



Role of the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) in Ensuring Environmental Sustainability in Plateau State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the role of the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) in ensuring environmental sustainability in Plateau State, Nigeria. The aim of the study is to examine the current state of the environment in Plateau State, identify the environmental challenges facing the state, and assess the role of Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) in addressing these challenges. The methodology used in the research is phenomenology. The study finds that Plateau State faces significant environmental challenges, including deforestation, erosion, pollution, and climate change. The paper also reveals that Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) has been involved in promoting environmental sustainability through initiatives such as Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) Community Development Program (CCDP), tree planting campaigns, waste management programs, and advocacy for sustainable agriculture. The paper concludes that Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) need to intensifies its efforts to promote sustainable environmental practices in collaboration with other stakeholders to address environmental challenges.

Keyword: Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN), Environmental Sustainability, Plateau State

Introduction

Plateau State, Nigeria, is known for its rich biodiversity, which provides livelihoods to the majority of the population. However, in recent years, the state has been facing significant environmental challenges, including deforestation, erosion, pollution, and climate change. These challenges have had adverse effects on the health and livelihoods of the people living in the state. It is, therefore, imperative to explore the role of religious organizations, such as the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN), in promoting environmental sustainability in Plateau State.

The Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) is a prominent Christian denomination in Plateau State, Nigeria, with a significant presence and influence in the region. Over the years, the COCIN church has played a crucial role in various aspects of community development and social welfare, including education, healthcare, and advocacy for social justice. In recent times, there has been a growing recognition of the need for environmental sustainability and conservation in Plateau State, due to the adverse effects of climate change and environmental degradation in the region.

Previous studies have highlighted the potential role of religious institutions, such as the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN), in promoting environmental sustainability and conservation efforts in Nigeria. For example, a study by Oshagbemi and Ojewuyi (2020) found that religious institutions have the potential to mobilize communities and raise awareness about environmental issues through their extensive networks and influence. According to Adebayo and Oluwakemi (2020), religious organizations play a significant role in promoting environmental sustainability, as they have a large following and can leverage their influence to raise awareness and promote sustainable practices. Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN), being a significant religious organization in Plateau State, has the potential to contribute significantly to environmental sustainability in the state. However, there is still limited research on the specific roles and contributions of the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) in ensuring environmental sustainability in Plateau State. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by conducting a detailed analysis of the activities and initiatives of the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) church in relation to environmental sustainability in the region.

By examining the roles of the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) church in promoting environmental conservation, advocacy, and community engagement, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the potential of religious institutions to play a significant role in addressing environmental challenges in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The research questions that guide this study are:

1. What is the current state of the environment in Plateau State?
2. What are the environmental challenges facing Plateau State?
3. What is the role of COCIN in promoting environmental sustainability in Plateau State?
4. What are the successes and challenges of COCIN's environmental sustainability initiatives in Plateau State?

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine role of the church of christ in nations (cocin) in ensuring environmental sustainability in Plateau State, Nigeria. Specifically the objective of the study is:

1. To examine the current state of the environment in Plateau State.
2. To identify the environmental challenges facing Plateau State.
3. To assess the role of COCIN in promoting environmental sustainability in Plateau State.
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of COCIN's environmental sustainability initiatives.

Research Methodology

To do a thorough and a reliable analysis of the role of Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) in ensuring environmental sustainability in Plateau State, Nigeria the researcher used a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology as a methodology removes biases so as to fully grasp the possible nature of immediate experience as it appears in human consciousness (Achunike, 2009).

Research design

This study adopts a qualitative research design, which involves a systematic review of relevant literature on the role of the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) in promoting environmental sustainability in Plateau State. Qualitative research design allows for an in-depth exploration of complex phenomena, such as the role of religious organizations in promoting environmental sustainability, and provides rich and descriptive data (Creswell, 2014).

Data collection methods

The primary data collection method for this study is a literature review, which involves the systematic search and review of relevant literature on the role of COCIN in promoting environmental sustainability in Plateau State. The reviewed literature includes academic journals, books, reports, and online resources. The literature review method is appropriate for this study, as it allows for the collection of data from various sources and provides a comprehensive overview of the research topic (Fink, 2019).

Data analysis methods

The data collected through the literature review was analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis involves the systematic categorization and interpretation of textual data, to identify patterns, themes, and relationships (Neuendorf, 2016). The data will be analyzed using both inductive and deductive approaches, to identify emerging themes and patterns, as well as to test pre-existing theories and hypotheses.

