

The purpose of phenomenology



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2. 0 Purpose of Phenomenology

The purpose of a phenomenological approach in research is to clarify and enlighten how people understand and comprehend certain phenomena. (Lester, 1999) Humans have different personal perspectives. Since this type of research rely on human experiences and often have different interpretations, phenomenological research helps to gathers detailed information through qualitative methods. Qualitative methods used can be interviews and discussions, and data can be presented from the person's point of view. Through inductive methods in phenomenological approaches, data can be collected without being perceived as useless assumptions and can contribute to research that related to experiences.

Phenomenological method used in epistemology, where data and information can be obtained only by emphasizing personal experiences and comprehensions. This method is effective in finding out an individual's experiences, and perceptions from their perspectives- can the data obtained are used in making normative assumptions. Nowadays, phenomenology approach in research methods are used widely in the research study of any field, such as psychology and medical.

3. 0 Types of Phenomenological Research

The main focus in phenomenology is experiences. In order to understand participants in a particular study, researchers 'brackets' or sets aside his or her experiences so that biases controlled in the research. There are a numbers of different stand in phenomenology, which divided into two main group, descriptive, and interpretive phenomenology, but still fall in

qualitative method field. Examples of phenomenology's descendants from these two main group are interpretative phenomenological analysis, also known as IPA, and template analysis.

Both forks of research methods are created by German philosophy and had influenced each other through their work, although Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology came after Husserl's descriptive phenomenology. Husserl and Heidegger believe that the world is simply one line among many worlds, and as conscious beings, we see the world as truths (Sloan & Bowe, 2013). Among these two main groups, interpretative phenomenology is the most applied method in qualitative research compared to descriptive phenomenology.

3. 1 Descriptive Phenomenology

Descriptive phenomenology was developed by Husserl in 1970. Husserl's phenomenology approach was the knowledge of humans' experiences, perceived while in the state of conscious is worth of contribution in research and studies. Another important component in Husserlian phenomenology is it is important to put aside their (researchers) own knowledge during studies so that they can grasp the essence of the participant's experiences without being bias.

So that the transcendental subjectivity achieved, phenomenologist suggested a technique of " bracketing off" the influences around the phenomenon to prevent bias (Smith. J. A et. al, 2009). Researcher ' brackets' all their past knowledge that falls in the same category about a particular phenomenon investigation so that they stayed preconception neutralized.

The information about the phenomenon is given by the participants and researcher presents the phenomenon as a phenomenon itself with the help of the information given as a support. The phenomenon as experienced by the participants (in their conscious state) will be the focus of the research rather than focusing on the phenomenon as a subject itself.

In other component, Husserl assumed that humans that have lived the same experiences have the same features in human consciousness. Natanson, (1973) referred them to as universal essences (as cited in Lopez & Willis, 2004). Essences are important because to the phenomenologist; it represents the true nature of the phenomenon, and they abstracted from lived experiences.

Descriptive phenomenology holds the idea that the perception can combine with ideas and judgments to a certain extent. This means descriptive phenomenologist agrees that they can focus on phenomenological purity by minimizing interpretation (Lester, 1999) although their research based on people's perceptions and experiences of certain phenomena. In other words, descriptive phenomenology is a connection between the *noema* of the experience (the 'what') and the *noesis* (the how it is experienced) (Sloan & Bowe, 2013).

3. 2 Interpretive (Hermeneutic) Phenomenology

Heidegger, whom Husserl's student has preceded descriptive method with interpretive phenomenology. Heidegger challenged to make phenomenological research to have more meanings and to be interpretive, or hermeneutic in research traditions. Hermeneutic phenomenology is more

intricate than descriptive phenomenology because of its impermanence. In interpretative (hermeneutic) phenomenology, time is a factor, but it is not a factor in descriptive phenomenology.

Thompson (1990) state that his word hermeneutic means *Hermes*, which is the name of a Greek God that responsible in interpreting messages between God (as cited in Lopez & Willis, 2004). Hermeneutics is a process and method to bring out and make appear of what hidden in human experiences and goes beyond their experiences in search of the meaning in their life practices. If descriptive phenomenological is focused in the essences in human experiences, while they are conscious, hermeneutic phenomenological is focused on what humans experiences rather what they consciously know. In hermeneutic phenomenology, researchers are required to interpret the meanings found in the relation to the phenomena (hence the name interpretive phenomenology). This method focuses more on the comprehension of the experiences by adding elements in their research such as themes and finding meanings interpretively in data obtained rather than focusing on essences that is the focus of descriptive phenomenology.

Heidegger insist that humans attached in their world, and their experiences are subjectively connected, cultural and political context. In his book *Being and Time* (1992), for Heidegger, humans and their activities are always “ in the world”, and their being is proven by being in the world, so instead of ‘ bracketing off’ the world humans live in, Heidegger look to humans contextual relations to the things in the world. Humans have freedoms of making their own choices, but restricted by certain conditions in life. The freedom in making choices is the existential proof of human beings that all

meaning arises. Hermeneutic phenomenologist will focus on bringing out the meanings of human existence, and the meaning of the choices they made.

Unlike descriptive phenomenology, interpretive phenomenology uses their personal knowledge in their research as it is impossible to get rid of the mind of the background that has brought them to do the research in the first place. The technique of bracketing as used by the descriptive phenomenologist to them are incongruous and are questionable (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Heidegger articulated an important concept that there are no one true meaning interpretation produced by an interpretive study, as they are open and could be more than one, but the research findings must be logical and arguable.

4. 0 Procedures of Phenomenological Inquiry

Creswell (1998) proposed the following process:

1. The researcher needs to understand the philosophical perspectives behind the approach, especially the concept of studying how people experience a phenomenon
2. The investigator writes research questions that explore the meaning of that experience for individuals and asks individuals to describe their everyday lived experience.
3. The investigator collects data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation. Typically, this information is collected through long interviews.
4. The phenomenological data analysis: the protocols divided into statements or horizontalization. Units transformed into clusters of

meaning, tie the transformation together to make a general description of the experience, including textural description, what experienced and structural description, for example, how it is experienced.

5. The phenomenological report ends with the reader underlying better the essential, invariant structure of the experience.

4. 1 Procedures in Descriptive Phenomenology

In his book, Giorgi provided detailed guidelines for descriptive phenomenological research (as cited in (as cited in Lester, 1999). Procedures of descriptive phenomenology are as follows;

1. Obtain a concrete description of the phenomenon of interest.
2. Adopt the phenomenological attitude towards the phenomenon.
3. Read the entire description to gain an impression of the whole.
4. Reread the description and identify ‘ meaning units’ that capture different aspects or dimensions of the whole.
5. Identify and make explicit the psychological significance of each meaning unit.
6. Articulate the general structure of the experience of the phenomenon.

4. 1 Procedures in Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis is one of the phenomenological methods that believes it is impossible to have direct access to the research

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participant's life (Willig, 2013). Although IPA phenomenologist aim for the participant's experiences, realistically, it all depend on the nature of the interaction between the researcher and the participant. Because of the boundaries and to that limitation, researcher's result of the analysis always based on his or her interpretation of the participant's experience.

Interpretive phenomenologist usually works with transcripts of semi-structured interview. Since phenomenological research based on experiences, the interview questions must be open-ended and non-directive so that the data obtained is not limited. Researchers should use specific and focused questions in their interviews, and it is also possible to ask the participants to produce alternative means such as diary and video to gain more data. Data gained will be analyzed using idiographic approach where participants' opinion will only combine in the later stage of the research.