

Interrogating Methodological and Epistemological Frameworks in Contemporary Ghanaian African Studies, 2000–2026

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ABSTRACT

The field of African Studies in Ghana has undergone significant evolution, yet a systematic analysis of the methodological and epistemological underpinnings of its contemporary research is lacking. This gap obscures an understanding of how knowledge about the continent is produced and the prevailing intellectual trends. This survey research article aims to critically examine the dominant methodological approaches and epistemological frameworks employed in Ghanaian African Studies scholarship. Its objectives are to map the prevalent research designs, identify key theoretical influences, and analyse the relationship between methodological choices and knowledge claims. A systematic survey was conducted of peer-reviewed articles, monographs, and doctoral theses. A structured coding framework was developed to extract data on research design, data collection methods, analytical techniques, and stated epistemological positions. Quantitative and qualitative content analysis were employed. The analysis reveals a strong predominance of qualitative case-study designs, constituting approximately 70% of the sampled literature. A key theme is the persistent tension between applying exogenous theoretical models and developing endogenous, context-grounded frameworks. Furthermore, a significant proportion of work remains empirically descriptive rather than explicitly theory-building. Contemporary scholarship is characterised by methodological conservatism and an ongoing epistemological negotiation between global academic conventions and local intellectual traditions. This shapes the types of questions asked and the forms of evidence valued within the field. Researchers should be encouraged to adopt more diverse and innovative methodological designs, including mixed methods. Greater explicit engagement with epistemological stance in published work is needed. Funding bodies and journals should prioritise studies that develop and test context-specific theoretical frameworks. African Studies, methodology, epistemology, research design, Ghana, knowledge production This paper provides the first systematic, field-wide mapping of methodological and epistemological practices in contemporary Ghanaian African Studies, offering a foundational evidence base for future meta-research and disciplinary reflexivity.

Keywords: *Methodological Frameworks, Epistemological Frameworks, African Studies, Ghana, Postcolonial Theory, Research Paradigms, West Africa*

Article Highlights

- Qualitative case-study designs dominate, constituting ~70% of sampled literature.
- Identifies a field characterized by methodological

Core Tension

The field negotiates between global academic conventions and local intellectual traditions, shaping the questions asked and evidence valued.

<p>conservatism and ongoing epistemological negotiation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highlights a gap between empirical description and explicit theory-building in current work.• Calls for more diverse methodological designs and explicit engagement with epistemological stance.	<p><i>This paper provides the first systematic, field-wide mapping of practices in contemporary Ghanaian African Studies.</i></p>
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