

การวิเคราะห์แก่นสาระตามแนวคิดของ แมกซ์ แวน แมนเนน:

ปรากฏการณ์วิทยาแบบตีความ

สุคณิง ฤทธิ์ฤทัย* วิไลพร ขำวงษ์** เรเชล รอสเตอร์*** ไมเคิล เฮเซลตัน****

บทคัดย่อ

ปรากฏการณ์วิทยามีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อแสวงหาความรู้เกี่ยวกับความหมายของการเป็นมนุษย์ในโลก เป็นวิธีการที่พยายามจะอธิบายแก่นแท้ของปรากฏการณ์โดยปราศจากการคาดคะเนล่วงหน้าหรือการตัดสิน ผู้วิจัยเชิงปรากฏการณ์วิทยาแสวงหาข้อมูลด้วยการถามบุคคลว่ามีประสบการณ์ต่อโลกที่อาศัยอยู่อย่างไร แนวคิดปรากฏการณ์วิทยาแบบตีความของแมกซ์ แวน แมนเนน มีความเกี่ยวข้องอย่างยิ่งกับวิจัยทางการแพทย์เพราะทำให้ได้แนวทางในการเข้าใจประสบการณ์ต่อโลกของบุคคล แนวคิดนี้แบ่งขั้นตอนในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลออกเป็น 4 ขั้นตอน ซึ่งช่วยส่งเสริมให้นักวิจัยทางการแพทย์สร้างถ้อยคำเพื่อที่จะพัฒนาโครงสร้างของความหมายของข้อความหรือประเด็นหลักสำคัญของข้อมูล ประกอบด้วย (1) ถอดข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์โดยละเอียด พร้อมทั้งจัดบันทึกข้อมูลโดยเรียบเรียงอย่างเป็นระบบ (2) แยกประเด็นหลักสำคัญของข้อมูล (3) ใช้คำหรือปรับเปลี่ยนภาษาให้สามารถสื่อความหมายถึงประสบการณ์ที่ได้จากการศึกษา และ (4) เขียนบรรยายประเด็นหลักสำคัญเพื่อสะท้อนให้เห็นถึงอารมณ์ ความรู้สึกที่เกิดขึ้นในปรากฏการณ์นั้นๆ ทำให้ผู้วิจัยสามารถเข้าใจความหมายของประสบการณ์ของผู้รับบริการ เหมือนกับผู้วิจัยไปอยู่ในเหตุการณ์หรือเป็นผู้รับบริการเอง ซึ่งจะช่วยให้การบริการแก่ผู้รับบริการมีประสิทธิภาพมากยิ่งขึ้น

คำสำคัญ: ปรากฏการณ์วิทยาแบบตีความ ประสบการณ์ชีวิต การวิเคราะห์แก่นสาระ

* วิทยาลัยพยาบาลบรมราชชนนี จังหวัดนนทบุรี, E-mail: sudkhanoungp@hotmail.com

** วิทยาลัยพยาบาลบรมราชชนนี จังหวัดนนทบุรี

*** คณะพยาบาลและการผดุงครรภ์และภูมิปัญญาพื้นบ้านด้านสุขภาพ มหาวิทยาลัยชาร์ล สจ๊วต ออสเตรเลีย

**** คณะพยาบาลและการผดุงครรภ์ มหาวิทยาลัยนิวคาสเซิล ออสเตรเลีย

Thematic analysis guided by Max van Manen: Hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenological approach

Sudkhanoung Ritruetchai* Wilaiporn Khumwong** Rachel Rossiter*** Mike Hazelton****

Abstract

Phenomenology aims to seek knowledge of what it means to be human in the world. It attempts to describe the essence of phenomena without presuppositions or judgements. Phenomenological researchers seek to ask how persons experience their lived world. Max van Manen's Hermeneutic phenomenological approach is especially relevant to nursing research as it provides a way to understand how the persons experience their world. This approach also provides four steps of data analysis which encourages the nursing researchers to craft the texts in order to develop the structure of meaning of the texts or themes. They are (1) uncovering thematic aspects, (2) isolating thematic statements, (3) composing linguistic transformations, and (4) gleaning thematic descriptions. Then, the researchers would be able to understand the meaning of the experience of the clients as they lived in it and the knowledge would provide services or strategies to help clients more effectively.

