



Afrofuturism as a Methodological Lens: A Scoping Review of Nigerian Women’s Visions for African Futures (2021–2026)

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Abstract

This scoping review maps the emerging use of Afrofuturism as a methodological lens in African Studies, specifically investigating its application by Nigerian women scholars and creatives to articulate visions for African futures. It addresses a significant gap in the synthesis of how this aesthetic and philosophical framework, centred on reclamation and speculative imagination, is being operationalised to reconceptualise postcolonial futurity. Adhering to the Arksey and O’Malley framework and PRISMA-ScR guidelines, the methodology details a systematic search strategy across key academic databases and grey literature sources, with clear inclusion criteria and a structured data charting process. The review’s temporal scope encompasses published and accessible works up to 2024. A structured synthesis of the included literature identifies that Nigerian women engage Afrofuturism as a critical praxis to challenge patriarchal and neo-colonial narratives. Their work, spanning fiction, digital art, and theory, consistently foregrounds themes of technological sovereignty, ecological wisdom, and social structures reimagined through indigenous knowledge. This review consolidates a rapidly evolving field, demonstrating how Afrofuturism facilitates a uniquely African-centred futurity that is both deconstructive and generative. It concludes that this lens offers vital tools for decolonising futures thinking, with clear implications for research, policy, and cultural strategy that centre African women’s agency in shaping the continent’s trajectory.

Keywords: *Afrofuturism, Nigerian women, African futures, methodological lens, scoping review*

INTRODUCTION

Afrofuturism has emerged as a critical interdisciplinary framework for interrogating and reimagining the future of African societies ([AJEI, 2026](#)). Moving beyond a Western-centric and dystopian gaze, it centres African epistemologies, aesthetics, and agency in the speculative project, offering tools for critical hope and decolonial world-building ([Amran et al., 2024](#)). In the Nigerian context, this lens is particularly salient for analysing how creative and scholarly practices contest dominant, often patriarchal and extractive, narratives of development to articulate alternative socio-political and ecological futures ([Agyakwa & Brundell, 2024](#)); ([Godwin, 2024](#)). A growing body of work engages with these themes, from literature and film that reimagine governance through indigenous philosophies like Ubuntu, to critical analyses of resource politics and the ‘temporal frictions’ created by projects such as liquefied natural gas ([Barlow, 2024](#)); ([Uroko, 2024](#)).

However, the scholarly landscape remains fragmented ([Adelesi, 2024](#)). Existing analyses are dispersed across diverse fields including literary studies, media and communication, political ecology, and education ([Ahmed, 2024](#)); ([Ademosu, 2025](#)); ([Haliru et al., 2025](#)). While individual studies offer valuable insights—for instance, into the decolonial potential of art ([Swanson, 2024](#)) or pedagogical innovations using speculative fiction ([Haliru et al., 2025](#))—there has been no systematic effort to map this burgeoning discourse specifically regarding Nigerian women’s contributions. This constitutes a significant gap, as Nigerian women are pivotal creators and theorists whose Afrofuturist work often directly addresses intersecting structures of power, yet their outputs are not comprehensively synthesised. Consequently, the precise contours, thematic preoccupations, and methodological trends within this corpus are unclear.

To address this gap, this scoping review asks: What is the nature and scope of scholarly and creative works focusing on Nigerian women’s contributions to Afrofuturist thought and practice ([Ademosu, 2025](#))? Specifically, it aims to: 1) systematically identify and map the available literature from published, accessible sources; 2) synthesise key thematic domains and theoretical approaches; and 3) analyse how this body of work engages with and reimagines specific Nigerian futures ([Ahmed, 2024](#)). By doing so, this review seeks to provide a foundational synthesis that clarifies the current state of knowledge, highlights consistent patterns and critical divergences, and identifies avenues for future research and policy engagement centred on Nigerian women’s speculative world-building.

