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A systematic review of methodologies in management, spirituality and religion

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Abstract: This article presents a systematic review of methodologies and paradigms in the field of Management, Spirituality and Religion (MSR), combining bibliometric and methodological analyses of articles published in the *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion* (JMSR) from 2004 to 2021. It aims to map the field's methodological landscape, examine its paradigmatic development, and advance spiritual research paradigms. The bibliometric analysis shows that international collaborations are dominated by Anglophone countries and that the most cited articles are either conceptual or quantitative studies. The methodological analysis identifies an 'empirical turn' since 2013 and a sustained 'qualitative gain', indicating the field's development alongside increasing methodological pluralism. Yet positivist approaches continue to dominate, while non-positivist studies remain concentrated within interpretivist paradigms, with limited engagement in critical, postmodern, or other related paradigms. This lack of paradigmatic diversity underscores the need for alternative evaluation criteria to support non-positivist, spiritually-grounded research. The major theoretical contribution is articulating a preliminary framework of spiritual research paradigms derived from two emerging spiritual paradigms in JMSR. It also outlines commonly used qualitative methodologies for non-positivist research and suggests directions for fostering creative approaches informed by Eastern, non-Anglophone, and Indigenous traditions.

Keywords: Management spirituality and religion; non-positivist epistemology; qualitative research; research paradigms; spiritual research; systematic review

Introduction

As a relatively new field, Management, Spirituality and Religion (MSR) is at a crossroads in its maturation journey with respect to research paradigms. In their analysis of various research areas, Keathley-Herring and her colleagues (2016) identify a mature research field as one that is, among others, robust across research paradigms and research methods/approaches. Moreover, failure to establish an appropriate research paradigm for a discipline may hamper its development or permanently marginalize it (e.g., Fornaciari and Lund Dean 2004; Omodan 2024).

While some organizational scholars favor a unified research paradigm (e.g., Pfeffer 1993), others have argued for more pluralism (e.g., Van Maanen 1995; Mir and Greenwood 2022; Zhu 2022; Lim 2023). Knudsen (2005) cautions that unification can lead to a specialization trap that weakens a field's adaptability to new and unforeseen phenomena. Furthermore, current thinking about research paradigms, building on Kuhn, calls for reflexive consideration of the comparative advantages of different theoretic approaches in enabling compelling theorizing and communication with practitioners (Zhu, 2022).

Meanwhile, there has been a growing call for 'a paradigmatic shift' and for establishing a 'spiritual research paradigm' among MSR scholars (e.g., Tackney et al. 2017b, 249; Storberg-Walker 2021; Lin et al. 2016). It was argued decades ago that MSR constructs resist positivist quantitative methods (Fornaciari and Lund Dean 2001) and that 'spiritual processes in the workplace can best be studied through the use of *spiritual processes themselves*' (Braud 2009, 60, emphasis in original). This is not to negate the merit of the positivist paradigm but to acknowledge that positivist approaches are not adequate for investigating the spiritual core of MSR phenomena, which is internal, subjective, and supernatural, and that alternative philosophies of science are much needed to advance the field.

To examine this issue, we conduct a systematic review of methodologies and paradigms employed in articles published in the *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion* (JMSR) from 2004 to 2021. We focus on JMSR as the leading dedicated journal in the MSR field (Rocha et al. 2025). Instead of surveying multiple outlets broadly, we select one high-quality journal to analyze the underlying philosophical assumptions, methodological choices, and evaluation criteria in greater depth. This design allows us to move beyond descriptive bibliometrics mapping to address the paradigmatic foundations of MSR research and articulate emerging spiritual research paradigms.

Our analysis centers on empirical research articles because research paradigms are most visible in the conduct of empirical inquiry: in how researchers define reality, generate knowledge, choose methods, and justify quality (Kuhn 1996; Mir and Greenwood 2022; Omodan 2024; Paudel 2024). Conceptual articles often shape paradigmatic debates, but they typically provide too little methodological detail for systematic classification. Moreover, while some non-empirical works (e.g., Boje 2005) may reflect distinct paradigmatic orientations, their inclusion would substantially expand the dataset and reduce analytical feasibility. This approach is also consistent with prior studies that limit methodological analysis to empirical research (e.g., Lund Dean and Fornaciari 2007). Accordingly, our analysis concentrates on empirical JMSR articles, with particular attention to non-positivist studies to identify emerging spiritual research paradigms.

