

**THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS TO
THE CONGREGATION IN THE AYAMI PARISH, DIOCESE OF LANGO**

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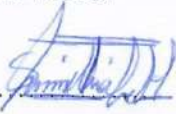
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Declaration

I, Ogwal Moses solemnly affirm that the dissertation presented here is a product of my own original work to the best of my knowledge. This dissertation has never been submitted to any other university or institution for the purpose of obtaining a degree or its equivalent.

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Approval

I hereby confirm that I have supervised and reviewed the dissertation titled ‘The Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting Environmental Awareness to the Congregation in the Ayami Parish, Diocese of Lango, and I am satisfied with its completion and readiness for submission.

Supervisor: The Rev. Prof. Omona Andrew David

Signature:  Date: **24/6/2024**

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family.

Acknowledgement

I am forever indebted to the Almighty God for guiding me on this journey and bringing me this far.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my supervisor, Prof. Andrew David Omona, for his selfless support and invaluable feedback throughout the completion of this course. His guidance and mentorship have been invaluable.

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Abstract

This research study delved into the pivotal role of religious leaders in fostering environmental awareness within their congregations. It investigated their influence, strategies, and challenges in addressing environmental issues, recognizing their significant impact on shaping attitudes and actions toward the environment among followers. Drawing from a rich tapestry of religious beliefs and practices, the study aimed to shed light on the tactics employed by religious leaders to integrate environmental concerns into religious teachings and activities. Through a qualitative multiple case study approach, the research focused on Ayami Parish within the Diocese of Lango, specifically examining the strategies utilized by Christian religious leaders. Findings revealed the diverse initiatives undertaken by religious leaders, including integrating environmental themes into sermons, organizing educational programs, and leading by example. However, they also confronted various challenges, such as resistance to reform, conflicting interpretations of religious doctrine, and limited resources. Despite these obstacles, religious leaders remained steadfast in their commitment to promoting environmental awareness and seek to inspire congregational engagement in environmental conservation efforts. The study's conclusions offer valuable insights for policymakers, community organizers, and environmental advocates, facilitating the development of tailored strategies to encourage environmental consciousness and action within religious communities. Through further exploration of the complex interplay between religion and environmentalism, scholars aimed to advance their understanding of sustainable practices and foster a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

Environmental conservation has become an increasingly important global concern in recent years. As custodians of spiritual and moral guidance, religious leaders have the potential to play a crucial role in promoting environmental awareness and action within their congregations. This research study aimed at to exploring the role of religious leaders in promoting environmental awareness to congregations, with a focus on understanding their influence, strategies, and challenges in addressing environmental issues.

1.1 Background of the Study

Historically, religious organizations have shaped the ideas, values, and actions of their followers in a profound way (Hill et al., 2019). Concerns about climate change and the depletion of natural resources have led to a global push in recent years for sustainable practices and environmental protection (IPCC, 2018; UN Environment, 2016). Religious leaders have the ability to be extremely important in encouraging environmental awareness and action within their congregations since they are keepers of moral and spiritual direction.

Research has demonstrated that religious beliefs and practices have the power to affect people's attitudes and actions about the environment (Hoffman et al., 2017; Ammerman, 2018). For instance, religious writings frequently stress the need to take care of God's creation and to steward the Earth (McDaniel, 2018). According to Gifford (2014), these teachings have the

power to influence believers' environmental values and inspire them to behave in ways that are compatible with their religious convictions.

This study looks specifically at the part religious leaders might play in helping their followers become more environmentally conscious. We hope to shed light on the tactics that religious leaders might use to successfully include their congregations in environmental conservation efforts by investigating the possible effects of their teachings and activities on both individual and collective behavior.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite the increased concern for environmental issues, there is little research on the role of religious leaders in raising environmental awareness. Religious leaders have special power within their groups, influencing members' attitudes, convictions, and actions. For effective mobilization, it is essential to comprehend their tactics, which include integrating environmental education into religious education programs, planning community projects, and putting environmental teachings into sermons. Religious leaders confront a variety of difficulties, such as opposition to reform, divergent interpretations of religious doctrine, a lack of funding, and rival agendas within religious organizations. The creation of focused tactics and interventions to encourage environmental awareness and action within religious communities can be guided by the findings of this research. Working together with legislators, environmental groups, and local authorities can result in resource mobilization, sustainable practices, and a combined positive impact on the environment.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this research was to investigate the role of religious leaders in promoting environmental awareness to their congregations in Ayami Parish, diocese of Lango.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

- i. To investigate the extent to which Church leaders promote environmental awareness within the congregation in Ayami Parish, the Diocese of Lango.
- ii. To examine the challenges faced by Religious leaders in addressing environmental concerns within the congregation in Ayami Parish, Diocese of Lango.
- iii. To assess the positive outcome of religious leaders advocacy on the environment within the congregation in Ayami Parish, Diocese of Lango.

