responses in interactions with learners, colleagues; (2) to explore the emotional displays and experiences of township high school teachers in their interactions with learners, colleagues and school management; (3) to investigate how working conditions such as work intensification, infrastructure, safety, and compensation – affect teachers' emotional labour experiences in these interactions; and (4) to study how the control, consent, alienation, autonomy and resistance experienced by high school teachers in relation to management, colleagues, and learners shape emotional labour experiences.

This concluding chapter provides an overview of the thesis, summarises the main arguments and findings, and discusses the study's contribution to the literature on emotional labour in teaching.

5.2. Reflections on the thesis subsidiary goals

Chapters two and three of this study introduced the concept of emotional labour and its key components – namely, surface acting and deep acting. In conceptualising emotional labour, the study drew on theoretical perspectives such as symbolic interactionism and the dramaturgical perspective, both of which were central to Hochschild's (1983) seminal work with flight attendants, where she first coined the term of emotional labour.

Hochschild's work has been widely discussed as well as by LPT scholars, due to her grounding of emotional labour within Marx's concept of wage labour. She expanded the understanding of labour power to include emotional alongside physical and mental labour. However, Hochschild's work has been criticised being overly individualistic and dichotomous, overlooking the broader social relations within the workplace and portraying workers as passive, fully controlled by management. To address these critics, this study incorporated insights from neo-Marxist scholars such as Braverman, Brook, Vincent and Taylor. This allowed a deeper exploration and analysis that recognises not only subjective emotional

experiences but also the structural dimensions of the workplace and the limited, yet significant agency and or resistance exercised by workers both individually and collectively.

Building on these theoretical foundations, this study examined empirical research both globally and within South African context - that show teaching is inherently involves emotional labouring. While emotional labour in teaching is well-documented internationally, there remains a gap in South African scholarship, especially in township schools. This study aimed to contribute to this existing gap.

In chapter four, this study first demonstrated how teaching is inherently an emotional practice, and further sought to empirically addressed the study's subsidiary goals through the identification of four key themes, as outlined above. Drawing on participants' narratives, the study demonstrates that teaching, particularly in the context of township schools, inherently requires teachers to perform emotional labour. Beyond academic instruction, teachers are forced to offer emotional and social support to learners who often come from impoverished communities marked by absent parenting, a lack of role models, and facing socio-economic hardships, the list is endless. The findings reveal that teachers did not merely feel obligated to take on these additional roles but perceived them as essential to enabling effective teaching and learning within their classrooms and schools.

Teachers and existing literature indicated that when learners face such challenges, these often manifests as disruptive classroom behaviour and poor academic performance. Teachers found that offering emotional support helped address these behavioural issues and improve learners' academic outcomes, which, in turn – for teachers', fostered a sense of fulfilment, emotional commitment, and professional identity. However, these efforts undertaken by teachers are often undermined by poor working conditions, including poor infrastructure, safety concerns, inadequate remuneration, and unsupportive or authoritarian managerial styles prevalent in township schools.

These adverse working conditions render the performance of emotional labour emotionally taxing, especially for younger teachers. The study's findings underscore the dual nature of emotional labour: while it can yield personal and professional rewards, it also entails significant emotional and physical costs. Importantly, this research cautions that despite the dual nature of emotional labour, negative experiences of this labour were more pronounced and prevalent among the teachers than the positive sentiments (outcomes).

After having demonstrated, in the first theme (4.2) in chapter 4, that being a teacher is more than delivering curriculum; it also requires teachers to perform emotional labour. In the second theme (4.3), the study found that gender, age, and professional position significantly shaped emotional labour experiences. Female teachers were more likely to assume caregiving roles due to entrenched cultural norms, and gender stereotypes that associate women with nurturing and emotional expressiveness. These expectations infiltrated into the school culture, increasing the emotional demands on female teachers.

Conversely, male teachers were less often expected to perform caregiving roles, but they were called upon to enact that this study terms the 'dark side' of emotional labour. They were expected to discipline unruly male learners, using intimidation and authoritative body language. While less common in educational studies, this form of emotional labour is equally significant and emotionally taxing.

