Question on Reality: Rethinking the Practice of Decolonisation in African Studies

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Abstract

Decolonisation, an occurrence that processes an idea, instills a new sense of belonging in people. In Africa, such occurrence is identified as a tool that sets the pace of marginalisation from the rest of the world. Knowledge colonisation still exists, with a gap between a few minorities (White/West) and the majority (Black/Rest). With a deeply rooted dichotomy at different societal levels, recognition is drawn to scholars in research and development. African scholars with the "West" have more hurdles to surmount, primarily to achieve

acceptance with their fellow counterparts. As the debate on decolonisation gains prominence, African studies and scholars become important. This study addressed the gap of inconsistencies in relationships, discussions, and the research base of African studies and scholars. It investigates the significance of African studies, examines the practice of African theory, and examines the extent of decolonisation as a reality in African studies. With educational and innovative strategies, structures for the practice of African studies were explored. A descriptive design is adopted for the study; with data gathered using primary and secondary sources.

Keywords: *Decolonisation, African Studies, Education, and Reality*

1.   Introduction

The rich, diverse, and dynamic nature of Africa makes it an important continent to be studied. Unique culture and tradition, language, and identity, along with the political thought of Africa, need to be understood, legitimised, and recognised. Although liberated from colonial administrations, colonial legacies still exist. "African studies", sometimes referred to as "Black studies", is an approach to the understanding of Africa and its people, both at home and in the diaspora. It seeks to change, challenge negative perceptions, and critique the marginalisation and dominance of Western scholars. Mediocre content, the invisibility of the researcher, the negative image and false presentation of Africa, and less incentive for qualitative research and publication contribute to its marginalisation. Hence, in decolonising African studies, scholars' challenges have been inevitable. The propagandist manner of African studies in non-African societies limits the recognition and acceptance of an African scholar. Political independence is not a prerequisite for the decolonization of knowledge in the present world. In the domains of research, consideration for African studies is marked b hierarchies (Olukoshi, 2006).

Comparative analysis of African scholars with their Western counterparts reveals poor in-depth interpretation and analysis (Basedau, 2020). According to the criteria of authorship and contents of journals, African scholars are disadvantaged in language and methodologies, making the research of their Western counterparts more relevant. Addressing such an identified gap, the study reveals decolonisation processes, identifies the significance of African studies and scholars, and investigates the practice of African-developed theories in research. It recommends educational and innovative strategies for African studies.

2.   Conceptual Clarification

2.1   African Studies

"African studies" or "Black studies" is a multidisciplinary approach to studying and understanding Africa and its people (Alpers & Roberts, 2002). It transforms limited traditional curricula by addressing critical questions on identity needed to achieve overall scholarship that is directed towards knowledge production. Knowledge production and acquisition are the primary focus of identity for Africans (Akolgo & Akolgo, 2019). African studies emerged from a philosophical pattern of thought, like religion, African thought, ideas, arts, and culture (Alpers & Roberts, 2002). With no limitation to a particular discipline, it embraces diverse aspects, all complementing each other to make up Africa as its subject matter (Hountondji, 2009). Values are appreciated in the study (Akolgo & Akolgo, 2019). Projected as unpleasant, Africans must understand their roots, inherited traditions, and norms and redefine African personality (Sackey, 2014).

2.2   Decolonisation

Decolonisation is a transformative process for achieving independence from imperial powers. That is, territories must obtain constitutional independence to become sovereign. Though constitutionally independent, allegiance to former colonial masters raises the debate about total disentanglement in contemporary times. In other words, there is no clean slate in the analysis of decolonisation in context and practice (Bismarck, 2012). Decolonisation is a technical and dramatic term for the dissolution of power to new sovereigns; that is, the transfer of legal and institutional control to indigenous states. This can be traced to events after the First World War, when colonial rule underwent transformation.

      The creation of self-governing states with the rejection of white civilisation is decolonisation (Betts, 2012; O'Dowd & Heckenberg, 2020). It is a transformative process that seeks to challenge white supremacy, nationalistic history, and truth (O'Dowd & Heckenberg, 2020). In African studies, decolonisation is the process that entails political and normative ethics, the practice of resistance, and the intentional undoing of colonial practices. In other words, there must be the unlearning and dismantling of unjust practices, assumptions, and

institutions, with positive action to create and build alternative spaces, networks, and ways of knowing that transcend colonial inheritance (Kessi et al., 2020).

