

Ethics of Care and Gender in Data Collection: Yoruba Women as Custodians of Knowledge

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Abstract

Case Studies

Yoruba women historically preserved and shared communal knowledge, particularly in oral traditions, health practices, and spiritual leadership. However, there is relatively less emphasis on their involvement in data sovereignty movements, particularly in asserting control over how their knowledge is collected, stored, and used. This gap calls for the need to expand the foundation of existing literature by focusing on the ethical treatment of their knowledge and the cultural sensitivity required in data methodologies. Using methods of literature reviews, oral histories, and critical philosophical argumentation, the study delves into the ethical considerations of engaging with indigenous knowledge systems, emphasising issues of consent, misrepresentation, and appropriation of knowledge. The paper finds that Yoruba women play an indispensable role in preserving and transmitting knowledge across generations. The paper calls for further exploration of how Yoruba women can use modern technology and digital platforms for the transmission of Indigenous knowledge and how the ethics of care align with the gendered responsibilities of Yoruba women in knowledge production and preservation. By analysing how care ethics shape the methods and ethical considerations of data collection, the paper argues for a more communal and culturally attuned approach to data collection, challenging individualistic and extractive tendencies found in Western methodologies. Lastly, it argues for a decolonized and gender-sensitive approach to data collection, recognising the valuable role of Yoruba women as custodians of knowledge and promoting more ethical and culturally attuned research practices.

Keywords: Custodian of Knowledge, Ethics of Care, Data collection, Yoruba women.

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INTRODUCTION

The Yoruba people are a major ethnic group in West Africa, predominantly found in southwestern Nigeria, with an estimated population exceeding 30 million. They are recognized for their cultural sophistication, political organization, and urbanization. The Yoruba language, with dialects such as Ijebu and Ekiti, is a key element of their identity. Yoruba women play a vital role in preserving oral traditions, such as folktales, proverbs, and rituals, which serve as tools for teaching ethical values and cultural continuity. These women contribute significantly to community health as herbalists, midwives, and spiritual leaders, showcasing their specialized knowledge grounded in Indigenous practices. Despite their substantial influence, scholarly research often portrays them merely as subjects of study rather than as active knowledge producers.

This paper advocates for a shift towards recognizing Yoruba women as agents of knowledge. It emphasizes the need for ethical research practices informed by care ethics—a feminist

framework that values empathy and communal relationships over traditional moral theories. By applying care ethics to research involving Yoruba women, scholars can foster participatory and culturally sensitive approaches, addressing issues like informed consent and knowledge ownership in their work. This work therefore advocates for decolonised research methodologies rooted in care ethics that prioritise relational accountability and epistemic justice. Such an approach not only affirms the agency of Yoruba women as knowledge bearers but also fosters more equitable knowledge production processes. It underscores the importance of recognising and valuing indigenous ways of knowing, particularly in contexts where colonial legacies and patriarchal structures continue to shape scholarly inquiry and public discourse.

The paper is organized into four main sections. The first section highlights the socio-cultural and historical significance of Yoruba women in southwestern Nigeria, emphasizing their roles in communal life. The second section focuses on their contributions to knowledge preservation through oral traditions and health practices. The third section introduces the ethics of

care as a theoretical lens, discussing its relevance to data collection and research methodologies. The final section addresses ethical dilemmas in engaging with Yoruba women's knowledge systems and proposes culturally responsive research practices that promote epistemic justice. Overall, the paper aims to reframe Yoruba women as active intellectual agents central to understanding and sustaining African cultural identities.

Yoruba Women as Custodians of Knowledge

Yoruba oral tradition highlights women as vital knowledge keepers who foster peaceful coexistence. Women, especially mothers, have preserved and transmitted cultural values, health practices, and spiritual teachings through generations. They play crucial roles in childcare, cooking, healing, relationships, and governance, using oral traditions, songs, praise poems, and religious activities like divination to pass on their wisdom (Olupona 2003).¹

Oral Traditions: Oral traditions—including myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, songs, and rituals—were essential knowledge repositories in pre-colonial Yoruba society. Passed down by griots, elders, and mothers, these traditions helped shape cultural values and identity (Julius 2023). Yoruba praise poetry, *oriki*, reflects the ideologies and histories of individuals, enhancing cultural memory and community ties (Olajubu 2003). Women's roles in storytelling and *oriki* underscore their contributions to preserving Yoruba culture. Folktales serve to entertain and educate, conveying moral lessons and practical advice. Through these narratives, Yoruba women have been key educators in their communities, promoting respect, self-reliance, and socioeconomic values.

