



A Phenomenological Exploration Of Spiritual Encounters In Medan's Christian Communities

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of phenomenological research on the capacity of Christian congregations in Medan City to embody and live out spiritual values in their daily lives, by exploring both the transformative potential offered and the challenges faced in integrating phenomenological insights into faith practices. The study employs a descriptive qualitative methodology rooted in a systematic literature review, gathering insights through literature that focuses on the experiences of church congregations in Medan City. The findings highlight potential pathways for integrating phenomenological studies to cultivate life values among Christian congregations, including addressing obstacles such as methodological unfamiliarity, limited resources, and access barriers in deepening the understanding and application of Biblical teachings. The study also reveals significant challenges, such as ethical considerations in raising congregational awareness of the enlightenment process, as well as limitations in data analysis that affect the effectiveness of delivering Biblical messages. This research underscores the importance of phenomenological learning as a means to enrich religious understanding among Christians, enabling them to confront and overcome challenges in practicing spiritual values and fostering love within the diverse socio-religious landscape of Medan City.

Keywords: Phenomenological, Study, Religious, Church, Members

INTRODUCTION

Christians in some countries have various kinds of spiritual experiences that should be interpreted that these spiritual experiences will make these Christians contribute to the Church regarding their desire to face their creator and repent, where they accept Jesus Christ as their Savior after realizing their transgressions (Irving Josafat Alexander, Sirait, Sibarani, & Sitorus, 2023). This encounter is often considered the beginning of their spiritual journey. Christians often combine personal encounters with God, connections within the church, and acts of service to others in their spiritual journey. While these experiences may differ,

they often unite people in common Christian activities and beliefs (Pardede et al, 2024). The spiritual experiences of Christians generally touch on a number of common themes, such as salvation and conversion (del Castillo, del Castillo, & Corpuz, 2021), through the remarkable moment of conversion experienced by many Christians, where they realize their sins and surrender their lives to Jesus Christ as their Savior. This encounter is often considered the beginning of their spiritual journey, Interaction with God through Dda, through an important aspect in the spiritual life of a Christian is prayer (Akurut, 2022). Through prayer, individuals feel God's presence and communication, receive comfort, strength, and wisdom, feel the truth of the Bible: many Christians experience moments when they are deeply moved to tears because of what they read in the Bible. Enlightenment or a fresh perspective on the spiritual realities represented in the biblical texts may come to mind (I J Alexander et al., 2024). Church Community Experience: For Christians, being part of a church community is often a significant spiritual experience. Together with other churchgoers, they gain support, brotherhood, and shared ministry (I J Alexander, 2025), all of which serve to strengthen and enhance their faith and relationship with God, as well as the experience of service, where serving others, both inside and outside the church, is a vocation shared by many Christians. They often encounter God's presence and guidance in their lives through these service activities (Chapman Jr, 2018). This religious experience cannot be broadly interpreted through our intellect and mind, but can be seen from the spiritual ability to interpret every verse in the Bible, such as the experience of service, through the common calling among many Christians is to serve others, both inside and outside the church. Through this service project, they generally feel God's presence and guidance in their lives, understanding spiritual realities, the Bible contains profound spiritual realities regarding promise, sin, redemption, and God's grace. Christians learn more about the spiritual and moral teachings that guide them towards a God-pleasing life through Bible study (Clato-Day, 2020). The Bible has the ability to change people's minds and emotions. Through reading, meditating, and internalizing the Scriptures, Christians allow the Holy Spirit to shape their minds and characters according to God's will (Coburn, 2019). Christians can find direction and guidance in the Bible when facing various obstacles and life circumstances. Biblical passages provide useful advice for acting morally, making wise judgments, and living a Christ-centered life (Whitney Sr.). Christians have the ability to deepen their faith and render better service to God because of the Bible. Verses of Scripture inspire individuals to live out their spiritual calling and carry out their ministry responsibilities with fervor. Christians continue to grow in their spirituality and become more Christ-like by reading, studying, and living the lessons found in the Bible. There is a phenomenological study of religious experience among Christian congregations, where this phenomenological study is at the root of the theological experience of Christian congregations in addressing the understanding of their religious experience. The purpose of phenomenological research methodology is to describe and understand directly the human experience without the need for presumption or explanation (Combest Sr, 2022). Methods that focus on directly describing, understanding, and interpreting people's subjective experiences of religious issues in everyday life are used in phenomenological studies of religious experience. The religious experience of each church congregation is created and described in accordance

with the questions that will be asked of the existing church congregation, where this study is carried out through the selection of people or groups to be the subject of study based on their meaningful and relevant religious experiences (Sirait et al, 2024). This can include those with significant spiritual experiences, religious leaders, or members of church congregations, comprehensive interviews with subjects. In-depth and open-ended interviews are conducted by researchers, allowing individuals to share their experiences openly. Open-ended questions are meant to encourage deep thinking and dialogue (Copeland, 2022). The main themes and patterns that emerged in the participants' religious experiences were determined by the researchers after the interviews were completed. This entailed classifying and organizing the relevant data according to the themes that naturally emerged from the data (Corley, 2018).

