

An evaluation of social and cultural factors influencing the church's environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai

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Abstract

The social and cultural factors influencing the church's mandate on environmental stewardship, focus on a case study conducted at CITAM Rongai in Kajiado County, Kenya. The study aims to evaluate the extent to which CITAM Rongai has implemented and upheld environmental stewardship principles and practices as mandated by God. It investigates the church's efforts in promoting environmental conservation guided by the following objectives: to assess whether people's practice influences its mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai; to establish if social norms influence the church's mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai; to establish if personal belief and values influence the church's mandate on environmental stewardship at CITAM Ongata-Rongai. The research used a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with key stakeholders and quantitative on church members' data analysis to comprehensively understand the church's role in environmental stewardship. A total of 124 respondents participated in the study. They were able to provide insights to church leadership, policymakers, and the wider community interested in fostering sustainable practices and conservation strategies. The church needs to influence people's practices on the execution of its mandate on environmental stewardship preaching and engaging experts on environmental stewards, to influence participants in tree planting. Secondly, the church needs to encourage its members on its mandate through its social norms within the church's social norms towards environmental stewardship. Through encouraging community engagement to build partnerships with local communities in Kajiado County to undertake environmental initiatives, such as tree planting drives, clean-up activities, and conservation projects. Thirdly The church needs to develop initiatives to ignite personal beliefs and values that would strongly contribute to their dedication to environmental stewardship among the participants and members at large and this will make them embrace and prioritize environmental stewardship.

Keywords: *Social-cultural, church's environmental stewardship, mandate, people's practices, social norms, personal believes, and values.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The reality of our global environmental crisis is undeniable. Environmental stewardship, originating as a universal mandate bestowed upon the first man (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:15), holds profound significance considering the ecological crisis affecting all people and living beings. The intensifying global environmental issues, intricately interconnected, pose a grave concern, with anthropogenic climate change notably threatening human security through the escalation of extreme weather events such as heat waves, droughts, and floods.

In Africa, the church has been essential in promoting environmental stewardship through various initiatives. These include advocating for policies that protect natural resources, promoting sustainable farming practices, and educating communities on the importance of conservation. One example of the church's work in environmental stewardship is the Catholic Church's *Laudato Si* campaign. The Church's *Laudato Si* campaign refers to initiatives inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical letter "Laudato Si'," published in 2015.

At home, another example is the All-Saints Cathedral Church in Nairobi, Kenya. This Anglican church has been actively involved in environmental conservation efforts for several years. They have implemented various initiatives such as tree planting campaigns, waste management programs, and educational workshops on environmental sustainability. Additionally, the church incorporates prayers and sermons focused on environmental stewardship into its regular worship services, emphasizing the importance of caring for God's creation as part of their spiritual duty. The movement also encourages churches to adopt eco-friendly practices such as energy conservation, recycling, and sustainable land management, integrating environmental stewardship into their religious practices and teachings.

Overall, the Church in Kenya bears a significant mandate for environmental stewardship, firmly rooted in its Christian teachings and the fundamental belief that God is the creator of the world, entrusting humans with its care. As stated in Genesis 2:15, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." This biblical mandate points out the sacred responsibility bestowed upon humanity to safeguard and nurture the environment as faithful stewards of God's creation. In Kenya, the Church has wielded considerable influence since the country's independence in 1963 and the advent of the multiparty system in the 1990s. Its remarkable contributions extend across various spheres of life, including social, economic, and political realms, earning it widespread recognition and respect.

CITAM (Christ is the Answer Ministries) is a Christian denomination in Nairobi, Kenya. In the early days of its establishment, the organization envisioned expanding its reach to other parts of the country, including Ongata-Rongai. CITAM Rongai Church is in Kajiado County, in Kajiado North Sub-County, in Ongata-Rongai Constituency. While the Rongai area is highly urbanized and the current population has invested in planting trees, Kajiado County is semi-arid. It is occupied by the Maasai tribe, who are pastoralists. This situation calls upon the church to understand two contrasting dynamics likely to raise a significant challenge in environmental stewardship, especially in tree planting and conservation. The study investigated how applied theological foundations, social-cultural motivations, practical steps, a program for environmental stewardship, and the church mandate coordinate environmental stewardship.

