



E-ISSN: 2707-8396

P-ISSN: 2707-8388

www.civilengineeringjournals.com/jcea

JCEA 2024; 5(1): 37-39

Received: 05-12-2023

Accepted: 11-01-2024

Usang N Onnoghen

Department of Environmental
Education, University of
Calabar, Nigeria

Gideon U Nwafor

Department of Mass
Communication,
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu
Ojukwu University, Anambra
State, Nigeria

Evelyn I Orji

Institute of Education,
University of Calabar, Nigeria

Christian C Odoh

Department of Environmental
Management, Nnamdi Azikiwe
University, Awka, Anambra
State, Nigeria

Benjamin Anabaraonye

Institute of Climate Change
Studies, Energy and
Environment, University of
Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

Corresponding Author:

Usang N Onnoghen

Department of Environmental
Education, University of
Calabar, Nigeria

The role of eco-theology in enhancing climate resilience in Nigeria

Usang N Onnoghen, Gideon U Nwafor, Evelyn I Orji, Christian C Odoh, Benjamin Anabaraonye

Abstract

Recent floods, cyclones, monumental wildfires, attendant droughts and tsunamis across various countries in the world, call for global attention to issues of climate change. Climate change is a global challenge which must be tackled with alacrity to achieve our sustainable development goals. Based on climate resilience theories advanced in recent times, studies have shown that eco-theology has a great role to play in enhancing global health, environmental sustainability and enhancing climate resilience. This study vividly defines the concept of climate resilience and eco-theology. It vividly explores the role of eco-theology in enhancing climate resilience for sustainable development in Nigeria. It concludes with a clarion call for researchers, theologians and scholars to dig deeper in research towards maximizing the role of eco-theology in enhancing climate resilience in Nigeria.

Keywords: Climate change, eco-theology, resilience, sustainable development

Introduction

Climate change is one of the global issues which we must of necessity tackle with alacrity in order to prevent global warming too unbearable for the survival of mankind. There is a general consensus among environmental scholars and scientists that the world is experiencing a rapid global climate change but separately differs on its nature, dimension, and effects (Umar and Ozohu 2015; Tsojon 2017) [27, 25]. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines climate change as a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods (UNFCCC, 1992) [28]. Climate change is the most significant challenge to achieving sustainable development, not only because it affects the global physical environment directly, but also because it affects nearly all aspects of socio-economic development (World Bank, 2016) [30]. Climate change has been described as an existential threat to human well-being. Climate change impact is intensely felt on soil fertility in Nigeria (Anabaraonye *et al.*, 2021) [3] and also on her biodiversity which affects sustainable development and economic growth of the nation and continent either positively or negatively (Anabaraonye *et al.*, 2022) [4]. Climate change is recognized as a true global emergency that requires concerted efforts by all countries, businesses, and even individuals to achieve the Paris Agreement goals aimed at addressing the crisis. These goals include holding the rise of average global temperatures to well below 2 degrees Celsius (2 °C) above pre-industrial levels and pursuing actions to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels. "Climate change mitigation is any action taken to eliminate or reduce the long-term risk and hazards of climate change to human life, property and the society" (GGW, 2018) [11]. "Climate adaptation refers to the ability of a system to adjust to climate change (including climate variability and extremes) to moderate potential damage, to take advantage of opportunities, or to cope with the consequences" (GGW, 2018) [11]. Climate resilience is the capacity for a socio-ecological system to absorb pressures and maintain function in the face of external stresses imposed upon it by climate change (Folke *et al.*, 2010; Moench, 2014; Shamsuddin, 2020) [8, 18, 23]. It also includes the ability and capacity of an ecosystem to adapt, reorganize, and evolve into more desirable configurations that improve the sustainability of the system, leaving it better prepared for future climate impacts (Carpenter *et al.*, 2001; Folke, 2006) [7, 9]. Climate change education is therefore very vital in order to enable individuals and communities to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate

towards sustainability in Nigeria (Anabaraonye, Okafor & Hope, 2018; Onnoghen, Ojong, Omang, Obibessong & Asor, 2020) ^[2, 21]. This study identifies the role of eco-theology in enhancing climate resilience for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Methodology

This study examined “The role of eco-theology in enhancing climate resilience in Nigeria” through existing literature review and participant observation. The main purpose of this research work was to survey theoretical backgrounds and previous studies on “the role of eco-theology in enhancing climate resilience in Nigeria” and the current progress with the implementation of eco-theology strategies in enhancing climate resilience and ensuring sustainable development in Nigeria.