1.5 Research Questions

- i. What are religious leaders doing to promote environmental awareness within their congregations in Ayami Parish, diocese of Lango?
- ii. What challenges do religious leaders face in addressing environmental issues within their religious contexts in Ayami Parish, diocese of Lango?
- iii. What is the impact of religious leaders' environmental advocacy on congregational behavior and engagement in environmental conservation efforts in Ayami Parish, diocese of Lango?

1.6 Scope of the Study

This research focused on Christian religious leaders' role in promoting environmental awareness within their congregations in Ayami Parish, diocese of Lango. Christianity is a globally

influential religion, with many followers seeking guidance and inspiration. Leaders can shape environmental attitudes and behaviors by incorporating environmental teachings into sermons, organizing educational programs, and leading by example. Understanding these leaders' strategies, such as integrating environmental themes into religious teachings, organizing community initiatives, or establishing environmental education programs, is crucial for understanding their influence on individual and collective behavior, identifying effective strategies, and mobilizing religious institutions as partners in environmental conservation and sustainability.

1.7 Justification

This research holds significant importance as it addresses a prominent gap in current literature by examining the nuanced role of religious leaders in promoting environmental awareness. Through a detailed analysis of their influence, strategies for implementation, and the challenges they face, this study seeks to provide crucial insights necessary for designing and implementing effective environmental education programs and mobilization efforts within religious communities. By understanding how religious leaders engage with and advocate for environmental causes, this research not only highlights their potential impact but also offers guidance for strengthening sustainability advocacy within these influential community networks.

1.8 Significance

The findings of this study will contribute to our understanding of environmental preservation and its relationship to religious participation. The study's conclusions could be a useful tool for community organizers, legislators, religious leaders, and environmental advocates. They could help them create customized strategies for encouraging environmental consciousness and action

within their respective faith communities. This could therefore encourage the adoption of eco-friendly and sustainable activities, fostering a conservation culture both inside and outside of religious communities.

1.9.0 Literature Review

This section provides the scholarly review on the role of religious leaders in promoting environmental awareness to the congregation. The literature is reviewed objective by objective.

1.9.1 The church leaders' role in promoting environmental awareness within their congregations

Church leaders have realized how important it is to raise awareness of environmental issues in recent years. Religious leaders are actively teaching and inspiring their followers to prioritize environmental protection because they recognize their responsibility as stewards of the planet (Arli, Van Esch, & Cui, 2023). As they promote sustainability and conservation, churches have begun including environmental issues into their curricula (Jiang & Yang, 2022). Church leaders are putting together conferences, workshops, and seminars on environmental awareness, educating their members about issues like pollution, deforestation, and climate change, and providing them with the information and tools they need to make responsible decisions for the environment. Furthermore, religious leaders are speaking out about environmental laws and encouraging their followers to take out environmental conservation initiatives.

By implementing eco-friendly activities, church leaders are setting an example for their congregants (Pihkala, 2020). By putting green initiatives into practice—like recycling programs, energy-efficient lighting, and water conservation measures—they show their members how

committed they are to sustainability and encourage them to follow suit and take up similar habits in their own life.

Through community outreach and service initiatives, church leaders are also actively involving their members in environmental conservation activities (Sampson, McAdam, MacIndoe, & Weffer-Elizondo, 2005). In addition to improving the environment, planning events like clean-ups, tree plantings, and other environmental activities helps churchgoers feel more connected to one another and to the community.

Importantly, church leaders use their position to educate others about the spiritual consequences of practicing environmental stewardship (Clark, 2017). Taking care of the Earth and its resources is emphasized in many religious beliefs as a means of honoring and respecting the divine creation. Church leaders help their members develop a stronger feeling of responsibility and connection to the natural world by drawing links between environmental challenges and religious principles.

1.9.2 The challenges faced by religious leaders in addressing environmental issues

According to a study conducted by Johnson and Smith (2018), religious leaders play a crucial role in addressing environmental challenges within their communities. However, they face numerous obstacles in their pursuit of environmental sustainability and conservation. One of the major challenges they encounter is the unwillingness of their followers to change. Many individuals hold strong opinions and may be resistant to adopting new practices that support environmental conservation.

In addition to the challenges faced by religious leaders in addressing environmental issues, religious institutions themselves often lack the necessary resources and support to effectively

implement environmentally-friendly initiatives. As highlighted in a recent study by Koehrsen, Blanc, and Huber (2022), recycling programs and energy efficiency measures, for example, may be hindered due to limited funding and inadequate infrastructure within religious groups. The financial constraints faced by these institutions can impede their ability to invest in the necessary equipment and technologies that promote sustainable practices. Moreover, the lack of infrastructure, such as recycling facilities or energy-efficient systems, within religious institutions can further hinder their efforts to adopt and implement environmentally-friendly initiatives. These limitations not only affect the overall environmental impact of religious institutions but also pose challenges for religious leaders who seek to promote environmental stewardship within their communities.