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Traditional Religious Activities: According to Kanu (2021), Yoruba women hold significant religious roles as priestesses and spiritual leaders, possessing deep knowledge of ceremonies, cosmologies, and herbal medicine. They serve as intermediaries between mortals and the divine, ensuring the well-being of their communities. Deities like *Ọṣun* embody the divine feminine, while priestesses such as *Iyá Ọṣun* engage in rites and act as diviners and healers (Abimbola, 1976). Women's involvement in sacred knowledge is highlighted

through oral traditions and religious texts, with figures like *Odu*, who taught divination to the deity *Orunmila*, exemplifying their vital role in Ifa divination. Akintunde and Falola (2016) note the tradition of *Iyaláwo* (Mother of...). Mysteries) the tradition of women studying and applying divine knowledge for spiritual advancement continues, with their expertise in Indigenous Knowledge and Sustainability central to this effort. They have historically served as herbalists and healers, using their knowledge of plants to treat ailments (Adebobola, 2009). In rural areas like *Tonkere*, women significantly contribute to traditional medicine, showcasing their commitment to health and sustainability.

This gendered knowledge is vital for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, as Yoruba women hold substantial economic power in markets, often serving as *Iyalaja* (Alaba, 2007; Gbadebo, 2010; Shadare, 2020; Aransiola, 2023). These marketplaces facilitate knowledge sharing and community building, with women leveraging their economic influence to sustain household and community stability (Aina, 2001).

Yoruba women also conserve and innovate cultural expressions through crafts, music, and performance (Phoebe, 2024). Their roles in community events highlight the importance of song and dance in teaching values to future generations.

Folklore: Folkloric performances play a vital role in moral training and cultural preservation, reflecting Yoruba values of connection and ethics (Drewal & Drewal, 1983). Aina (2001) highlights the political roles of Yoruba women, such as *Iyalode* and *Iyalaja*, showcasing their advocacy for women's rights and social change. The legend of *Pupupu*, founder of *Ondo City*, and the dual chieftaincy system that honors both male and female leadership illustrate the importance of women's contributions to governance. Akintoye (2010) notes their significant involvement in politics during the colonial era, creating a strong legacy for ongoing empowerment in today's society.

Yoruba women have made significant contributions to knowledge production, yet their roles are often overlooked (Aluko, 2024). Colonialism and Western-centric approaches have marginalized indigenous viewpoints, leading to power imbalances in knowledge development. Oyewunmi (1997) notes that Western dominance seeks to suppress native knowledge; however, Yoruba women actively preserve and enhance these critical perspectives. Acknowledging their contributions is vital for understanding diverse knowledge systems and promoting inclusivity.

International organisations like UNESCO and the World Bank emphasise the importance of gendered indigenous knowledge in addressing global issues such as sustainable development and climate change (UNESCO, 2019). Fernandez and Tick (1994) argue that respecting these knowledge systems fosters long-

¹ Olupona, J. K. (1993). The study of Yoruba religious tradition in historical perspective. *Numen*, 40(3), 240-273.

² Olatunji, T. (2020). Folktales and Moral Instruction in Yoruba Society. *International Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 12(3), 98-112.

term development through collaboration and inclusivity. Yoruba women's contributions, from oral storytelling to traditional medicine—represent a unique blend of tradition and innovation. Valuing their intellectual history is crucial for achieving equal knowledge systems and preserving cultural heritage.

The Ethics of Care: A Feminist Philosophical Framework

The ethics of care, grounded in feminist philosophy, offers a constructive framework that prioritizes relationality, interdependence, and accountability in ethical decision-making (Gilligan, 1982).³ This paradigm encourages us to reevaluate traditional ethical theories, such as utilitarianism and deontology, which often focus on abstract principles at the expense of contextual and relational insights (Held, 2006).⁴ By emphasizing the importance of human connection and responsibility, especially from the perspectives of women, the ethics of care presents an invaluable approach to engaging with the knowledge systems of Yoruba women. This approach resonates deeply with the communal and relational values that are key to Yoruba culture.

Yoruba women play a vital role in caregiving that transcends family obligations to encompass the preservation and transmission of traditional knowledge. Their contributions include nurturing family connections, participating in cooperative agricultural practices, building intra-community relationships, supporting traditional marital customs, and safeguarding women's languages, prayers, drumming, and other cultural expressions (Aluko et al., 2011).⁵ These efforts are essential for fostering community cohesion, identity, and functionality.

