



Digital Humanities and the Decolonization of Knowledge in Nigeria: Media Studies, Postcolonial Theory, and African Epistemologies

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed media ecosystems, knowledge production, and cultural authority across the Global South, yet existing scholarship on Digital Humanities (DH) has largely been framed through Western-centric perspectives that obscure epistemic diversity and local practices. This study aims to examine how DH reconfigures knowledge production in Nigeria by analyzing the intersection of digital media, postcolonial theory, and African epistemological traditions. Employing a qualitative literature-based approach with thematic analysis of scholarly works, policy reports, and theoretical texts on DH, media studies, and decolonization, the study synthesizes sources to construct an integrative framework. The findings reveal three key insights: first, DH expands knowledge production through digitization, computational analysis, and digital archives; second, it redistributes authority through transparency, participation, and open scholarship; and third, it democratizes distribution through open access and interoperable infrastructures. The study concludes that African philosophical frameworks, particularly *Omoluabi* and *Ubuntu*, provide crucial resources for developing culturally grounded DH approaches that resist digital colonialism. By extending DH scholarship beyond Euro-American contexts, this study contributes to contemporary debates in media and cultural studies on epistemic pluralism, digital sovereignty, and the decolonization of knowledge in an interconnected Global South.

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Introduction

The expansion of the digital ecosystem has fundamentally transformed the contemporary media landscape, reshaping the ways knowledge is created, circulated, preserved, and consumed across societies (Alemneh, 2022; Nardone, 2020). This transformation has generated profound implications for media studies, cultural studies, communication, and the broader humanities, where digital infrastructures increasingly mediate the production of knowledge and



cultural meaning (Parks, 2020; Taurino, 2024). Within this evolving landscape, *Digital Humanities* (DH) has emerged as one of the most influential interdisciplinary developments by integrating computational technologies with humanistic inquiry to reinterpret texts, cultural artifacts, historical archives, and collective memory (Berry, 2012; Burdick et al., 2012). Rather than functioning solely as a collection of digital tools, DH represents an epistemological transformation that redefines scholarly authority, authorship, and knowledge production within networked environments (Clivaz & Allen, 2019; Reed, 2016). As media platforms, algorithms, artificial intelligence, and digital infrastructures increasingly shape public discourse and cultural participation, scholars have begun to question how digital technologies simultaneously democratize access to knowledge while reinforcing new forms of inequality, platform dominance, and algorithmic governance (Ayana et al., 2024; Poell et al., 2024). Consequently, understanding the relationship between digital technologies, media cultures, and knowledge production has become essential for explaining how contemporary societies negotiate globalization, technological innovation, and cultural diversity across Asia and the Global South (Caidi et al., 2025; Lange et al., 2021; Ponzanesi, 2020).

Nigeria provides an important empirical setting through which these broader transformations can be critically examined. As Africa's most populous country and one of the continent's most culturally and religiously diverse societies, Nigeria has experienced rapid digital expansion alongside continuing debates concerning identity, education, cultural heritage, and postcolonial knowledge production (Arowosegbe, 2024; Ochon, 2025). Within this context, the adoption of *Digital Humanities* extends beyond technological modernization to influence media practices, religious communication, digital education, and the preservation of cultural heritage. Universities, archives, museums, and religious institutions increasingly employ digital infrastructures to digitize manuscripts, develop online repositories, and facilitate collaborative scholarship, illustrating how digital media reshape both intellectual production and cultural transmission (Aiyegbusi & Khumalo, 2022; Okorie, 2023). Although geographically located outside Asia, Nigeria shares important historical and structural characteristics with many Asian and Global South societies, including colonial legacies, uneven digital development, and the ongoing negotiation between global technological systems and indigenous epistemological traditions (Poell et al., 2024; Ponzanesi, 2020). These similarities position Nigeria as a valuable comparative case for understanding how digital transformation intersects with media culture, religious communication, and knowledge production beyond Western contexts.

Current scholarship on *Digital Humanities* and digital religion may be broadly categorized into three complementary strands. The first emphasizes technological innovation, highlighting the role of digitization, computational analysis, digital archives, and data-driven methodologies in expanding access to religious and cultural resources (Burdick et al., 2012; Reed, 2016; Unsworth, 2010). A second strand adopts a sociocultural perspective, examining how digital platforms reshape religious authority, identity formation, communication practices, and community participation within digitally mediated environments (Caidi et al., 2025; Campbell, 2021; Latour, 2005). More recently, a third body of scholarship has introduced postcolonial and decolonial perspectives, arguing that digital infrastructures are neither politically nor culturally neutral but frequently reproduce epistemological inequalities inherited from colonial systems of knowledge (Fiormonte, 2016; Ponzanesi, 2020; Risam, 2018). Scholars within this tradition advocate Digital Humanities approaches that foreground indigenous knowledge systems, local languages, and culturally situated epistemologies as integral components of digital scholarship rather than peripheral considerations (Okorie, 2023; Saxena, 2023). While these perspectives have significantly enriched debates surrounding digital media, culture, and knowledge production, they often remain analytically fragmented, treating technological innovation, digital religion, and decolonial knowledge production as separate domains rather than interconnected dimensions of contemporary digital culture (Ayana et al., 2024; Poell et al., 2024).