2.3   Education

The transmission of civilisation is education (Naziev, 2017). Transmitting and receiving learning is not limited to academic institutions where all-around development is achieved. Understanding the happenings around an individual logically provides a ladder to success for humans. It is the principal instrument for academic progress, social mobilisation, political survival, and effective management development in any country. To be educated, certain mechanisms are put in place to achieve the goal and objective of success (Usman, 2016). Education is an eye-opener to the identification of problems and the provision of solutions for effective and efficient management.

Essential to human life, it helps in critical reasoning, working properly, and making decisions that give meaning to existence (Bano, 2015). Education provides knowledge, skill, technique, and information that help in the identification of rights and duties; it is food for human intellectual growth (The Asian School, 2018). Education is socially organised and regulated for the continuous transfer of socially significant experiences from one generation to another (Naziev, 2017). It visits truth and possibility, encouraging and giving time to discovery (Smith, 2015). Often confused with schooling, education takes place in a formal and informal setting to inculcate a better capacity in individuals.

2.4   Reality

From the word, reality is real, which connotes an obvious appearance that is not imaginary. Reality is defined as the totality of known and unknown system structures and events (from the past and present) that are observable. The Cambridge Dictionary defines reality as the state of things, as real rather than imagination. It is obvious, identifiable, and can be easily inferred from physical touch or physical realities. In the practice of decolonisation, reality means the state of affirmation and recognition in a civic space that is devoid of marginalisation or unhealthy hierarchies. A positive change and equality in the discipline of African studies, as it relates to other disciplines, is the optimum goal of conceptualising reality in the discipline of African studies.

3.   Review of Literature

In rethinking African studies, the diverse and dynamic nature of Africa makes the continent important for study (Basedau, 2020). In the study of Africa, as with other studies in research and publication, there is a narrow scope in African research, omission of causal factors in qualitative methods, and inadequate comparison with the big picture. According to Basedau (2020), these challenges are lacunae in research conducted by non-Africanist scholars. Moreover, an avenue that could enhance African scholars in in-depth studies has not been explored for inadequate capacities by African governments. Conceived on the notion of conducting scientific and fact-driven research, African studies with Western ones will be effective when there are adequate incentives and opportunities for African scholars. To achieve common ground with non-African scholars, an accessible and conducive environment that aids research and development studies must be provided.

In the same vein, Basedau (2020) cites Germany as having a high concentration of African studies, authorship, and publication by Western scholars, but with less inclusion of Africanist scholars in journal publications. For instance, 70 percent of authors are of non-African origin. Marginalisation is not intentional, but the lack of resources for higher education in African countries, especially in universities and research institutions, aids in the negative impacts of poor output measures in Western metrics. Sharing in the author's view, unlike in the Western world where publications become the currency that buys position, tenure, and higher salaries, it is the reverse in Africa.

Further on knowledge of Africa and knowledge by Africans, it is emphasised that African studies are stamped in the history of colonisation (Hountondji, 2009). Despite being politically dependent, colonisation still exists in knowledge production. Instead of acculturation and the universal use of Western language in African research, African scholars ought to use the traditional African language to communicate in literature and address its audience. Although research seeks to promote autonomous, self-reliant scientific activity, the Black Scholar is often critiqued with claims to reason, objectivity, and rationality (Dei, 2014). Publications in books and journal articles on African politics come from non-African authors (Basedau, 2020), where articles written by African authors are estimated to be 17 percent (American Political Science Association Roundtable, 2019).

In output measures of African political authors to non-Africans, there is an unbalanced gap of marginalisation emanating from inadequate resources for research (Basedau, 2020). While the African native language suffers neglect in research and scientific activity, the European language is extensively embraced, thereby alienating African scholars (Ayo-Obiremi, 2019). Creating an identity for African scholars is not only a necessity for bridging the gap, but adopting historical African concepts and theories in practice gives them better recognition (Dei, 2014). Perhaps if the African language is used extensively, more recognition of its uniqueness will be appreciated.

The emergence of global studies in the twenty-first century creates a dilemma for area studies programmes, particularly African studies, as inputs from science and technology in global studies give no recognition, consideration, or respect for African conversations (Byfield, 2016). Corroborating this, in academic institutions, marginalisation takes different turns (Fredua-Kwarteng, 2006). In the globalised world, African researchers who should be better equipped to contribute to research have been limited in their publications (Ondari-Okemwa, 2007). Accordingly, visibility for African scholars in the global space is limited by economic-limited exposure to academic platforms and conferences, the continuous brain drains of early-career scholars, poor and limited access to technologies, and a constrained environment for research.

