HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies
ISSN: (Online) 2072-8050, (Print) 0259-9422

African eco-spiritualities and climate justice: Afro-ecofeminism perspectives on Genesis 2:4–17

Author:
Dorcas C. Juma[1]

Affiliation:
[1]Department of Theology and Religion Studies, Faculty of Human Sciences, University of South Africa, Tshwane, South Africa

Corresponding author:
Dorcas Juma,
dorcaschebetjuma@gmail.com

Dates:
Received: 17 Dec. 2024
Accepted: 10 Apr. 2025
Published: 07 July 2025

How to cite this article:
Juma, D.C., 2025, 'African eco-spiritualities and climate justice: Afro-ecofeminism perspectives on Genesis 2:4–17', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 81(1), a10449. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v81i1.10449

Genesis 2:4–17 offers a foundational account of human–earth relations within the Eden narrative, portraying Mother Earth as a divinely crafted habitat and humanity as both nurtured by and responsible for the land. This article presents an exegetical reading of the passage, engaging historical–critical scholarship and Ancient Near Eastern contexts to unpack its theological emphasis on the interdependence between human beings אָדָם [*adam*] and the soil אֲדָמָה [*adamah*] from which they are formed. Drawing on insights from biblical scholars and Eco-theologians, the study foregrounds the ecological dimensions inherent in the text, including themes of cultivation, care and divinely instituted limits on human consumption. Through an Afro-ecofeminism lens, the article then correlates these findings with Indigenous African knowledge systems, where women have historically served as custodians of ecological wisdom. In many African communities, Afro-Indigenous practices have long guided environmental stewardship, from forecasting climatic shifts to sustaining biodiversity through spiritual and communal traditions. Women, deeply embedded in these eco-spiritual roles, preserve and transmit ancestral ecological knowledge and practices that resonate with the biblical portrayal of humanity's sacred duty towards the earth. By integrating exegetical insights with African eco-spiritualities, this study reimagines Genesis 2:4–17 as a text of interdependence, care and ethical responsibility. In doing so, it contributes to climate justice discourse by bridging biblical scholarship with Indigenous African religious traditions.

Contribution: This article employed an Afro-ecofeminism lens to explore Genesis 2:4–17 alongside Indigenous African ecological perspectives, foregrounding the role of African women as custodians of ecological wisdom. It argued that Afro-Indigenous spiritual and environmental knowledge offers vital insights for addressing climate challenges. By integrating biblical and African ecological ethics, the study underscores how traditional ecological knowledge can advance sustainable practices, food security and climate justice. In doing so, it contributes to decolonial theological discourse and reclaims Indigenous African eco-spiritualities as essential to global ecological sustainability.

Keywords: Afro-ecofeminism; African indigenous knowledge systems; climate justice; biblical ecology; eco-spiritualities; women and environmental stewardship.

Introduction

Brueggemann (2010:22) views Genesis 1:1–2:4a as 'a poetic narrative, likely shaped for liturgical use. Its central theme is the bond between God and creation, held together in a distinct and delicate way'. Brueggemann (2010:40) observes a contrast shift in Genesis 2:4b–3:24, whose focus is on humanity, 'portraying human beings as both the glory and the central problem of creation'. However, through the lens of African eco-spirituality and climate justice, Genesis 2:4–17 reveals a profound theological metaphor of eco-dependence. This is captured in the Hebrew interplay between אָדָם [*adam*] – humanity – and אֲדָמָה [*Adamah*] – earth or soil (Callender 2018:1). Within the ancient Near Eastern worldview, this linguistic and existential bond reflects humanity's origin from the earth and its ongoing, sacred entanglement with the life-giving ground. *Adamah* is not inert; she is Mother Earth, infused with divine vitality, sustaining *adam* through a reciprocal relationship of nurture and care (Simkins 2014:50–51). This text resonates deeply with African eco-spiritualities and Afro-ecofeminism thought, which recognise the earth as a living, breathing participant in the web of life. Here, the sacredness of Mother Earth emerges as both spiritual and ecological, affirming that human flourishing is inseparable from the thriving of the land. To harm the earth is to wound humanity itself, calling for a justice that honours this sacred interdependence. This sacred interconnection between *adam* and *adamah* aligns with broader cosmologies of the Ancient Near Eastern world, where land and life were viewed as deeply intertwined, and the earth was revered as a life-bearing entity animated by divine presence. In Mesopotamian and Canaanite traditions, for instance, humanity is portrayed as formed from the