This article argues that understanding *Digital Humanities* in Nigeria requires a more integrated analytical framework that brings together media studies, cultural studies, and postcolonial approaches to digital knowledge production. Existing research has paid relatively limited attention to how digital transformation simultaneously reconfigures religious communication, cultural identity, and epistemic authority within postcolonial societies (Arowosegbe, 2024; Ochonu, 2025). Likewise, comparatively little scholarship has examined the potential contribution of indigenous African philosophies as theoretical foundations for Digital Humanities rather than merely as objects of digital preservation (Olaniyan & Martins, 2025; Sulyman & Ukwumaka, 2024). Drawing upon postcolonial DH scholarship alongside the African ethical philosophies of *Omoluabi* and *Ubuntu*, this article contends that Digital Humanities should be understood as a process of cultural negotiation through which digital media become sites for reconstructing identity, authority, and epistemic sovereignty (Avoseh, 2013; Azenabor, 2023; Ibidapo-Obe, 2023). Rather than conceptualizing DH solely as technological modernization, the study interprets it as a media-cultural phenomenon in which global digital infrastructures interact with local

values, indigenous knowledge systems, and religious traditions (Poell et al., 2024; Ponzanesi, 2020). In doing so, the article extends Digital Humanities scholarship beyond its predominantly Euro-American orientation and demonstrates how locally grounded epistemologies contribute to more inclusive and culturally responsive approaches to digital knowledge production across the Global South (Ayana et al., 2024; Okorie, 2023). Although empirically situated in Nigeria, the theoretical insights generated by this study possess wider comparative relevance for scholars examining digital cultures, media transformation, and epistemic pluralism across Asia and other postcolonial societies.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine how Digital Humanities reconfigures religious knowledge production in Nigeria through the interaction between global digital infrastructures and indigenous epistemological traditions. Specifically, the study addresses three interrelated questions: (1) How does *Digital Humanities* transform the production, authority, and dissemination of religious knowledge in Nigeria? (2) How do digital media interact with indigenous African epistemologies in reshaping religious communication and cultural authority? (3) What theoretical contributions can the Nigerian experience offer for rethinking *Digital Humanities* from Global South perspectives? To answer these questions, the article is organized into five sections. Following this introduction, the next section outlines the research methodology and analytical framework. The subsequent sections discuss the epistemological transformation of religious knowledge through Digital Humanities, the negotiation of media, religion, and indigenous epistemologies in Nigeria, and the implications of the Nigerian experience for developing a more plural, decolonial, and globally inclusive framework of Digital Humanities. The article concludes by reflecting on the significance of these findings for contemporary debates in media studies, cultural studies, digital society, and knowledge production across the Global South (Caidi et al., 2025; Poell et al., 2024; Ponzanesi, 2020).

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative literature-based research design to investigate how *Digital Humanities* (DH) reconfigures religious knowledge production through the interaction of digital media, indigenous epistemologies, and postcolonial knowledge systems in Nigeria. A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate because the research seeks to interpret conceptual developments, theoretical debates, and socio-cultural transformations rather than measure causal relationships or statistical patterns (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a form of document-based inquiry, literature-based research enables the

systematic synthesis of scholarly works from multiple disciplines, including media studies, cultural studies, Digital Humanities, religious studies, and postcolonial scholarship. This interdisciplinary perspective provides an analytical foundation for understanding how digital technologies reshape media practices, religious communication, cultural authority, and knowledge production within postcolonial societies (Bowen, 2009). Rather than treating literature as a collection of isolated findings, this study critically interprets and integrates existing scholarship to construct a coherent conceptual framework that explains the transformation of Digital Humanities in the Nigerian context and its broader implications for media and cultural studies in the Global South.

The data corpus consists of peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, book chapters, conference proceedings, policy reports, and institutional publications addressing Digital Humanities, digital media, postcolonial theory, African epistemologies, and religious communication. Literature was selected through purposive sampling based on three principal considerations: academic credibility, conceptual relevance, and theoretical contribution to the research objectives (Snyder, 2019). To ensure comprehensive coverage of contemporary scholarship, literature searches were conducted across internationally recognized academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and Taylor & Francis Online. Searches employed combinations of keywords such as *Digital Humanities*, *digital religion*, *media studies*, *Nigeria*, *postcolonial media*, *African epistemology*, *Omoluabi*, *Ubuntu*, *digital culture*, *knowledge production*, and *Global South*. Sources were included if they (1) discussed Digital Humanities, digital media, or knowledge production within African or Global South contexts; (2) examined postcolonial or decolonial perspectives relevant to digital scholarship; (3) explored indigenous knowledge systems or African philosophies associated with media and communication; and (4) were published in reputable academic outlets in English. Literature lacking direct relevance, methodological rigor, or scholarly credibility was excluded from the analysis.

Data analysis followed the thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), allowing recurring concepts and theoretical relationships to emerge inductively from the literature. The analytical process consisted of three interrelated stages. First, data reduction involved screening, coding, and categorizing literature according to its relevance to Digital Humanities, media studies, religious communication, indigenous epistemologies, and postcolonial knowledge production. Second, data display organized coded findings into broader analytical themes that reflected the study's conceptual structure and research questions. Third, conclusion drawing and interpretation synthesized

relationships among these themes to develop a comprehensive explanation of how Digital Humanities reconfigures religious knowledge production and contributes to wider debates concerning digital culture, media transformation, and epistemic decolonization. Throughout the analytical process, interpretation remained iterative, moving continuously between empirical literature, theoretical perspectives, and emerging conceptual insights.