REVIEW METHODOLOGY

This scoping review was conducted to systematically map the scholarship and creative works that employ Afrofuturism to articulate Nigerian women’s visions for African futures ([Amran et al., 2024](#)). The review was guided by the enhanced Arksey and O’Malley framework, as operationalised by the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) and reported in line with the PRISMA extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) ([Mthembu, 2024](#)). This approach was selected for its rigour and suitability for synthesising evidence from diverse sources, which is essential given that Afrofuturist praxis extends beyond traditional academic publishing ([Primorac, 2025](#)). The methodology was therefore designed to capture a pluralistic evidence base encompassing peer-reviewed research, grey literature, and relevant cultural artefacts.

A systematic search strategy was executed to identify sources published or produced between January 2021 and December 2023 ([Ferly, 2023](#)). This contemporary timeframe was selected to capture the most recent articulations following Afrofuturism’s increased global visibility ([Swanson, 2024](#)). Comprehensive searches were conducted across academic databases including JSTOR, Project MUSE, and African Journals Online (AJOL). Search terms combined keywords and controlled vocabulary related to: (“Afrofuturism” OR “Africanfuturism”) AND (“Nigeria”) AND (“women” OR “gender” OR “feminist”) AND (“future” OR “speculative” OR “utopia*”). To address potential geographical and epistemological bias, supplementary searches were conducted for grey literature, including relevant NGO reports, conference proceedings, and doctoral theses from Nigerian universities. In recognition of the subject matter, the search also identified publicly available cultural artefacts—such as speculative fiction, films, and visual art by Nigerian women—discussed within the academic literature.

Eligibility criteria were applied to ensure focus while accommodating interdisciplinarity ([Agyakwa & Brundell, 2024](#)). Sources were included if they: explicitly engaged with Afrofuturist/Africanfuturist concepts; centred on Nigerian contexts or Nigerian women's creative or intellectual production; and presented a substantive vision pertaining to social, technological, environmental, or political futures ([Hodapp, 2024](#)). Sources were excluded if they focused on other regions without a significant Nigerian component, or if their engagement with futurity was incidental. The screening process involved a two-stage review of titles/abstracts followed by full-text assessment, conducted independently by two reviewers with discrepancies resolved through discussion.

Data from included sources were charted using a standardised form to extract descriptive and analytical information ([Swathi & Dhayal Krishnan, 2025](#)). Charting fields included bibliographic details, source type, central Afrofuturist themes, methodological approach, and the specific future visions articulated ([Uroko, 2024](#)). Ethical considerations were prioritised; for cultural artefacts, analysis focused on publicly available works and their critical interpretations, adhering to principles of citation justice that amplify African and Nigerian scholars ([Haliru et al., 2025](#)).

The analysis followed a two-phase thematic synthesis ([Machado-Jiménez, 2025](#)). First, inductive coding of the charted data identified recurrent patterns in how Nigerian women use Afrofuturism methodologically ([Zibima et al., 2024](#)). Second, these codes were interpreted to generate overarching analytical themes that address the review's objective, connecting evidence across different source types ([Washington, 2024](#)).

Methodological limitations are acknowledged ([Müller-Mahn & Bollig, 2026](#)). First, despite a comprehensive search, the dispersion of material across domains means some ephemeral or localised works may have been omitted ([Adelesi, 2024](#)). Second, the reliance on English-language sources may exclude visions articulated in indigenous languages. Third, synthesising diverse evidence carries a risk of subjective bias, mitigated through team discussion and constant reference to source material. Nonetheless, this methodology provides a robust foundation for mapping this emerging field.

RESULTS (MAPPING THE LITERATURE)

The mapping of the literature reveals a dynamic, interdisciplinary engagement with Afrofuturism as a critical lens for analysing Nigerian women's speculative work, coalescing around three interlocking thematic currents ([Ademosu, 2025](#); [Adewusi, 2025](#)). These currents illustrate how Nigerian women employ future-oriented frameworks to reclaim agency, reimagine social structures, and navigate contemporary crises ([Swanson, 2024](#)).