Still on marginalisation, especially when interest in engaging in African studies is concerned, Fredua-Kwarteng (2006) reveals the experiences of 10 students enrolled in an African studies programme at a Canadian university. He identified the native stigma associated with African studies. Accordingly, in Western or European societies, students of African studies programmes experience emotional torture, disempowerment, intellectual deprivation, and cultural powerlessness because of the racist and propagandist way the courses are taught. He stressed that instead of getting integrated and acquitted with African studies, self-pity and psychological denunciation of their African identity and connectivity are prevalent. The African image is poorly projected and misinterpreted in Western media and the university community. Although acclaimed, the African studies programme has no recognition like other major disciplines in the university (Butler & Schmitz, 1992); today, expansion and the changing nature of embrace by Western universities (Sackey, 2014) gain prominence. Fredua-Kwarteng (2006)

further narrates his experience with his respondent from a non-African society and cites that,

> As students, we tell other students our negative experiences in African studies courses. We tell them about the humiliation we had to endure, the emotional wound we had to nurse, and the persistent doubt we had to entertain about our identity as Africans as a result of the African studies course we took at the university. When these students hear our experiences, they decide to stay away from these courses as a sort of protest or resistance. So the problem is not that African students of African heritage are not interested in African studies… (Fredua-Kwarteng, 2006).

African academics, which face a huge challenge with scholarships and operate at a fraction of their true selves (Waal, 2016), are redefined to expose students to the roots, nature, and undisclosed truths of African values (Akolgo, 2019). In research, the state of knowledge about African economies and politics has generated weak conclusions by Western academics, who interpret the current global and trending situation using old African data. Despite intellectual moves to support African studies, it continues to struggle to maintain legitimacy. African Studies provides provocative scholarships on identity, authenticity, and agency in Africa and its diaspora (Alpers & Roberts, 2002).

Worthy to note is that African studies programmes launched in 1957 laid a notable foundation for the discipline. The American Studies Association introduces a community of scholars who specialise in Africa, with an impressive number of fellows in leading black universities and colleges (Martin, 2011; West & Martin, 1997). The 1950s marked the introduction of new journals that expound on discussions on Africa. Likewise, grants, funding programmes, vocational training, and support for African studies grew in number during this period. Importantly, Africa's importance grew in the United States. Since the deepening years of the Cold War in the 1960s, much significance has been given to African studies in the United States, hence challenging white supremacy. There was a radical reordering of academic hierarchies and resources in the world of scholarship.

Arising from the forces of globalisation and anti-globalisation, strong legacies of intellectual and institutional construction of African studies became extinct. African studies that had been previously practiced later suffered grievous injuries (West & Martin, 1997). According to Martin (2011),

the 1960s saw African American students and scholars speaking of the voice of resurgent black powers, thereby calling for the transformation of the academy through greater representation and greater relevance of academic research to the black struggle and community (Martin, 2011:77).

On image and recognition, African studies is a ridiculed discipline (Sackey, 2014). As students expect to take discipline that will provide employment opportunities, consideration is never an option for African studies. Challenging this poor image presentation by Mamdani (1998), which explains that Africa is the least studied and dominated by Western science, capitalism, and social science (Mamdani, 1998), there is a contrary opinion of repositioning African studies (Msindo, 2020).

Giving credence to intellectual and ideological imperatives, and regional and global political economies, there is an increasing interest outside the continent. African intelligentsia has rediscovered and rewrote history that has been seized and denied by Europe (Zeleza, 2008). To Zeleza, an identity of culture, politics, thought, and tradition is identified with the diaspora, dispersed from Africa in history and contemporary times. Diaspora is a state of being a continuous process in which a diaspora is made, unmade, and remade in a changing condition where he lives and expresses himself to be moulded, and the contentious way of study and discussion". That is, African scholars on the continent and outside should explore this to engage in the reading and production of diaspora studies.

African Studies, developed initially to change the Western imperialist interest in Africa, was sponsored and championed in Western society to provide academic, scientific, and administrative exposure; direct research; avoid duplication on Africa; and ensure the availability of information on Africa (Msindo, 2020). Unlike the deepening interest of Western scholars in deepening knowledge of Africa (Zeleza, 2019), a strong move and clamour by African scholars are envisioned to decolonise knowledge, thereby producing African theories. Traced to repositioning African scholars in African Studies, Kwame Nkrumah, at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana (1963), posits that Africa in all its complexity and diversity—history, culture, institutions, language, and art—must be studied in an African-cantered way. Assessing the past glories and achievements of and in Africa will inspire more generations to a better future. African studies must enable open-mindedness and enhance welfare for all, an important goal for any African society. Accordingly, African studies are on an emancipatory

mission from the slavery of the Western educational system, delineating themselves from colonialism, with strict preparation to intellectually deflect from domination by Western scholars. Worthy of note is the perception of Africa and Africans in civic spaces.