Researchers considered the results of the data analysis and attempted to decipher the underlying meanings. They look for overarching trends, differences between individuals, and the broader impact of the religious experiences shared by participants (Fee, 2018). Researchers may create new ideas or conceptual frameworks regarding religious experiences based on the research findings (Old, 2020). Understanding religious processes, the variables that influence these experiences, and their impact on people's lives and society may fall under this category (Hayes, 2021). It is important for researchers to ensure that phenomenological studies are conducted according to strict guidelines for research quality. This requires consideration of research ethics as well as the interests of participants, in addition to data validity, reliability of findings, and accuracy of interpretations (Jenkins, 2022). Medan is one of the cities in North Sumatra Province that has a large Christian community, where the example of Christians, as well as the spiritual experience of their congregation, will be able to create faith, and goodness, both through the teachings of the Bible itself, and through phenomenological studies. This study will create an in-depth analysis of how this phenomenological study is able to create and produce Christians who can apply spiritual values in life, as well as what are the obstacles and challenges in the application of phenomenological studies in order to make the Christian congregation aware and able to apply goodness according to the teachings of the Bible (Luedtke & Sneed, 2018). explains that phenomenological study is a research approach that aims to understand the subjective meaning of human experience in the context of everyday life. This approach was developed by philosopher Edmund Husserl in the early 20th century and has become an important approach in various fields, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, and other social sciences. In phenomenological studies, researchers seek to place themselves in the subject experiencing the phenomenon being studied, focusing on the description of the direct position and direct experience of the subject. This means that researchers seek to see the world from the subject's point of view, without importing their own assumptions or frames of reference (Murphy, Jones, & Nigbur, 2023). Phenomenological studies make an important contribution to understanding human experience in depth and complexity, and help us to understand the subjective perspectives of individuals in various life contexts (Walker, 2019). The phenomenological study of religious experience among Christian congregations is a research approach that explores individuals' subjective experiences of religion in the context of their lives as members of Christian congregations. Phenomenology

is a research approach that focuses on the direct description and understanding of human experience, without making prior assumptions or interpretations (Musoni, 2021). General steps in a phenomenological study include:

1. Description of phenomena, where the researcher begins by collecting data that describes the subject's experience in detail and depth. This is often done through in-depth interviews, observations, or journal entries.
2. Understanding Meaning, where the researcher then seeks to understand the meaning contained in the subject's experience. This involves reflection and analysis of the data collected, focusing on a direct interpretation of the experience.
3. Identification of Themes and Patterns: The researcher looks for common patterns, themes, or structures that emerge in the data collected. This helps to organize and categorize the subject's experiences.
4. Validation and Interpretation, where researchers attempt to validate the results of their analysis by going back to the subjects or comparing their findings with previous studies. Interpretation of the study results can also be done by rocking the findings with existing theories or with a broader context (Neal, 2024).

Life History, where in some cases, the researcher may also be interested in exploring the subject's background or life context that may have influenced their experiences. This could involve questions about life history, culture, or relevant past experiences (Rainwater, 2019).

Religious experiences within Christian congregations can vary widely depending on individual backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences (Hunter, McCallum, & Howes, 2019). Religious experience in Christian congregations is often a combination of these elements, which work together to strengthen faith, deepen relationship with God, and extend the influence of Christian faith in daily life(Old, 2020).

There are some common themes that often emerge in the religious communities of Christian congregations:

1. Corporate Worship, where the experience of corporate worship is an important part of Christian congregational life. This includes activities such as worship, corporate prayer, Bible reading, and the preaching of the Word. Corporate worship provides opportunities for the congregation to experience God's presence collectively and to strengthen community bonds.
2. Personal and Communal Prayer through prayer is the primary way for members of a Christian congregation to communicate with God personally. However, there is also prayer done communally in small groups or during church services. The experience of prayer can bring peace, strength, and the perception of answers to prayer which is considered important in spiritual growth (Ouwelhand, 2019).
3. Bible study and teaching, where Christians often experience spiritual growth through Bible study and teaching. This could be in the form of Bible classes, sermons, or small study groups where they can learn and understand more about the teachings of the Bible and how to apply them in their daily lives.