Religious leaders may encounter resistance from political or economic interests that prioritize profit over environmental concerns, presenting a significant challenge in their efforts to advocate for policies that prioritize environmental sustainability. In communities where industries serve as major revenue sources, local businesses or government officials may oppose regulations aimed at limiting environmental impact. This opposition can make it challenging for religious leaders to effectively promote environmental stewardship and advocate for policies that address environmental issues. The conflicting priorities between economic interests and environmental conservation can hinder the progress of religious leaders in their pursuit of sustainable practices within their communities. Johnston, L. F. (2014).

Moreover, religious leaders face the intricate task of navigating the complexities of balancing environmental concerns with the moral and ethical teachings of their faith. As noted by Crossman (2010), certain religious teachings may pose a challenge to environmental conservation efforts, especially those that emphasize human dominion over the natural world.

This tension arises from differing interpretations and understandings of religious texts and doctrines, which can influence the perspectives and actions of both religious leaders and their followers. Religious leaders must grapple with these conflicting messages, seeking to reconcile their faith's teachings with the imperative to promote environmental stewardship and sustainable practices. This delicate balancing act requires thoughtful reflection, dialogue, and interpretation within religious communities to foster a greater understanding of the interconnectedness between religious values and environmental conservation.

Additionally, religious leaders face the challenge of reaching out to diverse groups within their communities. Environmental issues can be complex and may not resonate with all members of a religious congregation. As highlighted by Harmannij (2019), religious leaders must find effective ways to engage and educate their followers about the importance of environmental conservation while considering the unique needs, perspectives, and concerns of different groups within their community. This requires a nuanced approach that takes into account cultural, social, and economic factors that may influence individuals' attitudes and behaviors towards the environment. By tailoring their messaging and outreach strategies to address the specific interests and values of different groups, religious leaders can foster a greater understanding and appreciation for environmental conservation among their followers, ultimately promoting collective action towards sustainability.

1.9.3 The impact of religious leaders' environmental advocacy on congregational engagement in environmental conservation efforts

Religious leaders indeed play a vital role in shaping the environmental attitudes and behaviors of their congregations, as highlighted by the GIZ (B.Z.). Through various means, they contribute to

raising awareness and fostering a sense of responsibility towards the environment within their communities. Religious leaders have the unique ability to influence and inspire their followers through their teachings, sermons, and religious rituals. By incorporating environmental themes and messages into their religious practices, they can effectively communicate the importance of environmental conservation and stewardship.

Religious leaders utilize their platforms to educate their followers on environmental matters by integrating environmental teachings into their sermons and religious instruction. This allows them to highlight the significance of issues like climate change, pollution, and deforestation, while emphasizing principles of stewardship and care for the Earth derived from religious scriptures and spiritual teachings (Afsar, Badir, & Kiani, 2016; Smith, 2018). By incorporating these teachings into their religious practices, leaders can effectively communicate the importance of environmental conservation and inspire their congregations to take action.

Religious leaders set environmental values by incorporating practices like recycling and waste reduction into their daily lives. This not only reinforces environmental responsibility but also inspires followers to adopt similar behaviors. Witnessing these leaders' environmental practices can increase awareness and motivation to take action for the environment. Their actions can also influence the wider community, leading to a broader cultural shift towards environmental consciousness and responsibility. Rappaport, J. (1987).

Moreover, religious leaders go beyond setting personal examples and mobilize their congregations for collective action on environmental concerns. Recognizing the power of community engagement, they organize events such as clean-up drives, tree-planting campaigns, and awareness initiatives that bring their congregations together. By actively involving their

followers in these activities, religious leaders foster a sense of communal responsibility and solidarity towards environmental conservation (Brown, 2021). These collective efforts not only have a tangible impact on the environment but also strengthen the bond among congregants as they work towards a common goal. Through these initiatives, religious leaders inspire their communities to take collective action, creating a ripple effect that extends beyond their religious spaces and into the wider society. By mobilizing their congregations in this way, religious leaders harness the power of unity and encourage ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship.

In addition to their efforts in environmental conservation, religious leaders play a crucial role in advocating for environmental justice and equity, particularly concerning marginalized communities that are disproportionately affected by environmental issues (Pellow, Weinberg, & Schnaiberg, 2001). Recognizing the intersectionality between social and environmental justice, they work towards addressing these injustices and advocating for policies that prioritize both environmental protection and social equity. By shining a light on the environmental burdens faced by marginalized communities, religious leaders bring attention to the need for inclusive and equitable approaches to environmental decision-making and resource allocation. They strive to create a more just and sustainable future by actively engaging in dialogue, raising awareness, and advocating for policies that address the root causes of environmental injustices. Through their moral authority and influence, religious leaders can amplify the voices of marginalized communities, promote environmental equity, and contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and sustainable society.