Conceptual Framework of Research Paradigms

Research paradigms rest on philosophical assumptions that shape how scholars define reality, generate knowledge, choose methods, and interpret findings. Following Kuhn (1996), we treat paradigms as a disciplinary matrix consisting of views on the nature of reality (i.e., ontology), concepts, theories, and techniques of investigation that are regarded as appropriate (i.e.,

epistemology and methodology), and the role of researchers' values and ethics related to the purpose and conduct of research (i.e., axiology).

Table 1 summarizes seven research paradigms relevant to MSR research, drawn from the paradigms literature (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Aldawod and Day 2017; Prasad 2018; Saunders et al. 2019; Lim 2023; Omodan 2024): functionalism (including positivism and post-positivism), interpretivism (including constructivism and phenomenology), critical realism, poststructuralism, pragmatism, radical humanism, and postmodernism.

Insert Table 1 about here

Functionalism (including positivism and post-positivism) assumes an independent reality external to the researcher and strives to obtain universal knowledge through observation and quantification in a value-neutral and detached manner.

Interpretivism (including constructivism and phenomenology) assumes that reality is socially constructed by people through the creation of rich meanings and the use of language. Researchers, therefore, elicit people's narratives and interpretations and embrace their values and subjectivity in the research process.

Critical realism assumes an independent reality external to the researcher which is layered, structured, and contains causal mechanisms. It acknowledges the role of the researcher's values and worldviews while striving for objectivity in producing socially constructed and historically situated knowledge.

Poststructuralism assumes a socially constructed and power-dominated reality. Knowledge is obtained by focusing on voices and oppression amidst power relations. The researcher is also embedded in power relations.

Pragmatism assumes reality to be external to the researcher and the practical consequences of ideas. Knowledge generation is focused on successful problem-solving in specific contexts, with the researcher's values driving the process.

Radical humanism assumes that reality is ultimately spiritual, whereas individuals separate themselves from their true 'Being' in creating the external world. Hence knowledge is obtained by identifying sources of alienation that inhibit the possibilities of true human fulfillment.

Postmodernism assumes a participative reality created by the mind and the surrounding cosmos. Knowledge is inter-subjectively co-created with multiple ways of knowing, while the researcher's values constitute research.

Table 1 is intended as a heuristic rather than an exhaustive classification. The paradigms often overlap, but the framework helps identify the philosophical assumptions underlying empirical research.

Methodology

This systematic review comprises a bibliometric analysis (Broadus 1987; Donthu et al. 2021) and a methodological analysis. The bibliometric component provides contextual insight into the research ecosystem within which the more in-depth methodological analysis is situated. The primary focus of the study lies in the latter.

For the bibliometric analysis, the third author searched the Scopus Elsevier B.V. database on 18 March 2022 using 'Journal of Management Spirituality and Religion' as the source title. This search retrieved 379 documents from 2004 to 2020¹, including 303 research articles and 76 other items such as editorials, introductions, and book reviews. Using Bibliometrix R-toll package (Aria and Cuccurullo 2017) and VOSviewer software version 10.6.18 (van Eck and Waltman 2010), she

¹ Data from 2021 JMSR publications were not available in Scopus at the date of the search.

analyzed author affiliations, international collaboration networks, and the most cited JMSR articles. The three authors then interpreted these metadata drawing on their research experiences and insights.

For the methodological analysis, we retrieved all JMSR documents between 2004 and 2021 from the journal website. This dataset contained 446 documents, including 331 research articles, 38 book reviews, and 77 editorials and introductions. The first author and the second author then manually conducted a textual analysis (including content analysis and discourse analysis) of the 331 research articles to classify their philosophies of science and methodologies.

For each article, we recorded basic information such as author(s)/year/volume/issue/title and coded: 1) whether the study was conceptual or empirical; 2) if empirical, whether it used quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods; 3) methodology and methods; 4) research paradigm; 5) evaluation criteria. We use ‘evaluation criteria’ rather than ‘rigor criteria’ as the latter is more closely associated with logical positivism. Overall, the methodological analysis involves meticulously recording thousands of manual entries into expansive Microsoft Excel spreadsheets.

We used content analysis to extract explicit methodological information. To identify implicit philosophical assumptions, we used interpretive discourse analysis (Phillips and Hardy 2002). Discourse analysis focuses on the processes whereby the social reality is constructed and maintained by discourses. In this case, the ‘social reality’ we attempt to illuminate was the ontological and epistemological assumptions of JMSR authors as perceived by us.

Two issues required clear decision rules.

Issue 1: How to differentiate between empirical research and conceptual research?

