

Abstract

In the past two decades, the higher education system worldwide, including in Israel, has undergone significant changes and transformations due to the influence of significant processes that occurred in the global labor market, such as economic optimization, the adoption of managerial language (Hatzinikolakis & Crossman, 2020), and being driven mainly by financial considerations (Heffernan & Bosetti, 2020a, 2020b; Zamora-Ramos et al., 2023). One prominent expression of this shift is the intensification of competition among institutions (Constanti & Gibbs, 2004), giving rise to the perception of "student as a customer" and the constant need to satisfy students' satisfaction, in order to gain a competitive advantage over other institutions (Gaan, 2012; Nixon & Scullion, 2021; Scott, 2021). This perception has led, among other things, to a redefinition of the lecturer's role as a service provider. Consequently, there have been changes in the emotional demands, emotional rules, and expected levels of emotional investment expected from the lecturers, which have been found to have negative implications on their emotional well-being.

The present study focuses on lecturers in academic teacher training colleges in Israel, characterized by a lower economic and reputational status compared to universities (Suan & Davidovitch, 2009). As part of survival efforts and student retention initiatives, these colleges place special emphasis on satisfying the students in every possible way. The underlying assumption of the present work is that the context of academic teacher training colleges imposes unique emotional requirements on lecturers. Therefore, the articles presented in this work aim to raise the issue of personal well-being of lecturers in these institutions to the scholar and practical agenda.

The first article in this doctoral work presents a qualitative study designed to identify the focal points and central contexts in which lecturers in academic teacher training colleges perform emotional labor and to examine the directions for the next two articles. This research was conducted using a qualitative methodology. The tool developed for this study included two open-ended questions, prompting participants to anonymously provide examples of cases in which they performed emotional labor during their work at the college. Content analysis of the data revealed that the students and the administration constitute two prominent groups that cause the instructions to perform emotional labor, each revealing a broad spectrum of contexts and situations.

The second article aims to deepen and conceptualize the research findings that emerged from the former study, and to establish a unique model describing the expressions of the theory of "emotional investment" in the relationships between lecturers and students and highlighting the significant role of students compared to lecturers in various contexts within their work at the college. The study employed a qualitative methodology based on the case descriptions gathered in the previous research, using a "grounded theory"

content analysis approach. The findings led to the identification of three modular cycles representing different aspects of emotional relationships between lecturers and their environment in the college. The innermost cycle represents the relationships between the lecturer and the student regarding the lecturers' own personal lives and worldview. The second cycle represents these relationships regarding the lives and worldviews of the students. The outer cycle represents these relationships regarding the lecturer's conduct with the college's administration, which is being influenced by both inner cycles.

The research at the core of the third article aims to establish a multi-variable mediation model and to examine the mediating role of surface acting between lecturer personality traits and variables characterizing their work—organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and burnout—in the era of the "student as a customer", in their interactions with students. The study was conducted quantitatively on a broad sample of lecturers in teacher training colleges in Israel, and the data were collected using six questionnaires examining dependent, mediating, and independent variables. The findings indicate that surface acting mediates between personality traits and burnout, but not between personality traits and job satisfaction or organizational commitment. These results reinforce the negative relationship between emotional labor and job satisfaction and the positive relationship between emotional labor and burnout.

These three articles emphasize the need for practical attention to the issue of emotional labor among lecturers, especially in providing them appropriate support. These articles also highlight the need for further research in the specific context of lecturers in academic teacher training colleges in Israel within the broader context of the higher education system in Israel.