Vol. 8 No. 2 November, (2025)
JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND TOURISM EDUCATION
ISSN: 2659-0794 (PRINT) ISSN:2659-0808(ONLINE)
Content Available at: https://jeate.k-injo.com/index.php/Jete

Traditional African Religious Values And Environmental Ethics For Ecological Sustainability

Ayuk Awunghe Achu aawunghe@yahoo.com	**A**	***Department of Criminology & Security Studies, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria***
John Fidelis Inaku **barrjohninaku@gmail.com** **0009-0004-9802-3311**		***Department of Jurisprudence and International Law, University of Calabar, Nigeria***
Cleverty. Afu Njong Clevertyafu001@gmail.com		Department of Commercial and Industrial Law, University of Calabar-Nigeria
Ovat Egbe Okpa **okpaovat@gmail.com**		***Department of Educational Administration and Planning*** ***University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria***

Keywords

Traditional African Religion, environmental ethics, sustainable development, ecological spirituality, Nigeria, West Africa\

Correspondence Email:

aawunghe@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper examines how Traditional African Religious values can be integrated into modern environmental ethics to promote sustainable ecological development. Using an interpretive qualitative design grounded in African eco-philosophy, the study draws from Yoruba, Igbo and complemented by Akan traditions perspectives of Ghana. Data were drawn from secondary sources and ethnographic interpretations, analyzed through philosophical and theological reflection. Findings reveal that African cosmology, anchored in the interconnectedness of humans, nature and the divine which offers a moral compass for ecological harmony. Practices such as sacred grove preservation, ecological taboos, and communal stewardship reflect indigenous sustainability principles. The paper argues that aligning Traditional Africa Religious values with contemporary environmental policies can inspire culturally rooted, morally guided, and community-based sustainability. Nonetheless, modernization, religious hybridization, and neglect of indigenous wisdom hinder this integration. It concludes by advocating for the inclusion of indigenous ecological ethics in environmental education, policy, and interfaith dialogue.

Introduction

In recent decades, the global environmental crisis has become one of the most pressing challenges confronting humanity. Issues such as climate change, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, desertification, and pollution have severely threatened ecological balance and sustainable development. Despite the proliferation of international conventions, scientific innovations and environmental protection policies, ecological degradation persists at alarming rates. This paradox

explains the inadequacy of purely technocratic and policy-driven approaches to environmental sustainability (Linderoth,2025;Garg,2023). Scholars like Keerthi & Jayan (2025), have increasingly recognized that the environmental crisis is not only a scientific or economic problem but also a moral and cultural one. Consequently, there is growing interest in exploring indigenous knowledge systems and traditional moral frameworks as vital complements to contemporary environmental ethics. Within this context, Traditional African Religious values offer thought provoking ideas and moral imperatives that can enrich environmental ethics and foster sustainable ecological development (Šetek & Bartůňková, 2025).

Traditional African Religions are deeply rooted in the worldview that perceives the universe as a living, interconnected system governed by spiritual, moral and ecological order. Unlike the Western dualistic conception that separates humanity from nature, African cosmology emphasizes the unity of all existence humans, animals, plants, land, water, and the spiritual realm (Akuva & Koko, 2025). This holistic vision reflects an eco-centric worldview**,** wherein nature is not an inert resource to be exploited but a sacred entity imbued with spiritual significance. Thus, environmental ethics in traditional African societies are inseparable from religious beliefs, moral obligations, and communal practices. Every aspect of life agriculture, hunting, water usage, and settlement is governed by religious norms that ensure harmony with nature. These indigenous ecological principles, transmitted through myths, taboos, rituals and oral traditions, constitute a rich ethical reservoir that contemporary society can draw upon to promote sustainable development (Grant,2025; Naanyu, etal; Wathuta,2025; Fru,2025).

Sustainable ecological development entails the responsible use of natural resources to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. It embodies the idea of balance between human progress and environmental preservation. However, the dominant global model of development, rooted in industrial capitalism, has often prioritized economic growth over ecological integrity (Hajian & Kashani,2021). This has led to unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, especially in developing regions like Africa, where environmental degradation has deepened poverty, food insecurity, and social inequality. In the quest for sustainable alternatives, there is a compelling case for re-engaging the moral and spiritual wisdom embedded in Africa's indigenous religions. By integrating TAR values into modern environmental ethics, Africa can construct a culturally relevant, morally grounded, and community-driven framework for ecological sustainability (Wani, etal 2024; Mishra,2025; Oyadeyi & Oyadeyi,2025; Mokone & Ndhlovu,2025).