The findings also revealed that younger teachers were more susceptible to the negative consequences of emotional labour than their senior colleagues. In this study, this was found to be concerning the years of experience in the profession, where senior teachers' years of experience provided them with the benefit of learning from their previous interactions with learners, colleagues, and SMT how best to approach these interactions and use strategies such as deep acting, which is associated with less negative psychological consequences as their strategy to manage their emotions. This was not always possible for younger teachers because they were still new in the profession and had less workplace experience that they could use to cope better and manage even emotionally challenging interactions with their learners, colleagues, and SMT. Moreover, teachers' positions were also relevant in this study, particularly for female teachers in managerial positions, such as serving as school principals. In this study, it was found that for female principals to be respected in the school, they had to show emotional competence over their emotional expressions, and avoiding being perceived as vulnerable. This was more important when dealing with male colleagues, who often subtly challenged their authority. For such teachers, the study revealed that they are called to put in more effort, even having to engage in multiple roles, being both nurturing to learners and assertive to staff members to lead the school, thus denoting the intensified emotional labour experienced by female principals in township schools.

In the third theme (4.4) of this study, it was found that teachers would use emotional labour strategies, surface acting, and deep acting to satisfy both organisational and social expectations.

Although all teachers acknowledged engaging in emotional labour – particularly surface acting – it was found that younger teachers employed surface acting more frequently. This was largely driven by a perceived need to prove their competence and professionalism to learners, colleagues, and members of the SMT. Younger teachers reported that they were not afforded the same level of respect as their senior colleagues, and their contributions in school meetings were often overlooked or dismissed. In response to this marginalisation, many adopted surface acting – to present professional posture to conceal feelings of frustration and disempowerment. This form of emotional regulation, driven by institutional and interpersonal expectations, often led to a heightened emotional toll. In contrast, senior teachers – whose status and experience granted them greater recognition and autonomy – were less reliant on surface acting. Notably, the study also revealed that a small number of teachers neither engaged in surface nor deep acting to meet emotional expectations. Instead, they demonstrated instances of spontaneous and genuine emotional expression, although such occurrences were relatively rare, and sometimes overlapping with deep acting. In this paper, the phenomenon of teachers engaging in spontaneous and genuine emotional expression, only to quickly shift into deep acting, was analysed to align with what Hochschild 1983 describes as passive deep acting.

In the fourth theme (4.5), of this study, the focus was placed on how teachers' working conditions intensify their emotional labour, particularly in relation to work intensification, safety concerns, and both monetary and non-monetary forms of compensation. The findings reveal that teachers face excessive workloads, often having to balance pedagogical responsibilities with administrative duties and extracurricular commitments. These additional tasks not only encroach upon their teaching time but also extend into personal time, contributing. Work intensification was particularly burdensome, largely due to overcrowded classrooms and a lack of adequate resources, which hindered teachers' ability to perform their roles effectively. This led to frustration, exhaustion, and diminished job performance. Simultaneously, teachers were expected to maintain emotionally engaged interactions with learners, often having to present a caring and nurturing posture despite internal strain.

Safety concerns further complicated their work experiences. Many teachers reported feeling unsafe within their school environments, including in classrooms, where interactions with aggressive learners posed physical and emotional threats. This necessitated constant emotional regulation, as teachers sought to avoid conflict and ensure that their responses did not escalate tensions or violate professional standards. Moreover, teachers expressed deep dissatisfaction

with their compensation, feeling overworked, underpaid, and insufficiently appreciated for their contributions. Collectively, these factors significantly intensified the emotional labour experiences of teachers.

In the fifth theme (4.6) of this study, it was found that management styles – particularly those characterised by authoritarianism and lack of support significantly exacerbate the emotional labour experienced by teachers. While teachers acknowledged the important of honouring their employment contracts and maintaining professional respect toward SMT, many expressed frustrations with managerial practices that were overly controlling and dismissive of teacher autonomy. Although some teachers demonstrated a willingness to consent to the authority of the SMT, this consent was strained under conditions of excessive supervision and insufficient support.

Teachers further reported feeling alienated from their work when they perceived that they lacked agency in how their tasks were carried out. This sense of lack of agency (and some sense of autonomy) was intensified by rigid curriculum that afforded minimal flexibility and failed to address the contextual realities faced by teachers and learners in township schools. The curriculum's standardised pacing and sequencing added to teachers' stress, especially when little to no instructional support was provided by members of the SMT – such as the HoDs, principals.

