



# Decolonising Knowledge Production: A Theoretical Framework for Feminist Research Methodologies in Algeria

Decolonising Knowledge  
Production: A Theoretical  
Framework

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## Abstract

This theoretical article confronts the hegemony of Eurocentric epistemologies in feminist research on Algeria, arguing that such approaches perpetuate epistemic violence by marginalising indigenous knowledge. It aims to develop a decolonial feminist methodological framework, grounded specifically in the Algerian context, to rectify this. The study is situated within critical dialogues in Maghrebi feminist thought and African decolonial scholarship, systematically engaging these literatures to identify a gap in context-specific methodological principles for Algeria. The core argument is that a genuine decolonisation of methodology requires an epistemological shift that deconstructs coloniality in research design, ethics, and interpretation. This shift entails moving beyond superficial inclusion to privileging oral histories, embodied knowledge, and community-based participatory action as valid scholarly praxis. Methodologically, the article employs a critical synthesis, applying rigorous criteria for the selection and analysis of theoretical sources to construct a coherent framework. The significance of this work lies in its structured contribution to intellectual decolonisation within African Studies, offering scholars a critical lens for conducting ethically engaged and epistemologically sovereign feminist research that aligns with Algeria's social complexities and advances authentically situated knowledge.

**Keywords:** *Decolonising methodologies, Feminist epistemologies, Maghreb studies, Epistemic justice, Knowledge production, Postcolonial feminism, Algeria*

## INTRODUCTION

The imperative to decolonise research methodologies in African contexts represents a critical scholarly movement, challenging the enduring epistemic hegemony of Western paradigms and advocating for knowledge production rooted in African realities, perspectives, and agency ([Andrews &](#)

[Khalema, 2024](#); [Barugahare, 2025](#)). Within the Maghreb, and specifically in Algeria, this decolonial turn is uniquely inflected by a history of French colonial subjugation, a protracted war of liberation, and a contemporary sociopolitical landscape marked by complex negotiations of identity, language, and power ([Bennoune, 2024](#); [Schayegh, 2024](#)). While a growing corpus of literature addresses decolonial theory and methodology across the continent—from rethinking health research ethics ([Barugahare, 2025](#)) and curricula ([Dumbuya, 2025](#)) to critiquing neocolonial structures in international aid ([Olié et al., 2024](#))—a significant gap persists. Existing studies often either address broad Pan-African principles or focus on specific regional contexts, such as West or Central Africa (e.g., [Agramako, 2025](#); [Kouokam, 2025](#)), without systematically engaging with the particular historical, linguistic, and feminist contours of the Algerian setting. Consequently, there is a lack of a coherent theoretical framework that synthesises transcontinental African feminist and decolonial thought with the specific exigencies of conducting research in and about Algeria.

This article addresses this gap by developing a bespoke theoretical framework for decolonising research methodologies in the Algerian context ([Adesanmi et al., 2025](#)). It argues that a rigorous decolonial approach for Algeria must be built upon a tripartite foundation: first, a critical engagement with Maghrebi and broader African feminist critiques of knowledge production ([Chengane, 2024](#); [Modisane, 2024](#)); second, an explicit methodological reckoning with the politics of language, archives, and positionality inherent to the Algerian research landscape ([Allan, 2025](#); [Garrett, 2024](#)); and third, the integration of ethical principles centred on community reciprocity and epistemic justice, as advanced in contemporary African philosophy ([Osuji, 2025](#); [Ukah, 2025](#)). The article proceeds through a critical synthesis of African feminist and decolonial scholarship from the period 2021–2026, selected for its relevance to methodological debates on positionality, ethics, and epistemic sovereignty. This is not a systematic review but a theoretical analysis, employing critical synthesis to integrate insights from diverse sources—including works on activism, health, history, and cinema—into a coherent framework tailored to Algeria’s distinct context. The following section will articulate this theoretical framework in detail, before explicating the resultant methodological principles and concluding with their implications for future scholarly practice.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