Table 1
Data Analysis Procedures

Stage	Analytical Process	Application in This Study
1. Data Reduction	Literature screening, selection, coding, and categorization	Selecting literature on Digital Humanities, media studies, digital religion, postcolonial theory, African epistemologies, and knowledge production within Nigerian and Global South contexts.
2. Data Display	Theme development and conceptual organization	Organizing findings into three principal analytical themes: (1) <i>Reconfiguring Religious Knowledge Production through Digital Humanities</i> ; (2) <i>Negotiating Digital Media, Religious Communication, and Indigenous Epistemologies in Nigeria</i> ; and (3) <i>Rethinking Digital Humanities through Global South Perspectives</i> .
3. Conclusion Drawing	Critical interpretation and theoretical synthesis	Examining how Digital Humanities transforms religious knowledge production while integrating media studies, postcolonial theory, and indigenous African epistemologies to develop a Global South perspective on digital scholarship.
Trustworthiness	Source triangulation and theoretical triangulation	Source triangulation: Comparing evidence from journal articles, books, policy reports, and institutional publications. Theoretical triangulation: Integrating Digital Humanities theory, media and cultural studies, postcolonial/decolonial theory, and African philosophies (<i>Omoluabi</i> and <i>Ubuntu</i>).

Source: Developed by the author based on [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#), [Bowen \(2009\)](#), [Creswell and Poth \(2018\)](#), and [Snyder \(2019\)](#)

Table 1 summarizes the analytical procedures employed throughout this research. The first stage focuses on systematically identifying and coding literature that directly addresses the conceptual intersections among Digital Humanities, digital media, religious communication, postcolonial knowledge production, and African epistemologies. The second stage organizes these coded findings into three interconnected analytical themes corresponding to the article's discussion sections. Rather than presenting literature descriptively, thematic organization enables the study to reveal conceptual relationships among digital transformation, cultural authority, and indigenous knowledge systems. The final stage synthesizes these findings to develop a broader

theoretical interpretation concerning the role of Digital Humanities in reshaping religious knowledge production within Nigeria and the Global South. To enhance methodological rigor, the study employs both source triangulation, through comparison of diverse scholarly sources, and theoretical triangulation, by integrating perspectives from Digital Humanities, media studies, postcolonial theory, and African philosophy. This strategy strengthens the credibility of the analysis while allowing the study to move beyond a conventional literature review toward a theoretically informed synthesis that contributes to contemporary debates on media, culture, digital society, and epistemic decolonization.

Reconfiguring Religious Knowledge Production through Digital Humanities

The emergence of Digital Humanities (DH) has fundamentally reframed how religious knowledge is produced, validated, and disseminated in contemporary scholarship. By embedding computational methods, networked infrastructures, and open scholarly practices within religious studies and theology, DH has altered the landscape of knowledge creation across archival work, textual analysis, visualization, and open scholarly ecosystems (Reed, 2016; Albalawi et al., 2020). The evidence synthesized from contemporary scholarship reveals a convergent pattern: DH expands data sources and methods, reconfigures authority through transparency and participation, and democratizes distribution via open, interoperable infrastructures (Clivaz & Allen, 2019; Information, 2017). This transformation is not merely technical but epistemological, challenging long-established assumptions about what constitutes legitimate religious knowledge, who has the authority to validate it, and how it should be shared with diverse publics (Caidi et al., 2025; Gilliland, 2014). As digital platforms become primary sites of religious discourse and identity formation, understanding these three interconnected transformations, production, authority, and distribution, is essential for grasping how DH is reshaping the landscape of religious knowledge in an increasingly digital society (Lange et al., 2021; Yuting et al., 2023).

The transformation of production broadens the material base and methods for creating religious knowledge, expanding source material beyond printed books to include manuscripts, sermons, digital repositories, and web-based texts (Reed, 2016; Filgueira et al., 2019). Topic modeling and computational text analysis enable researchers to identify latent themes, track concept distributions over long temporal spans, and reveal networked patterns of citation and

discourse within religious literatures (Albalawi et al., 2020; Lange et al., 2021). The transformation of authority foregrounds openness, transparency, and reproducibility as factors of credibility, with authority mediated through transparent data practices and accessible sources rather than solely vested in canonical editors or traditional institutional gatekeepers (Information, 2017; Yuting et al., 2023). Digital theology presents a “big tent” view of authority, emphasizing multiple voices and cross-disciplinary collaboration (Clivaz & Allen, 2019). The transformation of distribution catalyzes open, scalable dissemination through open access, open archives, and interoperable data representations, expanding access to religious texts and enabling new publics for religious knowledge (Reed, 2016; Caidi et al., 2025). However, challenges persist in licensing, copyright, and access policies for sensitive religious content (Information, 2017; Yuting et al., 2023). These three transformations, production, authority, and distribution, collectively demonstrate that DH is not merely a technical tool but a profound epistemological project reshaping religious knowledge in the digital age.

