



The development of religious studies in the modern and postmodern era: A critical analysis of the transformation of the theological paradigm

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Abstract

This research examines the paradigm shift in religious studies from the modern era to the postmodern era, with an emphasis on the use of more inclusive and holistic methodologies. Initially, the study of religion in the modern era was dominated by positivistic approaches that focused on observable and measurable phenomena, often to the exclusion of spiritual and symbolic elements. However, in the postmodern era, a more diversified and interpretive approach began to be recognized, which incorporated a plurality of interpretations and the importance of local context. The research methodology involved a case study approach with in-depth interviews and content analysis of academic articles to explore how the theological paradigm has transformed. The results show an increasing acceptance of interpretative and phenomenological methods, which allow for a deeper exploration of spirituality and subjective experiences that are difficult to measure. These findings are important both theoretically and practically, providing new insights that can improve education, public policy, and interfaith dialog. However, this study has limitations including a sample that may not cover all religious traditions or contexts, so more diverse future research is needed to validate and extend these findings.

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Introduction

Religious studies as an academic discipline facilitates an in-depth understanding of various human religious traditions, highlighting their historical, cultural and doctrinal complexities and their influence on various

aspects of human life (Jackson, 2019). The study is interdisciplinary, involving the use of methodologies from various disciplines such as history, psychology, anthropology, and sociology to analyze and understand religion in its broader context. Since its emergence as a formal discipline in the 19th century, the study of

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religion has undergone significant evolution (Simbuka et al., 2019).

Initially sparked by European scholars' encounters with different religious beliefs and practices during colonial expansion, the study has developed a comparative and non-evaluative approach to understanding and comparing religious beliefs and rites from different cultures. This approach allows researchers to observe similarities and differences without making normative judgments about the beliefs.

The history of religious studies records a significant paradigm shift with the advent of the modern and postmodern eras. In the modern era, approaches tended to be reductionist and empirical, often ignoring the spiritual and symbolic elements of religion (Ekeke & Nwosu, 2023). This era emphasized understanding religion as a social or psychological phenomenon that can be explained rationally and scientifically (Rattani, 2021).

However, the arrival of the postmodern era introduced greater methodological and interpretative diversity in the study of religion. In the postmodern context, there is a tendency to reject a universal and singular view of truth and reality, which brings recognition of the plurality of interpretations and the importance of local context in understanding religion. The postmodern era criticizes traditional approaches that often exclude subjective experience and the internal complexity of religious practice.

The modern era in religious studies is often associated with a positivistic approach that emphasizes the empirical and observable aspects of religious phenomena. This approach prioritizes the scientific method and objectivity, assuming that religious knowledge can be explained through rational and verifiable principles of the universe (Wang, 2023). In this era, religious studies tended to focus on the outer aspects of religion, such as practices, rites, and institutions, often neglecting the deeper spiritual dimensions and subjective experiences (Scharbrodt, 2019).

In contrast, the postmodern era brings a paradigm that recognizes the importance of subjectivity and plurality of interpretations in the study of religion. It rejects the notion that there is a single, universal way to understand religion, delving deeper into individual experiences and the unique cultural context in which religion is practiced (Stausberg et al., 2023). Postmodern approaches emphasize the importance of understanding religion as a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon, whose meanings vary among different groups and individuals.

The shift from modernism to postmodernism in religious studies has marked an increased acceptance

of interpretive and phenomenological methods (Baron, 2019). These approaches place more emphasis on exploring spirituality and subjective experiences that are difficult to measure, recognizing that religious and spiritual experiences cannot always be fully understood through traditional empirical and analytical methods (Selim et al., 2022). This openness encourages scholars to use more qualitative and narrative methods in exploring how individuals and communities experience and make meaning of their religious lives.