Traditional African Religious values are anchored in a triadic relationship among the Divine (God or the Supreme Being), humanity and nature. The Supreme Being is perceived as the creator and sustainer of the cosmos, while humans serve as caretakers of creation rather than its exploiters (Atabongwoung, Lütz & Austin,2023; Agbo, Opata & Okwueze,2022). This theological vision resonates with the stewardship ethic found in many global religious traditions but is uniquely expressed through African cultural forms. For example, among the Yoruba of Nigeria, the Earth goddess Onile is venerated as the guardian of the land, and rituals are performed to honor her before tilling the soil. Similarly, among the Akan of Ghana, rivers and forests are considered the abodes of spirits, and taboos regulate human interaction with these natural features. Such practices not only preserve biodiversity but also cultivate moral consciousness about human responsibility toward the environment. They embody what scholars' term eco-spirituality a

spirituality that recognizes the sacredness of the earth and demands moral restraint in human use of natural resources (Nanthambwe,2025; Abubakari,2025; Nche & Michael, 2024).

In contrast, modern environmental ethics, largely shaped by Western philosophical traditions, has often been anthropocentric, emphasizing human utility and domination over nature. Although contemporary environmental movements advocate for sustainability and conservation, they sometimes lack a strong moral and spiritual foundation that can inspire behavioural change at the grassroots level (Khan, Ullah & Sarwar,2025). This is where Traditional African Religious values offer an alternative paradigm. Their moral force is rooted not merely in abstract reason but in the lived experiences, rituals and spiritual consciousness of the community. The belief that natural entities like rivers, mountains, forests, are inhabited by spiritual forces instills reverence and caution in human actions. Violating environmental taboos is not seen merely as ecological irresponsibility but as an act of sacrilege with spiritual consequences. Such beliefs serve as traditional mechanisms of environmental governance, ensuring collective responsibility and ecological restraint long before the advent of modern environmental laws (Raza,2024; Skyfire,2025).

Integrating these traditional values into contemporary environmental ethics does not imply a wholesale return to precolonial practices, but rather a critical synthesis an intercultural dialogue between indigenous wisdom and modern scientific approaches. This integration acknowledges that sustainable ecological development requires more than technology; it requires a moral revolution, a transformation in human attitudes toward nature. African traditional thought offers a moral vocabulary for this transformation, emphasizing respect, reciprocity, moderation, and communal responsibility (Zhanbayev, etal ,2023; Abumoghli, 2023). For instance, the Igbo proverb *''Ndu bu isi''—life is supreme*—extends beyond human life to include the life of the ecosystem. Similarly, the Ubuntu philosophy in Southern Africa, often summarized as *''I am because we are,''*embodies an ethic of interconnectedness that transcends human society to include the broader ecological community. Such principles, if incorporated into environmental policies and education, can cultivate a culture of ecological stewardship across generations (Chukwu,2008; Chukwu,2011; Magesa,2014). This paper explores how the moral accountability of humans to the supernatural shapes forest conservation in African societies, focusing on examples from Nigeria and broader West Africa. It examines how beliefs, taboos, and rituals rooted in traditional religion have historically sustained forests and how such indigenous ethics can inform modern sustainability initiatives.

Statement of the problem

Historically, the erosion of these values began with colonization, which introduced Western religious, economic and political systems that displaced indigenous cosmologies. The colonial encounter delegitimized African religions, branding them as ‘‘pagan’’or ‘‘primitive,’’while promoting extractive economies that exploited both people and nature (Sserwadda,2025). The postcolonial period has largely continued this trajectory, with development models that prioritize industrialization and resource extraction over ecological balance. Consequently, Africa faces a dual crisis: environmental degradation and cultural alienation. Forests are being depleted, rivers polluted and sacred groves desecrated, phenomena that reflect not only ecological neglect but also moral disconnection. Reclaiming Traditional African

Religious values is therefore not an exercise in nostalgia but a cultural and ethical imperative for restoring ecological harmony (Alifa,2023; Khomba,2024; Ogar,2023).

Moreover, global environmental governance structures, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 13 (Climate Action) and Goal 15 (Life on Land)**,** emphasize the need for inclusive and culturally sensitive approaches to sustainability. The recognition of indigenous knowledge systems in global policy discourse affirms the relevance of traditional religious values in environmental management. Across Africa, various initiatives, such as community-based forest conservation in Ghana, sacred grove preservation in Nigeria, and traditional water management in Kenya, demonstrate the continuing viability of indigenous ecological ethics (Graham,2024; Chertkovskaya,2023). These practices highlight the synergy between traditional values and modern sustainability goals, offering models for policy integration.

The intellectual task of integrating Traditional African Religious values into environmental ethics involves a multidisciplinary approach that draws from theology, philosophy, anthropology, and environmental science (Miao & Nduneseokwu,2025). From a theological perspective, it requires revisiting African concepts of creation, divinity and morality to articulate an eco-theology grounded in indigenous cosmology. From a philosophical standpoint, it invites a re-evaluation of African moral systems, particularly their relational and communal dimensions to frame an African eco-ethic that values harmony over exploitation. Anthropologically, it involves documenting and revitalizing indigenous practices, rituals, and taboos that have ecological significance. Scientifically, it necessitates harmonizing traditional ecological knowledge with modern environmental management techniques to ensure that conservation efforts are both effective and culturally legitimate (Becker, 2022; Kim,2017).