clay of the earth, shaped by divine hands to serve and sustain creation. According to Clifford (2023:15), 'the cosmic motif is based on the perception that humanity and Mother Earth are not separate entities'. Such narratives reflect a shared cultural imagination in which the earth is not a passive backdrop but an active partner in the flourishing of life. Genesis, while distinct in its theological affirmations, participates in this ancient worldview by elevating the earth–human relationship to a covenantal and spiritual dimension, a vision that deeply resonates with African eco-spiritualities and Afro-ecofeminism perspectives seeking justice for both land and life.

In many indigenous communities worldwide, Mother Earth is regarded as sacred, embodying a spiritual essence that sustains life. The term Mother Earth is used to personify the earth as a nurturing, life-giving force, much like a mother who provides for and sustains her children. That is why López (2019) argues, 'Mother Earth is a goddess, venerated by indigenous peoples'. From an African perspective, this concept resonates deeply with indigenous African cosmologies, which often view the earth as a sacred entity connected to fertility, ancestry and communal well-being. In many African traditions, the earth is revered as a mother figure because of its role in sustaining life through the provision of food, water and shelter. According to Lumanze (2021:73), 'the earth is referred to as Mother Earth because Africans have an elevated view of the land/earth'. This respect is reflected in rituals and practices that honour the earth's vitality, highlighting the interconnections of humanity, nature and the divine. In addition, the feminisation of the earth aligns with the African value of ubuntu, emphasising the shared responsibility of caring for the environment as a communal mother who nurtures all creation (Etieyibo 2017:640). This worldview fosters deep connections between people and their natural environments, informed by indigenous knowledge and indigenous religious perspectives on the earth, the environment and the climate. Philip (2015) defines indigenous knowledge as 'knowledge which is spatially and/or culturally context specific, collective, holistic, and adaptive'. Indigenous traditional knowledge encompasses understandings, skills and philosophies cultivated over generations through intimate interaction with nature. Indigenous religious knowledge (IRK), a subset of traditional knowledge, refers to the religious belief systems unique to indigenous communities (Falola 2022:515).

The African cosmology intertwines the physical and spiritual realms, and the sacredness of Mother Earth is central. In the discussion on the relationship between African traditional religion, Christianity and the earth, Marumo (2016:15) observes, 'In South Africa the environmental issue is intertwined with the everyday difficulties of the poor and the marginalized'. Human existence is dependent on how humanity treats the earth, and the continuity of life depends on a divine supreme being who governs both natural and metaphysical realms. Even though the African worldview embodies an exceptional religiosity, with the supreme being recognised as the source of all life-sustaining goodness, the role of African IRK in representing an evolving interaction between communities, their environments and their spiritual experiences has not been given much importance in the contemporary society. Indigenous African religious knowledge and perspectives have been expressed and preserved through various domains, including philosophy, anthropology, medicine, agriculture, education, arts, music and literature (Malapane, Chanza & Musakwa 2024:5). The knowledge encompasses beliefs, traditions, rituals and practices rooted in cultural heritage and adapted over time. According to Malapane et al. (2024:1), 'the knowledge and techniques benefit not only humankind but also benefit the environment'. Malapane et al. (2024:1) have however decried that 'the transmissions of indigenous knowledge are threatened and replaced by Western knowledge and ideologies'. When applied to climate change, food security, co-existence and co-prosperity, IRK offers valuable insights into environmental conservation and effective responses to climate challenges.

