Case Title

The power of phenomenology in examining how organizational members give meaning to emotions

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Abstract

Phenomenology has been a fertile source of inspiration for researchers working in a range of fields, such as psychology, psychoanalysis and nursing. However, there has been little explicit engagement of the methodology by management scholars. This article discusses the implications of undertaking phenomenological research into emotions in organizations. This is a powerful tool that seeks to explore how organizational members subjectively experience and give meaning to certain emotions. A phenomenological study is used as an example to illustrate how the scope of phenomenology is suitable and timely in exploring significant events that illuminate the meaning that professionals give to their organizational emotions. This approach can be regarded as a methodological contribution to knowledge, as phenomenological studies in management are rare, particularly within under-researched contexts such as higher education. The paper concludes with a discussion on the implications for employing phenomenology as an opportunity for developing new insights within current and popular bodies of organizational research.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this case, students should be able to:

- Recognise the benefits of undertaking a phenomenological study
- Understand the steps of how to conduct a phenomenological study in a higher education context
- Apply lessons learned from this case study in their own research

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Case Study

Introduction

The term *phenomenology* derives from the Greek words '*phainomenon'* (appearance), and '*logos'* (reason) (Manser & Thomson, 1995). Depending upon the epistemological and ontological position of the researcher, it can be conceptualised as a philosophy or as a methodology (Goulding, 2005). Phenomenologists argue that people can be certain about how things appear in their consciousness; thus, realities are treated as pure phenomena (Eagleton, 1983, 55). Phenomenology seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of the nature and meaning of human experience about a phenomenon for which the researcher has limited knowledge (van Manen, 1997). Lived experiences are understood as the ways in which people encounter situations in relation to their interests, purposes, personal concerns and background understandings (Benner, 1985).

Phenomenology is not widely used within organizational and emotion research, despite its power to understand human experience (Sanders, 1982; Gibson and Hanes, 2003; Conklin, 2007). Therefore, this case study's aim is to illuminate the power of the approach in the field, and thereby add to the organizational literature and provide help and guidance to current and prospective students. The case study's main argument is that phenomenology can enhance and expand what is known about the experience of organizational emotions and that students in the organizational field can benefit by firmly embracing such interpretative methods.

Philosophical foundations of phenomenology

Phenomenology as a philosophical movement was developed by Edmund Husserl, in the 20th century, and was refined by philosophers such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Gadamer. Phenomenology studies phenomena as they appear to consciousness. It seeks to describe and classify subjective experiences, since Husserl (1931) believed that we cannot be certain about the independent existence of objects in the external world, but we can be certain about how they appear to us in consciousness (Carson et al., 2001).

Husserl's transcendental phenomenology

Husserl's version of phenomenology has been classified as transcendental – a universal philosophic method. By focusing purely on phenomena and describing them, this came to mean the study of phenomena as they appear through the consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). The central notions that are essential to Husserlian phenomenology are intentionality, lifeworld, essences and phenomenological reduction (Spiegelberg, 2012).

Intentionality

The main purpose of phenomenology is to understand how people experience and perceive objects in the world. This can be accomplished through *intentionality*, which assumes that human experience always aims at something beyond itself (Crotty, 1998). There is an intimate relationship that experience has with its object, as the act of consciousness and the object of consciousness are intentionally related (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, experience cannot be isolated from its object and should be viewed as united, but nevertheless distinguishable (Crotty, 1998). Hence, intentionality indicates the direction of the mind to the object, as the object or experience exists in one's mind in an intentional way (Moustakas, 1994). For Husserl, consciousness is always consciousness *about something*, and since phenomenologists study phenomena as they appear to consciousness, the question that the researcher asks is '*what is it like to...?*' (Crotty, 1998).

Lifeworld

The *lifeworld* is a schema for describing and classifying lived subjective experiences (Husserl, 1931). These lived experiences comprise those things which are common sense and taken for granted. More specifically, the lifeworld is *'the world in which we as human beings among other human beings, experience culture and society, take a stand with regard to their objects, are influenced by them and act on them'* (Goulding, 2005:302). However, because they are not readily accessible, the aim is to return to these taken-for-granted experiences and to re-examine them (Hitzler and Eberle, 2004).