CITAM-Ongata Rongai

Located in Kajiado County, CITAM (Christ is the Answer Ministries) embarked on its journey by holding church services at Clarence Matheny Ministries (CMM) near Maxwell Academy.

Initially, a minor assembly of 100-300 members would gather at this location to worship, primarily drawn from the surrounding community near CMM.

However, CITAM's growth trajectory was nothing short of remarkable. Over the years, fueled by a resolute leadership team and a fervent commitment to its mission, the church experienced exponential popularity. Its appeal extended far beyond the confines of its initial congregation, drawing an increasing number of members from Ongata Rongai town and its environs.

With unwavering faith and perseverance, CITAM diligently pursued its vision of establishing a permanent place of worship in Ongata Rongai. After years of concerted efforts and steadfast belief, this vision materialized into reality. Today, CITAM stands as a beacon of faith in Ongata Rongai, with over 3000 regular attendees. Its presence is marked by a beautiful tent that serves as a spiritual sanctuary for believers in the region.

Committed to its mission of spreading the Gospel message, CITAM actively engages in serving the diverse needs of the local community. Through a myriad of outreach programs and initiatives, the church addresses various social, economic, and spiritual challenges faced by residents of Ongata Rongai and its surrounding areas.

1.1 Problem Statement

The primary goal of the church's mandate for environmental stewardship is the alarming ecological crisis, which poses a grave threat to the well-being and survival of all living beings. This crisis is primarily driven by human activities such as pollution, deforestation, and climate change, leading to the alarming loss of biodiversity, the degradation of ecosystems, and the disruption of natural cycles. Compounding this challenge is the prevailing worldview that views the natural world merely as a resource for human exploitation, neglecting its intrinsic value and the interconnectedness of all living beings.

In response to this pressing issue, the church's mandate for environmental stewardship seeks to promote a transformative vision of ecological responsibility deeply rooted in faith and spirituality. It acknowledges humanity's moral obligation to cherish and safeguard God's creation, advocating for sustainable practices that honor the sanctity of the environment. However, the church's efficacy in promoting environmental stewardship and tackling the environmental crisis remains a subject of ongoing debate and scholarly inquiry.

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To assess whether people's practices are influenced by the church's mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai
- ii. To establish if social norms are influenced by the church's mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai
- iii. To establish if personal beliefs and values are influenced by the church's mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai.

1.3 Research Questions

- i. How people's practices are influenced by the church's mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai?
- ii. How are social norms influenced by the church's mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai?
- iii. How are personal beliefs and values influenced by the church's mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on the church's mandate for environmental stewardship provides a rich and diverse range of perspectives, drawing on religious, philosophical, and ethical traditions. This type of literature review evaluates the state of knowledge on a particular topic¹. This literature underscores the importance of recognizing the interconnectedness of all living beings and the responsibility to care for the environment as part of our moral duty to respect and protect God's creation.

Social Cultural in Church participation in environmental stewardship

The church is in a privileged position about conserving our environment and denouncing environmental degradation.² Churches can significantly impact environmental stewardship efforts by leveraging their social and cultural influence. Encouraging individuals to integrate environmental care into their moral and ethical framework can lead to more sustainable practices within the church community and beyond.

People's practice and environmental stewardship

People's practice factors help comprehend why individuals within a society may exhibit certain actions. These factors are interconnected and dynamic, influencing behaviors in a complex and multifaceted manner. Efforts to understand and potentially modify behaviors often involve addressing these social-cultural influences.

Social Norms and Environmental Stewardship

Social norms are crucial to social-cultural dynamics, influencing behavior, values, and social interactions. *Fostering social norms may initiate and maintain desirable environmental behaviors.*³ These norms are unwritten rules or expectations that guide individuals' behaviors and actions, shaping the fabric of a community.

Personal belief and values and Environmental Stewardship

Personal beliefs and values prevalent within a social-cultural context are crucial for comprehending societal behaviors, attitudes, and decision-making processes. Diverse personal beliefs and *values* of nature lead to environmental *sustainability*⁴ Values serve as a compass that guides individuals and societies in navigating their interactions and shaping their identities.