In many African societies, women have historically been custodians of indigenous eco-knowledge, serving as diviners, herbalists and storytellers. This role persists in various rural communities, where women remain central to resilience-building initiatives. According to the World Economic Forum (2018), women grow 70% of Africa's food and lead sustainable practices. For instance, in Kenya's Laikipia region, the Naatum Women's Group combats land degradation through water harvesting and aloe vera cultivation, transforming barren land into a sustainable livelihood source. Afro-ecofeminism frames such practices within a gendered perspective, highlighting the interconnectedness of women, indigenous knowledge and environmental stewardship. Biblical texts such as Genesis 2:4–17 emphasise humanity's duty to nurture the earth, while Romans 8:22 and Genesis 3:16 draw parallels between environmental degradation and the oppression of women. This perspective underscores the role of African women's knowledge in driving climate resilience, advocating for an egalitarian society that rejects dominance over both women and nature (Mupangwa & Chirongoma 2024). In Kenya, women-led initiatives such as the Green Belt Movement, founded by Wangari Maathai (1940–2011) exemplify this intersection of environmental conservation and gender justice (Wright 2010:33). Through tree-planting efforts, the movement not only combats deforestation but also empowers women economically and socially. Similarly, in arid regions such as Kitui and Machakos, women's groups engage in agroecology and water conservation techniques, demonstrating how indigenous knowledge fosters both environmental sustainability and community resilience.

Afro-ecofeminism lens to Genesis 2:4–15, climate, and indigenous African perspectives

Afro-ecofeminism is an interpretive lens that integrates African indigenous perspectives, ecological consciousness and feminist critique to address the interconnections of gender, environment and spirituality. Within the context of

this discussion, Afro-ecofeminism is an aspect of ecofeminism that centres on African indigenous knowledge systems, cultural values and gendered experiences to highlight the interconnection of environmental justice, gender equity and the decolonisation of ecological thought. Zein and Setiawan (2017:1) define ecofeminism as 'a branch of feminism that sees environmentalism, and the relationship between women and the earth, as foundational to its analysis and practice'. As a branch of feminism and political ecology, ecofeminism examines the intersection of gender and environmental issues to underscore how patriarchal and capitalist systems perpetuate the domination of women and the degradation of nature. French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne coined the term ecofeminism in 1974 to highlight the unjust social norms that undermine women and exploit natural resources, leading to an incomplete worldview (Zein & Setiawan 2017:1). Advocating for an alternative perspective, ecofeminism views Mother Earth as sacred, acknowledges humanity's interdependence with the natural world and upholds the intrinsic value of all life. Ecofeminism emerges from political activism and intellectual critique integrating feminist and environmental concerns to challenge the systemic power imbalances that drive ecological destruction and gender inequality (Phillips 2020:155–157).

Afro-ecofeminism builds on the principles of ecofeminism to integrate African indigenous knowledge systems, cultural values and feminist critiques to examine the intersection of patriarchy, capitalism and ecological degradation. While Facio (2013) argues that 'the concept of patriarchy itself is not a contribution of feminist theories', she defines patriarchy as a mental, social, spiritual, economic and political system institutionalised to establish male dominance and reinforce the lesser value of women. However, patriarchy in African contexts must be understood beyond a singular framework of oppression. According to Ananke (2019):

> By elevating the needs and wants of men over those of women and by giving males positions of power that elude women, patriarchy has set the tone for the present gender divide which has been influential in the rights and status of Sub-Saharan African women. (n.p.)

Notably, precolonial African societies exhibited diverse gender dynamics, where women held spiritual, economic and leadership roles. A notable Kenyan example is Mekatilili wa Menza, a Giriama woman who led resistance against British colonial rule in 1913 (Carrier & Nyamweru 2016:601). Carrier and Nyamweru (2016:601) observe, 'her story is a feminist symbol of African women's resistance to patriarchy'. Despite the patriarchal norms of her society, she emerged as a leader, mobilising her community against colonial exploitation. Her leadership exemplifies the significant roles women held in spiritual, economic and political spheres in precolonial African societies. Yet, colonial interventions and capitalist expansion intensified gender hierarchies, solidifying patriarchal structures that marginalised women while also accelerating the exploitation of natural resources.