At the core of this integration is the principle of relationality, the conviction that existence is defined by interdependence rather than isolation. In African cosmology, harming the environment equates to harming oneself, since humans and nature are bound by a shared destiny (Ofuasia,2024). This relational worldview challenges the modern industrial ideology of domination, exploitation, and excessive consumption, advocating instead for a moral orientation grounded in coexistence, balance, and stewardship. Traditional African Religions further advance that, communitarian ethics, extending the sphere of moral obligation beyond humans to encompass animals, plants, and the spiritual forces that animate the natural world. Such an inclusive moral framework redefines human rights and duties in ecological terms. The practical embodiment of these values is evident in indigenous conservation practices such as the preservation of **sacred groves** in Nigeria and Ghana, spiritual landscapes revered as biodiversity sanctuaries guarded by taboos against logging, hunting, or cultivation (BEREBON,2025; Tavella,2024).

Integrating Traditional African Religious values into environmental ethics faces significant challenges. Modernization, globalization and urbanization have weakened traditional belief systems, especially among younger generations who view them as obsolete (Nche & Michael, 2024). The dominance of Christianity and Islam has further marginalized indigenous ecological ethics, often labeling them as idolatrous. Successful integration, therefore, requires cultural re-education, interfaith dialogue, and critical reflection. Policymakers must also avoid romanticizing outdated practices that may conflict with human rights or environmental sustainability (Adolfsson

et al., 2025). Ultimately, sustainable ecological development in Africa depends on restoring the sacred bond between humanity and nature.

Literature Review

Moral Accountability to the Supernatural and forest sustainability

Within Traditional African Religion lies a reservoir of ecological wisdom that unites moral, spiritual and environmental responsibility. Central to this worldview is the principle of moral accountability to the supernatural, the conviction that human actions, including environmental conduct, are observed, judged, and sanctioned by spiritual beings. This belief system creates a moral ecology that discourages reckless exploitation and promotes forest conservation. In African cosmology, the forest is not a mere ecosystem but a sacred space inhabited by deities, ancestors, and totemic spirits. Violating it constitutes a moral and spiritual transgression (Thakadipuram,2024; Vuong, et al., 2025). Thus, environmental stewardship is not only an economic or social duty but a religious and ethical obligation grounded in fear of divine retribution and the pursuit of cosmic harmony. The forest, in this sense, is regarded as a sacred partner in the cosmic order, deserving reverence, protection and ritual care.

Traditional African societies internalized this sacred accountability through taboos, ancestral sanctions and ritual practices that ensured ecological balance. Belief in divine punishment and ancestral oversight sustained a moral ecology that preserved forests and regulated human interaction with the environment for generations. The erosion of these beliefs due to colonization, Western education and religious proselytization, has contributed to modern environmental crises. However, reviving indigenous ecological ethics and blending them with contemporary conservation strategies presents a culturally grounded path to sustainable forest management. Such moral accountability to the supernatural is not mere superstition but an enduring ethical foundation that reaffirms humanity's spiritual and moral dependence on the Earth (Boinnard,2024).

In African thought, morality and religion are inseparable. As Kanu (2013), observed, ''Africans are notoriously religious and religion permeates all aspects of life.''The African cosmos is governed by a divine hierarchy comprising God (the Supreme Being), divinities, ancestors, and nature spirits, all of whom sustain moral order. Human responsibility thus extends beyond interpersonal ethics to encompass respect for the natural world. The concept of supernatural accountability implies that individuals answer not only to society but to unseen spiritual agents who reward righteousness and punish wrongdoing. Acts such as deforestation, river pollution, or destruction of sacred groves are viewed as offenses against the gods and ancestors. This framework functions through three moral dimensions: fear of divine retribution, pursuit of cosmic harmony, and the requirement of ritual restitution. Violators may face illness, infertility, or misfortune unless proper sacrifices or cleansing rites are performed (Abubakari,2025).

Across Africa, forests occupy a revered position within spiritual cosmology, embodying the inseparable link between nature and the sacred. Among the Yoruba of Nigeria for instance, the Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, is dedicated to the goddess Osun and has endured for centuries through religious taboos forbidding hunting, farming and logging. Similarly, the Igbo honor Ala,

the Earth Goddess, whose sacred groves (*ohu* or *osisi nsọ*) remain protected by cultural restrictions. The Akan of Ghana venerate Asase Yaa, the Earth Mother, through weekly rest days that prohibit farming. These traditions reflect a spiritual ecology that views the forest not as a resource to exploit but as a moral and living being deserving of respect and restraint (Adedeji, 2020; Kanu, 2018; Agyekum,2019).