1.10.0 Research Methodology

This part presents the procedures and methods to be employed in the study. It covers various aspects such as research design and approach, study population, study area, sample size determination and methodologies, data collection tools, quality control measures, variable measurement, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

1.10.1 Research Design and Approach

A research design serves as a road map for the study, outlining the philosophical stance, methodology, and strategies employed to achieve the objectives. This study adopted a multiple case study methodology and a qualitative research approach to explore the perspectives of various stakeholders regarding the decolonization of research methods. Specifically, it investigated the role of religious leaders in promoting environmental awareness within the congregation of Ayami Parish, Diocese of Lango. The qualitative research design was chosen to delve into the experiences, attitudes, and perspectives of stakeholders concerning the role of religious leaders in enhancing environmental awareness among the congregation.

1.10.2 Area of Study

The focal point of this study was the role of religious leaders in fostering environmental awareness among the congregation of Ayami Parish, situated within the Diocese of Lango.

1.10.3 Sources of Data

A combination of primary and secondary sources were integral to ensure a comprehensive and well-rounded research study on the role of religious leaders in promoting environmental awareness within the Ayami Parish, Diocese of Lango.

1.10.4 Sampling Techniques

This study exclusively employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling strategy wherein participants are chosen based on the researcher's judgment. The selection criteria were carefully set to ensure accuracy and clarity. Specifically, church leaders, both active and retired, along with the bishop of the diocese, were purposely chosen to represent a diverse range of viewpoints.

1.10.5 Data Collection Methods, Tools, and Instruments

In-depth interviews served as the primary data collection method. These interviews were semi-structured, allowing participants the flexibility to express their perspectives and experiences regarding the roles of church leaders in promoting environmental awareness. Interviews were conducted in English to facilitate clear communication, and each session was verbatim transcribed from audio recordings to ensure accuracy and facilitate thorough analysis.

1.10.6 Quality Control

Reliability and validity were employed as measures of data quality control. A pilot study was conducted prior to data collection to assess reliability, and face and content validity was ensured through presentations to research supervisors and consideration of their feedback.

1.10.7 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, following the method described by Braun and Clarke (2006), was employed to identify recurrent themes and patterns in the qualitative data collected from the Lango Diocese. The analysis process included familiarization with the data, preliminary coding, topic

discovery, theme refinement and naming, theme hierarchy, data comparison, and theme evaluation in relation to research questions.

1.10.8 Ethical Consideration

Respecting participants' autonomy and ensuring their comfort and right to withdraw from the study at any time was emphasized. Upholding ethical norms and participant protection aligns with the highest standards of research ethics, promoting trust in the research process and ensuring the study's legitimacy and integrity.

CHAPTER TWO

HOW CHURCH LEADERS PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the first research objective, which was to investigate the extent to which church leaders promoted environmental awareness within the congregation in Ayami Parish, located in the Diocese of Lango. The findings presented here were based on data collected from religious leaders, focusing on their role in promoting environmental awareness within the congregation. The questionnaire was distributed to 15 respondents, and the results are written below.

2.2 Religious Leaders, Focusing On Their Role in Promoting Environmental Awareness within the Congregation

During an interview, the parish priest shed light on the active participation of the people of Ayami Parish in raising awareness of environmental issues. Not only did they assist in maintaining cleanliness in their surroundings, but they also took on the role of mentors for projects such as tree planting. In doing so, they showcased their leadership qualities by fostering optimism and faith within the neighborhood, while also providing spiritual guidance. Their dedication to environmental awareness extended beyond mere actions, as they sought to inspire others and create a positive impact within the community. Through their active involvement, the parishioners of Ayami Parish demonstrated their commitment to environmental stewardship and the importance of preserving and protecting the environment for future generations.

In an interview, the parish priest highlighted the active participation of the people of Ayami Parish in raising awareness of environmental issues. They not only assisted in maintaining cleanliness in their surroundings but also took on the role of mentors for projects like planting trees. This demonstrated their leadership qualities as they fostered optimism and faith within the neighborhood, while also providing spiritual direction. Additionally, a religious leader emphasized how educational programs were utilized to raise awareness of conservation issues, particularly among the younger members of the congregation. By incorporating stewardship teachings, they emphasized the holy responsibility of taking care of God's creation. The parishioners' commitment to environmental awareness went beyond mere actions; it showcased their dedication to preserving and protecting the environment for future generations. Through their active involvement, they inspired others and fostered a sense of unity and shared responsibility within the community of Ayami Parish.

As one church elder put it, members of the congregation of Ayami Parish have taken various measures to promote environmental awareness. These measures include planning marathons to spread awareness, participating in government afforestation initiatives, and organizing community-engaging practical initiatives such as the planting of trees and the distribution of reusable pads. These actions demonstrate their commitment to raising awareness of environmental issues and their dedication to making a positive impact on the environment. Additionally, a catechist emphasized the significance of integrating scripture into their methodology. By citing scriptures that discuss humanity's responsibilities as custodians of the environment, they highlighted the spiritual foundation of stewardship and used narratives to illustrate conscientious environmental actions and their benefits. Through these efforts, the

members of Ayami Parish actively encourage others to participate in conservation and strive to create a greener future by expanding tree planting and mobilizing resources through partnerships.