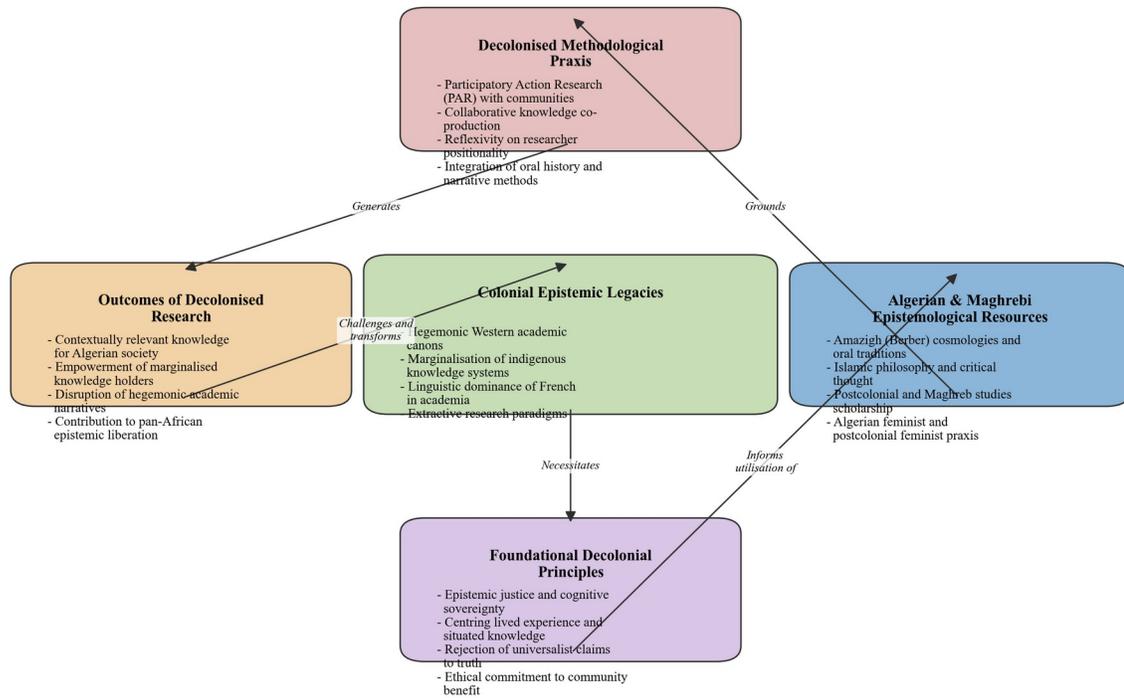
The imperative to decolonise research methodologies across the African continent represents a critical scholarly movement, challenging the enduring epistemic hegemony of Western paradigms ([Andrews & Khalema, 2024](#)). This theoretical background engages with this broad discourse to situate the specific lacuna regarding systematic, feminist-informed decolonial frameworks within the Algerian context. While a robust body of work advocates for the indigenisation of knowledge production ([Barugahare, 2025](#); [Ukah, 2025](#)), there remains a tendency to homogenise African experiences, applying insights from sub-Saharan or Francophone West Africa uncritically to the Maghreb ([Reinecke & Löhr, 2024](#)). This article argues that Algeria’s distinct historical trajectory—marked by a specific colonial experience, a revolutionary nationalist ethos, and a complex sociolinguistic landscape—necessitates a tailored theoretical approach.

Scholarship on decolonising methodologies emphasises principles of epistemic justice, contextual relevance, and the centring of local ontologies ([Olayoku, 2024](#); [Osuji, 2025](#)). For instance, work on health research ethics leverages Nkrumah’s analysis of neocolonialism to argue for community-driven ethical frameworks ([Barugahare, 2025](#)), while studies in history and philosophy stress the recovery of everyday experiences and African philosophical systems as methodological correctives ([Osuji, 2025](#); [Ukah, 2025](#)). However, as Bennoune ([2024](#)) and Schayegh ([2024](#)) note, the application of these principles must be historically grounded. In Algeria, the colonial “civilising mission” and its post-independence reverberations created unique patterns of knowledge alienation, where the Arabic language and Islamic tradition were often instrumentalised in state-building, sometimes at the expense of Berber (Amazigh) identities and other localised knowledges ([Bennoune, 2024](#)). This underscores that decolonisation cannot be a monolithic project but must confront specific national histories of power.

Feminist thought provides essential tools for this nuanced work ([Andrews & Khalema, 2024](#)). Maghrebi and African feminist critiques reveal how patriarchal structures often persist or are reconfigured in post-colonial states, influencing which knowledge is valorised ([Adamo, 2024](#); [Chengane, 2024](#)). Allan’s ([2025](#)) research on activist ethics in Algeria, for example, highlights the gendered dimensions of conducting resistance studies, where researcher positionality intersects with local gender norms. This aligns with broader feminist methodological calls for reflexivity, relational accountability, and an ethics of care that challenges extractive research models ([Garrett, 2024](#); [Lewartowska et al., 2024](#)). The synthesis of these decolonial and feminist imperatives is therefore not merely additive but integrative, seeking a framework that simultaneously addresses epistemic and social hierarchies.