Traditional African societies embedded ecological wisdom in proverbs, taboos, and customary laws rooted in divine authority. Environmental taboos commonly forbade cutting trees in sacred groves, hunting totemic animals, or farming during prescribed rest periods. Violating these prohibitions was considered a transgression against the gods, punishable by illness, drought, or communal misfortune. Among the Yoruba, desecrating a sacred grove invoked divine wrath, while the Igbo required public atonement for polluting sacred rivers. Such beliefs fostered a moral ecology in which reverence and fear sustained environmental discipline—achieving conservation through conscience rather than coercion (Onebunne & Chijioke, 2021)

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative and interpretive approach, combining elements of philosophical analysis, textual interpretation and ethnographic synthesis. Data were drawn from secondary sources, including academic literature on African religious thought, environmental ethics and sustainable development. Ethnographic insights from Yoruba, Igbo, and Akan traditions were analyzed to elucidate how indigenous ecological values operate in practice. The analysis also integrates comparative theological reflection to situate West African traditions within broader African eco-spiritual contexts,

Sacredness of Nature as relate to forest

Across the African continent, the forest has always been more than a collection of trees,it is a sacred living entity that sustains the physical, moral and spiritual life of the community. Traditional African Religion perceives nature as imbued with divine presence, linking the human and spiritual realms through a network of reciprocal relationships. Within this worldview, the sacredness of nature is not a metaphor but a lived reality that defines how people relate to their environment (Imarhiagbe, etal 2022).

Africa's forests, once safeguarded by sacred taboos and spiritual prohibitions, now suffer rapid depletion due to industrialization, agricultural encroachment and the decline of indigenous ecological values. Yet African cosmology provides a profound moral and spiritual foundation for forest conservation, grounded in the belief that nature is sacred and demands reverence (Osebor,2024). The African worldview is holistic, rejecting the separation between the sacred and the secular. Nature is viewed as a living, spiritual continuum in which all beings—divine, human, and non-human, participate. African cosmology places God at the summit of existence, followed by divinities, ancestors, humans and all creation, unified by a divine life-force. Thus, harming nature diminishes divine vitality. As Gichohi (2025), notes, environmental stewardship is a sacred duty, and forests serve as sanctuaries of moral and spiritual communion.

Corroborating this view, Shiferaw, Hebo & Senishaw (2023), notes that in many African societies, forests are revered as dwelling places of deities, spirits, and ancestors. These sacred landscapes serve as spaces for rituals, healing, and initiation. Among the Yoruba, deities such as Osun, Ogun, and Orisha-Oko are believed to inhabit forests or groves, with the Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove standing as a renowned example preserved through spiritual prohibitions. Similarly, the Igbo regard forests as the abode of Ala, the Earth Goddess, where sacred groves (ohu nsọ) are reserved for ritual purposes, and any unauthorized exploitation attracts divine punishment. The Akan of Ghana also venerate Asase Yaa, dedicating forests to her worship. Such practices transform forests from mere natural resources into moral and spiritual commons, where conservation becomes both a sacred duty and a form of religious devotion (Dorsey, 2020).

Rituals, Taboos and the Protection of Sacred Forests

Ritual and taboo are central mechanisms through which the sacredness of nature is expressed and maintained. African communities ritualize their relationship with the environment through prayers, sacrifices, and periodic festivals that renew spiritual harmony. Rituals are performed to honor deities and seek their blessing for rain, fertility, and protection of the land. In Osogbo, annual rituals during the Osun Festival reaffirm communal commitment to the goddess Osun and to the preservation of her sacred forest. Similarly, the Igbo celebrate the *Iri ji* (New Yam Festival), which includes thanksgiving to the Earth Goddess for her fertility and a pledge to maintain purity of the land and forest (Raheem & Elugbaju, 2024). Taboos forbid activities that could desecrate sacred sites or disturb ecological equilibrium. Examples include prohibitions against felling trees in sacred groves, killing sacred animals (totems), or collecting firewood from consecrated forests. In some communities, specific days are designated as ‘‘rest days’’when no farming, logging, or hunting is allowed. This traditional ecological calendar ensures periodic regeneration of the forest ecosystem.

Through religious and cultural practices, the sacredness of nature in African cosmology establishes a moral and ecological order in which forest conservation becomes both a communal and spiritual duty. This perception elevates sustainability from a purely economic issue to a sacred moral obligation. To live sustainably is to exist in harmony with nature’s divine order, ensuring the continuity of life for future generations. This worldview creates an intergenerational moral covenant to protect the earth’s vitality. The Yoruba proverb *‘‘A kii fi oko orisa se oko’’*(‘‘One must not farm the deity’s forest‘‘) emphasizes the inviolability of sacred groves, while the Igbo saying *‘‘Ala bu ndu’’*(‘‘The Earth is life‘‘) reinforces humanity’s dependence on nature’s sanctity. Thus, African ecological thought intertwines spirituality, morality, and sustainability (Byrch, etal 2015).