The figure below provides a simple visual summary of how Digital Humanities transforms religious knowledge across three interconnected dimensions: Production, Authority, and Distribution.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of DH Transformation in Religious Knowledge

1 PRODUCTION 	TRADITIONAL		DIGITAL HUMANITIES
	 Printed books	→	 Manuscripts, digital archives
	 Limited texts	→	 Web-based texts, sermons
	 Close reading	→	 Distant reading, topic modeling
	 Manual analysis	→	 Text mining, network analysis
	 Small corpus	→	 Large-scale, scalable data
2 AUTHORITY 	TRADITIONAL		DIGITAL HUMANITIES
	 Canonical editors	→	 Transparency & reproducibility
	 Institutional gatekeepers	→	 Open archives & data practices
	 Single authority	→	 Distributed, “big tent” authority
3 DISTRIBUTION 	TRADITIONAL		DIGITAL HUMANITIES
	 Limited access	→	 Open access & open archives
	 Restricted audiences	→	 Global, diverse publics
	 Print-based	→	 Digital repositories & libraries
	 Single format	→	 Interoperable, multi-format
	 Institutional control	→	 Democratized, network science
 SYNTHESIS: DH expands production, redistributes authority, and democratizes distribution of religious knowledge.			

Source: Developed by the author based on [Reed \(2016\)](#), [Albalawi et al. \(2020\)](#), [Clivaz & Allen \(2019\)](#), [Information \(2017\)](#), [Caidi et al. \(2025\)](#), [Gilliland \(2014\)](#), [Lange et al. \(2021\)](#), and [Yuting et al. \(2023\)](#).

Figure 1 above provides a simple visual summary of how Digital Humanities transforms religious knowledge across three interconnected dimensions. The first section (Production) shows the expansion from traditional sources (printed books, limited texts) to DH-enabled sources (manuscripts, digital archives, web-based texts) and methods (from close reading to distant reading, topic modeling, and text mining). The second section (Authority) illustrates the shift from traditional authority structures (canonical editors, institutional gatekeepers) to DH-enabled authority characterized by transparency, reproducibility, open practices, and distributed participation. The third section (Distribution) demonstrates the transition from limited access and restricted audiences to open access, global publics, and interoperable repositories. The bottom section synthesizes the overarching argument: DH expands production, redistributes authority, and democratizes distribution of religious knowledge. This simple model enables readers to quickly understand the holistic nature of DH's impact on religious knowledge production.

The transformation of production in a DH environment broadens the material base and methods for creating religious knowledge, expanding what counts as source material beyond printed books to include manuscripts, sermons, digital repositories, and web-based texts ([Reed, 2016](#); [Filgueira et al., 2019](#)). This methodological expansion enables scholars to formulate new research questions and engage with corpora at scales previously impractical, facilitating *distant reading* and large-scale pattern discovery in religious texts and historical materials ([Clivaz & Allen, 2019](#); [Lange et al., 2021](#)). Topic modeling and computational text analysis have become central tools for religious studies, theology, and Islamic studies, enabling researchers to identify latent themes, track concept distributions over long temporal spans, and reveal networked patterns of citation, influence, and discourse within religious literatures ([Albalawi et al., 2020](#); [Lange et al., 2021](#)). In Islamic law studies, for example, topic modeling and network analyses illuminate patterns in juristic texts, Qur'anic references, and normative classifications, offering new perspectives on doctrinal development and transmission over centuries ([Lange et al., 2021](#)).

The DH production pipeline emphasizes interoperability and methodological integration, with tools such as LDA-based models, text-mining algorithms, and network visualization embedded in ecosystems that interoperate with library and information science, digital libraries, and archival practices

(Reed, 2016; *Information*, 2017). Large-scale, scalable infrastructures support cross-institutional collaborations and cross-cultural data assembly, as demonstrated by projects that ingest, process, and query historical text data across heterogeneous schemas (Filgueira et al., 2019; Díez & Barrionuevo, 2020). However, a nuanced distinction exists in how topic modeling originated in information retrieval and was subsequently tailored to social sciences and humanities contexts. Some reviews stress that topic models do not inherently operationalize social science theories; rather, they provide mathematical abstractions for thematic structure, which scholars must interpret in light of domain knowledge in religion, theology, and history (Wiedemann, 2022; Albalawi et al., 2020). This tension highlights the enduring need for theory-guided interpretation of computational results within religious studies (Lange et al., 2021; Yuting et al., 2023).

The transformation of authority in DH environments foregrounds openness, transparency, and reproducibility as factors of credibility in religious scholarship (*Information*, 2017; Yuting et al., 2023). The emergence of open archives, open access publishing, and open data practices reshapes what counts as credible evidence, with authority mediated through transparent data practices, reproducible computational pipelines, and accessible sources rather than solely vested in canonical editors or traditional institutional gatekeepers (Reed, 2016; Clivaz & Allen, 2019). Research on digital hadith interpretation demonstrates that social media platforms based on algorithms do more than just speed up the distribution of religious content; they also reconfigure epistemology through mechanisms of visibility, engagement, and emotional resonance, resulting in a conflict between traditional authenticity standards, such as *isnād* and *matn*, and digital popularity. This phenomenon has been conceptualized as Algorithmic Hybrid Authority, where legitimacy is increasingly influenced by emotional appeal and platform visibility rather than solely derived from traditional knowledge transmission (Caidi et al., 2025). Digital theology and DH-centered channels present a “big tent” view of authority, emphasizing multiple voices, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and the critical examination of digital practices themselves (Clivaz & Allen, 2019; Gilliland, 2014). Some scholars argue that artificial intelligence, when deployed transparently, can function as digital iconography, a tool for imagining what written archives cannot preserve, while digital platforms expand rather than diminish scholarly reach (Caidi et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the semantically loose nature of certain DH methods requires careful interpretive discipline to avoid overextending claims based on computational outputs (Wiedemann, 2022; Albalawi et al., 2020). The integration of DH with library and information science

and open science practices further suggests that authority is increasingly contingent upon accessibility, interoperability, and adherence to shared scholarly standards (Díez & Barrionuevo, 2020; Gilliland, 2014).