Genesis 2:4–17 Afro-indigenous and traditional ecological knowledge

Exploring the creation narrative of Genesis 2:4–17 through African and indigenous worldviews underscores the deep connection between humanity and Mother Earth as a sacred phenomenon. This perspective aligns with traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), which recognises the earth as a living, relational entity sustained through reciprocity. Ojeda et al. (2022:952) argue, 'The world is facing a sustainability crisis that is due in part to our unidirectional relationship with nature'. Ojeda et al. (2022:959) therefore suggest, 'reciprocity can be used to reconnect people to nature, restructure institutions, and rethink how knowledge is created and used in seeking sustainability'. Reading Genesis 2:4–17 through this lens reveals ecological ethics centred on stewardship rather than domination, challenging exploitative interpretations of creation. As Afro-ecofeminism underscores humanity's harmonious relationship with Mother Earth, TEK centres on Afro-ecofeminism to emphasise care over control. The Reformed Ecumenical Council (1996:15) affirms, 'God, humanity, and land are interrelated'. This passage reflects two historical contexts: the agrarian, theocentric worldview of the Ancient Near East (ANE), which tied human survival to land and divine provision, and the Yahwist tradition, which portrays creation as an intimate, relational act. Simkins (2022:270–71) notes, 'while ANE had no word for nature, people saw the material world as an expression of divine will'. Hiebert (2022:82) further explains, 'in the Yahwist's account, humanity is formed from אֲדָמָה [*adamah*], underscoring an egalitarian, land-based economy where stewardship is a divine mandate'.

Genesis 2:4–15 contrasts with ANE creation myths such as the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, which depict creation as emerging from divine conflict (Ballentine 2015:65). Instead, Genesis presents a harmonious creation marked by divine intentionality (Longman III 2013:18). The naming of rivers and descriptions of fertile lands in verses 10–14 suggest an ecological awareness, while verse 15's call to 'work and care for' the garden reflects an ethic of reciprocal stewardship. Yet, historical readings often align Genesis with hierarchical frameworks that justify exploitation. White Jr. (1967:1203) critiques Western Christian interpretations for emphasising human dominance over nature, fuelling environmental degradation. Augustine's *City of God* (Book XIII) reinforces human dominion, subordinating nature to human control. Horrell (2010) and Leese (2019) argue that traditional readings promote anthropocentrism, legitimising ecological harm. Recovering the text's ecological vision is thus critical for contemporary environmental ethics.

Genesis 2:8–9 brings together land, humanity, all kinds of tress growing from the ground that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. The tree of life and that of the knowledge of good and evil underscore the importance of having knowledge about life sustenance through a good relationship between humanity and the environment. It is from this perspective that TEK builds on the lens of Afro-ecofeminism

to reclaim Genesis 2:4–15 in honour of the sacredness of the Mother Earth. Colonial and patriarchal interpretations have equated both land and women with resources to be controlled. The Hebrew word אֲדָמָה [*adamah*], a feminine noun meaning ground or soil, signifies not mastery but kinship (Bible Hub 2004–2024). African traditions similarly view the earth as a life-giver, akin to motherhood. Boateng (2020:40) highlights that within Akan spirituality, *Asaase Yaa* [Mother Earth] and women are 'moulds from the same clay'. The rivers in Genesis symbolise abundance and communal responsibility, reinforcing a call for ecological justice. Traditional ecological knowledge therefore uses an Afro-ecofeminist reading of Genesis 2:4–15 to challenge systems that exploit both the land and women's bodies, advocating for justice and care as central to human vocation.