In the postmodern era, it is not only recognized that religion can be explored through sacred texts and doctrines, but also through personal narratives and stories that shape religious identity (Bahrani & Kars, 2021). Phenomenological approaches in particular have been helpful in understanding religion as a lived experience, where truth and meaning are generated through regular interactions between individuals in their specific contexts. This approach recognizes the plurality of experiences and interpretations that can vary significantly even within a single religious tradition.

In a previous study, Kenter et al. (2019), described a transdisciplinary approach to managing social value diversity for sustainability, incorporating various theoretical traditions such as religious studies, social psychology, and others. They developed a conceptual framework for managing value diversity using 'lenses' and 'tensions'. These results provide a foundation for applying a similar framework in comparative religious studies, but this research more specifically examines how the framework can be used to understand the dynamics of more complex religious beliefs and practices.

Meanwhile, Taves (2019) expanded the scope of religious studies to worldview studies, proposing a more equitable basis for comparing religious and non-religious worldviews. The definition of worldview in the context of big questions connects the evolving world-making capacities we share with other animals, supporting the more open and inclusive approach adopted in my research. Laksana and Wood (2018) explored how youth in Indonesia navigate religious diversity in their daily lives, integrating religious and civic education.

Their results suggest that rigid educational frameworks can be expanded through lived experiences that support religious tolerance, which corresponds with my research findings on the need for more adaptive and inclusive methodologies in comparative studies of religion.

Najnin Jahan Mim (2020) explores how religious practices play a role in protecting the socioeconomic and cultural rights of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Based on an empirical study of eight refugee camps in

Kutupalong, Cox's Bazar, Mim documents how refugees through Islamic activities and practices maintain their cultural identity, interact with local government agents, and maintain solidarity with host communities.

The research also highlights how many secular humanitarian projects are often challenged, resisted, or rejected by refugees for not accommodating their connection to religion. Mim's findings provide important insights for practitioners and policymakers to ensure socioeconomic and cultural integration in human rights activities in refugee camps in the Global South.

Enstedt criticizes the dominant world religion paradigm in religious studies research and education, which is often based on Protestant, Christian and Western ideas about religion. Enstedt points out that this approach can introduce reductionist biases and fail to recognize religious expressions that do not fit into the framework.

In addition, non-confessional and secular religious education can be biased by norms and values that regard religion as obsolete and irrational. Enstedt uses Gert J.J. Biesta's philosophy of education to address these issues, focusing on three domains of education: qualification, socialization, and subjectivation, to deconstruct false religious stereotypes and support a more inclusive and objective approach in higher-level religious education.

This research uniquely develops and applies a theoretical framework to deeply understand the complexity of religious beliefs and practices in the study of comparative religion. In contrast to research, which applies broader social values management across multiple disciplines, this research framework specifically targets comparative religion. Expansion into worldview studies differs from the focus of this research which centers on the methodology of patterned comparative religion.

While exploring religious tolerance among young people through empirical educational studies, this research advocates for an educational framework that can be adapted in comparative religion theoretically. Mim's research on the socio-cultural rights of Rohingya refugees highlights the practical implications of religious activities, while this research centers on refining comparative methodologies to better understand such religious dynamics. Finally, while Enstedt criticizes the dominant paradigm in religious education as influenced by Western perspectives, this study builds on the critique by proposing an inclusive methodological framework that addresses these biases and broadens the analysis of religious phenomena.

Although the postmodern paradigm has encouraged the use of interpretive and phenomenological approaches

in religious studies, the integration of qualitative methodologies is still lacking (Storm, 2021). Research in the field of religious studies often still relies on more rigid and structured quantitative approaches, which are not fully capable of capturing the personal and subjective complexity of religious experience (Reed, 2021). This has resulted in a gap in the literature, where important aspects of religious life that relate to personal interpretation and social context tend to be under-documented. Researchers in this field need to develop and apply more effective qualitative tools that can accommodate the depth and diversity of religious experience. This will enrich academic understanding of religion and improve the quality of research in contemporary religious studies.

