

## Phenomenological Studies in Public Policy Analysis

### Studi Fenomenologi dalam Analisis Kebijakan Publik

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#### Abstract

*This study aims to explore phenomenological studies and their application in public policy analysis. The methodology employed is a literature review, conducted by collecting relevant materials on phenomenology, including books, journals, and online resources. The findings reveal that phenomenology has developed into a research design that examines human experiences, consciousness, and subjectivity in relation to phenomena within the analyzed domain. The study provides a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of societal responses to public policies, addressing critical aspects such as trust, uncertainty, and conceptions of justice. Thus, the phenomenological approach makes a significant contribution by incorporating subjective dimensions into the domain of public policy analysis.*

**Keywords:** *Phenomenological Studies, Qualitative Research, Public Policy*

#### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan studi fenomenologi dan penggunaannya dalam analisis kebijakan publik. Teknik yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah studi pustaka yang dilakukan dengan cara mengumpulkan literatur terkait fenomenologi, baik dalam bentuk buku, jurnal, dan situs. Penelitian ini mendapati hasil bahwa fenomenologi dikembangkan menjadi desain penelitian yang mengkaji tentang pengalaman, kesadaran, dan subyektifitas manusia terhadap fenomena yang terjadi sesuai pada bidang yang dianalisis. Temuan penelitian ini memberikan pemahaman menyeluruh tentang kompleksitas reaksi masyarakat terhadap kebijakan publik, termasuk aspek- aspek penting seperti kepercayaan, ketidakpastian, dan konsepsi keadilan. Dengan demikian, pendekatan fenomenologis berkontribusi signifikan dalam membawa dimensi subjektif ke dalam ranah kajian kebijakan publik.

**Kata kunci:** Studi Fenomenologi, Penelitian Kualitatif, Kebijakan Publik.

## **Introduction**

The process of development undertaken by a country aims to enhance the welfare of its people, as outlined in established policies. As highlighted by Sutmasa (2021), the government plays a pivotal role in the formulation of public policies, encompassing the stages of design, implementation, and evaluation of their impact on society. In this context, the effectiveness of governmental performance is a crucial determinant. Public policy emerges as an inevitable response to societal dynamics and problems, serving as a mechanism to address various issues.

In crafting public policies, the government is guided by principles of public interest, with the expectation that such policies will be appropriately targeted and aligned with the objectives initially planned (Coryanata, 2011). During the implementation phase, the success or shortcomings of a policy become evident, as its impact on the public can be assessed (Desrinelti et al., 2021). These impacts may manifest directly or indirectly, influencing the public in varying ways. Consequently, a thorough and in-depth study is necessary to analyze public policies effectively, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the implications of the decisions or policies enacted.

One approach that can aid in understanding public policy phenomena is phenomenological study. Phenomenology is a qualitative research method aimed at reducing events or phenomena into a narrative that elucidates their underlying meanings. In essence, phenomenology seeks to uncover the essence of a phenomenon (Hasbiansyah, 2008). This method generates insights into how this approach can provide a deeper and more contextual understanding of public policy dynamics. Furthermore, it creates opportunities for a broader comprehension of the policy's implications for society. By employing phenomenological studies in research or analyses related to public policy, it becomes possible to gain a more profound understanding of the essence of public policy phenomena, taking into account the experiences, perceptions, and understandings of the subjects involved in the study.

## **Definition of Phenomenological Study**

Kumar (2011) defines research as a process of critical thinking or examination of aspects of daily work, understanding and designing guidelines that govern specific

governance practices, and developing and testing new theories that contribute to the advancement of practice and professional expertise. Similarly, Hadi et al. (2021) describe scientific research as an objective and systematic process involving reasoning and observation to discover, validate, and strengthen theories or knowledge, as well as to find solutions to existing problems. Through research philosophy, researchers can identify the systematic methods used in conducting research, including the selection of research strategies, the adaptation of instruments to the research conducted, and addressing questions arising from issues encountered in the field. This process encompasses research paradigms, approaches, and theoretical frameworks (Hadi, 2020).

The research paradigm plays a crucial role as it examines empirical realities and provides flexibility in addressing problems. It is considered a fundamental component of research, enabling comprehensive explanations of observed phenomena. A researcher's paradigm is intrinsically linked to the research design, influencing the choice of the most suitable research approach (Hadi, 2020). A research approach refers to a structured plan detailing how a study will be conducted to answer the formulated research questions. During the 20th century, both quantitative (objective) and qualitative (subjective) approaches gained prominence, each characterized by distinct styles, theories, and assumptions.