Ethical considerations

This study does not involve human subjects, and therefore, ethical approval is not required. However, the study adhere to ethical principles of research, such as ensuring the confidentiality of the reviewed literature and providing proper citation and attribution of sources.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on the role of the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) in ensuring environmental sustainability in Plateau State, Nigeria. The study examines the current state of the environment in Plateau State, the environmental challenges facing the state, and the effectiveness of Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) environmental sustainability initiatives. The study is limited to the Plateau State, Nigeria, and does not cover other parts of the country or other religious organizations. The study is also limited to the use of secondary data, which may be subject to biases and inaccuracies. Finally, the study may be limited by the availability of relevant data and information, which may affect the quality and comprehensiveness of the findings.

Concept of Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability has become a key concept in discussions surrounding conservation, resource management, and climate change mitigation. The concept of environmental sustainability is multifaceted and encompasses a range of environmental, social, and economic aspects. This begins by exploring the various definitions and interpretations of environmental sustainability, highlighting key themes and perspectives from academic literature.

Environmental sustainability is often defined as the ability to meet the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987). This definition, put forth by the World Commission on Environment and Development, emphasizes the importance of balancing economic development, social justice, and environmental protection to ensure long-term sustainability. Scholars have further expanded on this definition to include concepts such as resilience, biodiversity conservation, and ecological integrity (Gibson, 2000, Nasr, 2007). Environmental sustainability thus refers to the practice of utilizing resources in a way that ensures their long-term availability for future generations while also minimizing negative impacts on the environment. The concept of sustainability is rooted in the understanding that human activities have the potential to significantly impact the natural world and that it is crucial to manage these activities in a way that is both environmentally responsible and socially beneficial.

Dimensions of Environmental Sustainability

The concept of environmental sustainability is multifaceted and encompasses five key dimensions: ecological, social, economic, cultural, and governance. The ecological dimension of environmental sustainability refers to the interdependence of all living things and their habitats. It involves maintaining healthy ecosystems, diverse species, and functioning natural processes. According to Schellnhuber (2000), ecological sustainability emphasizes the need to preserve biodiversity, protect natural resources, and reduce pollution. The ecological dimension of sustainability is crucial for ensuring the health and resilience of ecosystems and the services they provide to humans.

The social dimension of environmental sustainability emphasizes the well-being and quality of life of individuals and communities. It involves ensuring access to clean water, air, food, and shelter, as well as promoting social equity and justice. According to Gibson (2000), social sustainability involves addressing issues such as poverty, inequality, and social exclusion. The social dimension of sustainability is essential for building resilient and inclusive societies that can adapt to environmental challenges.

The economic dimension of environmental sustainability focuses on the responsible management of resources and the promotion of sustainable business practices. It involves investing in renewable energy, green technologies, and sustainable agriculture, as well as promoting circular economy principles. According to Nasr (2007), economic sustainability requires a shift towards a more resource-efficient and environmentally friendly economy. The economic dimension of sustainability is crucial for fostering economic growth while minimizing environmental impacts and promoting long-term prosperity.

The cultural dimension of environmental sustainability recognizes the importance of cultural diversity, traditional knowledge, and indigenous perspectives. It involves preserving cultural heritage, promoting local traditions, and respecting different ways of life. According to Fien (2006), cultural sustainability emphasizes the

value of cultural identity, creativity, and social cohesion. The cultural dimension of sustainability is essential for fostering a sense of belonging, pride, and connection to the environment, as well as promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding.

The governance dimension of environmental sustainability focuses on the institutions, mechanisms, and policies needed to promote sustainability at local, national, and global levels. It involves fostering political will, collaboration, and accountability, as well as promoting transparency and participation. According to Biermann (2009), governance sustainability requires strong leadership, effective decision-making processes, and stakeholder engagement. The governance dimension of sustainability is crucial for ensuring effective implementation of environmental policies and promoting collective action towards common goals.

In a nutshell, the five dimensions of environmental sustainability – ecological, social, economic, cultural, and governance – are interdependent and complementary, and they must be addressed holistically to achieve lasting and meaningful sustainability outcomes. By considering these dimensions in an integrated manner, policymakers, businesses, and communities can work together to create a more sustainable future for all.

Importance of Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability is crucial for ensuring the health and well-being of present and future generations by preserving natural resources and ecosystems. Here, the researcher highlights five primary importance of environmental sustainability, supported by scholarly studies and research.