Taboos and Ritual Regulations of sustaining the forest

In African cosmology, forests are revered as the abodes of spirits and deities, demanding reverence and moral restraint from humans. This sacred relationship is institutionalized through taboos and ritual regulations that define acceptable and unacceptable behaviours toward nature. For centuries, these customs functioned as indigenous systems of environmental governance,

ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources long before the advent of modern environmental laws. In many African societies, taboos serve as moral codes that guide human behavior in relation to the spiritual, social, and ecological realms. These prohibitive norms, known as *nsọ ala* among the Igbo, *ewo* among the Yoruba, and *akyiwadeɛ* among the Akan, are established by divine or ancestral authority to preserve cosmic balance and purity. Violating them is not merely a social offense but a spiritual transgression that brings both moral and ecological consequences (Byrch, etal 2015; Akalibey, etal 2024).

Ritual regulations, on the other hand, involve prescribed ceremonial acts, such as sacrifices, offerings and purification rites, performed to appease deities, restore harmony and cleanse the land after ecological disturbance (Iriyani, etal 2024). Together, taboos and rituals act as instruments of moral ecology, regulating human interaction with nature and ensuring that spiritual reverence translates into environmental responsibility. Because these forests are spiritually potent, access to them is restricted by taboos that prohibit indiscriminate hunting, farming, or tree felling. These prohibitions inadvertently protect biodiversity and sustain ecological balance, demonstrating how spirituality functions as a tool for conservation

African environmental taboos are broadly categorized into four interrelated types namely; resource-use, species-specific, spatial and temporal, each serving to promote ecological balance and forest conservation. Resource-use taboos prohibit excessive exploitation of natural resources. As noted by Seele, Esler & Cunningham (2019), certain trees such as the iroko and baobab can only be cut for sacred or ritual purposes after appeasement rites. Among the Yoruba, felling an iroko tree (Milicia excelsa) without the prescribed rituals is believed to bring severe misfortune or even death. Species-specific taboos protect sacred plants and animals regarded as spiritual entities. For instance, the Igbo revere the python (eke) as the sacred symbol of the Earth goddess; killing it is strictly forbidden as it disrupts both religious order and ecological equilibrium (Okafor,2025).

Spatial taboos limit human activity in sacred places such as groves, riverbanks, and shrines, which act as natural reserves accessible only during rituals or festivals. Temporal taboos, meanwhile, regulate the timing of resource use through designated ‘‘rest days’’for deities or the earth, when farming, hunting, and logging are forbidden. Among the Igbo, Eke and Afor days allow nature to regenerate. Together, these taboos conserve biodiversity, prevent overexploitation, and preserve soil and water integrity. Rooted in *Ubuntu*, they embody a moral ecology where spirituality, ethics, and sustainability merge, emphasizing reverence, restraint, and harmony between humans and nature (Adewoyin, Mokwenye & Ugwu,2021; Tatay & Merino,2023).

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This research is anchored in the theory of African eco-bio-communitarianism, articulated by Tangwa 1996 and Segun Ogungbemi 1994, who asserts that African moral systems emphasize community, relationality and balance. The theory posits that all entities;humans, animals, plants and spiritual beings,exist within a network of mutual interdependence. The theory of African eco-bio-communitarianism offers a philosophical and ethical framework for understanding how Traditional African Religious values underpin environmental sustainability. This theory is rooted in the belief that human, animal and ecology is interrelated and interdependent within a communal order sustained by both moral and spiritual forces. Furthermore, the theory espoused that the African worldview does not separate human existence from nature but situates both within a shared cosmic community governed by mutual respect, harmony and moral responsibility (Morgan & Okyere-Manu, 2023; Ifeakor & Otteh,2017).

This theory holds that African environmental ethics are fundamentally eco-biocentric rather than anthropocentric, recognizing the intrinsic worth of all living and non-living elements of nature. Humans are seen as custodians rather than proprietors of the environment, with moral responsibility extending beyond interpersonal relations to encompass land, water, forests and other life forms. The ancestors are regarded as custodians of both moral and ecological order, and reverence for them necessitates the preservation of the earth and its vital forces to ensure continuity and abundance for future generations (Whyte,2017). In African cosmology, nature embodies spiritual essence trees, rivers, mountains, and animals are not mere resources but sacred entities inhabited by divine or ancestral presences. This worldview nurtures reverence, restraint, and sustainable engagement with nature. Ecological sustainability depends on maintaining harmony between humans, the environment, and the spiritual realm. Disruption through exploitation, greed, or neglect leads to ecological and spiritual imbalance. Traditional African Religions reinforce eco-bio-communitarian values through rituals, taboos, and cosmological beliefs that guide environmental stewardship. Sacred groves, for instance, are protected spiritual sites that conserve biodiversity, while taboos restricting hunting, tree felling, or resource harvesting ensure regeneration, promoting both environmental balance and moral responsibility toward nature.