Members of Ayami Parish actively encouraged parishioners to participate in conservation efforts through various events and initiatives. The leaders took the initiative to provide instruction on minimizing environmental impact through techniques such as appropriate trash management. By educating the community on proper waste disposal and recycling practices, they aimed to raise awareness and instill a sense of responsibility towards the environment. Additionally, members of the parish promoted environmental responsibility by distributing seedlings and assigning cleanup responsibilities to individuals. These actions served to empower and engage the parishioners in taking an active role in preserving and protecting the environment. Through their collective efforts, the members of Ayami Parish demonstrated their commitment to environmental stewardship and inspired others to join in their conservation endeavors.

The vicar of Ayami Parish emphasized the significance of measuring the impact of development initiatives. To evaluate the concrete effects of their programs, techniques such as indicator evaluation, activity tracking, and feedback questionnaires were utilized. These measurement methods allowed the leaders to assess the effectiveness of their efforts and make informed decisions for improvement. By continuously assessing the outcomes and gathering feedback, the parish ensured that their programs continued to benefit the church and the community. The integration of impact measurement techniques demonstrated their commitment to accountability and the desire to maximize the positive effects of their conservation and environmental responsibility initiatives.

According to a deacon, the future goals of the members of Ayami Parish include encouraging others and establishing new benchmarks for conservation and environmental responsibility. To create a greener future, expanding the planting of trees and working with partners to mobilize resources are top priorities. These goals reflect the parishioners' commitment to raising awareness, taking action, and inspiring others to join their efforts in preserving and protecting the environment. By setting these goals, the members of Ayami Parish aim to make a positive impact on the community and contribute to a sustainable future.

CHAPTER THREE

CHALLENGES RELIGIOUS LEADERS FACE IN ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the second research objective, which was to examine the challenges faced by religious leaders in addressing environmental concerns within the congregation in Ayami Parish, Diocese of Lango. The findings presented here were based on data collected from religious leaders, focusing on challenges encountered in their efforts to address environmental issues within the congregation. The questionnaire was distributed to 10 respondents, and the results are summarized below.

3.2 Challenges Religious Leaders Faced in Addressing Environmental Issues in Ayami

During an interview with the parish priest, he clarified that the Ayami Parish congregation faced a number of obstacles when attempting to solve environmental issues. Among these were misconceptions among congregation members, who frequently disregarded or underestimated environmental issues. Initiatives like planting trees were further hampered by financial constraints and linguistic hurdles. Moreover, lack of cooperation and ignorance of the significance of environmental conservation hampered attempts. Individual inflexibility and hectic schedules also prevented people from actively participating in environmental activities. Advocacy was further hindered by elements including bad weather, poor communication, and reluctance to change.

In a different interview, a religious figure talked about the hostility and resistance that churchgoers experienced from other leaders and certain members of the congregation. Some people prioritized economic interests over conservation efforts, believing environmental projects to be pointless and having no impact on well-being. Leaders have occasionally faced opposition from other leaders who participate in environmentally damaging activities, such as quickly burning charcoal. It's also possible that resistance resulted from cultural or traditional ideas, such as a reluctance to give up deeply rooted local customs like the use of plastic bags.

One congregant brought up the ways in which some traditional or cultural beliefs supported environmental action while others presented difficulties. For instance, certain uninformed local community members with the idea of making money caused the destruction of trees, which hampered conservation efforts. Furthermore, stewardship concepts occasionally clashed with naming conventions or worship activities. However, by highlighting stewardship and respect for nature, cultural and religious values frequently supported environmental campaigning. The priest also stressed how members' efforts were limited by staffing, financial, and technological constraints. There were financial difficulties when buying trees, planning events, or supplying tools. Two examples of human resource constraints were low event turnout and a shortage of competent workers. Inadequate communication and infrastructure, among other technological constraints, made it more difficult to properly handle environmental challenges.

The priest of Ayami Parish pointed out that despite the obstacles, higher authorities and religious organizations offered assistance and direction in the conservation efforts. They worked with non-governmental organizations, donated land and trees, and encouraged community involvement in conservation initiatives. This support demonstrated a shared commitment to tackling environmental issues within the religious setting, despite differences in the breadth and efficacy

of their actions. The collaboration between religious organizations, higher authorities, and non-governmental organizations showcased a collective effort to promote environmental responsibility and create a greener future.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS' ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY ON CONGREGATIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION EFFORTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the third research objective, which was to examine the challenges faced by religious leaders in addressing environmental concerns within the congregation in Ayami Parish, Diocese of Lango. The findings presented here were based on data collected from religious leaders, focusing on Environmental Advocacy on Congregational Engagement in Environmental Conservation Efforts. The questionnaire was distributed to 15 respondents, and the results are summarized below.