4. Service and Mission, where for many Christians, the religious experience also includes service and mission within their community. This could be social service, assistance to the needy, or evangelization efforts to share their faith with others.
5. Community Unity and Care through relationships within the church community can be a significant experience for many Christians. The sense of brotherhood, support, and affection among fellow congregation members strengthens faith and provides moral encouragement in the face of life's challenges (Paras, Sy, & Tus, 2021)

Christians' spiritual experiences are often a blend of intimate moments with God, relationships within the church community, and service to others. Although such experiences vary, they often unite individuals in shared beliefs and practices of the Christian faith (D L Pardede, Pardede, Siahaan, Alexander, & Sirait, 2024). Spiritual experiences that exist within a church congregation can play an important role in shaping faith and piety towards God (D L Pardede, Pardede, Siahaan, Marpaung, et al., 2024).

METODE

This research explains how the role of church congregations in Medan City in applying spiritual values through phenomenological studies, where by understanding these phenomenological study church congregations in Medan City can apply spiritual values in life according to the teachings of the Bible (Pasaribu, Pardede, Alexander, & Pardede, 2024). This research uses a descriptive qualitative method using a systematic review model, where data collection techniques are carried out using literature studies and the data sources are church congregations in Medan City. This research approach is a descriptive quantitative method through a systematic review method, where (Hunter, D. J., Mccallum & and Howes, 2019) states that this method uses a research approach that uses qualitative analysis to explain and describe the findings of previous qualitative studies in a particular field or topic. This systematization review aims to present a comprehensive picture of the topic being studied, clarify the findings that have been found, and identify patterns or themes that emerge from these studies. The data collection technique is carried out using a literature study and the data source is the Church Congregation in Medan City, where according to (Pastori, 2022) literature study is a systematic process for collecting, reviewing, and analyzing relevant literature related to a particular research topic. The aim is to gain a comprehensive understanding of recent developments in a particular field, identify knowledge gaps, and provide theoretical foundations for further research (Prince, 2023). The formulation of the problem in this study is how much this phenomenological study is able to create and produce Christian congregations in Medan City who can apply spiritual values in life, as well as what are the obstacles and challenges for church congregations in the application of phenomenological studies in order to hit and be able to make Christian congregations aware and able to apply goodness according to the teachings of the Bible (Rainwater, 2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A Phenomenological Study on the Application of Life Values for Christian Congregations in Medan City

A phenomenological study of the application of life values for Christian congregations in Medan City will include an in-depth research approach to understand individuals' subjective experiences of life values, religion, and spirituality in the context of their daily lives in the city (Riley-Seymour, 2023) . The following are the steps that may be involved in conducting such a phenomenological study:

1. Selection of participants through the process of selecting respondents based on age, gender, as well as their social life background and spiritual experience, where the selection of participants is carried out to find out and analyze the spiritual experience of the church congregation in Medan City, where this spiritual experience will increase the motivation of the congregation in increasing faith and piety in living life in a society with different ethnicities, religions and groups. What church congregations in Medan City do to increase faith and piety is :
 - a. Weekly worship, where church members gather every week to worship together, which includes a time of worship, prayer, Bible reading, preaching, and the proclamation of the Word. This weekly worship is an important time to strengthen faith and the perception of God's presence in our daily lives.
 - b. Bible Studies and Small Groups, where many churches in Medan City organize regular Bible studies, either as part of weekly worship or in small groups. These Bible studies provide opportunities for congregation members to deepen their understanding of God's Word and strengthen the community of faith.
 - c. Prayer Together, where church members also often hold prayer sessions together, either before or after worship, or during special times such as days of prayer or certain ministry activities. Prayer together becomes an important moment to strengthen spiritual connection with God and each other.
 - d. Church services, where many congregations in Medan City are involved in various church services, such as children's, youth, music, social services, and others. Through these ministries, they can actualize their faith in real action and strengthen the church community.
 - e. Mentoring and Spiritual Counseling, where many churches also provide mentoring and spiritual counseling services for their members who need guidance and support in their faith journey. This helps congregation members to overcome spiritual challenges and grow in relationship with God (Rooks, 2023).
2. In-depth interviews, where researchers conducted in-depth interviews with participants to conduct explorations related to the experiences of Church congregations in applying human values related to religious experiences and also literacy related to religious knowledge in the A-Bible owned by Christian congregations in Medan City (Sijabat et al., 2025).
3. Thematic Analysis derived from interview data will be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. Researchers will look for patterns, themes, and meanings that emerge from participants' narratives about their experiences in applying life values in a religious context. The thematic analysis that emerged in conducting interviews regarding experiences in applying life values in religious contexts, especially Christianity, are:

- a. Alignment of Life, where respondents may share experiences of how they try to live in harmony with the values of life taught in Christianity. This could include aspects such as morality, integrity, and ethics in daily life.
- b. Relationship with God, where the experience of a personal relationship with God and how these life values affect the spiritual relationship with God may be an emerging theme. This could include aspects such as prayer, worship, trust, and reliance on God in the face of life's challenges.
- c. Service and Compassion, where many respondents may also share experiences of how they translate the values of Christian life into service to others and compassion for others. This could include various forms of service such as helping the needy, sharing compassion, and fighting for social justice.
- d. Spiritual Growth, where respondents may also express experiences of how they experienced spiritual growth through the application of the life values of Christianity in daily life. This could include processes of character building, experiences of transformation, and the discovery of a deeper meaning of life.
- e. Conflicts and Challenges, where some respondents may also talk about the challenges and conflicts they face in applying the values of Christian Religious life in complex and diverse world situations. These could include value conflicts, social pressures, or tensions between religious beliefs and the demands of the modern world (Simatupang, Surbakti, & Alexander, 2025).
- f. Hope and Fulfillment, where finally, respondents may also share their hopes and experiences of how applying the life values of Christianity has provided satisfaction and meaning in their lives. This could include feelings of peace, joy, and meaningful life experiences (Sinaga, Halawa, Prasetyo, Silaban, & Sinaga, 2024).

- a. Interpretation and interpretation, where researchers will conduct in-depth interpretation of the findings from data analysis. They will try to understand the meanings underlying the participants' experiences and how these life values are interpreted and applied in the daily lives of Christians in Medan City, where the life values that can be interpreted include
- b. Compassion, where compassion is a central value in Christianity. Churches in Medan City prioritize compassion towards others, including people in need, people who are marginalized, and people who are suffering. They understand that compassion is a manifestation of God's love that must be realized in their relationships with others.
- c. Justice and Welfare, where the values of justice and social welfare are a focus for church members in Medan City. They understand the importance of fighting for the rights and welfare of others, especially the weak and marginalized in society. They are committed to being a voice for the voiceless and participate in efforts to redress injustices in society.
- d. Truth and Integrity, where the values of truth and moral integrity are important to church members in Medan City. They believe that keeping the truth and living with integrity is a reflection of the character of Christ. They are committed to

living according to the moral principles set out in the Word of God and to being a good example to others.

- e. Forgiveness and Reconciliation, where church members in Medan City also emphasize the value of forgiveness and reconciliation in interpersonal relationships. They understand the importance of giving and receiving forgiveness as part of the Christian faith, as well as striving to repair broken relationships and seeking peace among others (Sinurat, Nainggolan, & Alexander, 2024).

Challenges and Obstacles for Church Members in the Application of Phenomenological Studies

The challenges for church congregations in Medan City in the application of Phenomenological Studies, especially if they want to apply this approach to understand religious experiences and apply life values in a religious context, are:

1. Limited Knowledge and Skills, where many church congregation members may not have sufficient knowledge or skills in research methodologies, including phenomenological studies. This can be a challenge in designing and executing an appropriate phenomenological study.
2. Resource limitations, where congregations may have limited resources, whether in time, funds, or manpower. Conducting a phenomenological study requires a considerable investment of time and resources, including for training, data collection, and analysis (G Sirait, Alexander, & Mahulae, 2023).
3. Access Limitations, where gaining access to participants suitable for studying phenomenology can be difficult, especially if they want to cover a wide range of age groups, backgrounds, and experiences. This can result in a non-representative sample and limit the generalizability of the findings.
4. Ethical Challenges, where phenomenological studies often involve the disclosure of highly personal and sensitive experiences of participants. Congregational Churches need to observe strict research ethics, including privacy, confidentiality, and protection of participants.
5. Understanding the Cultural Context, where the cultural context in Medan City can be very diverse, and understanding this context in depth is important in conducting a relevant and meaningful phenomenological study. Church members need to ensure that they understand and respect local values, beliefs, and practices in conducting their research.
6. Inadequate analysis, where data analysis in phenomenological studies is often complex and requires specialized skills in identifying themes, patterns, and meanings that emerge from the data. Congregations may face challenges in conducting in-depth and meaningful analysis of the data collected (G Sirait, Alexander, & Silaban, 2023).