The emotional toll was further elevated in the absence of collegial support. Teachers noted that, without opportunities for professional collaboration or peer learning, they struggled to adapt creatively to their environments or improve learner outcomes – particularly in settings where formal professional development was lacking.

Despite these constraints, teachers exercised both individual and collective forms of resistance. They challenged the managerial control and their working conditions subtly – through noncompliance or disengagement – and overtly, by mobilising through their unions. Teachers reported being expected to perform their tasks with warmth, enthusiasm, and take on additional, unrecognised duties without compensation. While unions offered a degree of support and protection, teachers were sceptical of their overall efficacy, describing their influence as inconsistent and, at times, insufficient in addressing the structural challenges they faced in their working environments.

5.3. Suggestions and recommendations

The findings of this study suggest that, while teachers demonstrated both a willingness and appreciation for the emotional labour inherent in their roles, there is a critical need to improve teaching and teachers' education, particularly in relation to the emotional dimensions of the profession. Teacher vocational training programmes – pre-service and in-service – should incorporate comprehensive modules that address the emotional aspects of teaching. Since township high school teachers in this study frequently reported engaging with high emotional job demands, they must be equipped with knowledge and strategies to manage these demands. Such training would help teachers better regulate their emotions and enhance their capacity to effectively engage with learners, colleagues, and SMT, thereby mitigating the negative effects of emotional labour.

Furthermore, the study recommends that younger teachers be supported through structured mentoring relationships with senior, experienced teachers. This support is vital in helping novice teachers navigate the profession's pedagogical, emotional, and social complexities. Trust among colleagues must be deliberately cultivated for such mentorship to be effective. It is, therefore, important that SMT actively fosters a culture of trust, collaboration, and mutual respect within the school environment. By doing so, schools can nurture professional learning communities that promote peer learning, collegial support, and the sharing of effective teaching practices.

One of the key findings of this study is the pressing need for SMTs, school administrators, and the DoE to take a more proactive role in supporting the well-being of teachers. This includes recognising the cumulative impact of ongoing emotional labour and the need for teachers to vent out these emotions, which often results in elevated stress levels, emotional and physical exhaustion, and burnout. To address these issues, schools and education authorities should explore ways to cushion the effects of emotional labour – such as providing access to psychological counselling services. Many teachers in this study indicated that such support is imperative and currently lacking within the profession.

Therefore, collaborative and emotionally supportive work environments are crucial in enhancing teachers' emotional resilience, professional development, and overall job satisfaction.

5.4. Areas for further study

The study is limited by its small sample size, compromising eight high school teachers from township schools in the SBDM, investigated using a qualitative approach. Therefore, the findings may not fully capture the breadth of emotional labour experiences among other group of teachers – such as primary school teachers or teachers in other districts, provinces, or parts of South Africa. In this study, it is then suggested that future research should consider replicating this study with a larger and more diverse sample to enhance the generalisability of findings.

Although in this study, to mitigate the study's limitation and qualitative studies in nature enabled rich, in-depth insights into the emotional labour experienced by township school teachers, this approach does not allow for broader generations. Therefore, future studies could benefit and adopt quantitative or mixed methods approaches, focusing on larger samples within township and rural school setting, to assess the prevalence, impact, and predictors of emotional labour in a more statistically robust manner.

Additionally, in this study, participants were selected based on age, experience and their position they hold in their school rather than the specific subjects they teach. However, the findings suggest teachers who are teaching subjects L.O., may be more vulnerable to emotional labour demands. Future research could explore the intersection of age, subject specialisation, and emotional labour to better understand how certain subjects might intensify emotional demands in teaching.

Finally, given the persistent structural inequalities in South African education – especially in township and rural schools – future studies should critically examine how poor infrastructure, lack of resources, and adverse teaching conditions exacerbate emotional labour. Such research should aim to develop clearer, evidence-based strategies and policy recommendations to support teachers working in these under-resourced environments.