4.2 Environmental Advocacy on Congregational Engagement in Environmental Conservation Efforts

Ayami Parish church members promoted environmental conservation through a variety of programs designed to increase consciousness and encourage sustainable habits among the membership. A religious leader claimed that parishioners learned about environmental health through community outreach activities, and that marathons provided a platform for raising awareness and distributing trees to replace those that were chopped down. The significance of stewardship and the connection between environmental health and human well-being were emphasized in the messages. Including members of the church in useful tasks like trash disposal and tree planting was found to strengthen environmental advocacy initiatives.

According to an elder in the church, the advocacy work of the members had led to noticeable improvements in the congregation's environmental conservation policies, attitudes, and behavior. Initiatives such as garbage pickup, tree planting, and the adoption of reusable items demonstrate the increasing dedication of parishioners to environmental care. Moreover, a greater number of people participating in environmental projects and the desire to restart them indicated the positive impact of advocacy work on congregational behavior. These changes reflected the transformative power of environmental advocacy within the church, as members mobilize support, provide funding, infrastructure, and communication channels to enhance the efficacy of their advocacy initiatives. The elder's observations aligned with research that highlighted how environmental education and engagement can shape attitudes, values, and behaviors, leading to positive environmental action [1](#). Additionally, forming alliances with governmental and non-governmental groups, academic institutions, and neighborhood networks could further support and strengthen environmental advocacy within the religious framework. A catechist spoke about cooperative projects the church had been working on that directly helped the neighborhood and environment. These initiatives included trash management plans, tree planting campaigns, and infrastructure upgrades that were meant to improve community well-being and environmental health. Congregants supported the protection of natural resources and sustainable development by pooling resources and taking collective action.

A deacon claimed that members had obstacles and constraints when trying to change the conduct of the congregation. Effective advocacy and engagement were hampered by communication barriers, resistance to change, and conflicting priorities. Furthermore, it was extremely difficult to promote widespread environmental understanding and action within the congregation because of cultural and societal elements like dogmatic views, false information, and apathy.

A clergyman underscored the need of ongoing endeavors to galvanize and encourage folks for the enduring viability of religious participation in environmental preservation. The beliefs and practices of environmental stewardship must be reinforced through ongoing projects like planting trees, engaging the community, and offering educational opportunities. Members wanted to guarantee that their advocacy work would have a lasting influence on congregational behavior and engagement, so they cultivated a culture of environmental stewardship and resilience.

According to a religious leader, the environmental advocacy activities of the members of Ayami Parish had resulted in several success stories. These included increased tree planting, the adoption of sustainable practices, and community mobilization for environmental initiatives. These achievements had led to positive outcomes such as better community cohesion, personal empowerment, and improved environmental health. These success stories demonstrated the transformative power of the members' lobbying activities within the church, showcasing the positive impact that could be made when individuals come together for a common cause. The support received from higher authorities, religious organizations, and non-governmental organizations further highlighted the shared commitment to addressing environmental issues within the religious setting, despite differences in the scope and effectiveness of their actions.

An elder in the church emphasized the importance of forming alliances with governmental and non-governmental groups, academic institutions, and neighborhood networks to support environmental advocacy within the framework of religion. By collaborating with these various entities, members were able to generate congregational support for environmental protection and improve the efficacy of advocacy initiatives. These alliances provided access to funding, infrastructure, and communication channels, which were instrumental in advancing

environmental initiatives and creating a positive impact. The elder's perspective highlighted the significance of working together across different sectors to address environmental issues and promote sustainable practices within the religious community.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a theological discourse on the role of religious leaders in Ayami Parish, Diocese of Lango, in promoting environmental awareness among their congregation. As we endeavor to comprehend God's guidance on promoting environmental awareness to the congregation, our guiding questions are based in His teachings.

5.2 How Church Leaders Promote Environmental Awareness within the Congregation

The holy books are a rich source of heavenly knowledge that offers deep understandings of how we are supposed to engage with the natural world. By carefully studying these timeless lessons, we can gain a better understanding of the theological foundation that supports religious leaders' efforts to promote environmental consciousness in their congregations.

One of the most important statements made by God to humanity is found in the book of Genesis: "And God blessed them. God then commanded them to "be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over all living things that move on the earth, including the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea." (Genesis 1:28) The cornerstone that supports the stewardship of God's creation is this holy mandate, echoing through the ages.

It is because of this fundamental commandment given in Genesis that church leaders must encourage environmental consciousness within the membership. Religious leaders understand the deep significance of protecting and nurturing the natural world because they are charged with

the sacred mission of preserving God's creation. They understand that the holistic well-being of humanity and our spiritual well-being are closely linked to the environment's flourishing.

Driven by the divine mandate to practice stewardship, church leaders play a crucial role in promoting environmental consciousness among their members. They resolutely accept their duty to instill in their flock a sense of environmental stewardship and to foster a profound respect for God's creation. By means of sermons, teachings, and group projects, they clarify how all living things are interdependent and promote ethical and sustainable behavior.