Essences

Essences are the ultimate structure of consciousness (Crotty, 1998). Thus, the aim is to describe the essences of the consciousness and perception of the human world. In order to grasp pure essence, the researcher must return to the immediate experience and hold on to it by a kind of intuition (Husserl, 1931). This can be accomplished through phenomenological reduction, the basis of phenomenological research, which grasps the experience of consciousness (Gibson and Hanes, 2003).

Phenomenological reduction

Phenomenological reduction is divided into two procedures: bracketing and reduction. *Bracketing*, or in Husserlian (1931) terms *epoche* (a Greek word meaning 'keeping distance'), assumes that researchers are able to separate their preconceived ideas from their lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). It is essential for the phenomenologist to suspend all held beliefs about the world – not in the sense of doubting their existence, but rather detaching from them or even putting them aside. *Reduction* occurs when the researcher perceives, thinks, remembers, imagines and judges the contents that build the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). This is useful when the researcher is interested in understanding the complexity of human experience and gaining a deeper understanding of the meaning of participants' experiences in order to understand the phenomena itself (Gibson and Hanes, 2003).

Heidegger's interpretative Phenomenology

Hermeneutic phenomenologists, such as Heidegger, rejected Husserl's notion of 'bracketing' and argued that the phenomenologist needs to refer to the person's background. Thus, every experience will entail an interpretation of the person's background and history. In other words, people are not separate from the world but are experienced as *being-in-the-world*, a key notion of the human everyday experience. Through being-in-the-world, Heideggerian phenomenology aims to discover the fundamental meaning of *being*, which refers to a set of relationships, practices and language that we possess by virtue of being born into a culture (Dreyfus, 1987).

In his major work, *Being and Time*, Heidegger (1962) linked phenomenology with the hermeneutical tradition. A basic principle of hermeneutics is that the researcher must recognise their biases and incorporate them into the research, because hermeneutics recognises the impossibility of the researcher remaining completely unbiased from their own prejudices and cultural context. The role of reflexively interpreting the text is important if one is to reach a better understanding of the social world. Thus, the reflexive interpretative process not only describes the experience as it appears in consciousness but also analyses and interprets the underlying conditions, historically and aesthetically, that account for the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology in organizational and emotion research

Phenomenology is under-utilized in organizational behavior and emotion studies, with quantitative or positivistic research being widely used. Some exceptions include Schabracq and Cooper's (1998) study of work and stress as a lived experience, Jonker and Botma's (2012) study on emotional workplace experiences within specific settings, and Lindebaum, Jordan and Morris' (2015) study on anger's expression consequences in the military.

Although studies of organizational emotions have burgeoned in recent years (e.g. Ashkanasy and Ashton-James, 2005; Briner and Kiefer, 2005; Elfenbein, 2007; Gooty et al., 2009; Ashkanasy and

Dorris, 2017), these have not been based on phenomenological studies. Indeed, the few phenomenological studies on emotions have emerged from the fields of psychology, health and nursing, and not from management research (e.g. Staden, 1998; Eatough and Smith, 2006; Eatough, Smith and Shaw, 2008).

Cassell and Symon (2004) suggest that the limited usage of phenomenology in organization research is because organizational researchers have relied upon scientific methods that have a long history of utilizing quantitative methods for understanding social phenomena, whereas phenomenology has been associated with sociological and anthropological enquiry. Other authors argue that phenomenology lacks the rigor, generalizability, and objectivity of the quantitative approach (Gummesson 2000; Cassell and Symon, 2004). However, examining emotions from a phenomenological perspective could give rich insights into the specific antecedents and consequences of different emotions based on people's appraisals associated with their specific reactions (Roseman et al., 1984), and can offer a detailed understanding of when and why people engage in certain behavioral responses, thoughts and actions (Tomkins and Eatough, 2013). Thus, phenomenology can help in gaining an understanding of the complexities of organizational life and the fullness of emotional experience of it.

