

Navigating the Postcolonial Terrain

A Critical Analysis of Epistemic and Methodological Challenges in Nigerian African Studies, 2000–2024

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ABSTRACT

The field of African Studies operates within a complex postcolonial intellectual landscape, where inherited Western academic paradigms often conflict with indigenous knowledge systems and contemporary scholarly imperatives. This creates significant tensions for researchers, particularly in major regional centres of scholarship. This study aimed to critically identify and analyse the principal epistemic and methodological challenges confronting scholars within the field. It sought to understand how these challenges manifest in research practice and influence knowledge production. A qualitative, critical analysis was conducted, employing a systematic review of relevant scholarly literature, institutional reports, and grey literature. This was supplemented by a thematic analysis of discourse from key academic forums and symposia. The analysis identified three dominant, interlinked challenges: the persistent hegemony of Western theoretical frameworks, the marginalisation of indigenous epistemologies in methodological design, and institutional pressures to conform to globally dominant publication metrics. A prominent theme was the strategic negotiation scholars employ, with approximately 70% of analysed discourse referencing the need to 'code-switch' epistemologically to achieve academic legitimacy. The study concludes that the field remains constrained by a neo-colonial epistemic order, which systematically devalues locally grounded methodologies and limits the transformative potential of African-centred scholarship. It is recommended that academic institutions develop dedicated funding streams for methodological innovation rooted in indigenous knowledge systems. Furthermore, scholarly associations should advocate for and create alternative publication platforms that prioritise epistemic diversity over conventional impact factors. epistemic justice, methodological decolonisation, knowledge production, postcolonial scholarship, indigenous methodologies This paper provides a novel, systematic typology of epistemic challenges, moving beyond theoretical critique to document the specific, practical strategies scholars use to navigate them, thereby offering a new framework for analysing scholarly agency in postcolonial academic spaces.

Keywords: *Postcolonialism, Epistemology, African Studies, Nigeria, Qualitative Research, Indigenous Knowledge, Decolonisation*

Article Highlights

- Identifies three interlinked challenges: Western theoretical hegemony, marginalisation of indigenous epistemologies, and institutional pressure from global metrics.
- Documents the practical strategies scholars employ to navigate the postcolonial academic terrain.
- Proposes concrete institutional and associational reforms to foster epistemic diversity and methodological decolonisation.
- Provides a novel typology for analysing scholarly agency beyond theoretical critique.

Core Recommendation

Academic institutions should create funding for methodological innovation rooted in indigenous knowledge systems, while scholarly associations must develop alternative publication platforms that value epistemic diversity over conventional impact factors.

This analysis moves from theoretical critique to document the practical realities of postcolonial scholarship.

ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

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