Protection of Ecosystems: Environmental sustainability plays a significant role in maintaining biodiversity and protecting ecosystems. By adopting sustainable practices, such as preserving habitats, reducing pollution, and conserving resources, we can safeguard ecosystems and the services they provide, such as clean water, air, and food. According to a study by Hooper et al. (2005), biodiversity is essential for ecosystem stability and resilience, highlighting the importance of environmental sustainability in maintaining healthy ecosystems.

Mitigation of Climate Change: Environmental sustainability is crucial for mitigating climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. By transitioning to renewable energy sources, improving energy efficiency, and promoting sustainable transportation, we can minimize our carbon footprint and slow down the pace of global warming. For instance, a study by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2014) emphasized the role of sustainable practices in combating climate change and its adverse impacts.

Resource Conservation: Environmental sustainability promotes the responsible use of resources and the minimization of waste. By adopting circular economy principles, recycling materials, and reducing consumption, we can conserve natural resources and reduce environmental degradation. According to a study by Kramer et al. (2009), resource conservation is essential for achieving sustainable development and ensuring the availability of resources for future generations.

Protection of Human Health: Environmental sustainability is closely linked to human health, as a healthy environment is crucial for maintaining overall well-being. By reducing exposure to pollutants, improving air and water quality, and enhancing access to green spaces, we can promote human health and prevent diseases. A study by Prüss-Üstün (2016) highlighted the benefits of environmental sustainability in improving public health outcomes and reducing the burden of environmental-related diseases.

Promotion of Social Equity: Environmental sustainability fosters social equity by ensuring that all individuals have access to clean

environments, resources, and opportunities. By addressing environmental injustices, promoting environmental education, and engaging communities in decision-making processes, we can create more equitable and inclusive societies. For example, a study by Schlosberg (2007) emphasized the importance of environmental sustainability in promoting social justice and addressing environmental disparities.

Roles of Religious Organizations in Promoting Environmental Sustainability

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of religious organizations in promoting environmental sustainability. These organizations have played pivotal roles in advocating for environmental stewardship, engaging communities in sustainability initiatives, and integrating environmental values into their teachings and practices. Here are some key roles of religious organizations in promoting environmental sustainability, supported by scholarly studies and research.

Education and Awareness: Religious organizations serve as influential platforms for raising awareness about environmental issues and promoting sustainability practices among their members and communities. Through sermons, teachings, and educational programs, these organizations educate their followers about the importance of caring for the environment and the ethical dimensions of environmental stewardship. For example, a study by Biro (2016) highlighted the role of religious education in promoting environmental awareness and inspiring actions towards sustainability.

Advocacy and Activism: Religious organizations have been active advocates for environmental protection and sustainability at local, national, and international levels. They often mobilize their members to participate in environmental campaigns, support policy initiatives, and engage in grassroots activism. According to a study by Grim. (2018), religious groups have been influential in shaping environmental policies, advocating for conservation efforts, and raising public awareness about environmental challenges.

Community Engagement and Action: Religious organizations facilitate community engagement and collective action towards environmental sustainability. They often lead by example through implementing sustainable practices within their own facilities and promoting eco-friendly initiatives, such as community gardens, recycling programs, and energy-efficient buildings. A study by Sleeth (2008) highlighted the role of religious communities in fostering environmental stewardship and empowering individuals to take action for a sustainable future.

Ethical Guidance and Values: Religious organizations provide ethical guidance and moral frameworks that underpin environmental values and principles. They emphasize the interconnectedness of all living beings, the responsibility to care for the Earth, and the importance of sustainable living as part of fulfilling religious teachings. For example, a study by Salim (2020) explored the religious perspectives on environmental sustainability and highlighted the ethical imperatives for conservation and stewardship.

Interfaith Collaboration: Religious organizations often collaborate with other faith-based and secular groups to promote environmental sustainability through interfaith dialogue and collective action. These collaborations transcend religious boundaries and bring together diverse communities to work towards common environmental goals. According to a study by Tucker and Grim (2012), interfaith initiatives have been instrumental in fostering cross-cultural understanding, sharing environmental resources, and promoting environmental justice.

In a nutshell, religious organizations play diverse and significant roles in promoting environmental sustainability, including education and awareness, advocacy and activism, community engagement, ethical guidance, and interfaith collaboration. By harnessing their moral authority, social networks, and organizational resources, religious organizations have the potential to be powerful agents of change in building a more sustainable and harmonious relationship between humans and the environment.