Results and Discussion

Many Nigerians today accept the premise that human activity is dramatically altering many biological processes and environmental systems. Strong scientific evidence also supports the contention that these alterations are destructive and global in scale. Despite the unease generated by this knowledge, consensus on what to do about it is low. Some fear that science and education *per se* may not be capable of inspiring the necessary changes in behavior; that political institutions are similarly weak; and that many economic theories actively support environmental degradation. For these people, addressing the global nature of human impact requires a belief system large enough to conceptualize on a cosmic scale. In their concern with the vastness and completeness of divinity, eco-theology emerges as a concept for enlightening, educating and encouraging the people to adopt eco-friendly practices thereby enhancing climate resilience in Nigeria.

Nature in the traditional African society had a personality-it was referred to as mother, father, etc., as in the cases of the earth referred to sometimes as mother earth. Nature was in fact understood as a discloser of God through visible animals, plants, spiritual beings, heavenly beings and earthly objects who is the creator of them all (Kanu, 2021) ^[13]. Exploiting the environment or nature, because of what she stands for, had its consequences. Such exploitations not only had consequences for the present, but for the future, as the happiness of humanity depends on the ability of human persons to maintain a balance with these forces or realities (Mbiti 1970; Metuh 1987; Okonkwo 2011; Kanu 2015) ^[16, 17, 22, 12]. Mbiti (1975) ^[15] identified that Africa has a very rich heritage of what past generations of African people thought or did, experienced, and passed on to their children. This heritage forms a long life that links African forefathers and mothers with the descendants who now feel proud of it. Scholars such as Udodora (2011) ^[26], Mbiti (1976) ^[14], Thompson (1970) ^[24], Calder (1968) ^[6], Gbenga (2006) ^[10] had observed that all religious traditions whether elementary, pre-literate or advanced, are environmental friendly and teaches environmental preservation and protection. Alokwu (2011) ^[1], therefore, avers that the visible and invisible elements of nature are linked together; and that the human person is inseparably bound with nature. This relationship with nature moderated the way in which the human person understood, related with and used the things that constitute part of his environment.

What is eco-theology?

Eco-theology is a form of constructive theology that focuses on the interrelationships of religion and nature, particularly in the light of environmental concerns (Wikipedia, 2024) ^[29]. Nwaigbo (2015) ^[20] defines eco-theology as “a reflective theology of social responsibility with a view to save the earth and the universe from further destruction. Eco-theology generally starts from the premise that a relationship exists between human religious / spiritual worldviews and the degradation or restoration and preservation of nature (Brown, 2021) ^[5]. It explores the interaction between ecological values, such as sustainability, and the human domination of nature. The movement has produced numerous religious-environmental projects around the world (Wikipedia, 2024) ^[29]. The burgeoning awareness of environmental crisis has led to widespread religious reflection on the human relationship with the earth. Such reflection has strong precedents in most religious traditions in the realms of ethics and cosmology, and can be seen as a subset or corollary to the theology of nature. It is important to keep in mind that eco-theology explores not only the relationship between religion and nature in terms of degradation of nature, but also in terms of ecosystem management in general. Specifically, eco-theology seeks not only to identify prominent issues within the relationship between nature and religion, but also to outline potential solutions (Brown, 2021) ^[5]. This is of particular importance because many researchers and supporters of eco-theology argue that science and education are simply not enough to inspire the change necessary in our current environmental crisis. Eco-theology begins from the understanding of the human person as a being created in the image and likeness of God and thus worthy of preserving. It also understands the human person as a being in the midst of other beings that are deserving of respect and preservation (Nwaigbo, 2015) ^[20].

Recommendations

Eco-theology can be enhanced through the television, radio, social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, etc. Educational blogs such as the Project Green Blog (www.projectgreeninitiative.wordpress.com) can further be used to educate communities, campuses, companies and churches across Nigeria on eco-theology and innovative strategies for enhancing climate resilience. There is great need to promote a better understanding of eco-theology across communities, cities, companies especially churches and mosques thereby enhancing climate resilience for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Seminars and youth programs targeted at climate change education towards enhancing climate resilience should be well encouraged and sponsored at various places of worship in Nigeria. As the saying goes, “Cleanliness is next to godliness”. Researchers, Theologians and Educationists need to delve further into deeper research on the role of eco-theology in enhancing climate resilience for sustainable development in Nigeria.