The theory of African Eco-Bio-Communitarianism, though a rich moral and philosophical framework for environmental ethics, faces several criticisms. Scholars argue that it often romanticizes indigenous practices, portraying them as wholly sustainable while ignoring cases of overexploitation, gender bias and ecological harm in traditional systems. Others note the difficulty of applying these beliefs in modern, urbanized and secular societies where communal sanctions have weakened. The theory also lacks a systematic framework for practical implementation, as its principles are largely moral and spiritual rather than empirical or policy-based. Lastly, critics highlight its cultural relativism**,** arguing that its spiritual foundations may not resonate in pluralistic or global contexts. Thus, while conceptually profound, eco-bio-communitarianism requires adaptation to remain relevant in addressing contemporary environmental challenges.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The exploration of Traditional African Religious values and environmental ethics reveals that Africa possesses a deeply rooted ecological philosophy that predates modern environmental movements. Anchored in the principles of African eco-bio-communitarianism**,** these values emphasize the interconnectedness between humans, nature, and the spiritual world. Through taboos, rituals, sacred groves, and ancestral veneration, traditional African societies have long maintained ecological balance and promoted sustainable living. The moral authority embedded in spiritual beliefs serves as both a social and religious mechanism for environmental regulation. Unlike Western anthropocentric models that view nature as a resource for human use, TAR presents a holistic worldview where all life forms possess intrinsic value and coexist within a sacred cosmic order. However, modernization, urbanization and the erosion of indigenous belief systems have weakened the influence of these traditional ethics. As a result, the continent faces increasing challenges of deforestation, pollution, and climate change. Revitalizing these indigenous values,while integrating them with contemporary environmental strategies, offers a culturally relevant pathway toward sustainability and framework for community-based environmental governance rooted in shared responsibility and respect for nature.

Recommendations

1. Governments and environmental agencies should incorporate indigenous ecological knowledge, taboos and conservation practices into national environmental policies and education systems.
2. Traditional institutions, elders, and custodians of sacred sites should be empowered to protect and transmit ecological traditions to younger generations.
3. Curricula at all levels should include African ecological philosophy to foster respect for nature and sustainable practices.
4. Scholars should promote interdisciplinary studies combining ecology and sustainable development to develop practical models of eco-governance.
5. Local communities should be supported to manage natural resources through culturally grounded approaches that reinforce spiritual and moral responsibility toward the environment.

REFERENCES

Abubakari, H. (2025). Folktales for Environmental Conservation: From Oral Traditions to Ecological Wisdom. *African Studies*, 1-20.

Abubakari, H. (2025). Folktales for Environmental Conservation: From Oral Traditions to Ecological Wisdom. *African Studies*, 1-20.

Abumoghli, I. (2023). The role of religions, values, ethics, and spiritual responsibility in environmental governance and achieving the sustainable development agenda. *Religion and Development*, *2*(3), 485-495.

Adedeji, J. A. (2020). Urban biocultural identity of Yorubas: intersection of philosophy and nature for wellbeing at Osun Sacred Grove UNESCO Site, Osogbo, Nigeria. In *Urban Nature* (pp. 51-66). Routledge.

Adewoyin, Y., Mokwenye, E. M., & Ugwu, N. V. (2021). Environmental ethics, religious taboos and the Osun-Osogbo grove, Nigeria. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, *11*(4), 516-527.

Adolfsson, J. S., Normann, S., Nakkerud, E., & Palacios Haugestad, C. A. (2025). Indigenizing psychology: A way forward for Indigenous knowledges in the psy-disciplines?. *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation*, *14*(2), 59.

Agyekum, K. O. F. I. (2019). Akan traditional perspectives on land care. *Essays on the Land, Ecotheology, and Traditions in Africa*, 207

Akalibey, S., Hlaváčková, P., Schneider, J., Fialová, J., Darkwah, S., & Ahenkan, A. (2024). Integrating indigenous knowledge and culture in sustainable forest management via global environmental policies. *Journal of Forest Science*, *70*(6), 265.

Akuva, I. I., & Koko, J. C. (2025). The Concept of Community in African Cosmogony: Analyzing Its Implications for 21st Century Global World Order. *FUDMA Journal of Humanities, Social Science and Creative Arts*, *1*(AHBSI), 46-52.

Atabongwoung, G., Lütz, J. M., & Austin, D. A. (2023). Invigorating interfaith consciousness for the common good: Reimagining the role of African religion and pentecostalism in contemporary South Africa. *Religions*, *14*(4), 486.

Becker, J. (2022). Interreligious Solidarity for an Ecological Civilization: A Catholic and Humanistic Buddhist Conversation. In *The Routledge Handbook of Buddhist-Christian Studies* (pp. 277-287). Routledge.

