

PHENOMENOLOGY IN QUALITATIVE INQUIRY: A REVIEW PAPER

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Abstract

**Background:** Phenomenology, as a qualitative research method, aims to achieve a comprehensive understanding of individuals lived experiences, often referred to as the "lifeworld." Actions, thoughts, feelings, and sensory perceptions collectively shape these experiences and inform how individuals engage with their environment.

**Objectives:** To review the key concepts of phenomenological inquiry as a qualitative research approach.

**Methods:** The relevant literature was searched across databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect. The PRISMA flow-chart was used to document the literature review process. This study includes the 10 out of 100 studies that fulfilled the inclusion criteria in the final review. Research studies published in the last 5 years, in English, with full-text availability, and review articles were included. The data from these studies were synthesized using a qualitative methodology to identify common themes across the literature.

**Results:** The study of phenomenology provides a crucial framework for researchers to explore and recognize individuals lived experiences.

**Conclusion:** Phenomenology provides an important perspective for researchers to explore individuals' real-world experiences.

INTRODUCTION

Phenomenology is often defined as the investigation of phenomena, as they appear in individual lived experiences, perception, and comprehension of these phenomena, and the significance they hold within subjective reality. Various forms of phenomenology exist, each originating from distinct perspectives on the nature and understanding of human experience. [1]. An individual's actions, thoughts, feelings, and senses all contribute to their lived

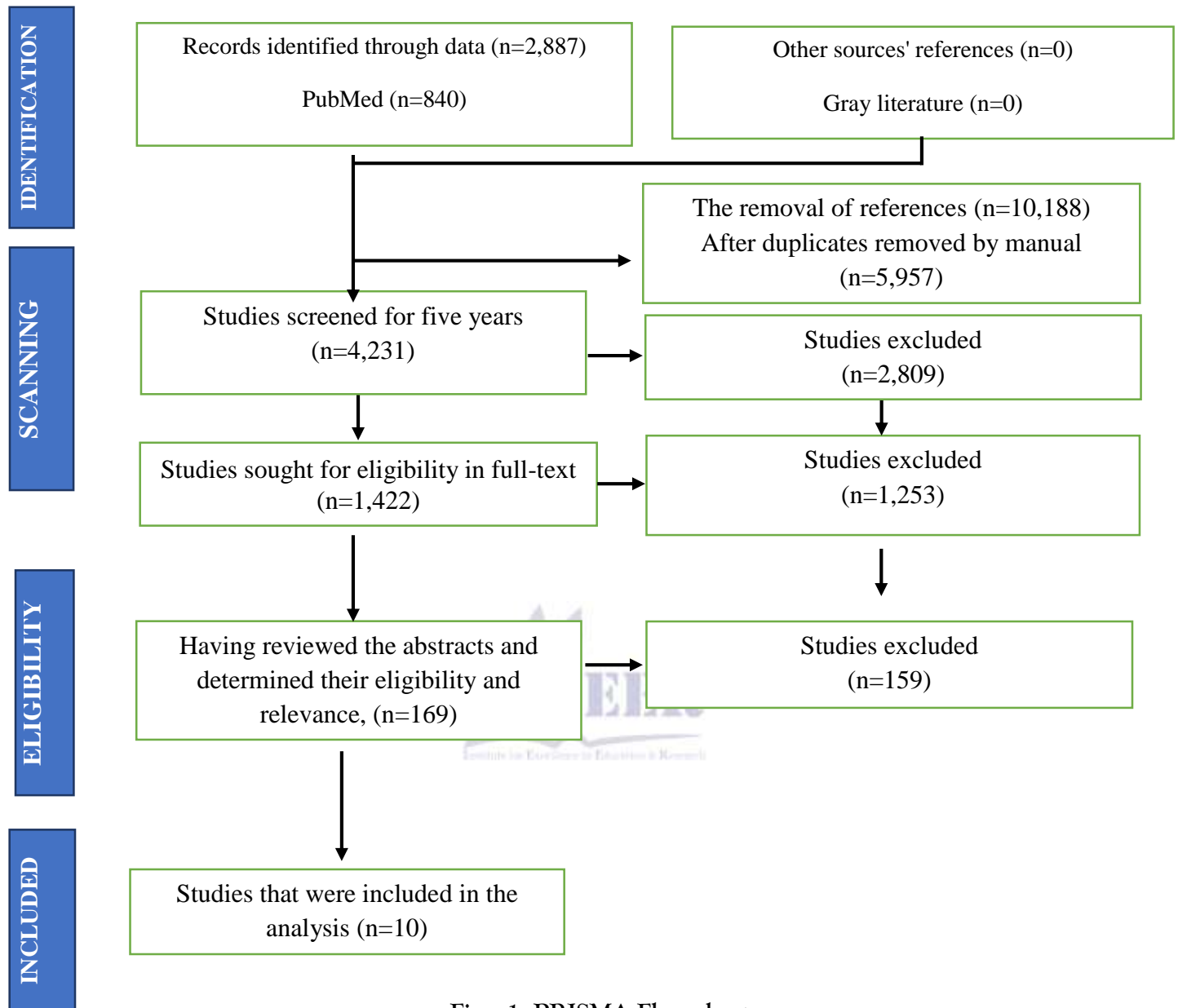
experience, which is how they interact with the world [2]. Numerous phenomenological methodologies are accessible. Employing phenomenology necessitates a researcher's familiarity with fundamental assumptions to guide significant methodological choices. Consequently, comprehending the foundations of the chosen approach is vital. Nonetheless, grasping and implementing phenomenological principles in the research process can prove