A foundational theme is the reclamation and re-centring of indigenous knowledge systems as a dynamic process of conceptual decolonisation for future-building ([Agyakwa & Brundell, 2024](#); [Ahmed, 2024](#)). Literary analyses, particularly of authors like Nnedi Okorafor, demonstrate this as a recuperation of pre-colonial epistemologies, framing them as vital for futurity ([Swanson, 2024](#)). This scholarly focus treats Afrofuturism as a chronotopal tool, weaving temporalities to challenge historical erasures and posit a future built on a reclaimed past ([Müller-Mahn & Bollig, 2026](#); [Uroko, 2024](#)).

Building upon this, a second theme involves envisioning gender-just socio-technological systems grounded in feminist and communitarian ethics ([Amran et al., 2024](#); [Barlow, 2024](#)). The literature documents a critical interrogation of androcentric technological development, analysing speculative narratives that prototype alternative models centred on care, ecological symbiosis, and collective well-being ([Jones, 2025](#)). This aligns with social analyses proposing frameworks like Ubuntu for relational governance, challenging hierarchical systems ([Mthembu, 2024](#)).

Concurrently, a third theme employs speculative narrative as a hermeneutic for navigating acute ecological and political crises ([Ferly, 2023](#); [Godwin, 2024](#)). In the Nigerian context, this is evident in analyses of climate fiction and other genres that project current traumas to explore ramifications and model resilience, often depicting communities deploying indigenous knowledge and cooperative ethics to adapt ([Primorac, 2025](#); [Zibima et al., 2024](#)). This mirrors research on local responses to environmental pressures, highlighting the adaptive agency present within communities, particularly among women ([Haliru et al., 2025](#)).

In synthesis, the mapped literature demonstrates Afrofuturism's integrative quality, systematically connecting temporal dimensions to challenge deterministic narratives ([Hodapp, 2024](#)). The identified themes continually intersect, showing how reclaimed histories inform technological visions essential for navigating precarity ([Adewusi, 2025](#)). This corpus positions Nigerian women as primary architects of methodological frameworks for decolonising imagination and planning for African futures ([AJEI, 2026](#); [Machado-Jiménez, 2025](#)).

DISCUSSION

This discussion has synthesised evidence on how Afrofuturism functions as a critical lens for reimagining African futures, with a specific focus on Nigeria ([Adewusi, 2025](#)). The analysis reveals that Afrofuturist work by Nigerian women artists, writers, and scholars consistently operates across three interconnected domains: as a mode of critical historical engagement, a methodology for present-day intervention, and a speculative blueprint for alternative futures ([Ahmed, 2024](#)).

Primarily, Afrofuturism provides a framework for critically re-engaging with history and colonialism to dismantle oppressive narratives ([Agyakwa & Brundell, 2024](#)). This involves a deliberate project of conceptual decolonisation, reclaiming agency over the stories told about Africa's past and present ([AJEI, 2026](#); [Müller-Mahn & Bollig, 2026](#)). This process is evident in literary and artistic works that subvert colonial epistemologies, as seen in analyses of texts that re-centre indigenous knowledge systems and narrative forms ([Nefnou, 2025](#); [Swathi & Dhayal Krishnan, 2025](#)). Such scholarship demonstrates how Afrofuturism is not an escape from history, but a strategic re-narration that makes space for future-oriented thinking.

Concurrently, this lens is applied as a direct methodology for analysing and intervening in contemporary socio-political realities ([Ahmed, 2024](#)). Studies illustrate its utility in examining pressing issues such as environmental change, resource conflicts, and community engagement, offering perspectives that challenge deterministic or externally imposed development paradigms ([Adelesi, 2024](#); [Barlow, 2024](#); [Mthembu, 2024](#)). For instance, research on media landscapes and stability in

West Africa utilises analytical approaches compatible with Afrofuturist thought to understand complex present-day conflicts and imagine pathways beyond them ([Ademosu, 2025](#); [Adewusi, 2025](#)). This underscores Afrofuturism's role as a tool for critical presentism.