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Appendices

Appendix: A

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee
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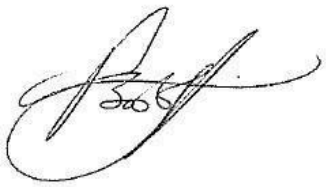
https://www.ru.ac.za/researchgateway/ethics/

30 July 2024
Mr Nkosinamandla Romeo Machastella
Email: g19m9196@campus.ru.ac.za
Review Reference: 2024-7998-8906
Dear Mr Machastella,
Title: Exploring the emotional labour process experienced among high school teachers in black township schools: A case study of Sarah Baartman District, Eastern Cape, South Africa.
Researcher: Mr Nkosinamandla Romeo Machastella
Supervisor: Ms Claudia Martinez-Mullen
This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Humanities Faculty Research Ethics Committee (HF-REC). Your Approval number is: 2024-7998-8906
Approval has been granted for 1 year. An annual progress report will be required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying you when the annual report is due.
Please ensure that the Humanities Faculty REC is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee on the completion of the research. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the Humanities Faculty REC should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation arising from this research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository, please notify the committee of the date of submission and/or any reference or cataloguing number allocated.
Sincerely,



Dr Priscilla Boshoff

Chair: Humanities Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Appendix: B

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION
(To be signed by research participant/s)

Project Title: ***Exploring the emotional labour process experienced among high school teachers in black township schools: A case study of Sarah Baartman District, Eastern Cape, South Africa.***

Nkosinamandla Machastella from the Department of Sociology, Rhodes University has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to Explore the emotional labour process experienced among high school teachers in black township schools: A case study of Sarah Baartman District, Eastern Cape, South Africa.
2. Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project *(*2024-7998-8906*)* and I have seen/may request to see the clearance certificate by contacting the Ethics Coordinator (ethicscommittee@ru.ac.za)

3. By participating in this research project, I will be contributing towards awareness of emotional labour. Participants will benefit through being aware of the emotional labour that they experience in their work (in their interactions with learners, colleagues and school management – school principals, directors), which upon this realisation they could be able to seek professional support and take necessary steps that will reduce the effects of this labour on their professional tasks and overall well-being.

4. I will participate in the project by participating in an interview(s).

5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

6. I understand that I have the right to refuse to respond to any question that I would prefer not to answer.

7. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but any expenses (for example taxi fare or lunch money) will be reimbursed.

8. The following risks are associated with my participation: the risk of not feeling comfortable, and evoking feelings of stress in responding to certain questions of the study.
9. The Researcher intends to publish the research results in the form of ***a scholarly journal. Publication in scholarly journals have the benefit of having a wide audience reach. The publication through scholarly journals will also enrich the University's research publications.*** However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained, and my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conducting of the research ***unless I indicate to the contrary/recognise that as a public figure, my identity will inevitably be/become known, in which case I agree to accept the loss of anonymity.***

10. In terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act (No. 4 of 2013) it remains my right to request the Researcher to provide me with a detailed explanation of exactly how confidentiality and anonymity of the data I provide will be achieved. I may also request to know exactly how my personal information will be stored securely, for how long it will be stored.

11. If any data collected from me for this research project is to be used by the Researcher for any further study, I am to be informed in writing and my written consent is requested again. I need not give consent for the new research if it is incompatible with the initial purpose of the present study (POPIA, s15(3)). Equally, I can simply reject the request. In such cases, a formal request needs to be made to me by the researcher via the Ethics Coordinator (ethicscommittee@ru.ac.za).

12. In terms of the POPI Act, I possess the right to receive feedback about this research. This will take the form of email, text messages and hard copy printouts. The participants will choose in which form they want to receive their feedback unless ***I elect not to receive this feedback.***

13. Any further questions that I might have regarding the nature of the research and/or my participation in it will be answered by Nkosinamandla Machastella (g19m9196@campus.ru.ac.za).

14. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record by the Researcher.

15. I ***agree*** to the Researcher's use of voice recording of my comments and opinions during interviews, the purpose of which is to ensure the accurate recording of my views/responses. Furthermore, I have the right to request a copy of the interview transcriptions to confirm that my opinions are accurately recorded

I, ……., have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand, and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask, and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

…….. …… ……..

Participants signature **Witness** **Date**

Appendix: C

Interview Schedule Guide

Filter Questions

1. How long have you been teaching at your current school?
2. What subjects and grades do you teach?
3. What are your main tasks and responsibilities related to learners, colleagues, and school management? Can you describe them?