The obstacles for church congregations in Medan City in the application of Phenomenological Studies, especially if they want to apply this approach to understand religious experiences and apply life values in a religious context, are:

1. Methodological Knowledge Limitations, where congregation members may not have sufficient knowledge or understanding of research methodologies, particularly phenomenological studies. This lack of understanding of the approach may hinder their ability to plan and implement learning effectively.
2. Resource Limitations, where phenomenological studies require significant time, effort, and financial resources to be carried out properly. Congregational Churches may face limitations in terms of these resources, such as lack of funds for training, data collection costs, or time available to carry out the study.
3. Difficulties in Gaining Access Gaining access to participants who are appropriate and relevant to the phenomenological study can be challenging, especially if the church congregation wants to reach out to different age groups, backgrounds, and experiences. This can complicate the data collection process and produce a representative sample.
4. Ethical challenges, where phenomenological studies often involve highly personal and sensitive disclosures from participants. Congregational Churches need to be mindful of strict research ethics, including privacy, confidentiality, and protection of participants, which can be an obstacle to conducting research properly (Dewi Lestari Pardede et al., 2025).
5. Assistance in Data Analysis, where data analysis in phenomenological studies can be complex and requires specialized skills in identifying themes, patterns, and meanings that emerge from the data. Church members may face barriers in conducting a deep and meaningful analysis of the data collected.
6. Contextual Knowledge Limitations, where the cultural and social contexts in Medan City can be very diverse, and understanding these contexts in depth is important in conducting a relevant and meaningful phenomenological study. A lack of understanding of the local context may hinder the ability of church members to interpret data appropriately and produce relevant findings.

Discussion

Based on the results of the study, it can be seen that the steps that may be involved in conducting a phenomenological study in applying the values of life for Christian congregations in Medan City are Selection of participants through the process of selecting respondents based on age, gender, as well as the background of their social life and spiritual experience, In-depth interviews, where researchers conduct in- depth interviews with participants to conduct exploration related to the experience of Church congregations in applying human values related to religious experience, Thematic analysis derived from interview data will be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, as well as Interpretation and Interpretation, where researchers will conduct in-depth interpretation of the findings from data analysis. This is in accordance with research (Gloria Sirait, Alexander, Susanti, Soripada, & Sirait, 2024) which explains that this phenomenological study is a must-have so that later church members in Medan City can easily understand and increase knowledge about the values of life in order to become a loving and peace-loving human being. While the challenges and obstacles for Church Congregations in Medan City in the application of Phenomenological Studies, especially if they want to apply this approach to understand

religious experiences and apply life values in a religious context, namely limited methodological knowledge, limited resources that have knowledge and have religious values, as well as difficulty gaining access in order to increase the ability and understanding of respondents in applying the teachings of the Bible in everyday life, ethical challenges regarding the sensitivity of the enlightenment process to the congregation, as well as less than optimal data analysis in order to apply, and spread God's teachings through the Bible. This is in line with research (Simatupang et al., 2025) which explains that these challenges and obstacles will affect the delivery of the message of the Church congregation in Medan City against God's teachings which are conveyed in an unreal way, resulting in a decrease in understanding of knowledge and a decrease in religious values that love and care for humanity (Siahaan & Sirait, 2023).

To improve the understanding of religion in the Christian congregation, a learning or phenomenological study is needed in order to apply the values of life for Christians, so that Christians can overcome the obstacles and challenges that exist, where these challenges will make Christian congregations will get challenges in applying religious values and applying love in the community in Medan City which has various religions, ethnicities and groups.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the steps that may be involved in conducting a phenomenological study in applying life values for Christian congregations in Medan City are Selection of participants through the process of selecting respondents based on age, gender, as well as the background of their social life and spiritual experience, In-depth interviews, where the researcher conducts in-depth interviews with participants to conduct explorations related to the experiences of Church congregations in applying human values related to religious experiences, Thematic analysis derived from interview data will be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, and Interpretation and Interpretation, where the researcher will conduct an in-depth interpretation of the findings from the data analysis, as well as challenges and obstacles for Church Congregations in Medan City in the application of Phenomenological Studies, especially if they want to apply this approach to understand religious experiences and apply life values in a religious context, namely limited methodological knowledge, limited resources that have knowledge and have religious values, as well as difficulty gaining access in order to increase the ability and understanding of respondents in applying the teachings of the Bible in daily life, ethical challenges regarding the sensitivity of the enlightenment process to the congregation, as well as less than optimal data analysis in order to apply, and spread God's teachings through the Bible.

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