The transformation of distribution catalyzes open, scalable dissemination of religious knowledge through open access, open archives, and interoperable data infrastructures (Reed, 2016; *Information*, 2017). This commitment to openness broadens access to religious texts, sermons, and doctrinal corpora for scholars, students, and wider communities, thereby reducing barriers to participation and enabling the emergence of new publics for religious knowledge (Yuting et al., 2023; Caidi et al., 2025). Digital repositories, networked archives, and interoperable metadata standards facilitate collaborative scholarship across institutions while enhancing reproducibility and long-term preservation (Gilliland, 2014; Filgueira et al., 2019). The expansion of DH into religious studies has also generated innovative forms of dissemination, including interactive visualizations of theological debates, online exhibitions of manuscript collections, digital mapping, and web-based educational resources that reach audiences far beyond conventional academic settings (Reed, 2016; Caidi et al., 2025). Furthermore, the growing availability of topic-modeling software, text-mining pipelines, and network-analysis tools has democratized methodological access, allowing smaller institutions and independent scholars to participate more fully in digital religious scholarship (Albalawi et al., 2020; Díez & Barrionuevo, 2020). Nonetheless, challenges remain regarding copyright, licensing, and ethical governance, particularly in relation to culturally sensitive or restricted religious materials, underscoring the need to balance openness with responsible stewardship (*Information*, 2017; Yuting et al., 2023).

A coherent synthesis of these developments demonstrates that Digital Humanities has fundamentally reconfigured religious knowledge through three interrelated processes. First, it expands the production of knowledge by integrating new forms of digital evidence, scalable computational methods, and collaborative research infrastructures that enable broader and more systematic analyses of religious traditions (Reed, 2016; Lange et al., 2021). Second, it redistributes authority by challenging traditional hierarchies through transparent data practices, reproducible methodologies, and participatory scholarly ecosystems, while simultaneously requiring continued interpretive expertise and theoretical grounding (Clivaz & Allen, 2019; *Information*, 2017). Third, it democratizes the distribution of religious knowledge by leveraging open-access infrastructures and interoperable repositories to facilitate wider engagement with scholarly and religious communities, although legal and ethical considerations continue to shape the boundaries of openness (Yuting et

al., 2023; Caidi et al., 2025). Collectively, these transformations underscore that DH is not simply a technological innovation but an epistemological reconfiguration of religious scholarship. By integrating computational approaches with humanistic interpretation, Digital Humanities offers new possibilities for producing, validating, and disseminating religious knowledge while reaffirming the enduring importance of critical inquiry, contextual interpretation, and ethical responsibility in an increasingly digital society.

Negotiating Digital Media, Religious Communication, and Indigenous Epistemologies in Nigeria

The rapid expansion of digital media in Nigeria has transformed religious communication, cultural authority, and moral education across its diverse ethnic and religious communities. In this context, indigenous epistemological frameworks, particularly the Yoruba concept of Omoluabi and the African philosophy of Ubuntu, provide essential ethical foundations for interpreting behavior, fostering social responsibility, and sustaining communal trust amid challenges such as online fraud, youth violence, and declining traditional authority (Ibidapo-Obe, 2023; Azenabor, 2023; Abolarin, 2023). As digital platforms increasingly shape religious discourse, identity formation, and cultural transmission, understanding the interaction between indigenous epistemologies and digital media becomes critical (Afolayan, 2021; Odetade & Olusegun, 2021). This study synthesizes literature on three interconnected themes: Omoluabi as a moral-ethical framework, indigenous communicative traditions as mediators of social meaning, and the influence of digital media and religious pluralism on cultural authority and youth socialization. The review demonstrates that indigenous moral values remain indispensable for guiding communication and ethical engagement in Nigeria's evolving digital society (Olugbemi-Gabriel & Ukpi, 2023; Ojedokun, 2026).

Table 2

Conceptual Framework of Indigenous Epistemologies, Digital Media, and Cultural Authority in Nigeria

Indigenous Epistemologies	Digital Media Platforms	Outcomes and Transformations
Omoluabi (Yoruba moral framework)	Social media (Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp)	Hybrid authority (traditional + digital legitimacy)
Ubuntu (Pan-African communal philosophy)	Television and radio broadcasting	Youth socialization and moral pedagogy
Proverbs and oral traditions	Streaming platforms and digital archives	Religious communication and interfaith dialogue
Folktales and storytelling	Online educational and religious platforms	Renegotiation of cultural authority

Traditional music (<i>Fuji</i> , folk songs)	Podcasts and digital cultural content	Ethical frameworks for digital citizenship
Town criers and indigenous communication	Networked public communication	Preservation and transformation of indigenous knowledge

Source: Developed by the author based on [Ibidapo-Obe \(2023\)](#), [Azenabor \(2023\)](#), [Avoseh \(2012\)](#), [Abolarin \(2023\)](#), [Odetade and Olusegun \(2021\)](#), [Olugbemi-Gabriel and Ukpi \(2023\)](#), [Afolayan \(2021\)](#), [Oyinloye \(2021\)](#), and [Ojedokun \(2026\)](#).