This study focuses on the qualitative approach, which is descriptive in nature, emphasizing processes, perceptions, interpretations of behavior, and general views of the studied subjects (Santoso, 2022). The qualitative approach employs fieldwork strategies and specific data collection methods, such as observation and interviews. It seeks to construct reality by interpreting the purpose and meaning behind phenomena, paying close attention to details, including the processes and events that occur. Creswell (as cited in Hadi, 2021) notes that qualitative research is influenced by naturalistic-interpretative paradigms, post-positivist perspectives, and postmodernism. Moleong (2010) explains that qualitative research applies a naturalistic paradigm to explore and identify the researcher's understanding of the phenomena experienced by the subjects being studied, describing them in words tailored to specific or natural conditions.

Consequently, qualitative researchers often immerse themselves in social situations, directly interacting with their research subjects and the field conditions they create. As such, qualitative research incorporates a high degree of subjectivity throughout its scientific processes, including data collection, examination, and analysis.

One approach that can assist in understanding phenomena related to public policy is phenomenological study. Phenomenology is a qualitative research method aimed at reducing events into a written account that explains the meaning of a phenomenon. In essence, phenomenology seeks to understand the essence of a phenomenon (Hasbiansyah, 2008). Phenomenology functions both as a method and a philosophy. As a method, it lays out the steps necessary to arrive at the essence of a pure phenomenon. According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), management refers to the process of undertaking specific activities by mobilizing the efforts of others, formulating organizational policies and goals, and overseeing the implementation and achievement of objectives. Tumangkeng (2022) describes phenomenology as a philosophical approach that examines human experiences. Moleong (2010) further explains that phenomenology involves understanding the reality or awareness of the historical value of objects and events, including their associated human experiences.

### **Framework of Phenomenological Study**

Phenomenology as a research method aims to provide individuals with insights and understanding to face the world and experience phenomena. In the context of public policy research, phenomenology enables both researchers and readers to comprehend how public policies can transform into complex and diverse social phenomena (Wattimena, 2012). Applying phenomenology in public policy analysis allows researchers to understand how public policies operate within social and political contexts and to uncover the variations and complexities inherent in public policies.

### **Application of Phenomenological Study**

Phenomenology requires a comprehensive understanding of the context in which a phenomenon is introduced. Researchers must first grasp the history, objectives,

and procedures of public policy before delving into how such policies evolve into complex and diverse social realities (Wattimena, 2012). For instance, regarding public policies governed by legislation, a case study can be drawn from Undang-Undang Nomor 11 Tahun 2020 tentang Cipta Kerja (Law No. 11 of 2020 on Job Creation), which has been conditionally deemed unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court (MK) and subsequently replaced by Peraturan Pemerintah Pengganti Undang-Undang Nomor 2 Tahun 2022 tentang Cipta Kerja (Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No. 2 of 2022 on Job Creation).

Through this example, it is essential to investigate the underlying reasons for the formulation of the initial legislation, the rationale for its replacement, and its impacts on society. Such an investigation evaluates whether the policy outcomes align with the original objectives. This case can serve as a focal point for analysis and discussion. However, without understanding the historical background and objectives of the policy, it would be challenging to conduct an in-depth analysis.

The researchers gathered information from various sources, including policy documents, legislation, and literature reviews. Additionally, observations and interviews were conducted to gain firsthand insights and capture the lived realities of affected communities. This information was utilized to identify the differences and complexities inherent in policy frameworks. Furthermore, prior legislation, policy drafts, or policies invalidated by authoritative bodies could serve as comparative or evaluative material, providing an overview of the design and implementation of public policies over recent years (Tumangkeng & Maramis, 2022).

The analysis in phenomenological research involves observation and interpretation while considering context and the role of subjective awareness. For instance, textual analysis can be employed to uncover the motives, roles, and structures embedded in public policies. The researchers compared collected data to explore the essence of public policy formulation, approval, implementation, and its subsequent impacts on local communities. Within this framework, comparing documents with findings from observations and interviews is permissible. This approach is justified because the success or failure of public policies can often only be assessed within a

certain timeframe following their implementation, based on the tangible impacts experienced by the affected communities (Tumangkeng & Maramis, 2022).

### **Research Methods**

The method employed by the researchers in this study is a qualitative literature review. Data collection was conducted over six weeks, drawing from books, journals, and websites related to research methods and phenomenology. The data analysis technique utilized in this study involved the following steps: (1) organizing and preparing the data for analysis, (2) thoroughly reading or reviewing all the collected data, (3) generating themes and descriptions, and (4) presenting the themes and descriptions.

### **Results And Discussion**

Exploring further, the emergence of phenomenology cannot be separated from the contributions of prominent philosophers and scholars who developed this concept, including Edmund Husserl, Alfred Schutz, and Martin Heidegger. Husserl, as the first philosopher to conceptualize phenomenology, introduced it in the early 20th century, which subsequently expanded into the fields of social sciences and humanities (Hasbiansyah, 2008). As a study concept, phenomenology has evolved significantly, becoming more robust and sophisticated compared to its initial formulation. It is an approach in social sciences that emphasizes a deep understanding of individual experiences within social and cultural contexts. In policy analysis, phenomenological approaches are employed to examine individuals' subjective experiences of public policies and how these experiences influence perceptions and actions regarding the policies. The evolution of phenomenology and its application in policy analysis provides valuable insights into its development and relevance in contemporary public policy contexts.