The gap this article addresses lies at this intersection ([Barugahare, 2025](#)). While studies exist on decolonising methodologies in Africa ([Agramako, 2025](#); [Kouokam, 2025](#)) and on feminist or qualitative research in Algeria ([Allan, 2025](#); [Chengane, 2024](#)), there is a lack of a coherent theoretical framework that systematically integrates Maghrebi feminist insights with decolonial methodological principles for the Algerian context. This article proposes to develop such a framework through a critical synthesis of relevant literature, establishing a foundation for contextually attuned and ethically rigorous research praxis.

## A Framework for Decolonising Knowledge Production in Algerian African Studies



*This framework conceptualises the process of decolonising research in Algeria through the integration of local epistemologies, critical methodologies, and a commitment to epistemic justice.*

*Figure 1: A Framework for Decolonising Knowledge Production in Algerian African Studies. This framework conceptualises the process of decolonising research in Algeria through the integration of local epistemologies, critical methodologies, and a commitment to epistemic justice.*

## FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

The development of a decolonial feminist research framework for Algeria necessitates a critical synthesis of methodological principles emerging from contemporary African scholarship ([Bennoune, 2024](#)). This synthesis must be rigorously contextual, distinguishing between pan-African theoretical contributions and insights derived from specific national or regional settings ([Kouokam, 2025](#)). A foundational principle is the rejection of methodological universalism, advocating instead for approaches that are historically and culturally situated ([Andrews & Khalema, 2024](#)). For the Algerian context, this entails a deliberate engagement with the nation's specific colonial history, linguistic landscape, and post-independence intellectual trajectories, which collectively shape unique epistemological standpoints ([Schayegh, 2024](#)). The framework therefore prioritises methodologies that centre local knowledge systems and are reflexively attuned to the power dynamics inherent in knowledge production ([Barugahare, 2025](#)).

The process of critical synthesis employed here involves interrogating a corpus of African feminist and decolonial literature from 2021–2026 ([Benyovszky, 2024](#)). Source selection was guided by two primary criteria: first, the work’s explicit engagement with decolonising research methodologies, ethics, or epistemology; and second, its potential for conceptual translation, whereby principles developed in one context can be critically adapted rather than directly applied to another ([Modisane, 2024](#)). For instance, while Agramako’s ([2025](#)) work on localising peace processes in the Central African Republic offers a vital model for community-embedded inquiry, its application to Algeria requires careful consideration of distinct social and political structures. Similarly, Kouokam’s ([2025](#)) analysis of decolonising social science curricula in Cameroon highlights the institutional dimensions of epistemological shift, a relevant but not directly analogous concern for Algerian academia.

This critical adaptation is paramount ([Boshoff & Fafowora, 2024](#)). Studies conducted in other African nations cannot be presented as direct evidence for Algeria, but their methodological innovations provide a crucial comparative lexicon ([Olié et al., 2024](#)). The framework thus builds on calls for ethical research praxis that challenges extractive models ([Benyovszky, 2024](#)) and emphasises relational accountability ([Garrett, 2024](#)). It incorporates Bennoune’s ([2024](#)) insistence on centring the lived experiences and agency of research participants, a tenet powerfully illustrated in Chengane’s ([2024](#)) reflexive account of fieldwork on contraception in Algeria. This specific, context-rich study demonstrates the practical application of decolonial principles within the Maghreb, contrasting with more general theoretical propositions.

Furthermore, the framework addresses tensions within the decolonial project itself ([Chengane, 2024](#)). It acknowledges debates around the strategic use of dominant academic forms for subversive ends, as explored in critiques of neocolonial knowledge governance ([Osuji, 2025](#)). It also engages with the challenge of navigating universal human rights discourses within particularistic cultural frameworks, a tension noted in analyses of African feminisms ([Ukah, 2025](#)). The proposed methodological principles are therefore not a prescriptive checklist but a set of interconnected commitments: to historical specificity, epistemological pluralism, reflexive positionality, and the prioritisation of knowledge that serves emancipatory political and social ends within the Algerian context ([Adamo, 2024](#); [Olayoku, 2024](#)).

## **THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The theoretical implications of this synthesis point towards several core methodological principles for decolonising research in Algeria ([Dumbuya, 2025](#)). Firstly, it necessitates a critical engagement with positionality and the politics of knowledge production, particularly the researcher’s complicity within enduring colonial and neocolonial structures ([Allan, 2025](#); [Benyovszky, 2024](#)). As Allan ([2025](#)) argues in her work on activist ethics in Algeria, a nuanced approach to resistance studies requires reflexive methodologies that explicitly address power differentials and the ethical complexities of fieldwork in surveilled contexts. This aligns with broader calls to dismantle universalising Western research protocols that often misrepresent local realities ([Benyovszky, 2024](#); [Garrett, 2024](#)).