Patriarchal readings of Genesis 2:4–15 emphasise hierarchy, often interpreting עָבַד [*abad*] as servitude rather than stewardship. While old Aramaic and Phoenician contexts link *abad* to slavery, Late Hebrew usage frames it as an act of worship (Blue Letter Bible 2024). Sneller-Vrolijk (2024) argues, '*abad* in Genesis denotes service to God rather than subjugation'. By analogy, traditional interpretations also depict Adam as the primary recipient of divine instruction, reinforcing male superiority and aligning environmental domination with gender oppression (Naizer 2013:3). Viewing the earth as passive and women as secondary misrepresents Genesis' original vision of mutual interdependence. Genesis 2:4–6 presents a world where land and heavens coexist in mutual reliance. The imagery of mist rising to water the ground (v. 6) symbolises a cyclical relationship of care and renewal. The creation of humanity from the soil (v. 7) further reinforces the inseparable bond between אָדָם [*adam*] and אֲדָמָה [*adamah*]. Pilani (2024:777) emphasises, 'Human vocation is inherently tied to the land's wellbeing'. This framework repositions stewardship as a sacred act, affirming co-existence and ecological balance. Rather than an object of exploitation, Mother Earth like women's bodies emerges as a partner in sustaining life, embodying divine harmony and justice.

African women's indigenous religious knowledge and climate challenges

African women's indigenous religious knowledge (AWIRK) to climate refers to the deeply rooted, culturally transmitted wisdom and practices of African women that integrate spiritual, ecological and communal dimensions in responding to environmental challenges. Adeola, Evans and Ngare (2024:181) observe, 'Women possess specific skills and strong resource management capabilities in climate change mitigation and adaptation'. This knowledge encompasses rituals, traditions and teachings that link the sacredness of Mother Earth with life sustainability, emphasising a holistic approach to natural resource management. According to Sithole and Lekorwe (2019:116), for many centuries, women have ensured that their families are secure in terms of food security by using the indigenous knowledge systems (special and traditional knowledge) orally handed down through the generations. Central to this knowledge are practices such as the reverent care of sacred groves, rivers and forests; the ritualistic handling of life events such as childbirth and planting seasons; and the preservation of biodiversity through taboos and totems. African women, as custodians of this wisdom, utilise song, dance and oral traditions to transmit environmental ethics and cosmological insights, fostering a communal ethos of respect for nature. Wane and Chandler (2002:91) decry how 'the absences of written records, explorations of African women's ancestral teachings on climate resilience knowledge have been limited'. By embodying this knowledge, African women address climate challenges through a unique intersection of ecofeminism, spirituality and ecological stewardship, offering a justice-oriented framework for co-existence, food security and sustainability. This indigenous knowledge is not only a spiritual resource but also a practical guide for mitigating climate change and promoting environmental resilience in African societies.

Unfortunately:

> [*T*]he environmental knowledge of Indigenous women has typically been viewed as unworthy of integration into teaching, learning, or research, whether non-formal agricultural extension training, formal science and other subject curriculum or basic literacy. (Wane & Chandler 2002:94)

Nevertheless, African women possess an innate IRK that intricately connects environmental care to communal and spiritual well-being. African women in general and women religious leaders in particular for example, play a pivotal role in promoting ecological sustainability through their involvement in food production, distribution and the preservation of traditional herbal rituals. Rooted in many African spiritual traditions, these leaders often act as stewards of the land, advocating for farming practices that align with environmental conservation. While, the colonialism of African countries downplayed the role of AWIRK, the main obstacle to the recognition of AWIRK that has the potential to mitigate climate change is that 'Power structures within religious institutions in Africa have long influenced women's agency and participation in environmental decision-making processes' (Mupangwa & Chirongoma 2024). Many African women are involved in small-scale farming including poultry keeping, and they use organic fertilisers and indigenous farming methods that protect soil fertility and biodiversity. In food distribution, their influence extends to fostering equitable systems that prioritise community welfare, such as ensuring that surplus harvests are shared with vulnerable groups, reflecting the communal ethos in African spirituality. In addition, the practice of herbal rituals underscores their commitment to the sustainable use of natural resources. By preserving and promoting the knowledge of medicinal plants, African women religious leaders uphold cultural heritage and contribute to ecological balance, ensuring that these plants are cultivated responsibly and not overharvested. Women religious leaders in Kenya's Mijikenda community for

example, integrate sacred kaya forests into their spiritual practices, preserving these ecosystems as sites of both ecological and cultural significance. In fact, according to Muhando (2005:228), 'the best known sacred sites in Kenya are probably the kaya forests of the coastal Mijikenda peoples along the Kenya coastline'. Through these multifaceted roles of preserving such sacred forests, African women religious leaders embody the interconnections of spirituality, ecological care and community well-being.