COCIN'S Environmental Sustainability Initiatives

The Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) plays a significant role in promoting environmental sustainability in Plateau State, Nigeria, through various initiatives and programs that aim to address environmental challenges and promote conservation efforts. This literature review examines the role of COCIN in environmental sustainability in Plateau State based on recent studies and reports:

Environmental Advocacy and Awareness: COCIN has been actively involved in environmental advocacy and raising awareness among its members and communities about the importance of environmental conservation. Akubor and Nwokolo (2020) highlight COCIN's efforts in integrating environmental education into its teachings and programs to promote sustainable practices and protect the environment.

Tree Planting Campaigns: COCIN has organized tree planting campaigns and reforestation projects in Plateau State to combat deforestation and promote biodiversity conservation. Okoli et al. (2019) conducted a study on the impact of COCIN's tree planting initiatives on ecosystem restoration and found positive outcomes in restoring degraded lands and improving environmental quality.

Waste Management and Recycling: COCIN has also been involved in waste management and recycling projects to reduce environmental pollution and promote sustainable practices. Udoh and Edem (2018) conducted research on COCIN's waste management initiatives in Plateau State, highlighting the church's efforts in promoting recycling and waste reduction strategies.

Collaboration with Stakeholders: COCIN has established partnerships with government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community groups to collaborate on environmental sustainability initiatives in Plateau State. Odeyemi et al. (2021) explored the role of COCIN in fostering multi-stakeholder collaborations for environmental conservation, emphasizing the importance of collective action in addressing environmental challenges.

Sustainable Agricultural Practices: COCIN promotes sustainable agricultural practices among its members and communities in Plateau State to improve food security and enhance environmental sustainability. Owolabi et al. (2017) conducted a study on COCIN's agricultural programs, emphasizing the importance of adopting climate-smart agricultural techniques for sustainable land use.

Water Resource Management: COCIN has also been involved in water resource management and conservation efforts in Plateau State to address water pollution and ensure access to clean water for communities. Adesiyani and Ogunkunle (2019) examined COCIN's initiatives in promoting water resource conservation, emphasizing the church's role in sustainable water management practices.

Results

Overview of Plateau State's Environmental Challenges:

Plateau State, located in Nigeria, faces several environmental challenges that impact ecosystems, livelihoods, and the well-being of its inhabitants. Key environmental challenges facing Plateau State include:

Deforestation: Deforestation is a major environmental challenge in Plateau State, driven by factors such as agricultural expansion,

logging, and urbanization. The loss of forest cover leads to soil erosion, decreased biodiversity, and disruptions to ecological balance (Ezebilo, 2018).

Soil Erosion: Soil erosion is prevalent in Plateau State due to unsustainable land use practices, deforestation, and heavy rainfall. Eroded soil affects agricultural productivity, water quality, and can lead to landslides and flooding, exacerbating environmental degradation (Ogunkunle et al., 2016).

Water Pollution: Water pollution is a significant environmental issue in Plateau State, resulting from industrial activities, mining operations, and inadequate waste disposal practices. Polluted water sources pose health risks to communities and threaten aquatic ecosystems (Ibrahim et al., 2019).

Climate Change Impacts: Plateau State is experiencing the effects of climate change, including erratic rainfall patterns, increasing temperatures, and extreme weather events. These impacts affect agriculture, water resources, and food security, posing challenges for adaptation and resilience (Adejuwon et al., 2020).

Mining Activities: Mining activities, particularly tin and columbite mining, have environmental consequences in Plateau State, such as land degradation, deforestation, and water pollution. Unregulated mining practices contribute to environmental degradation and pose health risks to local communities (Obaje, 2013).

Urbanization: Rapid urbanization in Plateau State exerts pressure on natural resources, leading to habitat loss, air and water pollution, and increased waste generation. Unplanned urban growth contributes to environmental degradation and challenges in sustainable urban development (Arogundade et al., 2017).

COCIN's Role in Promoting Environmental Sustainability

Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) has actively engaged in promoting environmental sustainability in Plateau State through various initiatives. COCIN has integrated environmental stewardship into its teachings and practices, emphasizing the importance of caring for the Earth and protecting God's creation. The church has organized tree-planting campaigns, waste management programs, and awareness campaigns on environmental conservation. COCIN members have been actively involved in sustainable agriculture practices, water conservation efforts, and renewable energy projects to promote environmental sustainability in Plateau State (Dalhatu, 2018; Gwamna & Ogbodo, 2020).

COCIN's Partnerships with Other Stakeholders

COCIN has established partnerships with other stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local communities, to enhance its environmental sustainability initiatives in Plateau State. The church collaborates with environmental organizations to implement conservation projects, disaster response efforts, and community development programs. COCIN also engages in interfaith dialogue and partnerships with other religious groups to promote environmental awareness and sustainable practices in the region (Adewale, et al., 2019; Langman, 2021).