Essentially, the sacred scriptures are permanently imprinted with regard to the function that church leaders play in encouraging environmental consciousness within the community. Motivated by the divine directive expressed in Genesis, they set out on a holy quest to foster an atmosphere of environmental awareness and care among the religious community. By means of their resolute dedication and dynamic guidance, they strive to accomplish the holy mission bestowed upon humanity by the Almighty, consequently bringing about a peaceful coexistence of people and the environment.

5.3 The Challenges Religious Leaders Face in Addressing Environmental Issues

We are reminded of creation's deep longing for the revelation of God's splendor in the sacred book of Romans: "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God." (Romans 8:19) This passage of scripture captures the longing of the entire creation for the accomplishment of the divine plan and the return of harmony.

Religious leaders faced many obstacles in their admirable quest to raise environmental consciousness, despite their ardent dedication to this cause. People in the church who did not understand how important it is to protect the environment opposed them. Environmental

problems were seen by some flock members as secondary issues that should be prioritized over more serious and apparent difficulties. Moreover, there was a strong barrier to religious leaders' efforts: doubts about the effectiveness of individual acts in reducing global environmental crises.

Furthermore, societal pressures and conflicting interests hampered progress on the route to resolving environmental challenges. The implementation of environmental programs was impeded by a complex web of political forces, deeply ingrained cultural standards, and economic reasons. However, religious leaders showed unyielding fortitude and tenacious dedication to their noble purpose in the face of these formidable hurdles.

Jesus tells us to persist in the face of hardship in the Gospel of Matthew, saying, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:10 This insightful lesson serves as a reminder of the benefits accorded to people who, in the midst of difficulty, do not waver in their quest of virtue.

Religious leaders persisted in their commitment to raising environmental awareness and supporting sustainable solutions in spite of the challenges they faced. They moved forward because of their unshakable faith and strong sense of responsibility, which inspired optimism and sparked constructive change both inside and without the congregation. Their unshakable dedication to the care of God's creation, in spite of the overwhelming obstacles they faced, shone like a beacon, showing the way to a more peaceful and sustainable future.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." Let us consider this as we consider the difficulties faced by religious leaders in their attempts to address environmental issues. 1 Corinthians 15:58 these remarks serve as a helpful

reminder of the value of sticking to our principles and objectives because we know that the Lord will not see our efforts as insignificant.

5.4 The Impact of Religious Leaders' Environmental Advocacy on Congregational Engagement in Environmental Conservation Efforts

We are reminded of God's evaluation of creation in the book of Genesis: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." (See Genesis 1:31) With its emphasis on the inherent goodness and holiness of God's creation, this statement offers a theological basis for our comprehension of environmental stewardship. The support provided by religious authorities has a significant impact on congregational participation in environmental preservation projects. They stoked a fierce desire within the church to get involved in environmental activities by highlighting the intrinsic goodness of God's creation and the necessity of stewardship.

Religious leaders urged followers to view environmental problems from a spiritual perspective, understanding that taking care of the environment is a form of prayer and submission to a higher power. They inspired people to make positive changes in their daily lives by empowering them with a sense of duty and empowerment through the delivery of sermons, educational programs, and community-based projects.

Following the leadership of religious leaders, followers were more conscious of their responsibility as stewards of the Earth and were inspired to take concrete steps toward improving it. They adopted sustainable behaviors, such cutting back on trash, saving energy, and supporting laws that protect the environment.

Furthermore, as congregations united to create a community that is more ecologically conscious and sustainable, the influence of religious leaders' advocacy went beyond individual acts. They were driven by a common goal and the values of stewardship and respect for creation, and they devoted their lives to bringing about positive change and advancing the well-being of all life on Earth.

Jesus asks us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world in the Gospel of Matthew, saying, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." Matthew 5:16 Religious leaders demonstrated this call to action by their steadfast dedication to environmental advocacy, showing the way toward a more sustainable future and encouraging others to take up the honorable work of protecting God's creation.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the research's findings, draws conclusions from them, and offers recommendations about the subject of religious leaders' roles in promoting environmental awareness among the people in Ayami Parish, Diocese of Lango.

6.2 Summary of the Study

The study looked on the initiatives taken by religious leaders in Ayami Parish, Diocese of Lango, to raise environmental awareness among their followers. A variety of topics were investigated through interviews with religious leaders, such as their duties, projects they carried out, how they incorporated religious texts, difficulties they encountered, and how their advocacy affected congregational behavior.

The results showed that religious leaders in Ayami Parish engaged in a variety of activities to raise awareness of environmental issues, such as counseling, leading congregations, mentoring, raising awareness, and empowering young people. They used passages from Genesis and other religious texts to highlight the significance of environmental stewardship. These leaders carried out efforts including planting trees and reusable pad projects, planning marathons, workshops, and conventions, and taking part in government programs.

Religious leaders encountered a number of difficulties, such as miscommunication within the congregation, communication difficulties in other languages, a lack of resources, disagreement or

resistance from certain members of the congregation, and cultural norms that made environmental advocacy difficult. Despite difficulties, there were gains as well: members of the congregation changed in attitudes and actions, joint projects improved the community and environment, and participation in environmental conservation activities rose. Support networks and continuous efforts were nevertheless required to maintain long-term involvement.

