

Epistemological Frameworks and Methodological Challenges in Nigerian African Studies, 2000–2026

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ABSTRACT

The field of African Studies in Nigeria operates within a complex intellectual landscape, shaped by competing epistemological traditions. The ongoing tension between indigenous knowledge systems and Western academic paradigms presents fundamental challenges for research design and validation. This comparative study analyses the dominant epistemological frameworks employed within Nigerian African Studies and identifies the consequent methodological challenges. It aims to map the theoretical terrain and evaluate how these frameworks influence research questions, data collection, and interpretation. The study employs a comparative documentary analysis of a purposive sample of doctoral theses, journal articles, and key institutional research agendas. A structured analytical framework was used to categorise epistemological positions and their methodological manifestations. Analysis revealed a predominant reliance on hybrid frameworks, yet a significant methodological dissonance was observed where Eurocentric methods were often uncritically applied to indigenous epistemological questions. A prominent theme was the marginalisation of embodied and spiritual knowledges in formal research outputs, with over 60% of sampled works favouring positivist or interpretivist approaches over indigenous paradigms. The field is characterised by a persistent epistemological-methodological gap, where stated commitments to endogenous knowledge systems frequently are not realised in practical research design, limiting the decolonisation potential of the discipline. Research training programmes should integrate dedicated modules on indigenous methodologies. Funding bodies should prioritise proposals demonstrating coherent alignment between epistemological stance and method. Academic journals should develop specific review criteria for methodological rigour within endogenous frameworks. epistemology, methodology, decolonisation, indigenous knowledge, research paradigms, Nigeria This paper provides a novel, systematic mapping of the epistemological-methodological nexus in Nigerian African Studies, introducing a diagnostic framework for assessing coherence between theoretical stance and research practice.

Keywords: *Epistemological frameworks, Indigenous knowledge systems, Postcolonial methodology, Nigerian academia, West African intellectual history, Comparative African studies, Decolonising methodologies*

Article Highlights

- Analysis reveals predominant reliance on hybrid epistemological frameworks.
- Significant methodological dissonance observed in applying Eurocentric methods.
- Over 60% of sampled works favour positivist or interpretivist approaches.
- Marginalisation of embodied and spiritual knowledges in formal outputs.

Core Recommendation

Research training must integrate dedicated modules on indigenous methodologies to bridge the epistemological-methodological gap.

This analysis provides a diagnostic framework for assessing coherence between theoretical stance and research practice.

ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

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