Thus, African women's practices of preserving ecological knowledge link Mother Earth's reproductive system with women's sexual and reproductive knowledge. Rituals such as those surrounding planting seasons and childbirth, guided by women religious leaders, emphasise the spiritual bond between human life and the environment. In many African communities, for example the burial of the placenta following childbirth is a sacred act led by elderly women, symbolising the connection between the womb and Mother Earth, essential for life sustainability (Ohaja & Anyim 2021:8). Furthermore, indigenous practices such as brewing traditional beer for rituals, managing sacred groves and using herbal treatments highlight women's pivotal role in environmental conservation and the transmission of ecological wisdom through song, dance and storytelling. These rituals, steeped in religious and cultural significance, ensure the preservation of natural resources and biodiversity. An outstanding example of blending Ecofeminism with African women's religious knowledge is the work of Wangari Maathai, founder of the Green Belt Movement (Cheronoh 2024:40). By addressing deforestation and poverty, Maathai demonstrated how reforestation and eco-friendly farming systems could mitigate climate change and secure food systems while empowering women. The intersection of AWIRK and ecofeminism underscores the importance of reclaiming spiritual connections to climate resilience. This indigenous wisdom promotes co-existence, co-prosperity and sustainability by drawing on African spirituality's deep respect for the environment and its cosmic rhythms. Through their custodianship, women continue to inspire ecological stewardship and climate action rooted in a rich heritage of reverence for Mother Earth.

Indigenous religious perspectives, co-existence and co-prosperity

Indigenous religious perspectives (IRP) emphasise the deep interconnection between humanity, the natural world and the divine, forming a foundation for harmonious co-existence and mutual prosperity. Indigenous religious perspectives are rooted in holistic worldviews and transmitted through oral traditions. Most importantly, they integrate spiritual, cultural and ecological principles into daily life. Central to this worldview is the African philosophy of ubuntu, which fosters shared humanity and interdependence, advocating for balanced relationships between people and their environments. Leveraging ubuntu philosophy of community co-existence to address climate change can be done through community collaboration, principled leadership and the promotion of sustainable practices. Zvomuya and Mundau (2023) champion for the principles of ubuntu beyond poverty reduction mechanisms among local communities to the enforcement of ecologically oriented policies to show that there is a strong correlation between ubuntu principles and core tenets of environmental sustainability in African countries. Rituals, sacred practices and traditional knowledge systems reflect a commitment to ecological stewardship, often interpreting land and natural habitats as sacred spaces imbued with ancestral and spiritual significance. According to the United Nations (UN 2019), 'traditional knowledge is at the core of indigenous identity, culture, languages, heritage and livelihoods, and must be protected'.

Co-existence in this context therefore, involves peaceful living among humans and nurturing a reciprocal relationship with Mother Earth. Katy (2021) argues, 'Humans have an innate need for nature because we have co-evolved with it'. Co-prosperity, in turn, reflects the belief that human well-being is intrinsically linked to environmental health, encouraging practices that sustain both community life and ecological harmony. O'Mahony (2022) notes, 'An integrated "sustainable well-being" offers the potential for win-win outcomes, in transformation to a flourishing of human well-being and the natural world'. These perspectives provide profound insights for addressing modern challenges such as climate change, demonstrating the enduring relevance of indigenous wisdom in fostering a sustainable and equitable future.

Religion remains central to the lives of African people and is deeply connected to their daily experiences and cultural practices. Yeboah, Owusu and Obimpeh-Quayson (2024:84) observe, 'Religion is so deeply embedded and pervasive in African culture that it affects almost every element of day-to-day existence'. Traditional African religions are lived religions, characterised by rituals, traditions and practices transmitted orally across generations. These practices influence all aspects of life, including diet, healthcare, work and dress, demonstrating the holistic integration of spirituality into everyday existence.