> "Black man with the black sense" or the idea that Africans cannot do anything positive or that Africans think negatively of themselves and their continent. …. Africans have a "pull him down" (Ph.D.) attitude interpreted to mean that individuals within some African communities are not inspired or enthused to see one of their progressing or "doing well" in the area of business or any endeavour of life (Akolgo & Akolgo, 2019:122).

There is discomfort around the study of blackness (Sefa, 2014). African scholars are identified as

> Black Scholars is not only about racialising the identity of Blackness; rather, it is about holistic, embodied learning with and through our racial, class, gender, sexual (dis)abled, and spiritual identities. The Black Scholar is about a complex relationship to culture, history, politics, identity, and the capacity of the Black subject for scholarly aesthetic appreciation. The Black Scholar is about historical consciousness. It is about acknowledging our place in history and scholarship as resistors and survivors…. (Sefa, 2014).

The Black scholar is more than a universal subject and co-producer of knowledge and culture in post-modernism. In the context of anti-Black racism, colonial oppression, and sub-humanity, the Black scholar in the pursuit of knowledge production, acquisition, and legitimization is traditionally critiqued. In the Western academy, the Black scholar is an interrupter of thought and ideas for white middle-class scholars and their scholarships. That is, to salvage the place for the Black minority, there is an interruption in Western thoughts and scholarships. Education in the Western academy speaks to the positions of Black scholars as producers of knowledge, whose decolonisation cannot happen with Western European scholarship.

Remaining true and sacrosanct to Black scholars in the decolonisation process. It is not enough to be interested in Black scholarship; an obligation is attached to Black scholars. The ardent

desire channeled towards addressing African conditions preserves a future for humanity. This identity creates a universal voice with a rooted understanding of the cultural knowledge of community wisdom and practices, which is geared towards creating a new being. A Black scholar is uncontaminated by the society to which he or she belongs.

> The Black scholar must pursue their liberation in the academy (and within all institutional spaces) by developing a warrior spirit, a spirit in combat. Practice and experience are our best teachers. The black scholar does not somehow assume the title or mantle of a warrior. It must be earned; that is, in our intellectual and political work, we must strive to gain validation, legitimisation, relevance, and acceptance in the eyes of our communities, not from the dominant (Sefa, 2014).

The shortage of written books by African scholars forced African universities to rely on imported books for studies in African-related subjects (Kigotho, 2021). Although independent from colonial masters, the perpetuation of colonial imperialism still exists. This is such that African universities are still in a colonised learning structure that is patterned after colonial masters. The vocabulary of African and Western scholarship has been "us" versus "them" (Cheru, 2012). African sources are poorly recognised in reference sessions and have no contribution to scholarship (Cheru, 2012). This is such that few African scholars are involved in scientific and rigorous research that produces knowledge.

4. Theoretical Framework

Constructivism is an outgrowth of critical theory that emphasises the role of identity in the shaping of political actions. It seeks to articulate and explore ontological propositions about social life as it illuminates world politics. Constructivists identify a structure to shape the behaviour of social and political actors and argue that non-material structures condition actors' identities. It contends that agents and structures are mutually constitutive (Reus-Smit, 2005; Theys, 2018). In other words, the theory emphasises that normative and ideational structure are as important as material structure in the shaping of behaviours.

Ideas, beliefs, and values are potent to influence the social and political actions of an entity. Manner and approach of interaction between the developed North and the developing South in the categorisation of states are identities that inform interest and, in turn, actions of engagements or relationships (Reus-Smit, 2005). While

constructivism gives credence to the identity of African studies, it also situates the marginalisation of African scholars. Although politically independent, the structure of marginalisation of African scholars with Western ones begets the need for decolonised knowledge. Whereas Africa is unique to be studied, deconstruction from Western-dominated theories creates space for the embrace of African studies.

Material structure acquires meaning for human action through shared knowledge, while normative and ideational structures shape social identities for political action (Reus-Smit, 2005; Wendt, 1995). A supervening power structure conditions the identities and interests of actors to shape the behaviour of interaction. Normative and ideational structure informs interest and identity through imagination, communication, and constraint. As such, the imagination of how to think and act is conceived, and communicating through behaviour is justified by norms that contradict individual rights. If, in any case, creativity and communication do not influence the behaviour or actions, there is a constraint on the actions of the actor. Therefore, action is most often influenced by the justification of rationality.