Subsidiary Goal 1: ***To investigate if the age, gender and position of schoolteachers in township high schools influence their emotional experiences and responses with learners, colleagues and school management***

1. Please specify your age range, gender identity, and current position at the school.
2. Have your age, gender, and position at school influenced your general experience at work? Please elaborate.
3. Have you had to assume specific roles based on your age, gender, or position when interacting with learners, colleagues, and school management? For example, as a female teacher, have you had to adopt a motherly role with your learners?
4. Has your age, gender, or position caused you physical, mental, or emotional strain? Please elaborate on the type of strain, its causes, and its impact on your work.
5. What support or resources would help mitigate the negative impacts of age, gender, and position on emotional management? Do these factors help you have positive experiences at work?
6. How do your learners, colleagues, and school management perceive you based on your age, gender, and position? Do you experience age or gender discrimination? Please elaborate and discuss how your position at the school affects this.
7. How do your age, gender, and position impact your interactions with students, colleagues, and school management, both positively and negatively? Is there a persona you feel you need to portray? Please explain and elaborate on how this affects you emotionally.
8. Does your work experience make a difference in your interactions with learners, colleagues, and students? How does it assist you in managing difficult situations and emotional challenges? Please elaborate.
9. In your experience, do colleagues from a particular age group, gender, or position perform more emotional work? Please explain why.
10. Have you encountered problems with colleagues of different ages, genders, and positions? How did you react to this? Has management assisted you in resolving the problem? How did you feel in this regard?
11. Do students from different ages, genders, and grades approach you differently? Please explain your experience. How do you manage emotionally these differences?

Subsidiary Goal 2: ***To explore township high school teachers' emotional displays and experiences in their interactions with learners, colleagues, and school management.***

1. Are the tasks and responsibilities you mentioned outlined in your employment contract, or do they naturally arise from the teaching profession? Please elaborate.

2. How do these tasks and responsibilities affect your emotions at work? Which tasks require emotional management? Can you provide examples of specific tasks that significantly impacted your emotional state, both positively and negatively, when interacting with learners, colleagues, and school management?

3. Are there any particular tasks or responsibilities that you find more emotionally challenging than others to display? Please elaborate and specify them, and who is involved in assisting with these tasks and responsibilities. Please explain.

4. Are there any expectations from learners, colleagues, or school management for you to behave in a particular way and emotionally respond in your interactions? Are these expectations outlined and explained in regulations or codes of conduct, or are they learned socially, culturally, and organizationally? Please provide specific examples.

5. When demonstrating emotions and behaviour at work, are they your genuine feelings, or are they consciously managed to meet organizational and social expectations? Please explain.

6. Have you ever had to show, hide, or suppress certain emotions (e.g., love, care, anger, frustration) during interactions with learners, colleagues, or school management? Please share specific instances.

7. How do you feel when you have to show, hide, or suppress emotions that don't align with your true feelings? How does this affect your job satisfaction, performance, and well-being?

8. What emotions and behaviours do you typically or often experience and display when teaching or interacting with learners, colleagues, and school management in challenging situations (e.g., difficult learners, emotional cases, overcrowded classrooms, unsupportive management)? Please provide specific examples.

9. Does the continuous interaction with learners with all kinds of behavioural and emotional needs (misbehaving, emotional support) affects you emotionally? Please explain, and describe the emotions you normally feel after your periods, during and after each school day – feel happy, sad, excited to go finish the teaching period, and school and go home. Please explain.

10. How do you manage emotional challenges when dealing with learners, colleagues, and school management? Do you think after having experienced and having to have interacted with difficult learners, learners that require intense emotional have made you to be able to cope well or made you to be separated from your role as a teacher (detaching your emotions)? Please explain and reflect from your experience as teacher.

11. Knowing that your work is very demanding, have you ever experienced work related stress, anxiety, burnout, trauma or depression? If so, how has that affected your work and how did you cope? Please explain.

