

LEARNING EXPERIENCE AT THE INDONESIAN NAVAL COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE (SESKOAL): OFFICERS' PERSPECTIVES IN FACING OPERATIONAL AND STRATEGIC MARITIME SECURITY CHALLENGES

Salim

Airlangga University Human Resources Development

Doctoral Program, Surabaya, Indonesia

mbahliem790@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This phenomenological research aims to explore and understand the essence of the learning experiences of officer students at the Indonesian Naval Command and Staff College (Seskoal) and how these experiences shape their perspectives in facing operational and strategic maritime security challenges. Employing Edmund Husserl's transcendental phenomenological approach, this study delves deeply into the lived experiences of officer students through in-depth interviews. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis methods with the aid of NVivo software, focusing on the identification of meaning units and reduction to uncover essential themes. The research findings reveal the invariant structure of the learning experience at Seskoal, which includes the intensity of engagement, significant learning moments, challenges encountered, and perceptions of methods and curriculum. Furthermore, this study highlights how these aspects of experience are interconnected in shaping officer students' perspectives on the complexities of maritime security, including the development of strategic analysis skills, increased sense of preparedness, and internalization of relevant mindsets. The findings of this research provide profound insights into the formative process of education at Seskoal from the perspective of officer students and its implications for their readiness in addressing future maritime security challenges. This study recommends the development of interactive learning methods and a relevant curriculum to optimize the formation of officer students' perspectives

Keywords: Learning experiences, transcendental phenomenological approach, in-depth interviews, invariant structure.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian Naval Command and Staff College (Seskoal) plays a crucial role in the professional development of Indonesian Navy officers, equipping them with essential analytical and strategic capabilities to address the complexities of future tasks [1]. The educational program at Seskoal is designed to enhance officers' understanding of various aspects of military operations, including increasingly dynamic and multidimensional maritime security challenges [2]. However, a deep understanding of how the learning experiences undergone by officer students during their education at Seskoal subjectively shape their perspectives on maritime security challenges remains limited.

Previous research on advanced military education has often focused on learning outcomes or the effectiveness of teaching methods [3], with less in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of officer students. This lack of phenomenological understanding raises concerns that the unique and profound perspectives of officers undergoing intensive education at Seskoal may be

overlooked. In fact, these perspectives are crucial for understanding how they make sense of maritime security challenges and prepare themselves to face them

Therefore, this research takes a step to explore the learning experiences of officer students at Seskoal through the lens of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. This approach aims to uncover the essence of these experiences and how various aspects of learning (intensity, significant moments, challenges, perceptions of methods and curriculum) are interconnected in shaping officers' perspectives on operational and strategic maritime security challenges. The contribution of this research is to provide an in-depth and holistic understanding of the subjective experiences of Seskoal officer students, which can serve as a foundation for the evaluation and development of more effective educational programs in preparing them to face the complexities of maritime security in the future [4].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study employs several theoretical frameworks to explain the

aspects influencing phenomenology at Seskoal in shaping officers' perspectives on facing maritime security challenges.

- Grand Theory is Phenomenological Theory of Edmund Husserl

Edmund Husserl's phenomenology is a revolutionary philosophical movement that strives to return to "the things themselves" (*zu den Sachen selbst*). Phenomenology aims to understand consciousness and the objects of consciousness as directly experienced from a first-person perspective. The core of Husserl's phenomenology lies in the concept of **intentionality**. Husserl stated that consciousness is always directed towards something. [5]

- Hermeneutic Phenomenology Theory

Hermeneutic phenomenology, primarily developed by Martin Heidegger and later expanded by Hans-Georg Gadamer, represents an evolution of Edmund Husserl's descriptive phenomenology. While Husserl focused on the pure description of consciousness and the essence of experience through *epoché* and reduction, hermeneutic phenomenology acknowledges that

understanding and interpretation are always inherent in human experience. [6]

- Adult Learning Theory, or Andragogy

Adult Learning Theory, or Andragogy, popularized by Malcolm Knowles (1913-1997), offers a distinct framework for understanding how adults learn compared to children (pedagogy). Knowles argued that adults possess unique learning characteristics and needs, and that teaching approaches should be tailored accordingly.