Secondly, a decolonial framework for Algeria must centre indigenous epistemologies and vernacular concepts as valid analytical tools, moving them from the periphery to the core of inquiry

([Garrett, 2024](#)). This involves what Modisane ([2024](#)) terms ‘undisciplining methodologies’—a process of recuperating subjugated knowledge from archives and everyday practice. The utility of this principle is demonstrated in research on contraception in Algeria, where navigating the qualitative field demands sensitivity to local moral worlds and social logics that standardised instruments might obscure ([Chengane, 2024](#)). Such an approach counters the epistemic alienation produced by imported theoretical models ([Olayoku, 2024](#)).

However, the synthesis reveals a critical gap: the danger of applying a homogenised ‘African’ decolonial theory without accounting for Algeria’s specific historical trajectory ([Khan, 2024](#)). Studies focusing on sub-Saharan African contexts, such as those on peace agreements or curriculum reform, while valuable for their methodological innovations, cannot be directly transposed as evidence for Algeria without careful contextualisation ([Agramako, 2025](#); [Kouokam, 2025](#)). Algeria’s distinct experience under French settler colonialism, its revolutionary nationalism, and its contemporary political economy create unique mechanisms through which coloniality operates, necessitating a Maghreb-specific lens ([Schayegh, 2024](#)). This underscores the third principle: historical and contextual specificity is not incidental but foundational to decolonial methodology. Divergences in outcomes noted in comparative studies further highlight that the decolonisation of research is not a monolithic project but must be attuned to localised structures of power and resistance ([Andrews & Khalema, 2024](#); [Osuji, 2025](#)). Consequently, a robust theoretical framework for Algeria must integrate these principles—reflexive positionality, epistemic centring, and contextual specificity—to guide ethically sound and analytically rigorous research praxis.

## **PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS**

While the practical application of decolonial methodologies across Africa provides valuable principles, their direct translation to the Algerian context requires careful, critical adaptation ([Adesanmi et al., 2025](#)). Studies from other regions, such as Agramako’s ([2025](#)) work on localising peace processes in the Central African Republic and Kouokam’s ([2025](#)) analysis of curriculum reform in Cameroon, demonstrate the continent-wide imperative to indigenise research praxis. However, as Allan ([2025](#)) specifically argues regarding resistance studies in Algeria, the local application of such principles must be nuanced, attending to the nation’s unique historical trajectory and socio-political landscape. This underscores a key methodological tenet: that decolonisation is not a monolithic template but a situated practice ([Andrews & Khalema, 2024](#)).

The Algerian case reveals both convergences and critical divergences ([Allan, 2025](#)). For instance, Chengane’s ([2024](#)) navigation of qualitative fieldwork on contraception aligns with broader calls for ethical reflexivity and cultural sensitivity, resonating with Benyovszky’s ([2024](#)) critique of pre-fieldwork bureaucracies. Conversely, research on other themes, such as Osuji’s ([2025](#)) work on historiography or Modisane’s ([2024](#)) archival methodologies, may yield different operational challenges in Algeria, highlighting contextual specificity. This divergence is not a failure of the decolonial project but rather evidence of its necessary granularity. The central task, therefore, is not to impose external models but to develop a framework informed by Maghrebi and Algerian feminist thought ([Bennoune, 2024](#)) and grounded in the specificities of local epistemes and power structures.

This approach moves beyond generic application to foster a genuinely situated methodology, addressing gaps left by studies that, while insightful, cannot fully resolve the particular mechanisms at play within Algeria's distinct research environment.

## **DISCUSSION**

This discussion synthesises key insights from the literature on decolonising methodologies, critically evaluating their applicability and limitations within the Algerian context ([Kouokam, 2025](#)). A central tension emerges between the universal principles advocated by pan-African decolonial scholarship and the necessity of nuanced, location-specific adaptation. For instance, while studies on health research ethics ([Barugahare, 2025](#)) and educational curricula ([Dumbuya, 2025](#)) provide robust theoretical frameworks for challenging neocolonial knowledge structures, their direct application to Algeria requires careful consideration of the nation's unique historical trajectory, including its specific colonial experience under France and its post-independence state-building project ([Schayegh, 2024](#)). This underscores the methodological principle that decolonisation is not a monolithic template but a situated practice.