Subsidiary Goal 3: ***To investigate how the working conditions (infrastructure, work intensification, wages, safety) of high school teachers in townships affect their emotional labour experiences in their interactions with learners, colleagues, and school management.***

1. Can you describe your daily activities and any challenges you experience? How do these activities make you feel? Can you describe a typical workday, including teaching hours, administrative duties, and extracurricular activities? How do these responsibilities impact your emotional state and interactions with others?
2. Do you feel equipped to meet the needs of your learners? Please explain.

3. How would you describe the infrastructure and facilities at your school, such as classroom conditions, teaching materials, teacher-student ratios, and support services? Please elaborate.
4. How do these resources, or the lack thereof, impact your daily work and emotional state? What challenges do you face, and how do they affect your interactions with learners, colleagues, and management?
5. Do you feel well-trained and prepared to work under your school's conditions? Please elaborate on the training you have received. Have you received emotional training? Is it necessary? Explain why yes or no.
6. What type of contract do you have? Is your work permanent or temporary? How does your work schedule compare to what the contract stipulates, and how does it make you feel?
7. Do your working hours and conditions balance with your wages and social security benefits? How do these factors impact your job satisfaction, performance, and commitment?
8. Has your compensation, including monetary and non-monetary incentives, affected your motivation or emotional engagement with your work? Please explain.
9. Do you feel that the working conditions at your school foster a collaborative and supportive environment among teachers? If so, what kind of support do you receive from colleagues and management in managing your responsibilities and emotions at work? Please elaborate. Share your own experience.
10. How adequate and effective is this support in helping you manage your responsibilities and emotional experiences? Please elaborate.
11. In your view, are the school premises and classrooms safe spaces for both learners and teachers? Have you experienced bullying or harassment from learners, colleagues, or school management? Please explain and cite specific situations if any. How did you react mentally and emotionally in these situations?
12. Have you or your colleagues dealt with violent, aggressive, or misbehaving learners at your school? If so, please explain and describe specific occasions.
13. How do you and other teachers manage such behaviour physically and emotionally? What techniques and strategies do you use, and how do these incidents make you feel? Please reflect on your emotional reactions and the impact on your emotional state and interactions with others. Have there been any changes in your reactions or emotions? Please explain.

Subsidiary Goal 4: ***To study how the control, consent, alienation, autonomy and resistance experienced by high school teachers in relation to management, colleagues, and learners influence emotional labour experiences.***

1. Do you feel supervised in your work as a teacher? If so, how (by learners, colleagues, or school management)? Can you describe the nature of this supervision and its impact on your daily tasks?
2. How do management, colleagues' and learners' supervision of your work, including syllabus and teaching methods, and performance evaluation, affect your work – is it helpful, overwhelming, or not needed, or other? Please explain by reflecting on how you have experienced this supervision in your years of teaching at your school.
3. How have the supervision methods, strategies from learners, colleagues and school management used in your workplace influenced you and your teaching methods, and approaches? Have you had to change your methods, and strategies that you have, you believe in and adopt and follow those outlined in the curriculum,

and school policies, from these three stakeholders? Please explain and reflect on specific instances where you felt the need to adopt them.

4. In your view, do you think you have the autonomy (power or choice) to make independent decisions and freestyle regarding teaching methods, lesson plans, curriculum design, and assessments? How does this autonomy, or lack thereof, affect your job satisfaction, performance and commitment?

5. Do you have space to be creative and innovative at work? If yes, please explain how it influences (positive or negative) job satisfaction, commitment, and performance. If not, how do you manage the lack of innovation in your work in relation to job satisfaction, commitment and performance? Please explain,

6. How do you express individual and collective grievances at work? Can you describe the conflict resolution process and its emotional impact on you? Is management approachable in resolving these conflicts and grievances? Share your experience.

7. Have you ever resisted or challenged the control exerted by school management, colleagues, or learners? Can you provide examples of situations where you or other teachers pushed back? What strategies do you use to resist while maintaining your job?

8. Are you aware of any teachers' trade unions? If so, could you name a few, and are you a member of any? Please explain your reasons.

9. Have you ever used teachers' unions to address grievances or resist decisions affecting your role? Could you provide examples where unions have been helpful?

10. Do trade union representatives advocate for workers' interests and rights? How does this representation make you feel? Do you believe unions provide a voice for workplace rights and wellbeing? Does the union help you feel more protected and freer at work? Please explain how you feel.