For the purpose of this paper, three categories of research were defined as empirical: 1) research using primary data on the focal phenomena of MSR; 2) research using secondary data on content and discourse of MSR research, such as content analysis, narrative analysis, and discourse

analysis; 3) bibliometric studies or systematic reviews. Research that used none of these data types was classified as conceptual. Non-traditional pieces such as fictional writings, dialogues, panel conversations, and memoirs were classified as ‘other’ (i.e., neither empirical nor conceptual). Under this scheme, 152 of the 331 research articles were categorized as empirical.

Issue 2: How to identify the research paradigm, especially when it was unstated in an article?

We followed three principles:

1) Studies using only quantitative methods were classified as positivist.

2) Qualitative or mixed-methods studies using only positivist evaluation criteria were generally categorized as positivist. Common positivist criteria for qualitative research include, for example, generalizability, minimized researcher bias, replicability, inter-coder reliability, triangulation for construct validity, and replication logic for external validity (e.g., Yin 2018). Articles claiming a non-positivist stance while relying only on positivist criteria were classified as implicitly or unconsciously positivist.

3) Qualitative studies that stated neither philosophical stances nor evaluation criteria were classified through author judgement using Table 1 as a heuristic. The first and second authors coded these articles separately and consulted each other where necessary. For example, Moran’s (2017) content analysis was categorized as implicitly positivist because it emphasized counting and measurement of the frequency of keywords, implying that truth is objective and measurable. By contrast, Fischer’s (2019) critical discourse analysis was assessed as implicitly poststructuralist, because it focused on how a religious logo is shaped by context, politics, and power.

Our analysis of the philosophies of science underlying JMSR articles is interpretive rather than definitive. Paradigmatic assumptions may be implicit, ambiguous, or internally inconsistent,

and authors may not agree with our classifications. That possibility is inherent in interpretive analysis.

Findings and Discussion

Bibliometric Analysis

We conduct an examination of the authors' affiliated institutions and the international collaboration networks, as illustrated in Figure 1. The countries in blue host all the institutions that produce publications in the JMSR: the darker the blue, the more publications are produced. The red lines indicate international collaborations: the thicker the line, the more collaboration. 78 out of the 379 documents involve international collaborations. The most 'collaborative' countries are the USA (47), UK (22), New Zealand (18), Canada (12), Monaco (8), France (6), Denmark (5), Netherlands (4), Australia (4), and India (4).

Insert Figure 1 about here

There are significantly fewer contributions from countries in the 'Global South', including the Middle East, East Asia, Latin America, and Africa. This pattern is not unique to JMSR but is found in other international journals across disciplines. Future research should investigate institutional barriers (e.g., linguistic, sociocultural, geopolitical) that may limit contributions from these regions. Moreover, the predominance of Anglophone countries may also constrain the diversity of research paradigms in MSR. It would be valuable to further tap into the rich religious and spiritual traditions of the underrepresented parts of the world. Strategies to achieve this may include regional special issue calls, paper development workshops, and editorial support to encourage broader submissions. Enhancing dialogue between editors and authors could also help address mismatches between reviewers and submissions, particularly where philosophical

assumptions, evaluation criteria, and writing styles shaped by dominant paradigms may not align with research informed by Eastern or non-Anglophone worldviews.

Employing VOSviewer software version 10.6.18 (van Eck and Waltman 2010), we identify the ten most cited JMSR articles in Scopus (2004-2020) as listed in Table 2. Our analysis reveals that the majority of the most influential articles are either quantitative (five articles) or conceptual (four articles), with only one qualitative empirical research. Quantitative research gains wide currency, whereas qualitative studies are less impactful in terms of citation. The more extensive citation of quantitative research indicates sustained dominance of positivist paradigms, which is arguably associated with the predominance of Anglophone countries in international collaboration networks mentioned above.

Insert Table 2 about here

Methodological Analysis

The first significant finding of our methodological analysis is an ‘empirical turn’ taking place around 2013, when empirical studies increase dramatically relative to conceptual papers (see Figure 2). Although there have been some reversals between 2013 and 2016, empirical articles have consistently outnumbered conceptual ones since 2016.

Insert Figure 2 about here

This ‘empirical turn’ suggests that the MSR domain has entered a new stage since 2013. The early years of MSR research are dominated by conceptual articles, which is appropriate for an emerging discipline. Academic disciplines emerge when scholars begin to agree on a field’s distinct scope and how it differs from other areas (Keathley-Herring et al. 2016). This is the vital role of conceptual studies in the early stage of MSR research. The ‘empirical turn’ builds on this earlier

conceptual work and advances the field by using empirical data to interrogate conceptual frameworks and theories more critically.