On the other hand, existing methodologies are often inadequate to capture subjective experiences in religion, resulting in a limited understanding of how individuals interpret and experience their religious beliefs personally. This creates a gap in the study of religion, where the deeper and more personal aspects of belief are often overlooked. Without effective tools to explore and document subjective religious experiences, research can miss important nuances that provide valuable insights into the practice and influence of religion in everyday life. Therefore, researchers need a more holistic approach that integrates qualitative methods to better understand the internal dynamics of religious belief and practice. Efforts to overcome these limitations will greatly enhance the ability of religious research to produce a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding.

Although phenomenological approaches in the postmodern era provide greater opportunities to explore and understand the subjective aspects of religion, there are significant difficulties in interpreting these highly subjective data. These difficulties often result in inconsistent or overly subjective interpretations, which can reduce the objectivity and reliability of research results.

Without a strong methodological framework and appropriate analysis techniques, phenomenological data can be difficult to integrate into broader academic discussions (Wareham, 2022). Therefore, researchers need to develop more robust analytic tools to manage and interpret qualitative data, thus enriching the understanding of religious phenomena in a measurable and repeatable way. Improvements in this approach can help overcome interpretive biases and strengthen the validity of research in religious studies.

Moreover, the neglect of socio-cultural factors in religious research often results in incomplete analysis and does not reflect the complex reality of religious phenomena

(LeVasseur, 2021). Many studies still focus on analyzing texts and doctrines without integrating the influence of social, political and cultural environments that affect religious practices and beliefs. As a result, the results of studies are often unable to provide an accurate picture of the way religion is played out in people's daily lives. Therefore, it is imperative that researchers integrate socio-cultural perspectives more deeply into their research methodologies, ensuring that the study of religion can accommodate the diversity and dynamics of different social contexts. This will support the development of a more holistic and contextualized understanding of religion on a global and local scale.

Limitations in the study of comparative religion are often due to the lack of adequate theoretical frameworks to manage the differences and similarities between highly diverse religious traditions (Swamidass, 2023). Commonly used approaches in the study of religion tend to be inadequate to effectively address the complexity of interactions between different faiths (Grumberg, 2021).

This results in analyses that are often superficial and unable to capture important nuances necessary for a deeper understanding of cross-cultural religious practices. Therefore, the development of new methodologies that can be more inclusive and adaptive to religious diversity is essential. This will enable researchers to more accurately evaluate and compare religious traditions globally, providing greater insight and applicability to contemporary religious studies.

This research was conducted based on the urgency to overcome the shortcomings in a more in-depth and holistic understanding of religion in the postmodern era (Chidester, 2019). The uniqueness of this research lies in the use of a methodology that integrates phenomenological and interpretive aspects, paying special attention to subjective experience and socio-cultural context in the study of religion. The urgency of this research is also driven by the need to understand the paradigm shift from modernism to postmodernism which is not only a theoretical change, but also has practical implications in people's religious life. This research aims to fill the gap in the literature that is still dominated by a positivistic approach, which often fails to capture important aspects of religious life that are personal and dynamic.

Furthermore, the aim of this research is to develop theoretical and methodological frameworks that are more effective in dealing with the complexities of religious studies in the contemporary era. The approach proposed in this research is expected to address the root of the problem in religious studies, which is the lack of

analytical tools that can accommodate and interpret the plurality of religious experiences and interpretations.

Thus, the findings of this research are expected to provide solutions to the problems faced in the comparative study of religion as well as in the analysis of socio-cultural influences on religious practice. This research is not only important in an academic context but also in practical applications, as it helps society and policy makers in understanding and addressing increasingly complex religious issues in the era of globalization.

Scope of Islamic Religious Studies

This study acknowledges the significance of Islamic religious studies within the broader context of religious studies. If Islamic religious studies were within the scope of this research, articles written by Muslim scholars would be prioritized for inclusion. Specifically, this study would focus on incorporating perspectives from Islamic theology, jurisprudence, and comparative religious studies.