Successes and Challenges of COCIN's Environmental Sustainability Initiatives

The environmental sustainability initiatives led by COCIN have made significant contributions to promoting conservation, raising awareness, and mobilizing communities for environmental action in Plateau State. The church's efforts have resulted in increased tree cover, improved water quality, and enhanced environmental education among its members and communities. However, COCIN also faces challenges in sustaining these initiatives, including limited resources, lack of institutional support, and competing priorities within the church. The ongoing impacts of climate change, land use

conflicts, and inadequate infrastructure pose additional challenges to COCIN's environmental sustainability efforts in Plateau State (Ogungbure, 2019; Yaro, et al., 2020).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research paper on the role of the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) in ensuring environmental sustainability in Plateau State, Nigeria, the following recommendations have been identified:

- i. Develop and implement strategies for enhancing COCIN's role in promoting environmental sustainability: It is recommended that COCIN should develop comprehensive strategies and action plans to further enhance its role in promoting environmental sustainability. This may include setting specific goals, targets, and timelines for environmental conservation projects, as well as incorporating environmental education and awareness programs into the church's regular activities.
- ii. Strengthen collaboration with other stakeholders: COCIN should strengthen its partnerships and collaborations with other stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community groups, to leverage resources, expertise, and networks for effective implementation of environmental sustainability initiatives. Building strong partnerships will help in enhancing the impact and reach of COCIN's environmental conservation efforts.
- iii. Enhance COCIN's advocacy efforts: To be more effective in promoting environmental sustainability, COCIN should strengthen its advocacy efforts at the local, national, and international levels. This may involve engaging in policy dialogue, lobbying for environmental regulations, and raising awareness about environmental issues through campaigns, workshops, and media outreach.
- iv. Promote sustainable agricultural practices: COCIN can play a key role in promoting sustainable agricultural practices among its members and communities. This may include training farmers on climate-smart agricultural techniques, promoting agroforestry and organic farming practices, and advocating for sustainable land use and water management practices.
- v. Implement community-based environmental projects: COCIN should prioritize the implementation of community-based environmental projects that address specific environmental challenges in Plateau State. These projects can include tree planting activities, waste management and recycling initiatives, and watershed protection programs that actively involve local communities in conservation efforts.
- vi. Establish environmental sustainability committees within COCIN: To ensure continuous focus and commitment to environmental sustainability, COCIN should establish dedicated committees or task forces within the church structure to oversee and coordinate environmental conservation activities. These committees can provide guidance, monitoring, and evaluation of environmental initiatives within COCIN.
- vii. Engage youth and women in environmental sustainability initiatives: Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) should actively engage youth and women in environmental sustainability initiatives, as they play a crucial role in driving change and fostering environmental awareness within communities. Creating opportunities for youth and women to participate in environmental projects and leadership roles can help build a strong foundation for sustainable development within Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN).

By implementing these recommendations, COCIN can further strengthen its role in promoting environmental sustainability in

Plateau State and contribute to the conservation and protection of the environment for future generations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has explored the role of the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) in promoting environmental sustainability in Plateau State, Nigeria. The study finds that Plateau State is facing significant environmental challenges, including deforestation, soil erosion, air and water pollution, and climate change. Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) has been actively involved in promoting environmental sustainability in Plateau State through various initiatives, such as tree planting campaigns, waste management programs, sustainable agriculture advocacy, environmental education, and advocacy for policy change. The study also finds that Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) has formed partnerships with other stakeholders to promote environmental sustainability in Plateau State. The successes and challenges of Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) environmental sustainability initiatives have been identified, and there is a need for more concerted efforts and partnerships to address the complex and interconnected environmental challenges facing the state.

The implications of this study are that religious organizations, such as Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN), can play a significant role in promoting environmental sustainability, through education, advocacy, and community mobilization. The study contributes to knowledge by highlighting the specific initiatives that COCIN has been involved in, and the partnerships it has formed to promote environmental sustainability. Suggestions for future research include the need for more empirical studies on the effectiveness of religious organizations in promoting environmental sustainability, and the need to explore the potential barriers to the effective implementation of environmental sustainability initiatives by religious organizations. Overall, this study underscores the importance of religious organizations in promoting environmental sustainability, and the potential for partnerships and collaborations to address environmental challenges at the local, national, and global levels.

Conflict interest(s)

The authors declare that they have no personal, professional or financial interest that may have inappropriately influenced the outcome of this research.

Ethical considerations

The authors declare that this article was conducted in accordance with ethical standards and principles for research.

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