By recognizing the importance of these contributions, the ethics of care provides a framework for research methodologies that are respectful, relational, and culturally sensitive. In contrast to the often extractive and individualistic tendencies of Western research methodologies, this approach honors the relational knowledge systems advocated by Yoruba women (Mohammed, 2020; Aluko, 2024).⁶ Taking a care-centered approach allows

us to create ethical data collection tactics that not only empower Yoruba women but also protect their intellectual and cultural contributions. This framework guarantees that their voices are heard and appreciated, which has a positive effect on their communities. Finally, the ethics of care promotes research that emphasises mutual respect, collaborative involvement, and co-creation of knowledge, ensuring that Yoruba women's viewpoints are recognised and appreciated in academic discourse (Appiah 2024).⁷

The integration of care ethics into research methodology promotes an ethical commitment to protecting Yoruba women's epistemic agency. This viewpoint promotes approaches that go beyond mere recording and involve active participation, promoting ethical accountability in knowledge generation. By emphasising care as a guiding principle, researchers can avoid hierarchical power structures and instead encourage ethical reciprocity and cultural integrity in their interactions with Yoruba women's knowledge systems.

A care-centered approach to research emphasizes the relationship and the researchers' responsibility to participants (Okkonen 2021).⁸ This perspective shifts the emphasis away from abstract conceptions of justice and towards a better grasp of the relational implications of research activities. Traditional research methods usually present researchers as impartial experts separate from their subjects. These methods are based on prepared questioning strategies, where the researcher guides and evaluates participants' responses within a specified framework (Khan, 2023).⁹ Such methodologies may neglect the complex interpersonal dynamics and lived experiences of participants, particularly women, whose roles and knowledge systems are deeply embedded in community settings. Yoruba women's sense of personhood is tied to communal responsibilities, therefore care-centered tactics offer a more authentic and empathetic portrayal of their experiences. This ethical approach has an impact on study design, data quality, and data interpretation, ensuring that marginalised voices are heard and valued as key sources of knowledge.

³ Gilligan, C. (1982). In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Harvard University Press. ISBN: 9780674445444

⁴ Held, V. (2006). *The ethics of care: Personal, political, and global*. Oxford University Press.

⁵ Aluko et al 2011

⁶ Mohammed, H. (2020). Indigenous Knowledge Management. LIS 212.National Open University, Abuja. 5-200., Aluko, Y. (2024).

In book: Rethinking Indigenous Knowledge Systems in the Contemporary Global Knowledge Discourse: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach. Edited by Enna Sukutai Gudhlanga,

Chipo Chirimuuta and Godwin Makaudze.Zimbabwe Open University.11-28.

⁷ Appiah R, Raviola G, Weobong B. (2024). Balancing Ethics and Culture: A Scoping Review of Ethico-Cultural and Implementation Challenges of the Individual-Based Consent Model in African Research. *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics*. 19(3):143-172.

⁸ Okkonen, I. and Takala., EmmaBell. (2021). Practising care in qualitative organizational research: moral responsibility and legitimacy in a study- of immigration management". Organizations and Management: *An International Journal* 16(2). Emerald Publishing Limited. 370-387, 1746-5648 doi 10.1108/QROM-08-2020-201

⁹ Khan, J., Raman, A., Sambamoorthy,N. and Prashanth,K). 2023. Research Methodology (Methods, Approaches and Techniques)

Aligning Care Ethics with Yoruba Women's Gendered Responsibilities

The ethics of care aligns closely with the gendered responsibilities of Yoruba women in knowledge production and preservation. As caregivers, Yoruba women prioritise the well-being of their families and communities, reflecting the relational values central to the ethics of care (Aluko et al 2011).¹⁰ This framework enables academics to create approaches that are more sensitive to the cultural and ethical implications of working with Yoruba women's knowledge systems. Care ethics can guide the development of participatory research methodologies that emphasise collaboration and mutual respect. These strategies can provide opportunities for Yoruba women to share their knowledge on their terms, instilling a sense of ownership and agency. Furthermore, care ethics can inform the development of laws and practices that safeguard Yoruba women's intellectual property and promote fair knowledge sharing.