Moreover, a gradual ‘qualitative gain’ over the past 20 years reflects methodological pluralism, given the complexity of MSR phenomena. Figure 3 shows that although quantitative research still exceeds qualitative research in JMSR, qualitative and mixed-methods studies together now comprise more than half (i.e., 53%) of the JMSR articles, which is significant given the overall dominance of quantitative research in the management field.

Insert Figure 3 about here

About 20 years ago, Fornaciari and Lund Dean’s (2004) systematic review of empirical MSR research during 1996-2000 found that 65% of empirical research employs quantitative measures, 31% qualitative measures, and 4% mixed methods. They consider this situation ‘troublesome’ and call for greater use of both quantitative and qualitative data to respect the MSR understanding that defies ‘nomothetic modeling’ (22). Likewise, other leading MSR scholars (e.g. Neal et al. 1999; Lips-Wiersma 2002; McGee 2001) call for more ‘ideographic approaches’ and ‘non-nomothetic research techniques’.

Figure 3 demonstrates a remarkable ‘qualitative gain’ in terms of the overall portion of qualitative research (41%) and mixed-methods research (12%) versus quantitative research (47%) over the past 20 years. This shift suggests that the MSR community has formed an enhanced awareness of the particularized nature of MSR research and hence more open to qualitative and mixed methods than most other management disciplines.

Despite this ‘qualitative gain’ at the methodological level, positivist research still dominates MSR publications. Figure 4 reveals that 116 of the 152 empirical research articles (i.e., 76.3%) are

based on positivist paradigms. Only 36 articles (i.e., 23.7%) adopt non-positivist research philosophies.

Insert Figure 4 about here

It is important to recognize that the predominance of positivist approaches in MSR research is not unique to this domain but reflects a broader pattern across management research. For instance, prior studies report that quantitative methods account for 78% in strategic management research, 85% in Organizational Behaviour, 72% in human resource management, and 71% in general management research (Samul 2017). These statistics suggest that MSR's reliance on positivist paradigms mirrors wider disciplinary norms rather than of particular characteristics of this field. Nonetheless, this comparison underscores the importance of cultivating greater methodological pluralism within MSR to fully capture the unique, subjective and often deeply personal dimensions of spirituality at work.

Furthermore, there is a lack of variety of non-positivist paradigms in JMSR. Table 3 shows that 28 of the 36 non-positivist research clusters within the interpretivist paradigms. Only eight articles take critical or postmodern approaches such as postmodernism, critical realism, poststructuralism, and radical humanism. Other philosophical approaches or perspectives, such as pragmatism, postcolonialism, and feminism, are largely absent from JMSR.

Insert Table 3 about here

It is worth mentioning that only one multi-paradigm study is identified from JMSR articles (i.e., Tackney et al. 2017a). It has been argued that MSR research that 'makes use of both positivist and non-positivist methods stands the best chance' of accurately recording spiritual experiences that defy easy definition and measurement (Lund Dean and Fornaciari 2007, 4). We hence suggest

that multi-paradigm approaches (Gioia and Pitre 1990; Lewis and Kelemen 2002) be more extensively employed within the MSR domain.

Our analysis includes a comprehensive list of the methodologies and methods used in the 36 non-positivist studies; however, the full table is omitted due to space constraints. Common methodologies include grounded theory, case study research, (auto)ethnography, and (participatory) action research. Purposive sampling is the most commonly used sampling strategy. Data collection methods include narrative or conversational interviews, historical archives, documentation, autobiographical works, and autoethnographic accounts. Data analysis is typically conducted through thematic analysis, discourse analysis, narrative analysis, or historical analysis.

Notably, there is a need for more research on evaluation criteria for non-positivist empirical research in MSR. Table 4 exhibits that only ten out of the 36 non-positivist articles explicitly state non-positivist evaluation criteria. 24 articles do not state any evaluation criteria. The remaining two only use positivist criteria. Given the urgent call for establishing spiritual research paradigms within the MSR realm, it is crucial for MSR researchers to create comprehensive, widely accepted, non-positivist evaluation criteria to ensure the quality of future non-positivist spiritual research.

Insert Table 4 about here

Our most significant finding and theoretical contribution is identifying a preliminary framework of spiritual research paradigms generated from two emerging spiritual research paradigms: the ‘Indigenous research paradigm’ (Gumbo and Gaotlhobogwe 2021) and the ‘Quantum research paradigm’ (Storberg-Walker 2021). The two articles are the only ones in our dataset that meet the selection criteria, i.e., explicitly stating philosophical assumptions and demonstrating methodological choices in line with the concept of a ‘paradigm’ (Kuhn 1996). Table

5 displays the preliminary framework of spiritual research paradigms including philosophical assumptions and methodological features of the two emerging spiritual research paradigms.