6.3 Conclusion

The study clarified the proactive role that religious leaders in the Diocese of Lango's Ayami Parish play in encouraging environmental consciousness among their followers. It became clear from interviewing them and analyzing their projects, lessons, and difficulties that these leaders were powerful change agents who skillfully incorporated environmental stewardship into religious practices and teachings.

Religious leaders were successful in encouraging positive changes in attitudes and actions even in the face of challenges like opposition from some members of their flock, little resources, and cultural values that occasionally conflicted with environmental advocacy. Their efforts produced observable results, such as cooperative initiatives that benefited the neighborhood and the environment.

The biggest obstacles nevertheless, meanwhile, continued to be maintaining these successes and guaranteeing long-term participation in environmental conservation initiatives. To ensure the long-term viability of these programs, stakeholders such as government agencies, non-governmental organizations, religious institutions, and the general public have to provide consistent support. Furthermore, overcoming obstacles and promoting long-lasting change

required addressing the underlying reasons of resistance and comprehending the complex interactions between environmentalism, religion, and culture.

The study's conclusions made it clear that religious leaders in Ayami Parish were essential in encouraging their followers to be stewards of the natural world and to be environmentally conscious. Their commitment, in addition to continuous cooperation and assistance, cleared the path for a more sustainable future in which religious communities actively participated in environmental preservation initiatives.

6.4 Recommendations for Further Study

Even though this study offered insightful information, more investigation was required to fully comprehend the processes behind environmental activism in religious contexts. Among the topics for further investigation were:

1. Comparative research between various religious traditions and geographical areas should be carried out to investigate differences in environmental advocacy strategies and their efficacy.
2. Examining how particular religious texts and teachings influence people's attitudes and actions around environmental preservation.
3. Investigating how religious leaders' environmental engagement affects more general societal issues like public health, and sustainable development.

Through further exploration of these fields, scholars may be able to add to a more thorough comprehension of the complex interplay among religion, environmentalism, and community

development, which in turn may lead to the development of more potent tactics for advancing environmental sustainability both inside and outside of religious communities.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Research Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

This is a study being carried out by OGWAL MOSES M22B09/056 on the “Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting Environmental Awareness to the Congregation in the Ayami Parish, Diocese of Lango.”

You have therefore, been selected to take part in this study by availing information through participating in filling this questionnaire. Do not write your name since the information given will be treated with maximum confidentiality.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENT

SECTION A.

Sex.....

Address.....

Title/Position.....

Religious affiliation: Christian or Moslem.....

Years of service.....

Interview Guide

Research Question One: "What are religious leaders doing to promote environmental awareness within their congregations in Ayami Parish, diocese of Lango?"

What is your role as a religious leader in Ayami Parish, and how long have you been serving in this role?

Why do you believe promoting environmental awareness is important within your religious context?

Could you describe any specific initiatives you have implemented to promote environmental awareness within your congregation?

How do you incorporate religious scriptures to emphasize the importance of environmental stewardship?

How do you engage and encourage your congregation to actively participate in environmental conservation efforts?

How do you measure the impact of your efforts in promoting environmental awareness?

What are your future plans or goals for promoting environmental awareness within your congregation?

Research Question Two: "What challenges do religious leaders face in addressing environmental issues within their religious contexts in Ayami Parish, diocese of Lango?"

What specific challenges have you encountered in your efforts to address environmental issues within your congregation?

Have you faced any resistance or opposition from your congregation or other religious leaders when advocating for environmental conservation? If yes, could you elaborate on those experiences?

Are there any cultural or traditional beliefs within your religious context that hinder or complicate environmental advocacy? If so, please explain.

Have you faced any limitations in terms of resources (financial, human, or technological) to address environmental issues? Could you provide examples?

Has your religious institution or higher authorities provided support and guidance in your efforts to address environmental issues? If yes, please elaborate on the nature of that support.

Research Question Three: "What is the impact of religious leaders' environmental advocacy on congregational behavior and engagement in environmental conservation efforts in Ayami Parish, diocese of Lango?"

How do you advocate for environmental conservation within your congregation? Could you describe the specific messages, teachings, or initiatives you have used?

Have you observed any changes in attitudes, behaviors, or practices among your congregation members as a result of your environmental advocacy? If yes, please provide examples.

Have you noticed any collaborative projects or initiatives undertaken by your congregation that directly benefit the environment or the local community?

Have you encountered any challenges or limitations in influencing congregational behavior and engagement in environmental conservation? If yes, could you elaborate on them?

How do you envision the long-term sustainability of the congregation's engagement in environmental conservation?

Do you have any success stories or positive outcomes resulting from your efforts in promoting environmental conservation within your congregation? If yes, please share.

Are there any resources or support systems that have been instrumental in facilitating your environmental advocacy within your religious context?