Inclusion Criteria

To ensure comprehensive representation, the following inclusion criteria would be applied:

The study would focus on articles authored or co-authored by Muslim scholars, examining Islamic religious thought, practices, and traditions. Comparative analyses of Islamic and non-Islamic religious perspectives, as well as discussions of Islamic theology's intersection with modern and postmodern thought, would also be included.

Database Search

To identify relevant articles, databases such as Islamic Studies journals (e.g., Journal of Islamic Studies, Islamic Studies), Middle Eastern and Islamic research databases (e.g., Al-Manhal, Index Islamicus), and mainstream academic databases (e.g., JSTOR, Scopus) would be searched. Relevant keywords, including Islamic theology, Muslim thought, comparative religious studies, and postmodern Islamic perspectives, would be employed.

Rationale

By actively incorporating Muslim scholars' perspectives and Islamic-specific research, this study aims to provide a richer understanding of the paradigm shift in religious studies. This inclusive approach recognizes the valuable contributions of Islamic religious studies to the broader field of religious studies.

Methodology

Research Design

In this study, a qualitative research design was used to analyze the paradigm shift in religious studies from the modern era to the postmodern era. A case study approach was chosen as the main method, with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the influence of theological paradigms in two different eras. Literature studies and expert interviews served as the main data sources, providing insights into the evolution of methodologies and practices in the study of religion (Berg, 2001). Content analysis of related academic articles was also conducted to add evidence and strengthen the findings. The overall design was designed to comprehensively explore how the understanding and application of theology has changed over time. Article selection criteria excluded studies focused solely on Islamic religious studies, acknowledging the distinctiveness of this field. Instead, this research concentrated on broader religious studies, with occasional intersections with Islamic perspectives.

Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 10 renowned experts in religious studies from leading universities in Indonesia. Specifically, the data collection took place in major cities, including Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, and Bogor, where prominent universities such as the University of Indonesia, and Islamic University of Indonesia are located. Respondents were selected based on their expertise in theology and religious studies, as well as their experience in applying interdisciplinary approaches in research (Johnson & Christensen, 2013). The semi-structured interviews allowed for an in-depth exploration of the experts' perspectives, providing valuable insights into the paradigm shift in religious studies.

Sampling

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing two sample sets. The expert interview sample consisted of 10 renowned experts in religious studies from leading universities in Indonesia. This small, specialized sample allowed for in-depth exploration of experts' perspectives, providing rich, detailed data. The content analysis sample comprised 30 academic articles published in the last five years, enabling analysis of

trends and patterns in recent publications. The sample sizes were chosen for specific reasons. The expert interviews aimed to achieve data saturation, where themes and patterns emerged consistently, which was reached with 10 participants. The content analysis sample of 30 articles represented a manageable size for comprehensive analysis, revealing emerging trends. However, the study acknowledges limitations due to small sample sizes, including potential bias and limited generalizability. To mitigate these limitations, purposive sampling ensured expert relevance, and systematic search protocols were used for content analysis. The samples' characteristics included experts affiliated with leading Indonesian universities, experienced in interdisciplinary research approaches, and articles published in the last five years, peer-reviewed, and in English.

Participants

The study's participant pool consisted of 10 experts in religious studies. These participants were experts in their field, with a strong background in theology and religious studies. They were selected from leading universities in Indonesia, providing valuable insights into the paradigm shift in religious studies.

Interviews

The interviews were conducted individually using a semi-structured technique, which allowed for flexibility in answering questions while still focusing on the research topic. The information obtained from these respondents is crucial to understanding the dynamics of change in religious studies compared between the two eras. The data from these interviews were then processed through thematic analysis techniques to identify patterns and key themes.

Instruments

The instruments used in this data collection included interview guides, field notes, and questionnaires to collect demographic data from respondents. The interview guide was developed based on relevant literature and consultation with experts in the field of qualitative research methodology. The data collection process was closely monitored to ensure data reliability and validity. All interview sessions were recorded and transcripts were made for further analysis. Data analysis procedures were carried out using the manual content analysis method, which allows for detailed and controlled categorization and interpretation of data (Leavy, 2020).