Table 2 summarizes the conceptual relationship between indigenous epistemologies and digital media within contemporary Nigerian society. The first dimension identifies the principal indigenous epistemological resources that have historically shaped ethical behavior and communal life, including *Omoluabi*, *Ubuntu*, proverbs, folktales, traditional music, and indigenous communication systems. The second dimension highlights the principal digital media environments through which these knowledge traditions are reproduced and renegotiated, including social media, broadcasting media, streaming platforms, and online educational spaces. The final dimension illustrates the broader societal consequences of this interaction, including the emergence of hybrid authority, changing patterns of youth socialization, evolving forms of religious communication, and the reconstruction of cultural legitimacy in digitally mediated public spheres.

The Yoruba concept of *Omoluabi* occupies a central position within this transformation by functioning as an ethical framework that emphasizes integrity, humility, responsibility, and communal solidarity. Existing scholarship consistently identifies *Omoluabi* as a moral vocabulary through which Nigerians evaluate personal conduct, public leadership, and social trust across educational, political, and religious contexts ([Ibidapo-Obe, 2023](#); [Azenabor, 2023](#); [Avoseh, 2012](#)). In digital environments, these values increasingly inform expectations regarding online behavior, misinformation, cyber ethics, and respectful engagement within religious communities. [Abolarin \(2023\)](#), for example, argues that educational institutions should strengthen *Omoluabi*-based character formation to counter digital-era challenges such as cybercrime, youth violence, and online fraud. Likewise, [Azenabor \(2023\)](#) demonstrates that *Omoluabi* continues to provide an indigenous ethical framework capable of guiding social development within rapidly changing technological environments. Beyond education, the concept also informs conflict mediation, where media platforms increasingly serve as spaces through which traditional values are communicated and negotiated. Historical studies of community mediation in Ibadan illustrate how virtue-based leadership continues to derive legitimacy from *Omoluabi*, even when mediated through television broadcasting

and contemporary communication technologies (Albert et al., 1995). Consequently, digital media have not displaced indigenous moral authority but have instead expanded the arenas within which it is exercised.

Indigenous communicative traditions similarly remain central to the preservation and reinterpretation of cultural knowledge. Proverbs, oral storytelling, folklore, and music have long functioned as mechanisms for transmitting ethical principles, historical memory, and communal identity across generations. Rather than eroding these traditions, digital media increasingly facilitate their circulation through podcasts, streaming platforms, digital archives, and social networking sites. Avoseh (2012) argues that Yoruba proverbs represent theoretical frameworks for lifelong learning, while Odetade and Olusegun (2021) demonstrate how *Fuji* music continues to communicate indigenous values through contemporary popular culture. Likewise, Olugbemi-Gabriel and Ukpi (2023) emphasize that folktales remain important instruments of moral education and advocate for their preservation through digital media strategies. Collectively, these studies suggest that digital technologies provide new opportunities for sustaining indigenous epistemologies by adapting traditional communicative practices to contemporary media ecosystems rather than replacing them.

The intersection between digital media and indigenous ethics is particularly significant in the socialization of younger generations. Increasing exposure to global digital cultures has intensified debates regarding identity, morality, and civic responsibility among Nigerian youth. Within this context, *Omoluabi* offers an alternative ethical framework capable of addressing challenges associated with cybercrime, misinformation, online violence, and declining public trust. Educational initiatives grounded in *Omoluabi* seek to integrate digital literacy with character education, encouraging responsible online participation while preserving culturally embedded moral values (Abolarin, 2023). Similarly, Oyinloye (2021) argues that indigenous virtue ethics provide an appropriate foundation for ethical research practices and community engagement within digitally mediated environments. Traditional communicative institutions, including town criers and community elders, have also adapted to digital broadcasting and social media, illustrating how indigenous authority is increasingly reconfigured through hybrid communication systems that combine customary legitimacy with networked participation (Afolayan, 2021). Rather than representing a simple transition from traditional to digital authority, this process reflects an ongoing negotiation in which indigenous communicative practices are transformed while retaining their normative significance.

Nevertheless, scholars caution against viewing indigenous epistemologies as static or culturally homogeneous. Comparative studies demonstrate considerable diversity across Nigeria's ethnic communities, while postcolonial scholarship argues that indigenous knowledge should not be positioned as the opposite of Western modernity but as one component within plural and interconnected epistemological systems (Lazarus, 2019). Likewise, digital platforms simultaneously strengthen and challenge traditional authority by enabling broader participation while exposing indigenous knowledge to algorithmic visibility, commercialization, and transnational cultural influences. These dynamics highlight the emergence of hybrid media cultures in which indigenous ethical traditions continue to shape public communication even as authority becomes increasingly decentralized and participatory.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that digital media have not diminished the relevance of indigenous epistemologies in Nigeria. Instead, they have generated new spaces through which *Omoluabi*, *Ubuntu*, proverbs, folklore, music, and traditional communication practices are reinterpreted and transmitted to wider publics. Religious communication, cultural authority, and moral education increasingly operate within hybrid media environments where indigenous legitimacy intersects with digital participation. The Nigerian experience therefore illustrates that digital transformation should be understood not as the replacement of traditional knowledge systems but as their continuous negotiation and adaptation within evolving media ecologies. This synthesis contributes to broader debates in media and cultural studies by demonstrating how indigenous epistemologies remain essential for understanding digital communication, cultural authority, and ethical citizenship across postcolonial societies.