Phenomenological research design

Several authors have developed frameworks for describing phenomenological research, suggesting different steps that researchers should follow (e.g. VanKaam, 1966; Giorgi, Fisher and Murray, 1975; Calaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1985). For instance, Spiegelberg (2012) proposed four essential stages. *Bracketing* is the first step, a conscious suspension of judgement by attempting to disconnect the researcher from the thoughts and opinions that are bracketed. The second step is the *intuitive description* of what is left after bracketing, by looking at the experience with an open mind. *Contrasting and comparing* aspects of the phenomenon is the third step. The final step is the

description of the phenomenon by *interpreting the meanings* that are not immediately revealed upon direct investigation.

Other researchers in social sciences developed more structured methods. Colaizzi's (1978) framework, for example, places emphasis on describing data analysis, which is performed concurrently with the data collection process. The method consists of the following steps:

1. Reading all of the participants' descriptions to acquire a general feeling for them.
2. Returning to each interview transcript and extracting significant statements related to the phenomenon under study.
3. Formulating meaning by spelling out the meaning of each significant statement.
4. A cluster of themes is then developed out of the formulated meanings. These clusters are validated by returning them to the informants to note any discrepancies.
5. Results are integrated into a rich description of the phenomenon. This forms an unequivocal statement of explanation of the behavior.
6. Finally, validation of the results is achieved by returning to each participant and ask them to participate in further interviews or express their opinions of the results.

Phenomenologists must be aware of issues such as validity and reliability, which are commonly associated with quantitative research (Kirk and Miller, 1986). However, these concepts are not relevant for qualitative research in general and the interpretive phenomenological approach in particular. This is not because of any weakness within interpretive research but because of the complexity and changing nature of the social world and interpersonal phenomena. Instead, qualitative researchers can incorporate measures that deal with these issues. For example, Lincoln and Guba (1985) replaced these terms with criteria for the evaluation of overall significance to be more aligned with the interpretive perspective. The concept of *trustworthiness* argues that the truth can be a subjective concept based on multiple realities, in which case subjectivity can be useful when the

examined phenomenon is about different people. Reality is seen as a multiple set of mental constructions, and thus social research should be concerned with different constructions of reality. The aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative project is to defend that the study's findings are *'worth paying attention to'* (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:290). Trustworthiness contains four key criteria – credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These are equivalent to the quantitative criteria of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity. *Credibility* is the evaluation of whether the research findings represent a credible interpretation of the data from the participants' original data. *Transferability* involves the degree to which the findings of the study can be applied to other situations. *Dependability* is an assessment of the quality of the integrated processes of data collection, data analysis and theory generation. This requires employing techniques to assess whether similar results would be obtained if the study was repeated in the same context and using the same methods and the same participants. Finally, *confirmability* is the qualitative investigator's concern with objectivity. It is a measure of how well the study's findings are supported by the data collected. The researcher must ensure that the findings are the result of the experiences of the participants and not the preferences of the researcher. Since then, other concepts for qualitative goodness were introduced such as catalytic validity (Lather, 1986), tacit knowledge (Altheide and Johnson, 1994), crystallization (Richardson, 2000) and empathetic validity (Dadds, 2008). More recently, Tracy (2010) enriched Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework of qualitative quality by introducing eight universal hallmarks for high quality qualitative methods, namely 1) having a worthy topic (one that is relevant, timely, significant, interesting or evocative), 2) rich rigor (having rich descriptions and explanations to support significant claims), 3) sincerity (marked by honesty and transparency about the researcher's biases, goals and foibles – achieved through self-reflexivity), 4) credibility (referring to the trustworthiness, and plausibility of research findings), 5) resonance (research's ability to affect readers who have no direct experience with the topic discussed), 6) significant contribution (research extends knowledge, improves practice and generates ongoing research), 7) ethics (procedural,

situational, relational and exiting ethics) and 8) meaningful coherence (ensuring the study hangs on well).