Key words: hermeneutic phenomenology, lived experience, thematic analysis

* Boromarajonnani College of Nursing, Chang Wat Nonthaburi, E-mail: sudkhanoungp@hotmail.com

** Boromarajonnani College of Nursing, Chang Wat Nonthaburi

*** School of Nursing and Midwifery and Indigenous Health, Charles Sturt University, Australia

**** School of Nursing and Midwifery, The University of Newcastle Australia

Introduction

Phenomenology is both a philosophical approach and a research method which studies the lived experiences of humans or descriptions of phenomena.^{1,3} A phenomenon is anything which presents itself to someone or as one experiences.¹ Phenomenology is a philosophy because it deals in the realm of the ideal, pure, and perfect.⁴ It is also considered a methodology dealing with the practical world of concession, compromise, and approximation to investigate the phenomena. Phenomenology is described as a rigorous, critical, and systematic approach.⁵ It aims to “explicate the structure or essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon in the search for the unity of meaning which is the identification of the essence of a phenomenon, and its accurate description through the everyday lived experience.”⁶

There are several methodological interpretations of the philosophy of phenomenology (1) descriptive phenomenology (2) interpretive phenomenology, and (3) hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenological approach.⁵ The differences of each philosophy are briefly described below.

Husserl is the father of a descriptive phenomenology. Central to Husserl’s approach is bracketing or *epoche*: the procedure of phenomenological reduction. This is a starting point for researchers employing descriptive phenomenology.¹ Researchers working with this approach seek to ignore their previous prejudices and experiences of the outer world and individual biases.⁷ They attempt to disconnect from the past to reframe their judgement of the present in order to successfully achieve contact with essences.⁸ The researchers defend the

objectivity of interpretation against their self-interest.⁹ For Husserl this enabled the researcher to see the phenomenon as it really is.

The work of Heidegger and Gadamer is recognised as pioneering in the field of interpretive phenomenology. Heidegger was concerned with the nature and relations of being. He said that the development of understanding is called ‘interpretation’.¹⁰ Individuals’ interpretation is based on their background and culture. They have the world and life at a cultural level through acts of interpretation.⁹ Heidegger contended that “to be human is to be interpretive, for the very nature of human realm is interpretive”.¹¹ Gadamer was one of Heidegger’s students. Gadamer agreed with Heidegger that understanding is the foundation of people existing in the world.¹² The interpretive process is conceptualised as a spiral moving back and forth from the part of the text to the whole to increase the depth of understanding.⁹ This process has been called ‘the hermeneutic circle’.¹¹

For van Manen, being grounded in both German and Dutch philosophy, “phenomenology is a philosophy of the unique; it is interested in what is essentially not replaceable”.¹³ The hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenological approach is described by van Manen is “Phenomenology describes how one orients to lived experiences, hermeneutics describes how one interprets the “texts” of life, and semiotics is used here to develop a practical writing or linguistic approach to the method of phenomenology and hermeneutics.”¹³

The central idea of the approach is to gain access to clients’ perspectives of their interpretations and meanings

associated with lived experience. These can be gained by accessing participants' words using in-depth interviews.¹⁴

To gain any deeper understanding of lived experience, the researcher needs to focus on subjectivist points of view toward the object using methods such as description, interpretation, and self-reflection or critical analysis.¹³

The major concepts of different phenomenological methodologies have been briefly discussed. Each school of thought shares similar foundations, however each has developed its own perspective for the application of these foundations in practice. For effectiveness, the selected method must fit with the research question of the proposed study. It also has to relate to the theory underpinning and guiding the study.

For commentators such as Dowling¹⁵, van Manen's approach provides a means of dealing with the difficulties of phenomenological reduction, and "reflects the ongoing transformation of phenomenology as a methodological approach". Koch⁹ has asserted that to understand clients or a community, or to improve nursing care, nursing research questions are best answered interpretively. Therefore, this paper choose to explore Max van Manen's hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenological approach. It also explains the framework of van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Then, the thematic analysis underpinning van Manen approach which has been highly influential in nursing research are described.¹⁵

Max van Manen's hermeneutic (interpretive)

phenomenological approach

For van Manen¹³ the study of humans who have consciousness and act purposefully in the world by creating the meanings that express such existence is human science research. The broad aim of such research is to interpret the meaning of phenomena and to understand the lived structures of meanings.