Ethics of Care in Data Collection

Adopting a care-centered approach in research has significant implications for research design and practice (Rosengren 2021).¹¹ Researchers must engage individuals as active partners rather than passive subjects. This includes communicating with Yoruba women on study objectives, methodology, and outcomes to ensure that they are in line with their needs and interests. Collaborative involvement builds trust and respect, empowers participants, and improves data quality. Researchers should be contextually sensitive when collecting data, and their approaches should respect the Yoruba community's cultural and social settings. Researchers should make an effort to grasp the cultural relevance of the knowledge they seek and make sure that their methods reflect that understanding. Recognising the significance of kinship systems or community rituals, for example, might reveal deeper insights and increase the research's validity.

Research has the potential to deliver enormous advantages to both participants and communities. One effective strategy is to share findings in understandable formats, hold capacity-building seminars, and actively promote local initiatives. By encouraging reciprocity, researchers can enhance their ties with participants, ensuring that study efforts benefit their well-being.

Emphasising ethical responsibility is critical for researchers to foster a healthy and respectful culture. This entails committing to authentically representing participants' expertise, providing credit for their efforts, and creating long-term partnerships within the community to address any concerns about exploitation. (Barrow, 2022).¹² Utilising care-centered

methodologies prioritises the dignity and agency of participants. Researchers should attempt to provide a safe environment in which participants feel empowered to freely communicate their views, free of compulsion or pressure. This strategy emphasises getting informed consent, preserving clarity about research aims, and developing a sense of ownership and participation among participants. Research has the potential to deliver enormous advantages to both participants and communities. One effective strategy is to share findings in understandable formats, hold capacity-building seminars, and actively promote local initiatives. By encouraging reciprocity, researchers can enhance their ties with participants, ensuring that study efforts benefit their well-being.

Cultural Significance of Data Collection

Women are essential to Yoruba culture, providing valuable knowledge that strengthens community cohesion and identity. Their expertise in kinship, cooperative farming, traditional marriage, women's language, and drumming contributes to the community's smooth functioning and diverse roles. This understanding can also help data collectors use effective strategies to gather information during informal discussions within the Yoruba community.

It is also worth noting that Yoruba women play important roles and provide extensive knowledge in various fields of specialisation, which include the social, economic, psychological, and health realms (Kanu 2021).¹³ Understanding the social and cultural dynamics of communities, particularly the Yoruba, is essential for fostering positive engagement in African research. This knowledge not only enhances the acceptance of programs but also helps researchers become valued partners within the community. Prioritizing ethical considerations during data collection is crucial; obtaining informed consent ensures that participants are aware of the research implications. Furthermore, embracing cultural sensitivity is key to accurately representing Indigenous knowledge. By adhering to these ethical principles, researchers can cultivate trust and collaboration with Yoruba women, ultimately leading to a more equitable and respectful research environment.

Ethical Dilemmas of Yoruba Women in Preserving Indigenous Knowledge. Yoruba women, as custodians of indigenous knowledge, face ethical dilemmas in preserving and transmitting this knowledge, particularly during data collection. These dilemmas arise from tensions between tradition, modernity, gender roles, and external research efforts.

One major challenge is the issue of consent and knowledge ownership, as Yoruba traditional knowledge is rooted in

¹⁰ Aluko, Y., Dawodu, O., and Nurudeen, A. (2011). The Centrality of Women in Moral Teaching in Yoruba Family System. The Nigerian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology 9(1):94-109. DOI:10.36108/NJSA/1102/90(0120)

¹¹ Rosengren K, Brannefors P, Carlstrom E. (2021). Adoption of the concept of person-centred care into discourse in Europe: a systematic literature review. *Journal of Health Organization Management*. 35(9):265-280

¹² Barrow, J., Brannan, G; Khandhar, P. (2022). Research Ethics. National Library of Medicine. National Centre for Biotechnology Information.

¹³ Kano, I., Omojola, I., & Bassa, M. (2021). Women in Yoruba Religion and Culture. Tollelege: *An Augustine Journal of Philosophy and Theology*. Vol. 2



communal sharing rather than individual ownership. Women play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage but may struggle with disclosing sacred or restricted information. Researchers exploring Yoruba spiritual practices, like Iya Orisa and Iya Osun, must respect the community's need for consent to protect these traditions.

To address these challenges, many Yoruba women seek community consensus before sharing knowledge, ensuring culturally appropriate information exchange while preserving traditions. Yoruba women, as custodians of indigenous knowledge, face ethical dilemmas in preserving and transmitting this knowledge, particularly during data collection. These dilemmas arise from tensions between tradition, modernity, gender roles, and external research efforts.