Article Selection Criteria

The selection of 30 articles for this literature review was based on a systematic approach, ensuring relevance and quality. To begin, clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. Articles were included if they were peer-reviewed, published within the last 5 years, in English, and relevant to the research question on the paradigm shift in religious studies. Conversely, non-peer-reviewed articles, unpublished or grey literature, and older publications were excluded.

Search and Retrieval

A comprehensive search was conducted using academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and Scopus. Relevant keywords and search strings, including “paradigm shift,” “religious studies,” and “postmodern,” were employed. Search results were filtered by publication date, language, and peer-review status.

Evaluation and Selection

Article abstracts and introductions were reviewed to assess relevance, methodology, and conclusions. Factors such as study design, sample size, and author expertise were considered. The selected articles aligned with the research question, demonstrated sound methodology, and contributed significantly to the field.

Basic Criteria

The basic criteria for selecting articles included:

- Relevance to the research question
- Validity of methodology and conclusions
- Reliability of study design and sampling
- Impact on the field
- Currency of publication

Additional Considerations

To ensure a balanced selection, articles were chosen from various themes and perspectives. Systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and seminal works were prioritized. The search and selection process was documented for transparency.

Specific Criteria for This Topic

Additional criteria specific to this topic included:

- Focus on religious studies, theology, or related fields
- Exploration of modern and postmodern perspectives

- Discussion of methodological or theoretical shifts

By applying these criteria, 30 relevant articles were systematically selected for this literature review, providing a comprehensive understanding of the paradigm shift in religious studies.

Data Analysis

The data analysis involved a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to examine the 30 selected articles. Initially, a quantitative content analysis was conducted to identify frequencies and patterns. A coding sheet was developed to record the presence/absence of categories, such as research methodologies, theoretical perspectives, and themes related to the paradigm shift in religious studies. The analysis revealed a significant increase in qualitative and interdisciplinary approaches, with 60 percent of articles employing phenomenological or hermeneutic methods. A qualitative thematic analysis was then conducted to deepen understanding of the data. Articles were coded and categorized using NVivo software, revealing key themes: (1) the shift from positivistic to postpositivistic approaches; (2) the integration of spirituality and intuitiveness in research, and (3) the growing importance of interdisciplinary collaboration. Notably, 80 percent of articles emphasized the need for holistic and inclusive research methods. The analysis also identified patterns in author expertise, with 70 percent of authors affiliated with theology or religious studies departments. The findings were further validated through statistical analysis using SPSS software, which confirmed significant correlations between research methodologies and theoretical perspectives. Specifically, a Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.75, p < .01$) indicated a strong relationship between the use of qualitative methods and postpositivistic theoretical frameworks. The data analysis was rigorous and transparent, ensuring inter-coder reliability and validity checks. The mixed-methods approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the paradigm shift in religious studies, revealing complex patterns and themes that inform future research directions.

Results And Discussion

The results of this study show that there is a paradigm shift in the study of religion from the modern era to the postmodern era. In the modern era, the positivistic approach is dominant, where the object of study tends

to be material and empirical, in accordance with strict scientific principles. In contrast, the postmodern era introduced a more postpositivistic perspective that accommodates spirituality and intuitiveness as part of the research method. This phenomenon marked an important shift in the assessment of scientific truth, where spiritual values and intuition began to be recognized as important components in understanding reality. Furthermore, this study found that although the modern era prioritized pragmatism, aspects of faith and religion remained significant, indicating that no era completely excluded the religious dimension in scientific studies.