References

1. Alokwu CO. The Synthesis of Oikothology and African Ecological Ethics as a Model for

- Environmental Protection in Africa. *Journal of African Environmental Ethics and Values*. 2011;1:35-57.
2. Anabaraonye B, Okafor JC, Hope J. Educating Farmers in Rural Areas on Climate Change Adaptation for Sustainability in Nigeria. In: Leal Filho W, eds. *Handbook of Climate Change Resilience*. Springer Nature Switzerland AG; c2018. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71025-9_184-1
 3. Anabaraonye B, Okafor JC, Ewa BO, Anukwonke CC. The Impacts of Climate Change on Soil Fertility in Nigeria. In: Choudhary DK, Mishra A, Varma A, eds. *Climate Change and the Microbiome*. Soil Biology. Vol 63. Springer, Cham; c2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76863-8_31
 4. Anabaraonye B, Amaechi M, Okolo NV, Adeniyi TF, Nwobu EA. The impacts of climate change on biodiversity in Nigeria. *International Journal of Research in Civil Engineering and Technology*. 2022;3(2):01-05.
 5. Brown V. The Rise of Ecotheology. <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/21stC/issue-3.4/brown.html>. Retrieved April 2024.
 6. Calder R. *Man and the Cosmos*. New York: NY Mentor; c1968.
 7. Carpenter S, Walker B, Anderies JM, Abel N. From Metaphor to Measurement: Resilience of What to What? *Ecosystems*. 2001;4(8):765-781. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10021-001-0045-9>
 8. Folke C, Carpenter SR, Walker B, Scheffer M, Chapin T, Rockström J. Resilience Thinking: Integrating Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability. *Ecology and Society*, 2010, 15(4). <https://doi.org/10.24926/ijps.v7i2.3386>
 9. Folke C. Resilience: The emergence of a perspective for social–ecological systems analyses. *Global Environmental Change*. 2006;16(3):253-267. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2006.04.002>
 10. Gbenga JS. *African Religion and Christianity in a Charging World: A Comparative Approach*. Nsukka: Chuka Educational Publishers; c2006.
 11. *Global Greenhouse Warming. Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation*. <http://www.global-greenhouse-warming.com/climate-mitigation-and-adaptation.html>. Accessed April 2024.
 12. Kanu IA. *A hermeneutic approach to African Traditional Religion, philosophy and theology*. Nigeria: Augustinian Publications; c2015.
 13. Kanu AI. *African Eco-Theology: Nature and Sources*. In: Kanu IA, ed. *African Eco-Theology: Meaning, Forms and Expressions*. <https://acjol.org/index.php/jassd/article/view/1940/191>. Accessed April 2024.
 14. Mbiti JS. *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann Educational Books; c1976.
 15. Mbiti JS. *Introduction to African religion*. Heinemann; c1975.
 16. Mbiti J. *Concept of God in Africa*. SPCK: East Africa; c1970.
 17. Metuh E. *Comparative Studies of Africa Traditional Religions*. Ibadan: Cleverianum Press; c1987.
 18. Moench M. Experiences applying the climate resilience framework: linking theory with practice. *Development in Practice*. 2014;24(4):447–464.
 19. Nwafor GU. Influence of Flood Risk Awareness Information on the Adaptive Behavior of Residents in Flood Prone Areas in Southeast Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*. 2021;5(11):178-190.
 20. Nwaigbo F. Jesus, Justice and Ecology: An African Perspective. *AFER*. 2011;53(2):353-373.
 21. Onnoghen UN, Ojong AA, Omang TN, Obibessong V, Asor LJ. Environmental Education: A Potent Tool for the Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals in South-South Nigeria. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*. 2020;17(8):1198-1210.
 22. Okwokwo I. Liturgical Theology: An Environmental Concern. *AFER*. 2011;53(2):417-436.
 23. Shamsuddin S. Resilience resistance: The challenges and implications of urban resilience implementation. *Cities*. 2020;103:102763. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2020.102763>
 24. Thompson FW. *West African Secret Societies: Their Organization, Officials and Teachings*. Westport: Negro University Press; c1970.
 25. Tsojon JD. Impact of climate change on agricultural production by farmers in Taraba state. *Niger Int J Entrep Dev Educ Sci Res*. 2017;4(1):178-190.
 26. Udodora RO. Religion and land use: A threat to global peace. In: Adesewo MA, ed. *Religion and Land Issue*. Ilorin: NASRED; c2011.
 27. Umar OJ, Ozohu OA. Impact of climate change on agricultural production and food supply in Africa. Paper presented at the international conference on latest trends in food, biological & ecological sciences, Dubai; c2015 Oct. p. 11-12.
 28. UNFCCC. *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>. Accessed April 2024.
 29. Wikipedia. *Eco-theology*. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecotheology>. Accessed April 2024.
 30. World Bank. *Climate Change Action Plan 2016-2020*. Washington DC: World Bank; c2016.