Gendered Power Dynamics: Yoruba women play a crucial role in the preservation and transmission of indigenous knowledge, particularly in areas such as herbal medicine, midwifery, and spiritual practices (Olajubu, 2003).¹⁴ Women practicing traditional herbal medicine provide essential information, particularly in areas such as fertility and maternity care. However, they frequently face problems as a result of patriarchal traditions that limit the sharing of their skills. While men tend to dominate larger elements of herbal medicine, recognising and encouraging women's contributions could promote collaboration and knowledge exchange. A talented female herbalist, for example, who is familiar with medicines for childbirth, could provide valuable insights if allowed to share her knowledge with researchers, NGOs, or the community. By fostering inclusive practices and addressing old notions about information transmission, we may create a fairer environment that benefits all.

Women's expertise is often overlooked in midwifery and birth practices. Indigenous Yoruba midwives (agbebis) have traditionally provided essential care based on orally transmitted knowledge. However, with the rise of Western medicine, their roles have diminished, often without acknowledgment of their expertise (Kasie, 2022). For instance, a Yoruba midwife may know various ceremonies and herbal remedies to alleviate labor issues but may be restricted from using these practices in a medical setting due to perceptions of being "unscientific." Younger women in nursing or medicine might feel pressured to abandon Indigenous methods for Western ones, leading to a decline in traditional knowledge. Additionally, while Yoruba women significantly contribute to spiritual practices as priestesses (Iyalorishas) and worship leaders, they remain excluded from higher spiritual ranks, particularly in the male-dominated Ifá system (Irele & Irele, 2010). This situation highlights how Yoruba women, critical to preserving indigenous knowledge, navigate complex gendered power dynamics that restrict their ability to share, document, or control their knowledge. This raises ethical dilemmas about knowledge ownership, gender-based exclusions, and cultural preservation.

Navigating Sacred and Public Knowledge: Certain

indigenous knowledge systems, such as Ifá divination and oral histories, possess valuable spiritual and ritual significance. Yoruba women navigate the important ethical challenge of determining how to share their knowledge with outsiders, including researchers, while also considering what should remain within their specific lineages or initiatory organizations.

The Problem of Commercialization and Exploitation: Yoruba women may have ethical concerns regarding the commercialisation of cultural knowledge, particularly in fields such as herbal medicine, crafts, and storytelling. Researchers and businesses may extract information for economic gain (for example, the pharmaceutical use of indigenous medicine) without compensating or acknowledging the knowledge holders.

Confidentiality and Community Trust: Women who serve as knowledge keepers often adhere to traditional oaths of secrecy, which underline the importance of trust within their communities. At the same time, modern research ethics advocate for transparency. This could be quite challenging as well. There's a need to strike a balance between safeguarding sensitive knowledge and documenting it for broader understanding.

Intergenerational Transmission and Modernization: Yoruba women are adapting cultural knowledge amid modernisation while preserving its essence. Younger generations, influenced by globalisation and education, are sparking discussions on which traditions to maintain or evolve. For example, a young Yoruba woman might merge herbal medicine with scientific research to enhance its credibility. Online platforms are also being used by young scholars to share Yoruba oral traditions, making them more accessible and relevant.

To bridge generational gaps, mentorship programs, workshops, and online forums can enable the exchange of ideas between elders and younger women, ensuring Indigenous wisdom remains relevant in contemporary society.

While facing the challenges of globalisation, Yoruba women focus on cultural sustainability by integrating their heritage into education and technological initiatives, which fosters intergenerational knowledge transfer. However, the digitisation of indigenous knowledge raises ethical concerns about misinterpretation and intellectual property theft. Yoruba women need to share information responsibly online, ensuring the protection of their cultural heritage.

Enhancing Yoruba Women's Involvement in Data Sovereignty

Yoruba women, as vital custodians of knowledge, can implement various strategies to effectively manage how their knowledge is collected, preserved, and utilised. By doing so, they can ensure that their insights and traditions are respected and continue to thrive within their communities. Some of the

¹⁴ Olajubu, O and Olupona, J. (2012). "Chapter Two Women in Yoruba Culture and Society". *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere*, SUNY Press, 2012, pp. 21-42.



strategies that could aid their knowledge preservation include;

Establishing Community-Led Digital Archives: Yoruba women can create community-controlled digital repositories to preserve their rich knowledge, including oral traditions, proverbs, medicinal practices, and spiritual teachings. A digital storytelling platform would empower them to share their stories authentically. Collaborating with institutions for digitization training can foster community ownership and help pass their heritage to future generations.