The fundamental ideas of phenomenology require a comprehensive understanding of human subjective experiences and how these experiences affect individuals' thoughts and behaviors. Phenomenology examines the intrinsic characteristics of phenomena as they appear in consciousness. This foundational

concept can be applied in policy analysis to understand how individuals and communities experience, interpret, and respond to public policies in everyday interactions (Latifi et al., 2022). It enables an exploration of how subjective perspectives, values, and experiences shape individuals' and communities' responses to public policies. Policy analysis, on the other hand, involves an in-depth examination of the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of public policies. Integrating these two concepts allows for a better understanding of how individuals and communities experience, interpret, and react to public policies in their daily lives.

The phenomenological method is applied not only within the discipline of philosophy but also across various social sciences. A core idea in phenomenological inquiry is the concept of "meaning," which represents the essential content arising from human conscious experiences (Hajaroh, 2020). Applying the concept of meaning in phenomenological studies within policy research facilitates an understanding of how individuals and communities assign symbolic significance to public policies and how this meaning impacts their opinions and actions toward these policies.

Furthermore, in phenomenology, the concept of intentionality describes the interrelation between processes occurring within consciousness and the objects that are the focus of that consciousness. In the context of policy analysis, the application of intentionality can help elucidate how individuals and organizations direct their attention, actions, and attitudes toward public policies, whether consciously or unconsciously. Thus, the foundational principles of phenomenology provide a robust theoretical and methodological framework for understanding subjective experiences relevant to public policies.

Phenomenology can be utilized in policy evaluation by gaining insights into the subjective experiences of communities regarding public policies. This method facilitates an in-depth exploration of subjects' deepest consciousness concerning their experiences in the context of public policies. It enables an understanding of how perceptions, values, and subjective experiences influence the ways individuals and groups engage with public policies. For instance, a phenomenological study was conducted to explore how educators in a vocational high school perceived and

responded to the "Merdeka Belajar" policy in structuring their teaching practices (Waafiy, 2020).

Moreover, the core principles of phenomenology, specifically meaning and intentionality, can be applied in policy analysis to explain how individuals and groups assign meaning to public policies and how these meanings shape attitudes and behaviors toward such policies (Latifi et al., 2022). Consequently, applying phenomenological insights in policy analysis can provide a deeper understanding of how stakeholders comprehend, interpret, and respond to public policies.

### **Advantages of Using Phenomenological Studies in Policy Analysis**

The use of phenomenological studies in research offers several advantages, as outlined below: (1) Understanding Subjective Experiences. Phenomenology facilitates an in-depth understanding of individuals' subjective experiences regarding public policies. This approach is crucial, as societal and community responses to policies are often influenced by their perspectives, values, and personal experiences. (2) Exploring Meaning and Intentionality. By incorporating the concepts of meaning and intentionality into policy analysis, phenomenology provides insights into how individuals and communities ascribe meaning to public policies. These meanings, in turn, shape attitudes and behaviors toward policy implementation and outcomes. (3) In-Depth Understanding of Human Behavior. Phenomenology offers a robust theoretical and methodological foundation for comprehending human behavior in policy contexts. Through this approach, researchers can gain insights into how stakeholders perceive, interpret, and respond to public policies. By employing phenomenological methods, policy analysis can achieve a more profound understanding of how individuals and communities perceive and react to public policies. This method provides richer, more comprehensive insights, contributing to improved policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation.

### **Disadvantages of Using Phenomenological Studies in Policy Analysis**

Despite its advantages, phenomenological studies also present certain limitations in the context of policy analysis, as described below: (1) Subjectivity.



Phenomenological methodologies often emphasize individual subjective experiences, which can lead to highly varied interpretations of evidence. This variability poses challenges in making broad generalizations or drawing universal conclusions. (2) Time and Resource Intensive. Research methods associated with phenomenology, such as in-depth interviews and textual analysis, are time-consuming and resource-intensive. This limitation can be problematic in policy analysis, where timely and efficient decision-making is often critical. (3) Limited Generalizability. Given its focus on individual subjective experiences, phenomenological analysis may have limited applicability in generalizing findings across larger populations or broader policy contexts. This constraint can reduce the relevance and utility of findings for wider policy applications. While phenomenological approaches provide unique and valuable insights, these limitations must be carefully considered, particularly when applied to policy analysis requiring scalability and efficiency.