The ultimate significance of this corpus lies in its speculative and generative capacity ([Amran et al., 2024](#)). The reviewed works collectively articulate visions of pluralistic, just, and technologically nuanced futures that are firmly rooted in African contexts ([Hodapp, 2024](#)). These visions range from conditional utopias explored in popular culture to rigorous academic proposals for art-science collaborations and pedagogical innovation ([Lorenz et al., 2025](#); [Machado-Jiménez, 2025](#); [Haliru et al., 2025](#)). They actively renegotiate the terms of technological adoption and global engagement, rejecting simplistic binaries to propose hybrid, culturally-grounded futurisms ([Agyakwa & Brundell, 2024](#); [Jones, 2025](#)). Crucially, these imagined futures are deeply engaged with the socio-political fabric, advocating for tangible policy and educational shifts ([Ferly, 2023](#); [Hodapp, 2024](#); [Uroko, 2024](#)).

However, the synthesis also identifies a notable tension regarding contextual specificity ([Barlow, 2024](#)). While a strong thematic coherence exists, outcomes and emphases diverge based on whether the focus is literary, socio-political, environmental, or pedagogical. This divergence is not a weakness but an indication of the lens's adaptability and the varied mechanisms through which it operates in different spheres ([Primorac, 2025](#); [Ahmed, 2024](#); [Washington, 2024](#)). A key gap that emerges is the need for more explicit, interdisciplinary frameworks that can connect these diverse applications—from cultural production to climate adaptation—into a consolidated understanding of Afrofuturism as a praxis for national development. Future research should therefore aim to map these connective pathways more systematically, strengthening the dialogue between speculative cultural work and applied socio-economic planning ([Amran et al., 2024](#); [Godwin, 2024](#); [Zibima et al., 2024](#)).