5. Contextual Relevance

In decolonising African studies, there is an established structure of power among non-African scholars. That is, the dominance and subservience nature of the Global South (formerly colonised territories) have informed the relationship and interaction between intellectuals and academics in African research studies and publications. The Global North, with its quality methods of research, aided by an efficient and effective educational environment, has positively influenced the outputs of non-African scholars, whereas the Global South, with its less equipped infrastructure and low orientation to research in academic institutions, has influenced perceptions of knowledge production and engagement. Notwithstanding, the position of uniqueness identified with blackness has been eroded by the adopted frameworks and patterns of Western or non-African scholars.

The language of the West (English) is universally adopted as a norm in academic research studies and publications. The perception of communication by non-western scholars has given a poor image of a less valued and recognised continent to other intellectuals. Noting that Africans have been overlooked when it comes to their economic and social contribution to the development of Western societies. It is crystal

clear that it is in the interest of every political entity to achieve its interest in power maximisation. Therefore, the interests of Western or non-African scholars and Africans cannot be overlooked in the discussions of decolonisation. As African studies and scholars seek recognition and acceptance in the world, western ones continue to dominate and set the pace of rigorous research studies.

6.   Methodology

A descriptive design is adopted. The method is chosen for its interpretive approach to the subject of study. Using primary and secondary data, relevant information on African studies is gathered. With in-depth one-on-one interviews, 10 respondents are drawn from a population of academics from five (5) departments at Obafemi Awolowo University, with another five (5) from the University of Ibadan. The representation of academics in different fields of specialisation strengthens different perspectives in literature. Through one-on-one in-depth interviews and a structured interview guide, the objective of the study is addressed. To satisfy gender equality, male and female degree holders as respondents were interviewed at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; respondents are from the Department of Political Science, International Relations, English, and History. Likewise, at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, academic respondents who are degree holders in the Department of History, Guidance and Counselling, Library, Archival, and Information Studies were consulted. Concerning respondents' background and exposure to history, and studies on Africa, with the requisite knowledge and perception of African studies, a purposive sampling technique was adopted. Likewise, their commitment to the integration of African scholars with Western ones is an advantage to the choice of respondents. Secondary data is gotten from books, journals, newspapers, and internet sources. The data is interpreted using thematic and discourse analysis.

7.   Data Presentation and Discussions

7.1   Socio-Demographic Profiles of Interviewees

The demographic profiles of the interviewees consist of characteristics such as age, gender, occupation, and educational qualifications. This information is presented below in tabular form and then discussed.

The Demographic Characteristics of Interviewees

Variables	Number	Percentage
Age Range	**N**	**%**
31 – 40 years	2	20%
41 – 50	5	50%
51 – 60	2	20%
61 Above	1	10%
Gender		**%**
Males	8	80%
Females	2	20%
Religion		**%**
Christianity	4	40%
Islam	5	50%
Non-believer	1	10%
Educational Qualification		**%**
Postgraduate (Master)	1	10%
Postgraduate (Ph.D.)	9	90%

Source: (Fieldwork, 2021).

The table reveals 50% of interviewees to be between ages 41 and 50, with a larger percentage of them having doctorate and professorship personalities. 80% of males and 20% of female academics signify the presence and dominance of men over women. 50% of interviewees were Muslims, with 40% Christians and 10% non-believers. More importantly, 100% of respondents who have a second-degree show mastery in their respective disciplines. This educational profiling is pertinent to Akolgo &Akolgo (2019), who identify that in addressing issues of Africa and decolonisation, knowledge production and acquisition are prerequisites to championing African studies.

7.2 Objective 1: Gaps of Inconsistencies for African Studies and Scholars

Despite African states achieving political independence questions of decolonisation in knowledge production need to be better addressed. That is, decolonisation in political space has little effect on the decolonisation of knowledge. In this study, inconsistencies and gaps in African studies and scholars are investigated.

African studies to (IDI/OAU, 2021) "is a generic name that captures intellectual studies on the peculiar history and circumstances of

theoretical knowledge generated from African realities". Africans have a unique way of knowledge production; that is, the authenticity of knowledge is primitively and exclusively African, but it takes a long narrative for the Global North to accept the viewpoint of Africans, and create intellectual dependence for them (IDI/OAU, 2021). In another response from an interviewee, he asserts,

> African study is a scholarship of any sort executed by Africans that is inclined towards its cultures and practices. Current research portrays African scholars as creative and innovative beings who can "independently" carry out substantial achievements without foreign intervention. We have our way of doing things, a position that gives uniqueness to African studies compared to other disciplines in theory and practice (IDI/UI, 2021)

The above explains that Africans have steadily and gradually rediscovered themselves and taken proactive measures to redefine their narratives. With regards to relationships and meeting points of disciplines and intellectuals in the Global North and South, respondents agree that African scholars have rediscovered their rightful place and strength, an obvious sign of decolonisation.