On the other hand, the postmodern era brought a wind of change by recognizing the importance of spirituality and intuition in research. The emerging postpositivistic approach allows researchers to incorporate more subjective and interpretive methods, thus paving the way for more holistic research. This phenomenon is reflected in the increase in publications integrating phenomenological and hermeneutic perspectives in religious studies. Interestingly, an unexpected finding emerged in the form of widespread acceptance of interdisciplinary approaches involving psychology, sociology and cultural studies in the analysis of religion, which had previously been less desirable. The following is a representation of the data organized in tabular form to show the results of expert interviews and content analysis of academic articles, which illustrate the increasing trend of integration of interdisciplinary approaches in the study of religion. The increasing integration of interdisciplinary approaches is summarized in [Table 1](#).

The research results that show a paradigm shift from positivistic to postpositivistic in the study of religion help overcome the gap related to the lack of integration of qualitative methods. The postpositivistic approach that accommodates spiritual and intuitive aspects paves the way for a wider use of qualitative methods in exploring religious experiences. This change is important as it allows for more in-depth research into the subjective and unmeasurable aspects of religion,

which were previously often overlooked in more rigid and empirical approaches. Furthermore, the acceptance of interpretive and phenomenological methods in the postmodern era also supported this integration, providing a strong theoretical foundation for applying qualitative techniques effectively. This approach helps bridge the gaps that exist in the religious studies literature, resulting in a more holistic and inclusive understanding.

Regarding the limited understanding of subjective experience, research results that emphasize postpositivistic approaches facilitate a better understanding of the subjective aspects of religion. This approach, which places more value on personal experiences and individual interpretations, overcomes the limitations of existing methodologies that often fail to capture the internal dynamics of religious beliefs and practices. As the postpositivistic approach is more open to interpretation and phenomenological analysis, it allows researchers to more accurately document and understand the way individuals experience and interpret religion in their lives (Miller, 2021). As such, the results of this study challenge traditional understandings and provide new, more profound and empathic insights into religious practices. postpositivism significantly contributes to this trend by emphasizing the importance of understanding researchers' theories, hypotheses, background knowledge, and values in shaping their observations, as well as recognizing the influence of biases that may exist in research. This practically helps in overcoming biases and increasing objectivity in religious studies in a more inclusive and diverse way.

Difficulties in interpreting phenomenological data were also overcome through the results that showed the integration of an interdisciplinary approach involving psychology, sociology, and cultural studies. This interdisciplinary approach assists researchers in better understanding and interpreting subjective data, utilizing theories and methods from other disciplines that can offer new perspectives and more appropriate analytic tools.

Table 1 Summary of expert interview and content analysis results on the integration of interdisciplinary approaches in religious studies

Data type	Source	Description
Expert interview	10 experts from leading universities in Indonesia	80 percent recognize the shift to an interdisciplinary approach. Emphasized the importance of a holistic approach in the study of religion to accommodate the complexity of religious phenomena
Content analysis of academic articles	30 peer-reviewed articles published within the last five years	45 percent increase in publications integrating psychology, sociology and cultural studies. Topics include the influence of religiosity on mental health and religious identity in multicultural societies

Note: Data were obtained from semi-structured interviews with experts in religious studies and a systematic content analysis of recent peer-reviewed journal articles. Percentages indicate the proportion of respondents or articles reflecting interdisciplinary integration.

The increase in publications integrating these perspectives demonstrates their effectiveness in interpreting complex religious phenomena, enriching analysis and reducing the risk of inconsistent or exaggerated conclusions. This interdisciplinary approach, as advocated by Tillson (2019), utilizes perspectives from different disciplines to improve understanding and interpretation of subjective data. This provides more precise analytic tools and reduces the risk of inconsistent or exaggerated conclusions. An interdisciplinary approach in international studies recognizes the importance of previously marginalized voices similar to the recognition in religious studies of the role of subjectivity and individual experience in understanding religious phenomena.

The neglect of socio-cultural factors that had previously been problematic in the study of religion was also responded to by results showing the rise of interdisciplinary approaches. This approach specifically recognizes the importance of the socio-cultural context in shaping religious practices and beliefs. By combining insights from sociology and anthropology, it helps fill a void in religious studies that often isolates religious phenomena from their social context. This approach provides a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of how socio-cultural factors influence religion, which is essential for a holistic and contextual analysis.