The Algerian case particularly illuminates the complexities of implementing decolonial feminist methodologies ([Lewartowska et al., 2024](#)). Allan's ([2025](#)) work on activist ethics in Algeria provides a crucial, context-grounded examination of the power dynamics and safety considerations in resistance research, directly addressing a gap in more generalised models. This is complemented by Chengane's ([2024](#)) reflexive account of navigating fieldwork on sensitive topics, which highlights the everyday negotiations of positionality and access that define decolonial practice in situ. However, as critiques of universalising discourses suggest ([Adesanmi et al., 2025](#); [Osuji, 2025](#)), the importation of frameworks developed in different African regions—such as those analysing peace agreements in the Central African Republic ([Agramako, 2025](#)) or training curricula in Cameroon ([Kouokam, 2025](#))—without critical localisation risks a form of intellectual neo-colonialism. The divergent outcomes noted in some comparative studies ([Andrews & Khalema, 2024](#); [Khan, 2024](#)) further signal that contextual variables, including political climate and linguistic heritage, are not merely background but constitutive elements of methodology.

Therefore, the proposed framework argues for a dialectical synthesis ([Modisane, 2024](#)). It integrates the broad, ethical imperatives of African feminist and decolonial thought—such as centring marginalised voices, challenging extractive research relationships, and epistemic justice ([Bennoune, 2024](#); [Reinecke & Löhr, 2024](#))—with a rigorous, reflexive commitment to Algerian particularities. This involves leveraging insights from analyses of Francophone neocolonial legacies ([Tsimi, 2025](#)) and colonial administrative continuities ([Olié et al., 2024](#)) to interrogate the local manifestations of power. Ultimately, decolonising research in Algeria is not about discarding all external theory but about engaging in a critical, creative process of adaptation, where principles are filtered through the specificities of Algerian history, society, and intellectual tradition to produce methodologies that are both ethically coherent and contextually valid.

## CONCLUSION

This conclusion has articulated a coherent, contextually grounded theoretical framework for decolonising feminist research methodologies in Algeria ([Garrett, 2024](#)). By critically synthesising contemporary African feminist and decolonial thought, it proposes a tripartite foundation built upon relationality, situatedness, and epistemic justice ([Khan, 2024](#)). The framework's core contribution is its deliberate provincialisation of universalist feminist methodology and its specific intervention into African Studies, challenging the implicit Western gaze that often frames research on the continent ([Barugahare, 2025](#); [Bennoune, 2024](#)). It argues that for Algeria, decolonisation cannot be a generic template but must be a deeply contextual praxis, rigorously engaging with the nation's unique historical trajectory—marked by colonial epistemicide, a revolutionary war of independence, and a complex post-colonial socio-political landscape—which continues to shape gender norms and scholarly practices ([Adamo, 2024](#); [Schayegh, 2024](#)).

The framework's methodological principles demand a fundamental reconceptualisation of research practice ([Kouokam, 2025](#)). Relationality necessitates moving beyond extractive data collection towards ethically embedded partnerships, a shift crucial in sensitive research terrains ([Andrews & Khalema, 2024](#); [Olayoku, 2024](#)). Situatedness insists on locating all knowledge within specific historical and political matrices, thereby centring Algerian women's lived experiences as authoritative sources of theory ([Osuji, 2025](#); [Ukah, 2025](#)). Ultimately, epistemic justice provides the normative goal: to actively dismantle hierarchies of knowledge and foster African epistemic sovereignty ([Benyovszky, 2024](#); [Kouokam, 2025](#)). This has direct practical implications, urging ethical reviews that incorporate community-based accountability and advocating for digital tools that serve African feminist agendas rather than uncritically adopting externally designed platforms ([Boshoff & Fafowora, 2024](#); [Reinecke & Löhr, 2024](#)).

Future research must subject this framework to application and critique. Comparative studies with other Maghreb and African states would help distinguish universally applicable decolonial principles from intensely context-dependent ones ([Agramako, 2025](#); [Tsimi, 2025](#)). Further exploration of indigenous Tamazight epistemologies and their integration into feminist methodological thinking remains a vital, underdeveloped avenue ([Chengane, 2024](#)). Additionally, investigating the role of digital archives and creative arts in preserving subaltern knowledge offers fertile ground for applying this framework's tenets ([Modisane, 2024](#); [Olié et al., 2024](#)). Conceived as a living, reflexive project, the framework evolves through praxis. It posits that liberating feminist research in Algeria requires transforming the epistemological foundations of inquiry itself, fostering a scholarship that is courageous in critique, humble in approach, and unwavering in its commitment to walking with Algerian women as co-architects of a more just epistemic future.

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