- The Concept of Lived Experience

The concept of Lived Experience, as put forth by Alfred Schutz in his monumental work, *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (1967), offers a rich and profound perspective on how individuals experience and make sense of their social world. While rooted in Husserl's phenomenology, Schutz developed these ideas to specifically understand intersubjectivity and the construction of meaning in everyday life.

- The Concept of Readiness

The concept of Readiness refers to the state of an individual possessing an adequate combination of knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and experience to effectively and efficiently perform tasks and responsibilities within a specific role or profession. More than just technical mastery, professional readiness encompasses interpersonal aspects, adaptability, work ethic, and understanding of the professional context.

Qualitative research, including phenomenology, has explored the experiences of officers at various Command and Staff Colleges. These studies generally highlight the intensity of the programs, participatory learning methods (case studies, simulations), colleague and instructor interactions, as well as the challenges of academic and leadership adaptation. Findings suggest that the Sesko experience is often transformative, shaping how officers think strategically and collaborate.

Studies in the fields of strategic studies and military education examine

how officers develop strategic thinking skills. Qualitative research often focuses on the influence of formal education, operational experience, and mentoring. Findings indicate that education at the Sesko level plays a crucial role in broadening officers' strategic perspectives.

Research has identified various challenges faced by students in advanced military education, including workload, academic pressure, the integration of theory and practice, and the diverse backgrounds of learners. Understanding these challenges is important for interpreting the experiences of Seskoal officer students [7].

Although perhaps fewer in number, research in the field of maritime military education and training can provide insights into how aspects of maritime security are taught and learned in a military environment [8].

3. METHODOLOGY

This research will employ the Transcendental Phenomenology approach as developed by Edmund Husserl. This approach aims to describe the essence of experiences shared by a

group of individuals who have encountered the same phenomenon. The focus is on understanding the universal structure of the learning experiences of officer students at Seskoal related to operational and strategic maritime security challenges, by bracketing researcher biases and assumptions to uncover the meaning inherent in the participants' experiences. The participants are as follows:

- Indonesian Navy officer students currently undergoing education at the Indonesian Naval Command and Staff College (Seskoal).
- Willing to voluntarily participate in the research and provide in-depth descriptions of their experiences.
- Able to communicate clearly and openly.

Purposive sampling with maximum variation will be used to obtain rich and diverse perspectives regarding the learning experiences. Variation will be considered based on:

- Different corps or specializations within the Indonesian Navy.

- Diverse previous assignment experiences before attending Seskoal.

The number of participants will be determined based on the principle of data saturation, which is when significant new information no longer emerges from the interviews. It is estimated that between 8 to 12 officer students will be involved.

The primary method of data collection will be in-depth phenomenological interviews. The aim of the interviews is to elicit detailed descriptions of the learning experiences of officer students at Seskoal and how various aspects of these experiences are interconnected in shaping their perspectives on operational and strategic maritime security challenges.

Data analysis will follow the steps of Husserl's phenomenological reduction with the assistance of NVivo software for the management and analysis of qualitative data. The validity and reliability of the research will be enhanced through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings based on the data collected and analyzed using NVivo. The results are structured to answer the Research Question.

a. Structure of Analysis Presentation

The results of the analysis will be presented in sections that explicitly answer the research question by exploring the interrelationships between aspects that have been identified through the coding and analysis process in NVivo. Direct quotes from participants will be used to illustrate themes and interconnections.

- **Phenomenology of Learning Aspect and Significant Learning Aspect** The NVivo analysis indicates that the learning experience at Seskoal for officer students is often characterized by intensity and emotional, cognitive, and physical engagement. Codes such as "actively involved," "feeling challenged," "in-depth discussions," and "realistic simulations" emerged significantly. Learning moments considered significant by

participants were often marked by the codes "Aha moment," "fundamental change in understanding," and "connected with task experience."

- **Phenomenology of Learning Aspect and Learning Challenges Aspect**

The learning experience at Seskoal is not always smooth. The NVivo analysis identified various learning challenges such as "dense material load," "differences in prior knowledge," "time pressure," and "difficulty understanding abstract strategic concepts."