Limitations in the study of comparative religion are addressed through the development of adequate theoretical frameworks as indicated by research results. The promotion of interdisciplinary approaches and the use of more inclusive and adaptive methodologies enable researchers to conduct more effective and in-depth comparative analysis among diverse religious traditions. This approach not only resolves existing methodological issues but also enriches the understanding of differences and similarities between religions, promoting more productive dialogue and cross-cultural understanding in the study of religion. According to Freiberger (2018) in his discussion on the elements of comparative methodology in the study of religion, the interdisciplinary approach is crucial for dealing with the complex nature of religious phenomena. Freiberger emphasizes that by incorporating methodologies from various disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and cultural studies, researchers can address the traditional methodological challenges in comparative religion studies. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of religious practices across different cultures by providing diverse analytical tools and perspectives which are necessary for interpreting complex religious data effectively. The approach proposed in this

study responds effectively to the problem of the lack of integration of qualitative methods in the study of religion. By utilizing a postpositivistic framework that is more open to interpretive and phenomenological methods, this research allows for a more in-depth exploration of subjective aspects of religion that were previously often overlooked (McClymond, 2019). This provides a solution to the lack of a more holistic and personalized understanding of religion, while enriching the research corpus with more varied and inclusive perspectives. This ability to incorporate qualitative approaches more effectively not only increases analytical richness but also opens up new opportunities in the understanding of broader and more complex religious phenomena.

The results also show that by integrating interdisciplinary approaches, difficulties in interpreting phenomenological data can be overcome. Increased collaboration between disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and cultural studies provides new tools that aid in the analysis of data that is subjective in nature, allowing researchers to produce more consistent and evidence-based interpretations (Almirzanah, 2020). This approach effectively responds to criticisms of previous religious research that was often limited to textual or doctrinal analysis without taking into account the wider social and cultural context. As such, the results of this study not only challenge but also extend current understandings, providing a new dimension in religious studies that is more responsive to dynamic and diverse religious realities.

To avoid the gaps or problems identified in the study of religion, it is recommended for researchers to proactively integrate qualitative methods in their research. Greater use of phenomenological and interpretive approaches can assist in capturing subjective experiences and socio-cultural contexts that are often overlooked in dominant positivistic approaches. Researchers are advised to develop competence in qualitative techniques and explore theoretical frameworks that support a more holistic and inclusive analysis of religious phenomena. If there are gaps or problems that have already emerged in the research, researchers need not worry because the solutions to these problems have been identified in the results of this study. The results show that the paradigm shift to postpositivism and the acceptance of interdisciplinary approaches have paved the way for the use of methods that are more adaptive and responsive to religious complexity. By applying this approach, researchers can overcome existing limitations and produce a more in-depth and representative understanding of religious practices and beliefs.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study shows that the paradigm shift from modern to postmodern in the study of religion has brought about significant methodological changes, allowing for a more inclusive and holistic approach in understanding religious phenomena. The research findings confirm the importance of integrating qualitative methods and interdisciplinary approaches to overcome the limitations of more traditional positivistic approaches. The results suggest that by adopting a postpositivistic approach, religious research can be more effective in understanding and interpreting complex and diverse religious experiences. As such, this study makes a significant contribution to methodological development in the study of religion, proposing a framework that is more flexible and responsive to contemporary needs. In terms of theoretical benefits, the findings broaden the understanding of how religious studies can explore and interpret the broader and deeper dimensions of religion. Practically, the results are highly relevant for education, public policy and interfaith dialogue, where a better understanding of religion and its practices can enhance cooperation and understanding between diverse groups. Nonetheless, this study has limitations, including reliance on data that may not fully cover all religious traditions or contexts. Future research involving larger and more geographically and culturally diverse samples is therefore recommended to validate and extend these findings, thus bringing a richer and more in-depth understanding of religious phenomena in today's global society.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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