The main source of data is the views and experiences of the participants themselves. Interviews are the most common source for a phenomenological inquiry (Moustakas, 1994), although the phenomenon of interest should be the one that determines the data collection and the selection of textual sources (Benner, 1994). The purpose of phenomenological research is to better understand the participants' lifeworld. Therefore, informants provide descriptions as they talk about their specific experiences with the phenomenon under study (Giorgi, 1997). However, phenomenologists can never totally be free of their own perspectives and therefore pure description of the human experience is impossible (Gibson and Hanes, 2003). The setting-aside of preconceptions (bracketing), is achieved with the researcher's engagement in self-reflection. This enables them to identify and manage their preconceptions and to allow the phenomenon to reveal itself as it is (Giorgi, 1997).

Method in Action

This section applies the above methodological discussion by providing illustrative examples from a phenomenological study conducted in the Republic of Cyprus. The study aimed to explore the meaning and consequences of emotions that university lecturers experience and display at work. The research was divided into seven steps, based on Moustakas' (1994) methodological model. The purpose of each step was to build a holistic view of lecturers' experiences of emotions by combining participants' views and the researcher's interpretation.

Step 1: Preparing to collect data

The starting point of the study was to formulate the research question and determine the nature of the study. To define the working environment of lecturers in Cyprus, a literature review was

undertaken that would help identify issues and challenges that could influence the lecturers' emotions. The study was predicated on the understanding that the context of each study plays a significant role in the perceptions of each working population, because what people think, how they feel and what they do is shaped strongly by the social contexts in which they live.

The higher education sector in Cyprus is quite young. However, a recent creation of three new private universities and several colleges has brought rapid expansion. Changes to the nature of academic work (e.g. rapid growth of student numbers, escalating workloads, long hours, and increased surveillance and control), together with increasing demands from key stakeholders (e.g. students, employers, society) have provided tangible and comparable measures of lecturer performance through which managers have tightened their control over the labour process (Willmott, 1995). Prior to the study, it was unknown how this work intensification and the profession's nature affected the experience and expression of lecturers' emotions. Accordingly, the study has evolved to seek to provide an investigation into lecturers' emotions with a phenomenological emphasis on their subjective experiences and expression. The central research question was: *what does it feel like being a lecturer in the Cypriot marketized academia?*

Step 2: Develop criteria for selecting participants

An important ethical aspect of phenomenological research is ensuring mandates such as not to harm, deceive participants, and ensure privacy and confidentiality (Sales and Folkman, 2000). Therefore, this step included establishing contact with the participants, obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and developing questions for the phenomenological research interviews.

Sampling was purposive. In other words, the researcher identified and gained access to key informants whose insights into the issues could help the aim of the research (Coyne, 1997). The sample comprised of eight females and four males, senior and younger lecturers, with academic

experience ranging from 3 to 29 years, and who ranged in age from late twenties to late fifties. Inclusion criteria were that lecturers were willing to participate in lengthy tape-recorded interviews, had an academic title or position and worked in a Cypriot higher education institution. The sample was homogenous in terms of ethnicity and educational level: all participants had been born and raised in Cyprus and were PhD holders.

Lecturers from three different Cypriot universities were contacted by email informing them about the study's nature and asking them about their potential interest in participating in the study. Gaining the trust and support of all the people involved in the project is of great importance for phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994); therefore, after showing interest in participating, the lecturers were contacted again by email, which this time explained more about the purpose of the study and the identity of the researcher and requested confirmation of their participation. Because it was important to build a safe and supportive environment in which individuals could explore their experiences openly, the participants were asked to choose the date, time and location of the interview.

Step 3: Collecting Data

An interview outline was developed based on the findings of the literature review in Step 1. Key issues included lecturers' experiences and the expression of specific emotions and their eliciting events. Interviews took a conversational shape to elicit rich descriptions of the respondents' emotional experiences that were important to them. Phenomenological research aims to allow the phenomenon under study to reveal itself, therefore researchers must be open to and truly want to know the answer to the question and not to aim to confirm their preconceptions about the phenomenon (Gadamer, 1989). Self-reflection was important at this point, because a basic principle of phenomenology is that the researcher recognises their biases and incorporates them into the research (Moustakas, 1994).