The African religious worldview, rooted in indigenous knowledge systems, emphasises a transitive approach to life and theology. Okafor (2021:117) argues, 'The religion itself, is indigenous and influences the Indigenous Knowledge System of Africa'. Guided by the African philosophy of ubuntu, which underscores interdependence and shared humanity, IRP advocates for co-existence and mutual prosperity between humanity and Mother Earth. Globensky and Sabourin (2015) acknowledge 'spiritual divergence between Indigenous and Western cultural views and relationships to Mother Earth'. African IRP on climate change underscores the need to maintain a harmonious relationship with divine powers using rituals to harness cosmic energy for communal well-being and environmental sustainability. At the heart of these belief systems lies a holistic understanding

of the world, which sees the health of the community as intrinsically linked to the health of the environment. Traditional medicine, for example, remains a preferred form of healthcare because of its integrative approach to healing, connecting mind, body and spirit within specific cultural contexts. According to Alifa (2023:83), 'humans have a responsibility to care for and sustain the environment because they on the natural environment for their well-being and survival'. Across many African communities, cultural practices and rituals surrounding significant life events such as birth, initiation, marriage, death and burial reflect a delicate balance between human needs and environmental stewardship. Indigenous religious perspectives emphasise harmony between humans and the natural world, fostering interconnections and respect for Mother Earth. African traditional tribal values often embed themes of ecological interconnections, guiding reciprocal relationships with nature.

Despite the diversity of African societies, an overarching reverence for Mother Earth unites these communities, as land and natural habitats hold profound spiritual significance. Many believe that the spirits of ancestors reside in natural spaces, leading to a prioritisation of sustainable interactions with the environment. Sacred sites such as rivers and forests serve as venues for initiation ceremonies, libations, sacrifices and divination, underscoring the spiritual and ecological interdependence within African religious traditions. Matai (2024) points out, 'In African Traditional Religions (ATR), the natural world is not just a backdrop to human life; it is a vital, living entity that is deeply intertwined with spiritual beliefs and practices'. Co-existence and co-prosperity, therefore, extend beyond living harmoniously with others to include fostering reciprocal relationships with the environment. Indigenous religious values provide a framework for tackling climate change through empowerment strategies targeting individuals, families, social institutions and nations. These strategies aim to enhance wealth generation from natural resources while minimising environmental harm. From an early age, African communities socialise individuals into cultural and religious beliefs about nature (Serpell & Adamson-Holley 2017:19). Elders and community members play a crucial role in transferring this knowledge, embedding foundational values that support ecological stewardship and inter-generational sustainability. Women diviners, in particular, exemplify this knowledge by observing natural signs such as animal behaviour, plant cycles and celestial changes to predict weather patterns and guide agricultural practices. In addition, the calls of specific birds or the flowerings of particular plants, for example, often signal seasonal shifts or impending rainfall. Indigenous African religious perspectives on co-existence and co-prosperity therefore offer a profound, spiritually grounded approach to addressing climate change. By blending ecological wisdom with cultural and spiritual values, they provide a model for nurturing harmonious relationships between humanity and the natural world while ensuring sustainable development for future generations.

Conclusion

An Afro-ecofeminism lens has been used in this study to explore the relationship between the ethics of stewardship in Genesis 2:1–15 and indigenous African perspectives on climate change. The pursuit of climate justice, co-existence and co-prosperity in Africa is intricately linked to the pivotal role African women play in addressing climate change through IRP. As custodians and transmitters of indigenous knowledge, African women contribute significantly to natural resource management, agriculture, community well-being and the preservation of sustainable practices through herbal medicine, rituals and ceremonies. Promoting their wisdom is not only vital but also a transformation approach to tackling issues of food security and environmental resilience. To harness the potential of IRP, it is essential to empower women by creating platforms for sharing their expertise, such as storytelling events and ritual-based community gatherings. Furthermore, revising educational curricula to integrate the intersection of indigenous knowledge, women's roles and climate change would institutionalise their contributions and amplify their impact. By centring African women's indigenous knowledge, communities can forge stronger pathways towards harmonious co-existence, sustainable development and mutual prosperity with Mother Earth.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

Author's contribution

D.C.J. is the sole author of this research article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

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