

Interrogating the Decolonial Turn

A Survey of Methodological and Epistemological Currents in Ghanaian African Studies (2000–2024)

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ABSTRACT

The field of African Studies globally is undergoing a significant methodological and epistemological reorientation, often termed the 'decolonial turn'. Within this context, there is a need to systematically map how this intellectual shift is being interpreted, adopted, or contested within specific national academic communities. This study aims to survey and analyse the methodological and epistemological currents characterising African Studies research in Ghana over the past quarter-century. Its objectives are to catalogue prevalent research approaches, assess the influence of decolonial thought, and identify dominant thematic and theoretical preoccupations. A systematic survey was conducted of peer-reviewed journal articles, monographs, and selected doctoral theses produced by Ghana-based scholars. A structured coding framework was developed to analyse the epistemological stance, methodological design, and central claims of each sampled work. Analysis reveals a pronounced but uneven engagement with decolonial frameworks. While over 60% of recent publications explicitly engage with decolonial or postcolonial vocabulary, a significant methodological conservatism persists, with a majority of studies (approximately 70%) employing conventional qualitative case studies or historical analysis rather than innovative community-based or participatory methods. The decolonial turn in the Ghanaian context is largely discursive and theoretical, with a slower transformation of concrete research practices. This creates a tension between stated epistemological commitments and actual methodological execution. Academic programmes should integrate training in innovative, participatory methodologies aligned with decolonial principles. Funding bodies should prioritise research that demonstrates methodological experimentation. Further comparative survey work across different African regions is warranted. This paper provides the first systematic, longitudinal survey mapping the methodological and epistemological landscape of African Studies in Ghana, offering an evidence-based analysis of the gap between decolonial theory and research practice.

Keywords: *decolonial turn, African Studies, Ghana, research methodology, knowledge production, epistemic justice, Sub-Saharan Africa*

Article Highlights

- Systematic survey reveals uneven adoption of decolonial frameworks in Ghanaian African Studies.
- Over 60% of recent publications engage with decolonial vocabulary, yet 70% employ conventional methodologies.
- Findings indicate a significant gap between theoretical discourse and research practice.
- Calls for integrated training in participatory methods aligned

Core Tension

Analysis identifies a critical divergence: widespread theoretical engagement with decoloniality coexists with methodological conservatism in research design and execution.

This longitudinal survey provides empirical grounding for debates on epistemic justice in African knowledge production.

with decolonial principles.	
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