The researchers had an interest and commitment to studying the experience of lecturers' emotions because this related to their own profession. To remain open to the experience of emotions from the perspective of the participants, they did not posit a definition of emotion, which would have been based on their own pre-understandings (Moustakas, 1994). Instead, participants were asked to talk as widely as possible about their emotions to allow them to focus on what they thought was important in their experience. Phenomenological studies are usually concerned with 'big questions' which have a considerable importance to the participant (Smith and Eatough, 2007). Therefore, the participants were encouraged to talk about different emotions to allow them to share rich experiential accounts. The primary question and examples of follow up questions are given below:

> *Main Question*: 'Imagine that I am a recently employed lecturer in your institution, who comes to you asking to describe what it is like being a lecturer. Can you describe the main emotions that are part of the being a lecturer?
>
> *Follow-Up Questions:* Consider the situation that brought about this emotion, and how you felt at the time. Specifically, think about: What circumstances caused this emotion? What made you (angry, scared etc.)? Who were the key people involved? Did you express your emotion? How was it expressed (or not expressed)? To whom? What happened as a result?

Phenomenological Reflection

One of the key ethical issues in phenomenological research is overcoming the researcher's own views. Therefore, the researcher should try to avoid guiding the participants' expressions or ask questions that would contain the researchers' own interpretations (Häggman-Laitila, 1999). Reflexivity, then, is key to help minimise problems of interpretation (Clancy, 2013).

The descriptions that derived from the interviews provided the basis for a reflective analysis to portray the essences of the emotion experience. Whilst the original data were comprised of

descriptions gained through open-ended questions and dialogue, the researchers then had to describe the experience based on reflection and interpretation of the research participant's story.

The knowledge produced depends on the researcher's standpoint, while reflexivity involves the realisation that researchers are influenced by what they study (Frank, 1997). Reflexivity requires this awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings and the acknowledgement of the impossibility of remaining uninvolved (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). The phenomenologist is necessarily implicated in the research process, since only in this way can an understanding of the participants' worlds be achieved. Therefore, the honest analysis of the researcher's self leaves the reader with no doubt about the personal experiences of their work.

Following each interview, the researchers recorded their reflections upon the interaction between themselves and the participant, because as lecturers themselves, these interactions had the potential to influence their interpretation of the interview data. Phenomenological research is based on the premise that engaging in an objectively valid interpretation is not possible because it will lead to interpretations that are devoid of contextual factors (Sanders, 1982). Therefore, pure description which is free of the researcher's own conceptions and involvement in the lifeworld is impossible (Dahlberg and Drew, 1997). The interpretive phenomenological approach is much more than a description and interpretation of the participants' experiences, since it requires the researcher to demonstrate to the reader what is 'going on' during the research, which is part of the reflexive process (Gadamer, 2004).

The researchers reflected on their personal experiences of emotions at work. By utilising these personal experiences, it was possible to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the profession's emotionality. They were aware that their experiences had to be put aside (bracketing), while they were trying to interpret the emotional experiences from the perspective of the study participants. However, bringing their preconceptions into conscious awareness enabled them to generate open questions that required understanding rather than confirmation of their assumptions. Self-reflective

questions were asked, such as ‘so, could that mean that you felt proud?’, “shall I assume that your anger had some positively-perceived outcomes?’

The researchers reported their personal beliefs, values and biases in a reflexive section of the study. An example of reflexivity is found below:

> *Reflecting back on my research with the use of phenomenology, I can see that my personal background and experiences were helpful in my understanding, but also in the delivery of appropriate questions, and in my interaction with the participants, as they appreciated talking to someone with knowledge in their profession. This was especially evident when interviewing the younger lecturers. From a phenomenological sense, experiencing emotions with different groups of people could be seen as an essential part of what it means to be in the world of academia. The interpretative phenomenological approach allowed me to enter into the participants’ experiences by giving them voice to reveal their emotions, thoughts and reactions. From our conversations, I felt that this ‘voice’ was something new to them and they were sometimes unsure whether or not to reveal certain emotions or phrases. For example, one of them wanted to use strong language and regularly expressed her concern regarding its appropriateness: ‘Is it OK to say this?’, ‘Am I allowed to swear?’ Giving the opportunity to the participants to reveal their emotional experiences is an essential part of qualitative research, and it certainly gave me the opportunity to understand better, how emotions were experienced in their workplace. It was crucial for me to learn about Cypriot university emotions and dynamics, including hierarchy, collegial and student friendships and competitive and power relations, in order to construct a supporting frame of reference for my future profession.*