challenging [3]. Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty are widely recognized as some of the primary figures in the development of phenomenology. While their writings may pose challenges in readability and comprehension, they offer foundational insights that remain profoundly significant for those deeply engaged in the study of phenomenology [4]. In simpler terms, phenomenological research often involves returning to the essence of lived or primary experiences, a concept known as "turning back zu den Sachen." It's about exploring what presents itself in a person's consciousness as the phenomenon or event of lived experiences [5]. Furthermore, the German philosopher Edmund Husserl is widely regarded as the founding father of phenomenology (Zahavi, 2018). Husserl's work centers on consciousness, viewing the human being as a multifaceted entity existing not only in the physical realm but also in the realm of consciousness. This conscious experience is intimately linked with the body, forming a unified conscious bodily existence [6]. Edmund Husserl is the progenitor of phenomenology, a viewpoint also explored by Stephenson (1988). Specifically, investigated aspects developed by what is often referred to as the "first Husserl," encompassing elements elucidated in his early phenomenological works such as "Logical Investigations" and "Ideas I." These foundational texts are rooted in a static analysis approach [7]. The analytical approach in phenomenology involves five key steps guided by the phenomenological attitude. First, researchers engage in repeated readings of the data to grasp their essence and significance. Next, they categorize the data into meaningful units. Then, researchers employ a descriptive, reflective, and hermeneutic writing style to articulate their

findings, focusing on conveying the richness of meaning inherent in the data. As they write, essential factors and themes emerge, which are deduced and explored further. Finally, researchers deduce the basic structure of the lived experiences based on the emerging themes and factors identified during the analysis. [8]. The study aimed to review key concepts in qualitative research.

## METHODS:

The relevant literature was searched across databases such as PubMed, Academia, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect. The PRISMA flow-chart was used to document the literature review process. This study includes the 10 out of 169 studies that fulfilled the inclusion criteria in the final review. Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) were used on PubMed, and research studies published in the last 5 years, in English, with full text available, were included. Review articles were excluded. In contrast, those related to the research studies were excluded. Similarly, by filtering and searching peer-reviewed academic journals for the same data range, 1,908 related research studies were discovered. A similar approach was applied to Google Scholar and ScienceDirect. Keywords such as phenomenological, methodological, and framework were used to streamline the search and identify relevant studies. The initial search showed 10,188 results. Following eligibility screening of 5,957 full-text studies, citations and abstracts were filtered to yield 169 results. After that, they reviewed the abstracts and titles of the papers, excluded 80, and selected the 10 most closely related to the study for final review. The PRISMA chart is presented for this study (Figure 1



Figur1. PRISMA Flow chart

## RESULTS:

The following 10,188 results were obtained from the initial search. In the end, 10 research studies were selected for this review. The results show that the methodological frameworks in these studies offer a robust foundation for conducting

phenomenological research, especially in guiding investigators toward deeper insight and interpretation of lived experiences. The entire search phase for the study was described in detail (Table 1).