Insert Table 5 about here

Table 5 shows that the two paradigms share four core features: 1) ontological and epistemological assumptions grounded in spiritual traditions or post-Newtonian sciences that transcend positivism and embrace multiple ways of knowing; 2) qualitative inquiry as the primary research approach; 3) purposive sampling combined with other sampling methods; and 4) explicit recognition of researcher agency, including the researcher's context, history, inner capacities, and emotional or spiritual connection to participants.

The two paradigms also highlight four additional dimensions of spiritual research. The 'Quantum research paradigm' develops an axiology centered on deep, meaningful human experiences 'involving deep interconnectedness, transcendence, growth, transformation, mystery, or joy' (96). It also emphasizes holistic data analysis involving 'all facets of the researcher' (103) and introduces a creative form of postmodern writing through 'two-voice bricolage' (95). The 'Indigenous research paradigm', by contrast, illustrates spiritually grounded data collection through sharing circles, wherein narrative interviews are conducted in 'a most respectable, comforting, and healing manner' (468).

At the same time, several dimensions remain underexplored (see Table 5). The Indigenous paradigm does not elaborate on axiology or writing practices, whereas the Quantum paradigm does not specify data collection methods. Neither addresses evaluation criteria. The two paradigms are still in their nascent stages of development, awaiting further enrichment to make more substantial impacts.

Contributions, Limitations, and Future Directions

To our knowledge, this study is the first comprehensive analysis of paradigms in the MSR domain that investigates the philosophical assumptions of MSR research. It contributes to spirituality studies in three ways. First, it identifies a preliminary framework of spiritual research paradigms based on two emerging paradigms in JMSR: the Indigenous research paradigm and the Quantum research paradigm. Together, these paradigms suggest that spiritual research is typically non-positivist, qualitative, purposively sampled, and explicit about the researcher's role, while opening space for meaningful human experience, holistic analysis, and creative forms of writing.

Second, the study reveals the methodological evolution of the field: MSR has become more empirical and more open to qualitative inquiry, yet positivist approaches still dominate, non-positivist work remains concentrated in interpretivist paradigms, and non-positivist evaluation criteria remain underdeveloped. These findings reflect enduring patterns evident across both MSR and the wider academic landscape. We therefore encourage broader adoption of critical, radical, and postmodern orientations, with greater attention to postcolonialism, feminism, radical humanism, poststructuralism, pragmatism, and multi-paradigm approaches, alongside the development of comprehensive non-positivist evaluation criteria.

Third, the study offers practical guidance for future MSR research by identifying commonly used methodologies in non-positivist studies and calling for deeper engagement with Southern, Eastern, non-Anglophone, and Indigenous traditions. Greater paradigmatic diversity will require institutional support through cross-regional collaborative initiatives, special issues, editorial outreach, mentorship, and new publication venues for underrepresented or emerging paradigms. In doing so, the study positions MSR as an active contributor to broader conversations on epistemic diversity, decolonization, and methodological innovation in management and spirituality research.

This study is limited by its focus on JMSR articles. While this design enables an in-depth methodological analysis within a dedicated body of work, it may not capture the full diversity of MSR scholarship. Future research could extend the analysis across journals and databases. Moreover, we identified only two emerging spiritual research paradigms that met the selection criteria within the 2004-2021 JMSR dataset. Other relevant approaches exist beyond this sample, and additional paradigms have since appeared in JMSR (e.g., Yu 2025). Future research should therefore broaden the scope and continue exploring non-positivist approaches that challenge conventional paradigmatic boundaries.

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TABLE 1
Research Paradigms Relevant to MSR¹