Step 4: Organizing and analyzing the data

In this step, interviews were analyzed and organized by employing thematic analysis. The researcher must return to theory and find the correspondence of the knowledge that emerges from the phenomenological interviews (Sanders, 1982). Through this process features of the emotions, events and coping mechanisms in academia were identified that were meaningful to the Cypriot lecturers. Three core themes and various subthemes related to the experience of emotions emerged from the analysis, supported by illustrative examples from the interviews. The core themes were: (i) 'Do I even matter?', (ii) Being part of a 'greedy' system, and (iii) 'What makes me tick'.

Step 5: Validating the results

Data validation is important in phenomenological studies, because the researcher receives feedback on her interpretation of their lifeworld. In this study, validation of the data was obtained by emailing transcripts and interpretations back to participants, so they could validate that they reflected their perspectives and assess whether the overall narrative account was realistic and accurate. The researchers' interpretation reflected their empathic understanding of the interviewees' experiences because they had already constructed their lifeworld and positioned themselves there during the interviews.

Sixth Step: Synthesis of meanings and essences

The term 'essence' derives from the Greek word *ousia*, meaning the essential nature of something. Essence, therefore, is what makes the phenomenon under study what it is (Van Manen, 1997). Meaning came during the analysis of the participants' descriptions, which provided evidence of the essence of the emotions, using thick description of in-depth illustrations that explicate the complex specificity and circumstantiality of the data as elaborated by Tracy (2010).This process involved looking for phrases that were important in revealing the emotions' nature. To achieve this,

the left-hand margin of each interview transcript was used to make notes of anything that seemed important in relation to the research aims, and the right-hand side was used to change initial notes and ideas into more specific themes. In this step, the researchers integrated the knowledge they created through bracketing with the existing theory and the phenomenological interviews.

Participants' accounts were characterised by thick and rich descriptions, creating the feeling for readers that they had experienced the events. Figures of speech, such as metaphors and similes, contributed to the vividness of the descriptions; for example, '*it's like someone is hugging you with a magic, warm blanket*', '*It feels as if a warm liquid is being poured in my body when I experience incidents like this one'* to describe the internal warmth of the emotion of pride, or '*time flies'*, when they are enjoying their teaching with their students meaning the passing of time, as though it had the characteristics of a bird, and '*It felt like a psychological war'* to describe the emotion of anger, when certain students misbehaved. Metaphors were particularly helpful when describing subjective and bodily experience (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), with participants using powerful metaphors and figurative language in general to describe their experiences of their emotions.

Throughout this process, several subthemes were created from the three core themes to describe the specific emotions (e.g. anger, disillusionment, fear, envy), the emotion antecedents (e.g. perceived student misbehaviour, lack of collegiality, pressures from managers, intrusive parents), and coping mechanisms (e.g. strong friendships with students, social/collegial support). The researchers expected that the themes that would emerge from each interview would be different, since each lifeworld is different, and each interviewee experiences it in a different way. The use of the subthemes helped the researchers to find overlapping layers that could construct a common lifeworld where a theory that explains interviewee experiences can be meaningful.

Step 7: Implications and Outcomes - the experience and expression of emotions in Cypriot academia

In this final step, the data that had been collected, assessed, analyzed and synthesized drove the theoretical contribution of the results. The researchers distinguished the results from prior research, suggested further investigation and discussed outcomes in relation to social, personal and professional values (Moustakas, 1994).