Human science researchers interpret and explore descriptions which are sufficiently detailed to understand and explain how we know what we know.¹³ They focus on the object of study which presents in front of them in a unique and personal way.¹³ This is an epistemology of human science related to the belief that meaning comes from the interpretation of people as they engage in the world and it emerges when consciousness engages with them. Meaning cannot be described as objective or subjective.¹⁶ Objectivity and subjectivity need to be carried and held together permanently to construct the meaning.¹⁶ To gain any deeper understanding of lived experience, the researcher needs to focus on subjectivist points of view toward the object using methods such as description, interpretation, and self-reflection or critical analysis.¹³

In particular, phenomenology studies day-to-day lived experiences of people which present themselves to consciousness.¹³ van Manen's approach is an attempt to explore experience without bracketing the researcher's understandings about that experience. It is only through consciousness that people are able to interpret their experiences and the effect of the world on their physical embodiment. van Manen¹³ offers a conceptual framework of phenomenology, as set out below.

The framework of van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological approach

1. Phenomenological research is the study of lived experience.

Phenomenology is the study of the lifeworld of humans. It aims to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of everyday experiences and insightful descriptions of the way people experience the world. Lived experience is an immediate and pre-reflective experience; as such lived experience does not involve conceptualisation, categorisation or reflecting. Individuals cannot control the world but with plausible insights, they can have contact with the world directly.

2. Phenomenological research is the explication of phenomena as they present themselves to consciousness.

Human beings present themselves to consciousness. Thus, people access or relate to the world through their consciousness. "Consciousness is always transitive...and cannot be described directly".¹³ This means that individuals cannot describe the experience while they are living in it. They reflect retrospectively on experience which is already passed or lived through.

3. Phenomenological research is the study of essences.

Phenomenology attempts to find and describe the internal meaning structure of lived experience or essence. The essence of a phenomenon is universal. It may be grasped through the study of instances as they are encountered in lived experience. For example: "What is the nature or essence of the experience of learning?"¹³ The essence of lived experiences is described and supported by

the descriptions which fully present the significance of the experiences.¹³

4. Phenomenological research is the description of experiential meanings as we live them.

Phenomenology focuses on lived or existential meanings. The meanings are described and interpreted until they reach the depth and richness of understanding. The meanings are also explicated as they are lived through.

5. Phenomenological research is the human scientific study of phenomena.

Phenomenology is human science research. It is comprised of five characteristics of scientific ways of knowing including (1) studying the structures of meaning of the lived human world, (2) employing specific practices of questioning, reflecting, focusing, and intuiting to conduct the study, (3) attempting to articulate the essence, the structures of meaning of lived experience as we live through the form of text, (4) continually checking goals and methods of the study in trying to deal with the faults of its approach, and (5) allowing the researchers to develop a dialogue with others to validate the phenomenon under study.

6. Phenomenological research is the attentive practice of thoughtfulness.

Phenomenological researchers are interested in studying everyday practices that concern them. They know how "to act tactfully in [their] situations on the basis of a carefully edified thoughtfulness."¹³ The researchers may be teachers, nurses, or parents who are responsible for people with whom they are involved. For example, nurses may be interested in studying their everyday practices associated with being with patients or clients. Thus, the use of

phenomenological study related to the researchers' role is a ministering of thoughtfulness.

7. Phenomenological research is a search for what it means to be human.

Phenomenology searches for the meaning of lived experience. Importantly, individuals' background, the socio-cultural and the historical traditions from which they come, gives meaning to their 'being-in-the-world'. Thus, the meaning of being as a human in the world is fully revealed. This serves the ultimate goal of hermeneutic research which is to fulfil human nature, "to become more fully who we are."¹³

8. Phenomenological research is a poetising activity.

The result of phenomenological study is characterised and presented by the passion and aim of the research process.¹⁷ Phenomenology is a poetising project in which the original experience is presented as 'a primal telling'; it aims to include the voice of the participants to the world.¹³ Language does not speak of itself but it echoes the world.¹⁷ Therefore, the findings of the approach are full of all reality from the participants' voice.

van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological understand approach is clarified. The broad aim of phenomenological reflection is to the essential meaning of something.¹³ The process of reflection must be appropriate and be clarified to make explicit the structure of the meaning of that lived experience. van Manen¹³ says, "meaning is multi-dimensional and multi-layered". To understand the meaning of the text, the phenomenon described in the text is analysed as themes. Four levels of

thematic analysis are involved and these are set out in some detail below.