Paradigm	Ontology (nature of reality/being)	Epistemology (what constitutes knowledge)	Axiology (values and purpose of research)	Typical methods
Functionalism / Positivism	External, independent, ordered, singular reality.	Knowledge as causal explanation or generalizable laws from observable and measurable facts.	Value-free; researcher remains detached and neutral.	Deductive, structured, large-sample, mainly quantitative; triangulation verifies findings.
Interpretivism / Constructivism / Phenomenology	Socially constructed, complex, experiential, multiple realities.	Knowledge from meanings, narratives, stories, perceptions, and new interpretations.	Value-bound; researcher is involved and reflexive.	Inductive, small-sample, in-depth, mainly qualitative.
Critical realism	External, stratified reality with causal mechanisms.	Knowledge is historically situated and transient; epistemological relativism.	Value-laden; researcher acknowledges bias while seeking credible explanation.	Retroductive, context-sensitive, multi-method inquiry; triangulation required.
Poststructuralism	Reality constructed through power; dominant voices silence others.	Knowledge is shaped by ideology; analysis attends to silences, absences, and oppression.	Value-constituted; researcher is embedded in power relations.	Deconstructive, discourse-based, mainly qualitative.
Pragmatism	External, complex reality; practical consequences in context.	Knowledge is what helps solve problems and guide action.	Value-driven and reflexive.	Following the problem; qualitative, quantitative, mixed, or action research.
Radical Humanism	Reality is the projection of consciousness; delusion alienates people from true being.	Knowledge reveals alienation that limits human fulfillment.	Value-driven; researcher is central and radically reflexive.	Inductive, often autoethnographic, small-sample, in-depth and qualitative.
Postmodernism	Reality is participative, plural, fragmented, and language-shaped.	Knowledge is co-created through multiple ways of knowing.	Value-constituted; critiquing grand narratives; researcher radically reflexive.	No single best method; deconstructive, genre-blending, mainly qualitative.

¹ Adapted from Burrell and Morgan (1979), Aldawod and Day (2017), Prasad (2018), and Saunders et al. (2019).

Table 2
Top 10 Cited JMSR Articles

Article	Method	Citations
Saks, A. M. (2011)	Conceptual	109
Petchsawang, P. and Duchon, D. (2012)	Quantitative	101
Houghton, J. D., Neck, C. P. and Krishnakumar, S. (2016)	Conceptual	81
Balog, A. M., Baker, L. T. and Walker, A. G. (2014)	Conceptual	72
McKee, M. C. et al. (2011)	Quantitative	67
Case, P. and Gosling, J. (2010)	Conceptual	62
Haq, F. and Jackson, J. (2009)	Qualitative	60
Fry, L. W. et al. (2017)	Quantitative	59
Petchsawang, P. and McLean, G. N. (2017)	Quantitative	57
King, J. E. and Williamson, I. O. (2005)	Quantitative	51

Table 3
Non-positivist JMSR Articles

Paradigm	Articles	Total
Interpretivism/ Constructivism/ Phenomenology	Clark (2004), Cunha (2004), Bell (2007), Karakas (2008), Pavlovich and Doyle Coner (2009), Delbecq (2010), Groen (2010), Jacobs and Longbotham (2011), Cullen (2011), Litz (2013), Sandelands and Carlsen (2013), Chaston and Lips-Wiersma (2015), Almond (2015), Crossman (2015), Singh et al. (2016), Lychnell (2017), Jensen and Neck (2017), Yahanpath et al. (2018), Vu and Gill (2018), Nandram et al. (2018), Miller et al. (2018), Cova et al. (2019), Driscoll et al. (2019), Allen and Williams (2020), Small (2020), Betters-Reed et al. (2020), Mwaka and Ochola (2021)	28
Critical Realism/ Poststructuralism	Bergin (2007), Aadland and Skjørshammer (2012), McGhee and Grant (2017), Fischer (2019)	4
Radical Humanism/ Existential Phenomenology	Blenkinsopp (2007), Gumbo and Gaotlhobogwe (2021)	2
Multi-paradigm	Tackney et al. (2017a)	1
Postmodernism	Storberg-Walker (2021)	1

Table 4
Non-Positivist Evaluation Criteria in JMSR

Article	Paradigm	Evaluation criteria
Blenkinsopp (2007)	Radical humanism	Verisimilitude
Karakas (2008)	Interpretivism	Multiple interpretations
Aadland and Skjørshammer (2012)	Critical realism; postmodernism	Participatory self-reflection on values, practices, and institutional change
Litz (2013)	Interpretivism	Objectivity, perspicacity, veracity
Singh et al. (2016)	Interpretivism	Rich, thick data
Tackney et al. (2017a)	Multi-paradigm	Valid, reliable, artistic, ethical, explanatory, apologetic, and prophetic; interviewee accuracy check
Miller et al. (2018)	Interpretivism	Interpretations of lived experience
Nandram et al. (2018)	Interpretivism	Avoiding preconceptions and conceptual forcing; theoretical saturation
Cova et al. (2019)	Interpretivism	Relevant facts only; adequate explanation of the research question
Small (2020)	Interpretivism	Layered reflection through rich participant stories