Although research on emotions has flourished in recent years, the value of the findings of this phenomenological study lies in the illumination of the discrete emotions that Cypriot lecturers experience and in the characteristics of a specific occupation within a cultural context that has experienced significant turbulence. Findings showed that demonstrating emotion as part of being a lecturer is of growing importance, especially given the multiple stakeholders that lecturers deal with in their daily routine. Findings further showed that Cypriot lecturers were positioned as managed professionals, whose emotions were affected by the context of massification and of financial austerity, and whose personal actions were expected to be closely aligned with the university's objectives to attract students and secure income. A rich database of emotional stories was created, providing a useful insight into the work involved in academia and dealing with students, colleagues, managers and student relatives.

Practical implications of the study include the need for organizations to consider the authentic, silent and controlled expressions of lecturers' emotions that were identified in their stories, together with their pleasant and unpleasant consequences. The aim should be to retain emotional expressions that create pleasant outcomes for the individual and the organization and to avoid silencing emotional expression and promote norms of self-managed emotional expression. The study's findings may encourage organizations to consider increasing the level of emotional expression tolerated at work. For example, participants mentioned the authentic expression of anger and frustration in some of their stories that resulted in better relationships and communication with their students. If the workplace becomes a community in which individuals feel they can bring their whole self, where they feel safe enough to express authentic emotion, then organizational and individual benefits may result.

Practical Lessons Learned

The phenomenological framework discussed above has never previously been used in the Cypriot context. One problem with phenomenological research is the time that participants have to spend in interviews and in the revision of the researchers' reports. The problem that phenomenologists need to tackle is that they must build a relationship of trust with participants so that they will be open to share their experiences with honesty – linked with Tracy's (2010) *relational ethics*. Preliminary meetings with the participants under investigation provide an opportunity to establish rapport, review research aims and complete consent forms.

Phenomenological research, although it can be time consuming, is a valuable methodological approach that offers many opportunities to the organizational researcher.

Emotion researchers who are interested in financially turbulent European workplaces, and the emotions that are experienced within them, have many opportunities to develop theories, especially when considering that qualitative research methods are particularly useful in under-researched contexts (Carson *et al.,* 2001). Phenomenology can be the basis of emotion research because it is a paradigm that provides rich and insightful descriptions of human views (Moustakas, 1994).

Considering the contextually rich descriptions of our participants, we recommend that researchers continue to investigate discrete emotions, with specific reference to the events giving rise to emotions, in different occupational levels in academia, or even different occupational contexts and cultures. Research in Cyprus could be expanded by studying other emotional phenomena in academia with phenomenological approaches. Further studies exploring the emotional experiences of lecturers in other countries would be of valuable, because further information may be revealed in these different contexts.

One area that had limited prior attention in the literature was the psychological support that students offered to lecturers when dealing with difficult emotional parts of the job or when personal problems impacted on their job. More extensive research is needed to explore this close relationship that lecturers have with their students and see how the mutual sharing of their experiences may contribute to their well-being. It is suggested that this type of social support is an important coping strategy with many implications that can be used in academia, which is therefore worthy of further investigation.

Conclusions

Phenomenology is a rich methodology for emotion research. Participants' enthusiasm, which was evident from their conversations and willingness to participate in the research, was very encouraging for applying phenomenology in future projects. Phenomenology can be the most appropriate methodology when research seeks to understand emotion phenomena, and particularly where it explores the human dimension of lecturing practice. Using an example from a phenomenological study in Cyprus, this paper has illustrated the lived emotional experience of lecturers, their thoughts and evaluations, plus the contradictory consequences the expression of their emotions have. Phenomenology helped to 'penetrate' the world of lecturers and to collect first-hand personal accounts of emotional experiences.

Therefore, this case study supports phenomenological research as a fruitful arena for examining organizational emotions due to its focus on explaining and illustrating the complex, dynamic and holistic nature of human experiences.

Exercises and Discussion Questions

- Outline the benefits and strengths of using phenomenology in research?

- What ethical issues might you encounter when conducting phenomenological research?
- What quality problems might you encounter if you are about to embark on a phenomenological study? How might you design your study to overcome these?
- What is reflexivity and how can it be used in phenomenological research?
- In what ways can phenomenology contribute to emotion research?

Further Readings

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Web Resources

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