BEREBON, C. B. (2025). Integrating Ethical, Legal, and Cultural Paradigms: Advancing Environmental Stewardship. *GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis*, *8*(1), 1-15.

Boinnard, L. D. K. (2024). *Dreaming With the Forest: A Study on Ayahuasca and Indigenous Engagement With the Sacred*. Pacifica Graduate Institute.

Byrch, C., Milne, M. J., Morgan, R., & Kearins, K. (2015). Seeds of hope? Exploring business actors' diverse understandings of sustainable development. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, *28*(5), 671-705.

Byrch, C., Milne, M. J., Morgan, R., & Kearins, K. (2015). Seeds of hope? Exploring business actors' diverse understandings of sustainable development. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, *28*(5), 671-705.

Chertkovskaya, E. (2023). From economic growth to socio-ecological transformation: rethinking visions of economy and work under SDG 8. In *The Environment in Global Sustainability Governance* (pp. 197-216). Bristol University Press.

Chukwu, D. O. (2008). *The extended family in Africa as a model for the Church: Towards an ecclesio-missioncentric theology of inculturation for the evangelization of the Igbos of Nigeria"*. Loyola University Chicago.

Chukwu, D. O. (2011). *The church as the extended family of God: Toward a new direction for African ecclesiology*. Xlibris Corporation.

Dorsey, L. (2020). *Orishas, goddesses, and voodoo queens: The divine feminine in the African religious traditions*. Weiser Books.

Fru, E. N. (2025). '' Feeding the World Without Devouring the Planet:''African Indigenous Cosmologies Informing Christian Environmental Ethics.

Garg, D. K. (2023). Environmental challenges and sustainable development. *Journal of Global Values*, *14*, 203-210.

Gichohi, P. M. (2025). Church's Ecological Stewardship and Sustainability: A Dogmatic Approach to Sensitizing Community on Habit Change in Kenya. *International Journal of Professional Practice*, *13*(3), 1-12.

Graham, M. (2024). Sustainable Development Revisited: Rethinking Growth-Centric Paradigms Through the Lens of the Sabbath. *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, *13*(3), 212-212.

Grant, B. J. (2025). *''Coming Home to Our Mother [Earth]'': Embracing Relationality Through Inner Work, Sweat Lodge Ceremony, and Spirituality* (Doctoral dissertation, Arizona State University).

Hajian, M., & Kashani, S. J. (2021). Evolution of the concept of sustainability. From Brundtland Report to sustainable development goals. In *Sustainable resource management* (pp. 1-24). Elsevier.

Ifeakor, C. S., & Otteh, A. (2017). African Environmental Ethics: A Non–Anthropocentric African Environmentalism. The Journey So Far. *IGWEBUIKE: African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, *3*(6).

Imarhiagbe, O., Onyeukwu, I. I., Egboduku, W. O., Mukah, F. E., & Ogwu, M. C. (2022). Forest conservation strategies in Africa: Historical Perspective, status and sustainable Avenues for progress. In *Biodiversity in Africa: potentials, threats and conservation* (pp. 547-572). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

Iriyani, S., Arman, M., Nugroho, B., Buchori, D., & Setiajiati, F. (2024). Indigenous Custodianship and Timber Legality Assurance System: Challenges and Opportunities for Customary Forest Management in Indonesia. *Jurnal Sylva Lestari*, *12*(3), 929-947.

Kanu, I. A. (2013). The dimensions of African cosmology. *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions*, *2*(2), 533-555.

Kanu, I. A. (2018). Igbo-African gods and goddesses. *Nnadiebube Journal of Philosophy*, *2*(2)

Keerthi, M., & Jayan, A. (2025). AI IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: UNLEASHING POTENTIAL, OVERCOMING CHALLENGES, AND ADDRESSING ETHICALCONCERNS. *MET SRUJAN*, *1*(1), 55-65.

Khan, H., Ullah, S., & Sarwar, R. (2025). Faith-Based Organizations, Environmental Conservation and Sustainability: A Systematic Review. *Research Mosaic*, *5*(1), 21-34.

Khomba, J. K. (2024). Towards Environmental Restoration and Sustainability: Embracing the African Ubuntu Philosophy. *Strathmore LJ*, *8*, 109.

Kim, H. Y. (2017). Theodao: Integrating Ecological Consciousness in Daoism, Confucianism, and Christian Theology. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology*, 104-114.

Linderoth, O. (2025). BRICS: building blocs in a changing world: A decade of environmental discourse: How BRICS frames ecological sustainability 2014-2024.

Magesa, L. (2014). *Anatomy of inculturation: Transforming the church in Africa*. Orbis Books.