Table 5
Emerging Spiritual Research Paradigms in JMSR

Dimension	Indigenous research paradigm	Quantum research paradigm
Article	Gumbo and Gaotlhobogwe (2021)	Storberg-Walker (2021)
Ontology	Multiple realities shared across humans, cosmos, and spirit.	Quantum ontology linking field and material world.
Epistemology	Knowledge arises through mind, body, emotion, intuition, dreams, visions, spirit, and signs from nature.	Postmodern epistemology with multiple ways of knowing.
Axiology	Unspecified.	Focus on meaningful human experience, researcher's inner development, relationships and participation
Sampling	Purposive; convenience.	Purposive.
Data collection	Rapport-building, native-language narrative interviews, and sharing circles.	Unspecified.
Data analysis	Transcription, translation, repeated reading, and thematic analysis.	Deconstruction and quantum commentary using scholarly, intuitive, embodied, and imaginal knowing.
Writing	Unspecified.	Two-voice bricolage, metaphor, embodied storying, personal pronouns, extended length.
Researcher's role	Researchers and participants are spiritually and emotionally connected.	The researcher plays a starring role; researcher's context/history matter.
Evaluation criteria	Unspecified.	Unspecified.

Figure 1
Countries of Authorship and International Collaboration in JMSR

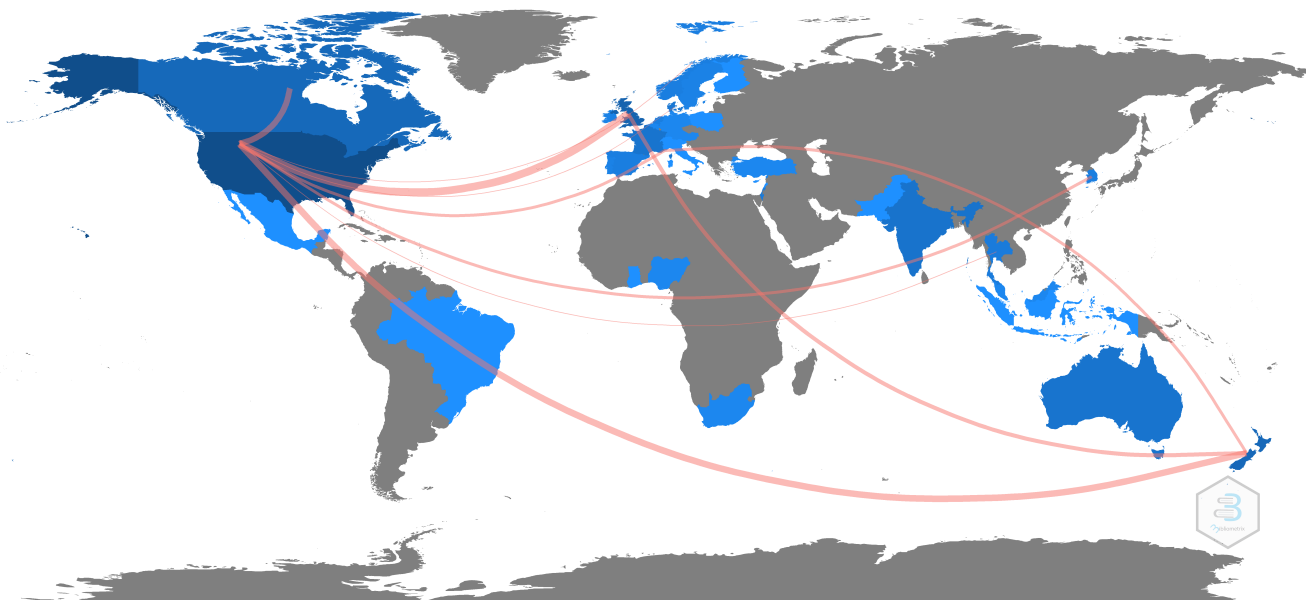


Figure 2
Types of JMSR Articles by Year

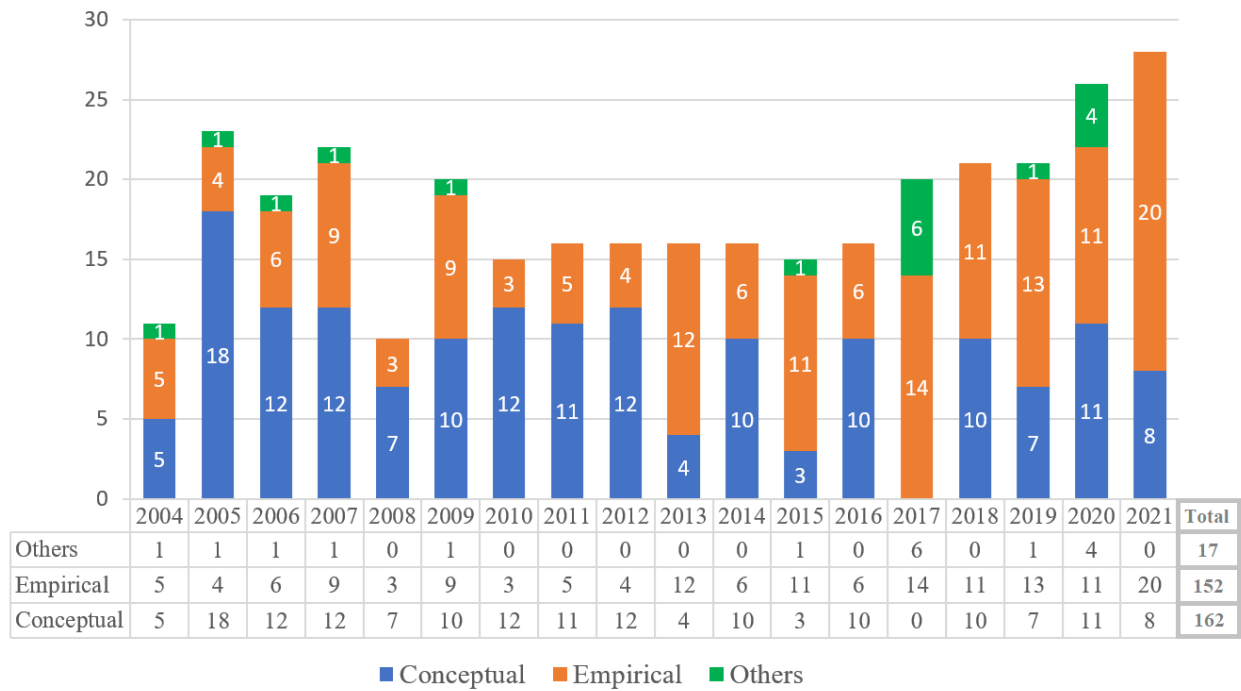


Figure 3

Approaches of JMSR Empirical Articles by Year

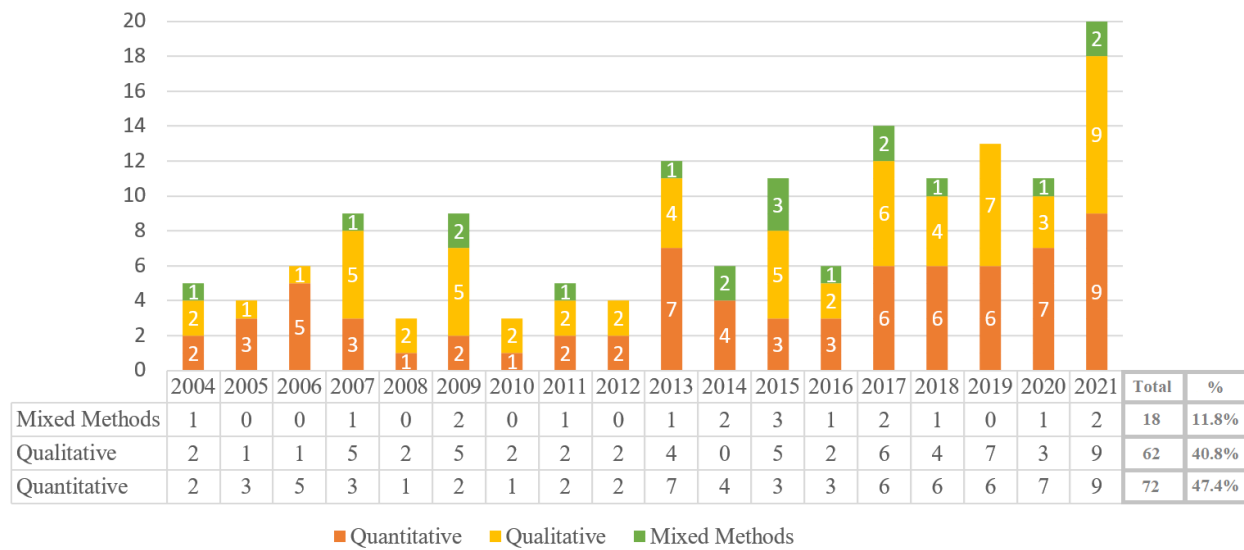


Figure 4

Non-positivist vs. Positivist JMSR Articles by Year