First, the gap between African studies and scholars, rests in the ontological concept of "African studies". While literature further expounds on the origin of "African Studies", wrong impressions about African identities, literature, and people will be addressed and corrected.

African scholars are subservient to Western scholars because of their over-reliance on Western ideas and tools. What exists is political independence, not knowledge independence. Decolonising the intellectual space, particularly knowledge production in Africa, is dependent on methods of acquiring knowledge, disseminating, circulating, and validating knowledge, the language of decolonisation, and the practice of scholarship (IDI/OAU, 2021). However, in a world dominated by Western languages, the challenge of using African languages in research is inevitable. Since everything regarding scholarship for Africans is directly connected to Western structures, knowledge production is minimal for African scholars. Africa is least studied and dominated by Western science, capitalism, and social science (Mlambo, 2006). Against this position of seclusion, a respondent asserts, "African studies in the contemporary world of discipline are well positioned and patronised. It is encouraged more in North America and some western European countries than it is in Africa" (IDI/UI, 2021).

While the study is beneficial to intellectuals, understanding Africa at all levels and decolonising the discipline is important; laced with genuine interests, its unique nature will be identified in global knowledge production.

Instead of poor acceptance and negligence, African study is interwoven with other disciplines, and transmitting it to other parts of the world will achieve exposure and recognition for African scholars.

> Science generally has its roots in African science. The fields of study known to man and nature, from zoology to botany to medical sciences, erupted from "Studies in Africa". African studies are not only in the humanities; therefore, African studies should not be addressed only on the parameters of the humanities; Africa (IDI/UI, 2021) informs African humanistic studies.

On global feasibility, African-based scholars and their counterparts are not at equivalent status. Based on materials and resources, the level of understanding for African scholars is lower when compared to the rigour of research conducted by Western ones. The environment, and educational standards based on knowledge production in non-African territories have significant negative implications for African researchers. Providing feasibility for African scholars is a crisis that exists in educational institutions. In the same vein, beyond the intellectual capacity to think and engage in research studies, incentive and environmental determinism partner to strengthen the wide gap that disqualifies African scholars from Western ones (IDI/UI, 2021; IDI/UI, 2021).

In other words, African scholars in an independent African territory require educational and research development to engage in studies worthy of global acceptance and recognition. Typically, when African governments create an enabled environment for academic development, an avenue for quality research engagements that produce knowledge will better position African scholars. A theory that produces knowledge will get recognition and acceptance; hence, the vision and stage of a competitor with Western-oriented scholars are set. Moreso, dealing with the superior mindset of Western scholars can be a notable challenge, but creating a competitive stage set for African scholars will distinguish the distinctiveness of research on African politics.

Integration of African scholars in African studies is not encouraging. That is, rigorous research in African studies has not been adequately embraced; hence, the position of African studies in other

disciplines is inferior, just as it is for African scholars in Western ones. African scholars do not operate on the same level as the West. Painted as inferior and submitted to the superior authority of scholars from the Global North, African scholars have accepted subservient status, which reflects in African research and findings. The gap of inconsistency for African scholars is fuelled by the negligence and determination of the government in funding research. The attraction of research and academics gets less attention, unlike the developed countries of the global north (IDI, 2021). The attitude of negligence towards improved educational development exacerbates the gap between African and Western scholars.

It is no gainsaying to acknowledge African scholars as intellectuals, but the existing gap between African studies and scholars emanates from pitfalls of reference to Western literature rather than African. Often propelled to give recognition and acceptance to Western literature and scholars, Africa's uniqueness in knowledge production is misplaced (IDI/UI, 2021). Supporting this claim.

> Africans can project themselves as relevant in the world of scholarship. Again, rather than objective, African scholars prefer to shield originality in research studies. Likewise, continuous engagement in innovative studies gets poor attention from the African government, especially genuine findings that should be incorporated into policy implementation is discovered. Findings are made a year in, and a year out but no action is taken to incorporate them into practice (IDI/UI, 2021).

Unlike the Western ones, African scholars are not appreciated for their discoveries by their government. Therefore, rather than actively engaging in a rigorous study that will improve their status with non-western ones, haphazard studies with little or no significance to an educational institution, specialised agencies, and the government are engaged.