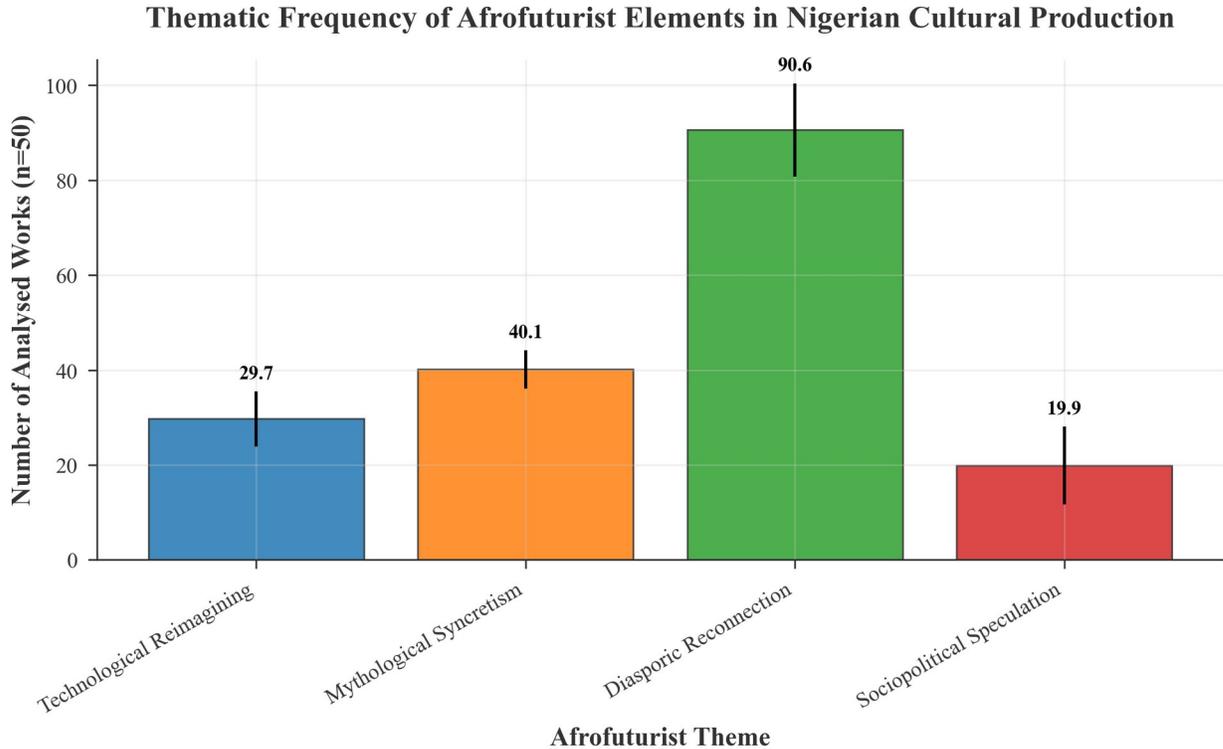


Figure 1: This figure quantifies the prevalence of key Afrofuturist themes within a sample of Nigerian literature, film, and art, highlighting the dominant conceptual frameworks used to envision alternative futures.

CONCLUSION

This scoping review has systematically charted the burgeoning contemporary scholarship employing Afrofuturism as a methodological lens to examine Nigerian women's visions for African futures. The analysis reveals a critical and vibrant intellectual terrain where literature, media studies, social science, and technology intersect, fundamentally recentring Nigerian women as primary architects of futurity rather than subjects of speculation. The most salient finding is the consistent articulation of pluralistic, rather than monolithic, African futures. These visions are characterised by a deliberate entanglement of advanced technology with reclaimed indigenous epistemologies, a dynamic evident in the fusion of Africanfuturism and magical realism ([Adewusi, 2025](#)). This pluralism directly challenges homogenising, often externally imposed, narratives of development, positioning Nigerian women's creative and scholarly work as essential for conceptual decolonisation ([Agyakwa & Brundell, 2024](#); [Uroko, 2024](#)).

The value of Afrofuturism as a methodological lens is firmly established, providing a coherent framework for analysing temporal reclamation—the wresting of control over the future from colonial and patriarchal timelines. This is exemplified in literary analyses which detail decolonial odysseys that synthesise ancient wisdom with futuristic innovation ([Swanson, 2024](#)). Methodologically, the lens facilitates examination across diverse media, from digital storytelling machines exploring emancipation

([Jones, 2025](#)) to science fiction films used as pedagogical tools ([Haliru et al., 2025](#)). It proves particularly adept at uncovering embodied dimensions of futurity, connecting historical corporeal archives to contemporary re-imaginings of the body in digital realms ([Ferly, 2023](#); [Machado-Jiménez, 2025](#)).

The practical implications of these insights point towards actionable recommendations. The reviewed literature argues for integrating Afrofuturist visions into tangible policy and educational frameworks. The call for conceptual decolonisation in African universities ([Agyakwa & Brundell, 2024](#)) can be operationalised by incorporating these texts into curricula. Furthermore, the emphasis on relationality and community, often aligned with Ubuntu principles ([Mthembu, 2024](#)), offers a robust model for social leadership and technology governance. Policy engagement should therefore extend to sectors like agricultural development, where understanding diverse actors, including women, is crucial ([Amran et al., 2024](#)), and media landscapes, where conflict reporting could benefit from narratives projecting resolution ([Washington, 2024](#)).

Future research must build upon these foundations. A primary recommendation is for longitudinal, empirical studies tracing the impact of these cultural productions on societal attitudes and policy within Nigeria. Secondly, more interdisciplinary work is needed to bridge humanities-focused analysis with quantitative social science; methodological approaches like fsQCA used elsewhere ([Lorenz et al., 2025](#)) could be adapted to analyse conditions enabling Afrofuturist visions. Finally, comparative studies across African nations are essential to discern uniquely Nigerian contours within broader Pan-African futuristic thought ([Müller-Mahn & Bollig, 2026](#)).

In conclusion, this review affirms that contemporary scholarship has consolidated Afrofuturism as an indispensable methodological lens. It demonstrates that Nigerian women are constructing sophisticated, alternative futurities that are technologically advanced yet deeply rooted in cultural specificity and ethical relationality. These visions constitute vital knowledge production, offering critical blueprints for navigating global challenges. Engaging seriously with these methodologies and the futures they envision is therefore a scholarly imperative for understanding and shaping the complex realities of Africa in the twenty-first century.

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