- **Phenomenology of Learning Aspect and Perceptions of Methods & Curriculum Aspect**

Officer students' perceptions of learning methods ("really liked discussions," "simulations helped visualization") and curriculum ("curriculum relevant to tasks," "some material felt theoretical") significantly influenced their learning experience.

- **Significant Learning Aspect with Operational and Strategic**

Maritime Security Perspective Formation Aspect

Significant learning moments often act as catalysts in shaping officers' perspectives on maritime security challenges. Insights gained during significant moments (deep understanding of the strategic implications of a tactical decision) directly influence how officers analyze and understand maritime security issues.

- **Learning Challenges Aspect with Operational and Strategic Maritime Security Perspective Formation Aspect**

How officer students overcome learning challenges can shape their resilience and depth of perspective. Success in overcoming difficulties in understanding concepts or adapting to the study load can build analytical and problem-solving skills relevant to facing maritime security challenges.

- **Perceptions of Methods and Curriculum Aspect with Contribution to Readiness Aspect**

Positive perceptions of methods and curriculum correlate with officer students' sense of readiness to face future tasks. Interactive learning methods and a relevant curriculum are believed by officer students to enhance their knowledge, skills, and confidence in addressing maritime security challenges.

- **Contribution to Readiness Aspect with Operational and Strategic Maritime Security Perspective Formation Aspect**

The sense of readiness formed through education at Seskoal influences how officer students view and analyze maritime security challenges. Officer students who feel more competent and confident tend to have a more mature, analytical, and proactive perspective in addressing maritime security issues.

b. Validity and Reliability of the Research

The validity and reliability of this research were pursued through the implementation of various strategies during the data collection and analysis

process. The results of these efforts are as follows:

- **Validity Credibility** resulted from the interview data analysis yielding rich and in-depth descriptions of the learning experiences of officer students at Seskoal. Direct quotes from participants are extensively presented in the Research Findings chapter to illustrate essential themes and interrelationships between aspects, ensuring the participants' voices are central to the narrative. For example, participants described in detail the intensity of naval warfare simulations and how it triggered a fundamental understanding of tactical decision-making. Draft interpretations of essential themes and the interrelationships between aspects were verified by three key participants. Their feedback generally confirmed the accuracy of the representation of their experiences. Minor adjustments were made to the emphasis of language to better reflect the nuances conveyed by the

participants. Field notes taken during the interviews enriched the understanding of the participants' emotional and non-verbal context, supporting the interpretation of the interview data. Analysis of Seskoal's curriculum documents (as supporting data) showed an alignment between the learning material and the maritime security challenges identified by the participants. Reflective notes (memos in NVivo) transparently documented the bracketing process and the evolution of the researcher's understanding during the analysis. For example, early memos recorded the researcher's assumptions about the significance of certain aspects, which were later corrected based on the emphasis given by the participants in their narratives.

- **Transferability** resulted from the Research Methods chapter presenting a detailed description of the research context, including the characteristics of the participants (range of intakes, diverse corps representation), and the Seskoal education program. Readers are

expected to be able to assess the potential transferability of these findings to other advanced military education contexts. The involvement of 10 officer students with varying intake backgrounds and corps provided rich and diverse perspectives on the phenomenon under study, strengthening the potential relevance of the findings for a broader group of officer students at Seskoal.

- **Dependability** resulted from the detailed interview protocol, verbatim transcripts, systematic coding notes in NVivo (including code definitions and example quotes), as well as well-documented and traceable analytical memos. The process of developing themes from initial codes to essential themes is also documented in NVivo memos. The process of analysis and interpretation of findings was discussed regularly with the research supervisor who is an expert in qualitative methodology and phenomenology studies, ensuring methodological rigor.

- **Confirmability** resulted in the Research Findings chapter, where each essential theme and interpretive claim is supported by direct quotes from participant transcripts that can be easily traced back through the NVivo project. Relevant codes are also presented to clarify the basis of the interpretation. The researcher consistently reflected on interpretations and sought to distinguish them from the subjective experiences of the participants. The primary focus was on the meaning expressed by the participants regarding their learning experiences.