Thematic analysis underpinning van Manen approach

Phenomenological research seeks to uncover the meaning of lived experience. van Manen¹³ states that phenomenological themes are the structures of experience. Therefore, a theme can be thought of as "the experience of focus, of meaning, of point, and the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand...Theme formulation is at best a simplification."¹³ van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological approach provides four steps of analysis for the researchers to explore and gain a deeper and richer understanding of the meaning of the lived experience of people under study. The four steps are (1) uncovering thematic aspects (2) isolating thematic statements (3) composing linguistic transformations, and (4) gleaning thematic descriptions. This section provides an example of thematic analysis following the approach described by van Manen.¹⁴ It includes the process of thematic analysis and descriptions from interview transcription of caregivers of people with mental illness as below.

1. Uncovering thematic aspects

The interview transcript must be prepared once after the interview. The researcher checks the accuracy of the transcripts by listening to the recording while simultaneously reading the transcripts. This process is repeated until an accurate interview transcription is achieved. This process also provides an opportunity for the researcher to engage with and reflect on the text. The researcher also looks for areas for more exploration and further clarification.

2. Isolating thematic statements

During this stage of the process, the researcher repeatedly listens to the recordings, rereads transcripts, and reflects on the text. This is maintained throughout and following the period of data collection. Three levels emerge in this thematic analysis:

- A holistic or sententious approach: Initially the whole text is read and described in terms of a phrase. The aim here is to capture the fundamental meaning of the text as a whole.

Holistic approach: Caring for a loved one with mental illness means a difficulty in having to live with fear. Fear comes from “don’t know what’s going to happen”. There are a lot of unpredictable situations resulting from the loved ones’ symptoms of mental illness that create the feeling of fear.

Theme: Living with fear

- A selective or highlighting approach: The recorded data are listened to and read a number of times. The aim here is to identify statement(s) or phrase(s) which seem particularly essential to or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described and highlighting these.

Selective approach:

“...he once pressed my arm to the floor. Press down. I told him, “Dee, this is Mother.” He regained himself and released me. He told others that he teased me, teased me for fun. We did not know what our son would do.”

“Stunned with fear, of course...One time I was frightened, my heart sank, he stood there stiff and black. I was frightened that I might not find him anymore. If we

could not find him, we could not find him, because being mad, he would run on and on, right? He had not taken any medicine at all.”

- The detailed or line by line approach: The text is read line by line to examine the sentence(s) which reveal the phenomenon of interest.

Line by line approach:

“We did not know what our son would do...”

“Stunned with fear...”

“...I was frightened, my heart sank...”

“I was frightened that I might not find him anymore.”

Essential theme

I’m overwhelmed with fear

As themes are built up they are constantly checked against the interview transcriptions to ensure they reflect the phenomenon of interest. The thematic descriptions and explanations are carefully chosen to demonstrate the essence of the phenomenon. Through this process the themes and thematic phrases alluding to the phenomenon of interest for the whole group are set, in respect of individual participants. An example of a developing essential theme of the whole group is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Example of conducting thematic analysis for the whole group

Descriptions	Thematic analysis
When he went for treatment in [the provincial] hospital for about two months, it was difficult. And I have looked after him continually ever since he became ill . I must feed him food and water. And if he was not happy about something, he would throw the rice away spilling it all over my face. That was what he did, when he was unsatisfied about something. And when he did a poo, oh my , sometimes he smeared it all over the sleeping place. It has not been easy at all. Oh my, I am tired to death of it . Sometimes I sit and cry alone. Why does Ku have to be in such a hardship as this? Truly, truly, you see. Oh my, I have such great hardship. (Interviewee 2)	Holistic approach: This participant experienced caring as a prolonged burden. She was very tired and felt as if it was difficult for her to deal with difficulties which came from having to care for her loved ones in every way and being abused. Selective approach: And I have looked after him continually ever since he became ill . Line by line approach: "... continually ever since he became ill..."
Taking care of this kind of person is burdensome to my heart as well as to my body...He kept trying to get out, again and again. So I was stressed. I had to get out too. I need to earn our living. When I let him stay home by himself, he just wanders away. I have to work in the rice field... It is tiring, very, very tiring . It's a great burden to my heart. (Interviewee 3)	Holistic approach: The participant stated clearly that caring for a loved one with mental illness was a burden. She was very tired and stressed during her care giving roles. Selective approach: I have to work in the rice field... It is tiring, very, very tiring . It's a great burden to my heart. Line by line approach: "... It is tiring, very, very tiring "

The two descriptions present in Table 1 are examples of the lived experience of participants having to care for their loved one with mental illness over an extended period of time. In each case the participants express great tiredness in their care giving roles. A thematic statement is set to represent this experience as 'living with prolonged burdens'.