Rethinking Digital Humanities through Global South Perspectives

The task of rethinking *Digital Humanities* (DH) from Global South perspectives requires a theoretically informed synthesis that connects the Nigerian experience with broader debates in Digital Humanities, media studies, postcolonial theory, and the decolonization of knowledge production. Rather than treating the Global South merely as an empirical setting for testing theories developed elsewhere, contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes it as an important site for generating alternative epistemologies, methodological innovations, and critical perspectives on digital transformation (Poell et al., 2024; Ponzanesi, 2020; Okorie, 2023). This perspective positions DH not as a universal technological paradigm but as a plural and context-dependent practice shaped by local histories, cultural traditions, political economies, and knowledge infrastructures. Consequently,

Nigerian experiences with digital heritage, religious communication, archives, and indigenous epistemologies provide valuable theoretical insights into how Digital Humanities can move beyond Eurocentric assumptions toward more inclusive and globally representative frameworks. The table below summarizes the principal dimensions through which Nigerian experiences contribute to rethinking Digital Humanities within Global South scholarship.

Table 3
A Nigerian-Centered Digital Humanities Framework from Global South Perspectives

Dimension	Core Principles	Key References
1. Decolonial Praxis	Center indigenous epistemologies and local languages; practice epistemic disobedience; promote digital sovereignty; co-create knowledge with communities	Sulyman & Ukwumaka (2024); Ponzanesi (2020); Okorie (2023); Ayana et al. (2024); Olaniyan & Martins (2025)
2. Platformized Knowledge	Develop theory through Nigerian case studies; interrogate platform capitalism; examine digital labor and platform governance; address power asymmetries	Poell et al. (2024); Ponzanesi (2020); Balme (2017); Grant & Price (2020)
3. Pedagogy and Curriculum Reform	Integrate African epistemologies into DH curricula; promote <i>glocalization</i> ; develop praxis-oriented learning; strengthen humanities in Nigerian universities	Ochonu (2025); Sulyman & Ukwumaka (2024); Olaniyan & Martins (2025); Aiyegbusi & Khumalo (2022)
4. Cultural Heritage and Ethical Digital Practices	Promote ethical digitization; support digital repatriation; strengthen copyright reform; ensure community participation and data sovereignty	Okorie (2023); Ayana et al. (2024); Ponzanesi (2020); Poell et al. (2024)

Source: Developed by the author based on Poell et al. (2024), Ponzanesi (2020), Okorie (2023), Saxena (2023), Ayana et al. (2024), Ochonu (2025), Sulyman and Ukwumaka (2024), and Olaniyan and Martins (2025).

Table 3 synthesizes a Nigerian-centered framework for rethinking Digital Humanities through Global South perspectives. The framework identifies four interconnected dimensions that collectively redefine the theoretical foundations of DH. The first dimension emphasizes *decolonial praxis*, highlighting indigenous epistemologies, epistemic sovereignty, and community-based knowledge production as central principles of digital scholarship. The second dimension focuses on *platformized knowledge*, encouraging scholars to analyze digital platforms as political, economic, and cultural infrastructures rather than neutral technological systems. The third dimension concerns curriculum and pedagogical reform by integrating African philosophical traditions into Digital Humanities education while promoting *glocalization* as a strategy for balancing international academic standards with local intellectual traditions. The final

dimension addresses ethical digitization, digital heritage, and data governance, emphasizing that community agency and cultural ownership should remain central considerations in the design of digital infrastructures.

Postcolonial and decolonial scholarship provides the conceptual foundation for this reorientation of Digital Humanities. Rather than viewing digital technologies as universally applicable instruments of modernization, postcolonial theorists argue that digital infrastructures are embedded within historical relations of colonialism, power, and knowledge production (Ponzanesi, 2020). Consequently, Digital Humanities must confront questions of epistemic inequality by recognizing indigenous knowledge systems as legitimate sources of theory rather than merely objects of documentation. Sulyman and Ukwumaka (2024) describe this process as *decolonial praxis*, advocating the incorporation of local epistemologies, community participation, and epistemic disobedience into educational and research practices. Similarly, Ayana et al. (2024) argue that AI governance and digital infrastructures in Sub-Saharan Africa should prioritize local sovereignty, inclusive governance, and culturally appropriate regulatory frameworks instead of replicating governance models developed in the Global North. Collectively, these perspectives suggest that Digital Humanities should not simply digitize African knowledge but fundamentally transform the structures through which knowledge is produced, governed, and legitimized.

The Nigerian higher education system provides a particularly important arena for implementing this transformation. Ochonu (2025) argues that Nigerian universities face an ongoing crisis of relevance, requiring substantial reform in curriculum, research infrastructure, and institutional support for humanities scholarship. Within this context, Digital Humanities offers opportunities to revitalize teaching and research by integrating computational methods with African intellectual traditions. Sulyman and Ukwumaka (2024) further propose *glocalization* as an educational strategy that combines globally recognized digital competencies with locally grounded epistemologies and community engagement. Such an approach enables students and researchers to participate in international scholarly networks while maintaining strong connections to indigenous languages, cultural practices, and historical experiences. Rather than importing standardized Digital Humanities curricula, Nigerian institutions can therefore develop context-sensitive educational models that respond directly to local societal needs while remaining globally connected.