7.3   Objective 2: Significance of African Scholars and Studies

African studies explain Africa, its people, and its identities as unique (IDI/OAU, 2021). Instead of the history of darkness, insight into African studies through literature will give significance to practices in African debates. This supports the notion of Nkrumah (1963) that African studies investigate past histories and achievements, and clarify

unique culture, tradition, and values in an African-centred way. Through such inclinations and studies of past events, a new perception is conceived by young African researchers around the world. The study "accrues the relevance of generated knowledge to African conditions, and the fact that existing knowledge bases impact different geographical zones and people in their full diversity" makes it significant (IDI/OAU, 2021).

The culture of Africa shows richness; therefore, reworking the debate of subservience will be addressed when African scholars and studies correct equal rights, chances, and platforms and then proclaim colonialism in scholarship. Consequently, African scholars play out the long history of enslavement to the West but understanding that civilisation and knowledge began in its territory will achieve academic interests for scholars. Supporting the realistic position by Fredua-Kwarteng (2006), a respondent affirms

> For instance, Professor Wole Soyinka, Edmin Clark, Chinua Achebe, Kenneth Dike, Ade-Ajayi, Adetoun Ogunseye, Zulu Sofela Samir Amir, and Mahood Mandani have used various platforms to mentally emancipate Africans from the shackles of mental slavery in the West. Therefore, healthy participation itself needs to be contextualised. African scholars need an enabling environment to understand Africa in reality, not the damages caused to the continent by the West. (IDI/UI, 2021)

As constructivists posit that relationships are based on identities and character, African scholars and studies have been long consumed by the structure and realities of darkness, with poor exposure to research and methodologies. African studies have become significant in creating a new lens for relationships and interaction with other disciplines and scholars. The existing gap between the Global-North and South in scholarship will be bridged.

7.4   Objective 3: **Practice of African Theory**

The study revealed that the narrative has successfully changed in the projection of African research, findings, and knowledge base. Contrary to the adoption of Western philosophies and ideologies, African scholars have the wherewithal to propound African-centred theories. A respondent said,

> …..an African doctoral student invented a scheme that captured known and unknown knowledge of the world of genetic engineering. His input has positive impacts on the researchers of contemporary genetic engineering in the capacity of a librarian. If an individual could do this, then it is very possible to have more African scholars in universities generating different schemes for studies (IDI/UI, 2021).

African scholars have the innate knowledge to propound theories, but the environment has not been favourable to the birth of such ideas. Propounding such theories requires assertions to become universally accepted. African-centred theories and not Western theories should dictate when it involves African studies. By doing this, aninvestigation of African perspectives will pay attention to issues that interest Africans.

As African theories and methods are important in knowledge production, the question of usability poses another challenge. Some African theories have been formulated but not universally adopted when compared to Western ones. Western reflections of structure and power have been incorporated into studies to analyse issues; therefore, identifying with African theories to analyse issues will be a debate. Western theories are sometimes not entirely applicable to Africa, and "coming up with new African theories will be reinventing the will" (IDI/OAU, 2021).

A respondent (IDI/UI, 2021) elaborated on the politics of disseminating knowledge. Theories are codified ideas exerted from occurrences. Therefore, if an African theory can be universally subscribed to, questions that need to be addressed are "Will theories developed in Africa and by Africans be used in academic research, where will they be published, and how many works based on such African theories will be read in the world". Going further, when such African theories are developed but not published in notable publishing outlets, they will not be universally adopted. If African scholars do not publish in certain journals, the production will not be internalised. The availability of theories and acceptability are restricted to the structure of publication for African scholars. Writing a globally competitive research study and publishing it in credible outlets will enhance the practice of African theories.

With the in-depth loss of the works of African scholars, the global conversation is limited. African language, as it interprets researchers' views and perceptions of findings, can be a problem hindering the communication of complex ideas and events based on African theories

to the world. African-based scholars can develop theories that can be accepted as standards when rigorous exercise and critical conversation are involved. African theories and Western ones cannot be placed on the same pedestrian as the latter; "see findings of Africans as less authentic". (IDI/UI, 2021). Decolonisation of African theories from western-dominated ones will create a niche for African scholars who, rather than importing ideas from the developed West, localise their ideas in African studies.

7.5 Objective 4: Practice of Decolonisation as a Reality in African Studies

If there is decolonisation of knowledge in Africa, campaigners for African studies will increase. Decolonising knowledge in Africa "cannot be achieved when the template of scholarship and assessment of scholarly outputs remain the exclusive dictate of the Western world" (IDI/UI, 2021). The reality of the decolonisation of knowledge will be possible when the Western curriculum is substituted with Africans to teach a new generation of scholars. Removing the political structures of the Western world in their entirety gives insights into the oversights of African studies. In the same vein, research expressed in the unique language of Africa will be effective to conceptualise knowledge and endear high performance (IDI/UI, 2021; IDI/UI, 2021). Decolonising knowledge production can take the lead in this direction.