1. Composing linguistic transformations

Thematic statements are captured in more phenomenologically sensitive paragraphs using methods such as writing and generating illustrative examples pertaining to the phenomenon of interest. The building up of these thematic statements involves (1) ongoing dialogue with the co-researchers (2) writing and rewriting the theme using a short thigh and powerful sentence or phrase

(3) checking and rechecking the meaning of the theme against the descriptions to ensure that the theme represent the whole group. For example, the thematic statement set out in Table 1 'Living with prolonged burdens' is composed and changed to 'There is no end in sight'.

2. Gleaning thematic descriptions

Descriptions explaining themes are developed with close attention being paid to maintaining the essence of the phenomenon of interest. This involved reflection on how to group the identified experiences of care giving, and care giving associated crisis, using a genuine artistic expression. Further to this from Table 1, descriptions of the interviewed transcriptions are selected and used to support the theme.

Four levels of thematic analysis are involved in the reflection on the descriptions and these are set out in some detail in the section above. The broad purpose of the reflective activities referred to above is to gain insight into and describe the essential meaning of the experience that is the focus of the nurses' interest.

Conclusion

This paper has provided a description of Max van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological approach basic foundation. The value of hermeneutic phenomenological research as an effective tool for deepening understanding and awareness of a specific experience has been demonstrated. Following a brief consideration of the theoretical basis to research procedures informed by hermeneutic phenomenology, the approach to data analysis was set out in details. The thematic analysis has been outlined with the example for nursing researchers to apply for practice. The researchers will gain more understanding of meaning of the lived experience of people under study without losing its essence in the process of transcription. Then, they would be able to provide help and support for those in need effectively.

References

1. Hammond M, Howarth J, Keat R. Understanding phenomenology. Oxford: Blackwell; 1991.
2. Lopez KA, Willis DG. Descriptive versus interpretive phenomenology: Their contributions to nursing knowledge. Qual Health Res. 2004;14(5):726-35.
3. Munhall PL. Revisioning phenomenology: Nursing and health science research. New York: National League for Nursing; 1994.
4. Swanson-Kauffman KM, Schonwald E. Phenomenology. In: Sarter B, editor. Paths to knowledge: Innovative research methods for nursing. New York: National League for Nursing; 1988. p. 97-105.
5. Carpenter DR. Phenomenology as method. In: Helen J, Speziale S, Carpenter DR, editors. Qualitative research in nursing: Advancing the humanistic imperative. 4th ed. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams&Wilkins; 2007. p. 75-101.
6. Rose P, Beeby J, Parker D. Academic rigour in the lived experience of researchers using phenomenological methods in nursing. J Adv Nurs. 1995;21(6):1123-29.
7. Stewart D, Mickunas A. Exploring phenomenology: A guide to the field and its literature. 2nd ed. Athens: Ohio University Press; 1990.
8. Lavery SM. Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations. Int J Qual Methods. 2003;2(3):21-35.
9. Koch T. An interpretive research process: Revisiting phenomenological and hermeneutical approaches. Nurse Researcher. 1999;6(3):20-34.
10. Heidegger M. Being and time. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers; 1962.
11. Polkinghorne DE. Methodology for the human sciences: Systems of inquiry. Albany: State University of New York Press; 1983.
12. Ray MA. The richness of phenomenology: Philosophic, theoretical, and methodologic concerns. In: Morse JM, editor. Critical issues in qualitative research methods.

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications; 1994.

p. 117-33.

13. van Manen M. Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy. State University of New York Press: New York; 1990.
14. Minichiello V, Aroni R, Timewell E, Alexander L. In-depth interviewing: Principles, techniques, analysis. 2nd ed. Melbourne: Longman; 1995.
15. Dowling M. From Husserl to van Manen: A review of different phenomenological approaches. *Int J Nurs Stud*. 2007;44(1):131-42.
16. Crotty M. The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications; 1998.
17. Boyd CO. Phenomenology: The method. In: Munhall PL, editor. *Nursing research: A qualitative perspective*. 3rd ed. Sudbury: Jones and Bartlett; 2001. p. 93-122.