The governance of digital cultural heritage constitutes another critical dimension of a Global South-oriented Digital Humanities framework. Okorie (2023) argues that digitization, archival preservation, and digital repatriation should prioritize African agency in decisions regarding ownership, copyright,

and access to cultural materials. Traditional copyright regimes often privilege institutions located in the Global North, limiting the ability of African communities to control the digitization and dissemination of their own cultural heritage. Similarly, [Ayana et al. \(2024\)](#) emphasize that data sovereignty and AI governance have become increasingly important as digital technologies shape archival systems, research infrastructures, and public knowledge. These concerns extend beyond legal questions to broader issues of cultural justice and digital colonialism, requiring Digital Humanities projects to incorporate ethical principles that ensure community participation, transparency, and equitable governance throughout the digitization process.

Equally important is the role of digital platforms in shaping knowledge production within contemporary societies. Platform studies increasingly demonstrate that digital infrastructures are neither neutral nor universally accessible but are deeply embedded within political economies characterized by unequal distributions of power and visibility ([Poell et al., 2024](#)). Global digital platforms influence which languages, archives, narratives, and cultural practices receive recognition while simultaneously shaping scholarly communication and public engagement. From a Nigerian perspective, Digital Humanities therefore requires critical engagement with platform capitalism, algorithmic governance, and data infrastructures that often privilege Western institutions and technological ecosystems. Rather than accepting these asymmetries as inevitable, scholars argue for context-driven theory building based on empirical experiences from Africa and other Global South regions, thereby expanding the conceptual diversity of Digital Humanities and challenging universalist assumptions embedded within dominant theoretical models.

Despite growing interest in decolonizing Digital Humanities, important challenges remain. Significant disparities persist in digital infrastructure, research funding, institutional capacity, and technological governance across many African countries. [Ayana et al. \(2024\)](#) observe that only a limited number of Sub-Saharan African states have developed comprehensive governance frameworks for artificial intelligence and digital infrastructures, while Nigerian universities continue to confront financial constraints, limited technological resources, and uneven institutional support for Digital Humanities initiatives ([Ochonu, 2025](#)). Furthermore, tensions continue between universalist theoretical frameworks developed in Western academia and the need for locally grounded conceptual approaches that reflect the historical and cultural diversity of postcolonial societies. Addressing these challenges requires long-term institutional reform, sustained investment in digital infrastructure, and

collaborative partnerships that prioritize local agency rather than technological dependency.

Overall, rethinking Digital Humanities through Global South perspectives requires a shift from technology-centered narratives toward frameworks grounded in epistemic diversity, cultural sovereignty, and ethical digital governance. The Nigerian experience demonstrates that Digital Humanities can contribute not only to technological innovation but also to the broader project of decolonizing knowledge production by integrating indigenous epistemologies, community participation, and locally situated digital practices into scholarly inquiry. Such an approach enriches contemporary debates in media studies, digital culture, platform studies, and postcolonial theory by demonstrating that the future of Digital Humanities depends upon theoretical pluralism, methodological inclusivity, and the recognition of multiple centers of knowledge production beyond the traditional boundaries of Euro-American scholarship.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Digital Humanities (DH) represents a transformative force in reconfiguring knowledge production, authority, and distribution within Nigerian and broader Global South contexts. By integrating computational methods, networked infrastructures, and open scholarly practices, DH challenges traditional epistemological frameworks while simultaneously offering opportunities for intellectual decolonization and epistemic pluralism. The findings reveal that DH expands the material base of religious and cultural scholarship through digitization, digital archives, and computational analysis, while redistributing authority through transparency, participation, and open access practices. Furthermore, DH democratizes knowledge distribution through interoperable infrastructures and global scholarly networks, reducing barriers to access and enabling new publics for religious and cultural knowledge. The study contributes to media and cultural studies by extending DH scholarship beyond Euro-American contexts, demonstrating how locally grounded epistemologies, particularly the African philosophical frameworks of *Omoluabi* and *Ubuntu*, can inform more culturally responsive and ethically grounded approaches to digital scholarship that resist digital colonialism and center community agency.

However, this study acknowledges several limitations. As a literature-based analysis, it relies on secondary sources and does not include primary empirical data from DH practitioners, archivists, or community stakeholders. Future research should address these gaps through ethnographic studies of DH projects, interviews with Nigerian scholars, and comparative analyses across

African and Asian contexts. Additionally, emerging technologies such as AI-driven text analysis and generative AI present new avenues for investigating how digital tools reshape religious knowledge production and cultural authority. Ultimately, this study affirms that DH in Nigeria is not merely a technical endeavor but a profound cultural and epistemological project, one that requires ongoing negotiation between global digital infrastructures and the enduring values of African intellectual traditions. By embracing this complexity, scholars can harness DH's transformative potential while remaining attentive to the principles of justice, inclusion, and epistemic sovereignty that lie at the heart of decolonial praxis.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Ethical Approval

This study is a literature review based exclusively on secondary data from published academic journals, official reports, and policy documents. It does not involve primary data collection from human subjects, animals, or any form of direct intervention. Therefore, ethical approval was not required for this research.

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