Miao, Q., & Nduneseokwu, C. (2025). Environmental Philosophy and Ethics. In *Environmental Leadership in a VUCA Era: An Interdisciplinary Handbook* (pp. 121-157). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

Mishra, H. (2025). Environmental degradation and impacts on agricultural production: A challenge to urban sustainability. In *Sustainable urban environment and waste management: Theory and practice* (pp. 53-92). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

Mokone, N., & Ndhlovu, E. (2025). Impact of Global Challenges on the African Food System: A Critical Assessment. In *African Food Systems: Rethinking Prospects for Continental Sustainable Transformation* (pp. 357-387). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

Morgan, S. N., & Okyere-Manu, B. (2023). Development Theories and Governance Ideologies Conundrums in Africa: An Observable Disconnects Between Values and Practices. In *Contemporary Development Ethics from an African Perspective: Selected Readings* (pp. 65-78). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Naanyu, V., Kisembe, E., Lagat, D., & Wathuta, J. (2025). Environmental Ethics: A Kenyan Perspective. In *Bioethics from the Global South* (pp. 65-81). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

Nanthambwe, P. (2025). The Role of Religion and Religious Groups in Afrocentric Governance: Shaping Cultural Identity and Socio-political Structures. *African Renaissance*, *2025*(si1), 185.

Nche, G. C., & Michael, B. O. (2024). Perspectives on African indigenous religion and the natural environment: Beings, interconnectedness, communities and knowledge systems. *Phronimon*, *25*(1), 1-26.

Nche, G. C., & Michael, B. O. (2024). Perspectives on African indigenous religion and the natural environment: Beings, interconnectedness, communities and knowledge systems. *Phronimon*, *25*(1), 1-26.

Ofuasia, E. (2024). *Ìwà: The process-relational dimension to African metaphysics*. Springer Nature Switzerland.

Ogar, M. B. (2023). *Sacred Forests and Rivers: The Role of Indigenous Religion in Promoting Environmental Sustainability in Abanyom, Cross River State, Nigeria*. University of Johannesburg (SouthAfrica). https://www.proquest.com/openview/e7947191a901131c3edc0b219eef961c/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=2026366&diss=y.

Osebor, I. M. (2024). THE SYMBOLISM OF FOREST IN THE NATIVE CENTRIC ECOLOGY. *Euromentor Journal*, *15*(3), 100-117.

Oyadeyi, O. O., & Oyadeyi, O. A. (2025). Climate change, green economy, and agriculture-a development pathway towards food security and climate resilient sub-Saharan African countries. *Scientific African*, e02792.

Raheem, O. W., & Elugbaju, A. S. (2024). *Myth, Ritual, and Visible Expressions of Obātálá and Olókun in Ilé-Ife*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Raza, S. (2024). SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: A SOCIOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF HOW SOCIAL NORMS INFLUENCE SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES. *Innovations in Science, Technology, and Society*, *2*(1), 19-28.

Seele, B. C., Esler, K. J., & Cunningham, A. B. (2019). Biocultural diversity: a Mongolian case study. *Ecology and Society*, *24*(4).

Šetek, J., Alina, J., & Bartůňková, T. (2025). Factors A New Paradigm of Sustainability: Integrating Circular Economy, Inclusive Capitalism, and Christian Ethics. *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, *14*(3), 867-867.

Shiferaw, A., Hebo, M., & Senishaw, G. (2023). The spiritual ecology of sacred landscapes: Evidence from sacred forests of the Sebat Bête Gurage, Central-South Ethiopia. *Cogent Social Sciences*, *9*(1), 2210900.

Skyfire, E. (2025). *Journeying between the worlds: Walking with the sacred spirits through Native American shamanic teachings & practices*. Llewellyn Worldwide.

Spatial taboos limit human activity in sacred places such as groves, riverbanks, and shrines, which act as natural reserves accessible only during rituals or festivals.

Tatay, J., & Merino, A. (2023). What is sacred in sacred natural sites? A literature review from a conservation lens. *Ecology and Society*, *28*(1).

Tavella, E. (2024). Speculating on ecological futures: Narratives of hope and multispecies justice in contemporary ecofi ction. In *Storying the Ecocatastrophe*. Taylor & Francis.

Thakadipuram, T. (2024). Nature of Evil and Spiritual Intelligence. In *Leadership Wholeness, Volume 2: Application of the Spiritual Intelligence Model* (pp. 97-168). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

Vuong, Q. H., Nguyen, M. H., & La, V. P. (2025). *Towards an eco-surplus culture: From market failures to vulnerabilities and logical flaws of 'artificial' environmental protection systems*. Visions for Sustainability, 24 (12178), 1-68.

Wani, M. J. G., Loganathan, N., & Esmail, H. A. H. (2024). Impact of green technology and energy on green economic growth: Role of FDI and globalization in G7 economies. *Future Business Journal*, *10*(1), 43.

Whyte, K. P. (2017). Our ancestors' dystopia now: Indigenous conservation and the Anthropocene. In *The Routledge companion to the environmental humanities* (pp. 222-231). Routledge.