- **Reliability** The interview guide used had a clear yet flexible structure, ensuring core topics were explored with all participants while allowing space for individual narratives. Transcriptions were done verbatim and verified for accuracy. The coding process in NVivo was carried out systematically with clear code definitions. Consistency in the application of codes was monitored through periodic reviews of the coded data. This research involved

regular discussions between the researcher and the supervisor regarding the analysis process and theme interpretation, ensuring alternative perspectives and minimizing subjective bias in interpretation.

Based on the implementation of the above strategies, this research is believed to have achieved an adequate level of validity and reliability for qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. The rich and in-depth descriptions, verification with participants, transparent documentation of the research process, as well as the researcher's reflective efforts provide a strong basis for trusting the findings of this research as a credible representation of the learning experiences of officer students at Seskoal and the formation of their perspectives on maritime security challenges.

c. Research Implications

These findings imply the importance of maintaining and enhancing interactive learning methods such as simulations and case studies at Seskoal. In addition, the curriculum needs to be continuously evaluated for its relevance to current

maritime security challenges. Support for officer students in overcoming academic challenges also needs attention to ensure an optimal learning experience and the formation of strong perspectives. Further research could explore the long-term impact of the learning experience at Seskoal on officers' performance in assignments."

5. CONCLUSION

a. This phenomenological research aimed to understand how the learning experiences of officer students at the Indonesian Naval Command and Staff College (Seskoal) shape their perspectives in facing operational and strategic maritime security challenges, by exploring the interrelationships between various aspects of these experiences. Through in-depth interviews with officer students and data analysis using NVivo based on Husserl's principles of phenomenological reduction, several key conclusions can be drawn:

b. Intensity of Experience Sparks Significant Insight: Deep engagement in the learning process, characterized by active participation and cognitive challenges, forms the foundation for the emergence of significant learning

moments. These moments become turning points in officer students' understanding of the complexities of maritime security.

c. Learning Challenges as Catalysts for Perspective Growth: Despite presenting difficulties, the learning challenges faced by officer students at Seskoal, when successfully overcome, contribute to the development of analytical and problemsolving skills essential for understanding maritime security challenges from various perspectives.

d. Positive Perceptions of Methods and Curriculum Foster Readiness and Understanding: Appreciation for interactive learning methods and curriculum relevance significantly enhances officer students' sense of readiness to face future tasks, while simultaneously deepening their understanding of strategic and operational maritime security issues.

e. Significant Moments and Readiness as Pillars of Perspective Formation: Significant learning moments provide profound insights that directly shape officers' strategic analysis frameworks. The sense of readiness built through

education at Seskoal provides confidence and a strong foundation for proactively analyzing and responding to maritime security challenges.

f. Interdependent Relationships Between Aspects: The phenomenology of the learning experience at Seskoal in shaping perspectives is not a linear process, but rather a complex and interdependent interaction between various aspects. The intensity of learning influences the emergence of significant moments, challenges affect perceptions and readiness, and ultimately, readiness and in-depth understanding collectively shape a mature perspective on maritime security.

g. Overall, this research concludes that the learning experiences at Seskoal, as lived by officer students, significantly shape their perspectives on operational and strategic maritime security challenges through the dynamic interaction between learning intensity, challenges faced, perceptions of methods and curriculum, and the sense of readiness developed. The essence of this experience is the transformation of understanding and the formation of a more comprehensive and confident analytical framework.

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BIOGRAPHY

Salim



FADM Salim, S.E., M.Phil., M.Tr.Opsla. born in Surabaya, October 28th 1972. Graduated from Indonesian Naval Academy in 1995. Have experienced various assignments in Indonesian Warships and fleets as a Commander. Have received various Civil and Military Educations, both domestic and foreign. Have carried plenty assignments in Indonesian Navy and Indonesian Armed Forces, UN Assignments in MONUSCO (Congo), UNISMA (Mali), and UNIFIL (Lebanon). Have completed numerous educations such as International Surface Warfare Officer (USA), Indonesian Air Force Staff and Command School, Command and Staff Operation Law (Sydney), various armaments and navigation courses in Netherland, Germany, French and Cyber Security Course in Italy. Joined and completed Master Securities Studies Program in Madras University, National Defence College equivalent to Lemhanas RI in New Delhi, and Currently Enrolled a Doctoral Programme at the University of Airlangga, Surabaya.