Developing Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Knowledge: Yoruba women, working with researchers and politicians, can develop ethical frameworks for Knowledge preservation. This could safeguard their intellectual legacy from misappropriation and exploitation. For example, we can establish a women-led code of ethics to guide researchers on knowledge appropriation and consent. This can be achieved by organizing meetings where women can define the conditions for ethical involvement in knowledge sharing.

Harnessing Technology for Effective Knowledge Transfer: Integrating Yoruba information into digital platforms like podcasts and YouTube can empower communities to share their knowledge widely. For instance, Yoruba women can create videos or podcasts focused on traditional medicine and cultural customs. Providing training in media production and content creation is essential to equip them with the skills needed to share their insights effectively.

Support for Intellectual Property Rights: Yoruba women can advocate for the legal recognition of their expertise as intellectual property to prevent unauthorized use. Participating in policy conversations about Indigenous knowledge protection gives them a voice in how their history is managed. Take, for instance, working with legal specialists to promote Yoruba traditional knowledge preservation laws. This can be accomplished by requesting inclusion in national and international intellectual property frameworks.

Advancing Community-Based Research Practices: Yoruba women should be active participants in research endeavours, not passive subjects. Encouraging collaborative and participatory research guarantees that participants retain ownership of the knowledge given. Yoruba women who work as co-researchers on academic projects about cultural traditions could be consulted for collaborations. To accomplish this, they may form review committees to authorize research undertaken in their areas.

Teaching the next generation about data sovereignty: Teaching younger Yoruba women about the value of data sovereignty promotes continuity. Passing down knowledge in culturally suitable ways while incorporating new digital tools helps to preserve Indigenous epistemologies. An example is community mentorship programs in which older women teach younger generations about knowledge preservation. This could be accomplished by schools introducing Yoruba knowledge into formal education programs.

Establishing networks and collaborations: Connecting with Indigenous and feminist data sovereignty groups empowers Yoruba women to take control of their knowledge. These

partnerships provide essential technical and legal support for protecting Indigenous data rights. Collaborating with global Indigenous networks can help share best practices. Establishing Yoruba women's councils focused on digital and intellectual property rights can further this cause. By leveraging technology, advocating for legal protections, and promoting community-based research, Yoruba women can safeguard their intellectual heritage for the benefit of their communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper recommends involving Yoruba women as co-researchers rather than mere subjects in research methodologies. Engaging them in oral history projects, ethnographic studies, and focus groups can empower their agency in knowledge creation. Ethical frameworks should reflect Yoruba cultural values and adopt gender-sensitive approaches, ensuring informed consent through community discussions that prioritize Yoruba women's perspectives. Recognizing their contributions to knowledge production and granting control over their narratives and intellectual property rights is crucial to prevent exploitation and misrepresentation.

Academic institutions should incorporate Yoruba women's knowledge systems into curricula, research, and policymaking to challenge Western-centric biases and promote indigenous traditions. Researchers need to adopt ethical frameworks that prioritize shared ownership and collaborative decision-making, avoiding extractive methodologies. Institutions should support digital archiving and community-driven projects to preserve this knowledge for future generations. As part of a dissemination plan, researchers must give back to the communities studied through workshops and initiatives that benefit Yoruba women and their communities. By following these recommendations, researchers can ensure ethical and respectful engagement with Yoruba women's knowledge systems.

CONCLUSION

This paper emphasizes the crucial role of Yoruba women as custodians of knowledge, preserving cultural values, health practices, and spiritual teachings within their communities. Despite their significant contributions, their voices remain marginalized in academic and policy discussions, particularly regarding data sovereignty. Scholars are urged to recognize Yoruba women as partners in knowledge production rather than mere data points.

Integrating ethics of care into research methodologies can enhance consent, ownership, and cultural sensitivity, fostering equitable practices. A care-centered approach emphasizes relationality and ethical accountability, essential for honoring Yoruba women's contributions. By adopting gender-sensitive analyses and incorporating intersectionality, researchers can challenge biases and promote methodologies that elevate marginalized voices.

The paper calls for decolonized, gender-sensitive data collection methods that validate Yoruba women's roles as knowledge custodians. Utilizing modern technologies can empower them to document and share their knowledge within

their cultural contexts. Ultimately, this study advocates for culturally attuned methodologies that challenge Western-centric frameworks, promoting the inclusion and recognition of Yoruba women in knowledge production.

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