### **Phenomenology in Policy Analysis: Insights and Applications**

Although phenomenological techniques provide significant insights into individuals' experiences of policies, they also present limitations that must be acknowledged in the context of policy studies. Understanding subjective experiences of individuals regarding public policies may constrain the broader comprehension of phenomena in policy analysis. Below are examples of how phenomenology can contribute to understanding phenomena in policy analysis:

a) Understanding Personal Experiences

Phenomenology, as the study and description of the intrinsic nature of phenomena, enables researchers to explore individuals' subjective experiences of public policies. This approach is critical, as societal and group responses to public policies are often shaped by subjective perspectives, values, and lived experiences.

b) Exploring Meaning and Intentionality

Phenomenology helps policy analysts comprehend how individuals and communities ascribe meaning to public policies and how these meanings

influence their attitudes and behaviors toward policy implementation and outcomes.

c) **Gaining Deep Insights into Human Behavior**

Phenomenology provides a robust theoretical and methodological framework for understanding human behavior within policy contexts. Through this approach, researchers can analyze how stakeholders perceive, interpret, and react to public policies.

By employing phenomenological methods, policy analysis gains deeper insights into how individuals and communities perceive and respond to public policies, offering richer and more comprehensive perspectives that can enhance policy planning, implementation, and evaluation.

### **Phenomenological Techniques for Policy Analysis**

Several phenomenological techniques can be utilized in policy analysis to capture deeper insights, as suggested by Putriandini (2012):

a) **First-Order Understanding Data Collection**

This technique focuses on directly understanding participants' perceptions of a phenomenon. In policy analysis, it can be applied to gain a thorough understanding of how stakeholders directly experience and interpret public policies.

b) **Internal Control System Analysis**

A conventional phenomenological approach is used to analyze the implementation of internal control systems and individuals' subjective impressions of these systems, such as in studies on financial governance within consultative assemblies.

c) **Direct Understanding of Phenomena**

Phenomenology involves studying and describing the intrinsic nature of phenomena as they reveal themselves to consciousness. This technique can provide a direct understanding of how individuals and communities experience, interpret, and respond to public policies. Using this method, policy analysts can

acquire nuanced knowledge of stakeholders' interpretations and reactions to policies.

By leveraging phenomenological methodologies, policy analysis can obtain valuable insights into stakeholders' subjective experiences, offering a richer foundation for policy design and evaluation.

## **Conclusion**

Phenomenological research provides a profound and contextual framework for addressing the dynamics of public policy. This study aims to explore the subjective meanings embedded in individuals' experiences with specific government policies. By employing a phenomenological approach, it investigates the essence and structure of these experiences, thereby uncovering details often overlooked in traditional policy analyses. As a core concept in phenomenology, intentionality helps elucidate the direction of individuals' consciousness toward specific policy domains. The practices of epoché and bracketing ensure objectivity by suspending judgments and biases, enabling observations free from external influences. Through the lens of participants, phenomenological reduction distills essential structures, offering rich insights into the meanings and impacts of policies.

The findings of this research provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of societal reactions to public policy, highlighting critical aspects such as trust, uncertainty, and perceptions of justice. These findings not only enrich the public policy literature but also offer policymakers a contextualized perspective on the personal and social impacts of their policies. Critiques, such as limited generalizability and the challenges of suspending biases, present opportunities for further research development. Nonetheless, this phenomenological study introduces a more humanistic and contextual perspective on public policy, encouraging policymakers to engage in deeper reflection to better understand and address the needs and expectations of the communities they serve.

This study employs phenomenological investigation to gain a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of public policy involving individuals and organizations within society. Together with epoché and bracketing as methods to mitigate bias, intentionality as a driver of awareness provides access to the realm of personal experiences that shape societal perceptions of policy. While the study reveals valuable insights, limitations such as the constrained generalizability of findings and reliance on researcher interpretation must be addressed. Even so, the findings underscore the importance of incorporating subjective factors into policymaking. These insights can assist policymakers in developing more inclusive policies that account for the diversity of societal experiences and perspectives.

Understanding individual and group perspectives within society is increasingly critical in an increasingly complex global context. By integrating phenomenology into public policy studies, a broader discourse can emerge on how policies can better respond to citizens' needs, aspirations, and concerns. Thus, this study underscores the importance of phenomenology in reflecting on the substance of public policies and bridging the knowledge gap between policymakers and the communities they serve.

Future researchers are encouraged to broaden the scope of phenomenological methods employed, exploring diverse techniques to enhance the depth and breadth of analysis. Additionally, adopting a triangulation approach can be considered to improve the validity and reliability of findings in subsequent studies. Comparative analyses with other phenomenological studies in the field of public policy or related disciplines are also recommended to identify similarities and differences in findings, which can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. This study is expected to serve as a valuable reference for future research related to the application of phenomenological approaches in public policy analysis, providing foundational insights and frameworks to explore the complexities of public policy dynamics further.

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