**Table 1: Description of included studies**

S. No	Author	Year	Country	Aim of the Study	Key Findings
9	Parthasarathy et al.	2023	USA	Aims at exploring university students' perceptions of their dietary behaviors.	Participants reported eating more meals prepared at home and snacking more frequently.
10	Low Kellett, et al.	2020	Australia	Explores the lived experiences of community-dwelling older people living in one-person households.	Three themes were identified: active and meaningful community connectedness; eating well and behaviors to promote dietary resilience
11	Eisenberg et al.	2024	UK	Explores how people who have developed a heightened preoccupation with healthy eating after a cancer diagnosis.	Themes of personal development following cancer, characterized by a positive identity shift and a renewed commitment to healthy eating, were identified through the analysis.
12	Cunningham et al.	2023	USA	Aimed to gain insight into the nurse's lived experience of transferring nutrition knowledge to patients.	Participants used teamwork to overcome obstacles and provide comprehensive nutritional care.
13	Estiningtyas et al.	2020	Indonesia	Aims to describe the nutritional support of children with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia.	The physiological issues associated with chemotherapy, nutritional support during chemotherapy, nutritional knowledge, and socioeconomic factors were the five themes that surfaced.
14	Amiruddin et al.	2021	Indonesia	To find out the nutritional parenting patterns of children who are stunted in the working area of the Health Centre.	Parenting affects toddlers who experience stunting in the working area.
15	Liljeberg et al	2022	Sweden	To deepen the understanding of what oral nutritional supplements mean to patients.	Oral nutritional supplements are a one-dimensional remedy, and the Use of Everyday oral nutritional supplements is regulated autonomously.
16	Sousa Campos et al.	2020	Brazil	Describes the relationship of bereaved mothers with eating habits.	The eating habits of bereaved mothers were described by four themes: loss of pleasure and appetite, sharing meals while grieving, facing the "empty chair,"

					and emotional responses to cooking as a representation of the child's memory.
17	Tsai et al	2020	Taiwan	Aimed to explore the motivations behind family member visits to the nursing home.	Providing food tailored to residents' needs, providing a comforting family atmosphere, and assisting residents during mealtime.
18	Von Essen et al.	2021	Sweden	Examine the transition to a plant-based diet by young adults and the challenges and conflicts this brings.	Five aspects were involved in the shift to a plant-based diet: skill development, integration of experiences, emotional control, adaptation of customs, and health-driven inquiry.

**DISCUSSION**

This research reviewed significant patterns in the use and methodological rigor of phenomenological inquiry revealed by the systematic analysis of the 10 selected studies. Solely barely any of the 10,188 articles that resulted from a thorough initial search satisfied the rigorous standards for methodological coherence, underscoring the difficulties in differentiating genuine phenomenological research from qualitative studies that are only broadly labelled. This result was consistent with recent findings that researchers' conceptions and applications of phenomenological methods frequently differ significantly, especially in interdisciplinary contexts [19]. Despite these advantages, the methodological robustness of some research articles may be compromised by the lack of explicit elaboration of their phenomenological frameworks. This disparity reflects criticism from recent reviews that many qualitative studies only partially incorporate phenomenological philosophy into their design and analysis, resulting in implementations that are inconsistent or superficial [19].

Moreover, the importance of lived experience as a phenomenon relevant to the studies is a recurring theme. In line with recent research that underscores the breadth and contextual richness of participants' experiences, phenomenological approaches prioritize capturing detailed, complex accounts of those experiences. Phenomenology

supports qualitative research, that is, research influenced by lived experience, especially in the social sciences, healthcare, and education [20].

Furthermore, the use of phenomenology in psychology and the health sciences continues to grow, demonstrating its usefulness beyond conventional social science settings. In particular, recent research on the affective and temporal aspects of chronic illnesses has demonstrated how phenomenological analysis can uncover intricate experiential structures that quantitative approaches might miss [21]. Additionally, Coyoca and Ray (2025) provided researchers with a methodological roadmap for qualitative analysis by demonstrating how phenomenological caring inquiry is methodically applied in nursing research and other professions [22]. In a similar vein, Rashid and Mowla (2025) further validated structured approaches to meaning-making in lived experience studies by illuminating the steps involved in phenomenological inquiry within an empirical research context [23]. Zeiler et al. (2025) demonstrated the usefulness of phenomenological frameworks for capturing experiential nuance, using a philosophically grounded phenomenological analysis to examine affectivity and temporality in the lived experiences of COVID-19 [24]. This review emphasizes how phenomenological methodological frameworks remain relevant and continue to evolve in today's qualitative research.

Their ability to shed light on lived experiences with nuance and conceptual clarity confirms phenomenology's special role in comprehending human phenomena. For researchers seeking to maintain the integrity of phenomenological inquiry in contemporary scholarly practice, maintaining methodological fidelity and a philosophical foundation remains a crucial challenge.

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