Cultural mindset and diligence must become a reality for decolonisation in African scholars. The politics of acceptance by Western scholars is another challenge among African scholars. Perceived as vast in the knowledge of African issues, decolonisation will be an illusion. This is because, for a good thinker, if acceptance is lost, decolonisation becomes a mirage. Notwithstanding, with acceptance as a gradual process, African scholars must understand that producing knowledge from an African-centred perspective is a germane decolonisation of African studies. Like Ndlovu-Gatsheni Sabelo, promising African scholars must identify with the society to which they belong (IDI/OAU, 2021). Quoting Byfield (2016), Africa can always rewrite its history and create equivalent materials that make European studies worthwhile. The question of how far African scholars are ready to go in the process of decolonization becomes a critical concern. African scholars must truly identify with Africa. A keen sense of belief in Africa and Africanism is important.

7.6 Objective 5: Educational and Innovative Structure(s) in the Practice of African Studies

Educational and innovative strategies identified in the study include those identified specifically by the respondent government, researcher, and citizen as important to the practice of African studies. The African government must utilise findings from its educational institutions, increase funding opportunities for research and monitoring implementation for the primary users, and ensure quality assurance. Researchers must be authentic and original in their findings, and the readiness of citizens to provide objective information is sacrosanct to their practices (IDI/UI, 2021).

Collaboration must substitute discord for African researchers shaping knowledge. Interaction across national boundaries must be active. Rigorous peer review and quality publications are equally essential. Reasserting and projecting African studies should be framed to calibrate and rewrite African history in the global knowledge system. African scholars must first be decolonised in thought patterns (IDI/UI, 2021).

African researchers need to incorporate traditional, unique cultures and identities into their research. If the oracle is real, then African tradition is real; this should be expounded to certain levels in African studies. Instead of having Western studies in the African curriculum, the Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) must be included as a general study in all educational institutions. African educational bodies must be restructured and modified to incorporate African realities in local contexts (IDI/UI, 2021). African scholars should highlight intellectual skills in international competitive debates and opportunities that project African identity to the world. Courses that relate to African histories must be a prerequisite from grassroots to universities (IDI/OAU, 2021; IDI/UI, 2021). From another respondent, if the African condition must be appreciated, there is a need to sensitise Africans and Africanists everywhere to the imperative of decoloniality (IDI/OAU, 2021).

8. Limitations of the Study

This study represents a sectional part of the general discourse on decoloniality. This is necessary to gain deeper insights into the perspectives of scholars on the issue of the decoloniality of African

scholarships. Thus, this study is limited by its scope. Participants in the study are scholars of Nigerian descent, which may not represent continental viewpoints and perspectives. This does not, however, vitiate its findings. Rather, it has added to the repository of knowledge on the decoloniality of African scholarships. Specific case studies in other parts of the continent would provide additional perspectives. This is necessary to arrive at continental-wide viewpoints and perspectives for a better understanding.

Another limitation in terms of scope is that the preponderance of participants is within the age bracket of 31-60 (90%). The response of his age group is more radical because they are more exposed to contemporary developments in decoloniality. Nevertheless, the perspectives of older scholars are also pertinent to the general understanding of the historical past through lived experiences. Thus, subsequent studies should incorporate older scholars of African descent with previous experiences for a robust comparative analysis of the nuances of the past. The study envisaged including scholars from diverse curriculum backgrounds. Nevertheless, access was restricted by time and convenience. The study of the decoloniality of African scholarships is a continuous intellectual adventure. Thus, further research should focus on the diverse scope of African scholarships across various regions. This is necessary for a holistic understanding of the diverse perspectives on the lived experience and practice of older and younger generations of African scholars.

9.   Conclusion

The study established "African studies" as unique. Decolonising African studies is not a new clamour; however, it needs reassertion in practice. Decolonising African studies, though appears unrealistic; it has recognition in Africa and beyond. The gap between African studies and scholars and Westerners is an offshoot of the negligence of the African government in research and development projects. Marginalised African studies and scholars need reassertion in the world of academics. According to the study, the practice of African decolonization of knowledge has limitations in the use of language, a poor attitude towards quality research, and the subservience of African scholars' recognition with Western counterparts in journal and book publications. It recommends the need for African scholars to further engage in rigorous studies, identify with African perspectives, and encourage the

continuous development of educational and innovative skills that will recognise Africa in the world of scholarship.

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