¹ Hannah Snyder, "Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines," *Journal of Business Research* 104, no. 2 (November 1, 2019): 333, accessed April 8, 2023, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0148296319304564>.

² George K. Kiarie, "Environmental Degradation: What Is the Role of the Church in Environmental Conservation in Kenya from 1963-2019?," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 46, no. 2 (2020): 1, accessed November 30, 2023, http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_abstract&pid=S1017-04992020000200004&lng=en&nrm=iso&tlng=en.

³ George Perry et al., "Evaluating the Role of Social Norms in Fostering Pro-Environmental Behaviors," *Frontiers in Environmental Science* 9, no. 2 (June 1, 2021): 63.

⁴ Unai Pascual et al., "Diverse Values of Nature for Sustainability," *Nature* 620, no. 7975 (August 2023): 813, accessed April 10, 2024, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-023-06406-9>.

The conceptual framework indicates the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. Is a visual representation in research that helps to illustrate the expected relationship between cause and effect⁵.

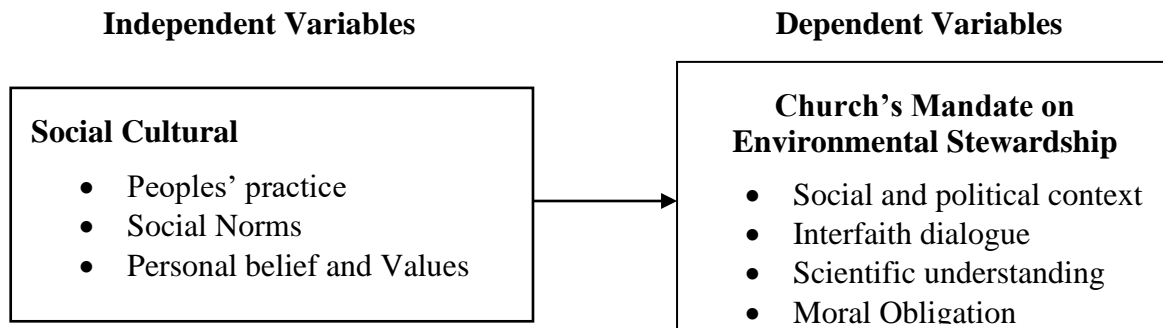


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The research methodology for this paper on "Church's Mandate on Environmental Stewardship" aims to investigate the application of theological foundations, assess social-cultural factors, understand motivations, and determine practical steps for environmental stewardship at the CITAM Ongata-Rongai assembly. The proposed methodology encompasses a mix of qualitative and quantitative research approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Research Design

Qualitative Approach

The qualitative approach integrated a comprehensive literature review, conducting two focus groups with church members and four key- in-depth interviews with key stakeholders actively engaged in environmental stewardship at CITAM. These key figures include the senior pastor and three Environmental Ambassadors. The objective was to gain insights into the role of the church in its mandate to Environmental Stewardship.

Quantitative Approach

The quantitative approach employed structured surveys to collect numerical data, providing statistical insights into the congregation's awareness, attitudes, and behaviors related to environmental stewardship.

Survey Design, Sample Population, Data Collection & Analysis

Structured survey instruments were developed that included both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions to quantify responses. The tool covered awareness of environmental stewardship, perceived importance, current engagement levels, and potential barriers to participation.

Sampling

⁵ Claire DeMarco, "LibGuides: Section 1: Conceptual Framework," last modified 2024, accessed April 10, 2024, <https://resources.nu.edu/c.php?g=1013602&p=7661246>.

Qualitative Sample Design

In addition to in-depth interviews, two discussion groups were conducted, engaging young adults (18-30) and those aged 35 and above. This approach aims to gather diverse perspectives on environmental stewardship at CITAM Ongata-Rongai through open dialogue.

Quantitative Survey Design

A structured questionnaire was administered to 106 participants, maintaining a balanced gender distribution, and targeting church members with at least two years of attendance. The survey included individuals aged 18 years and above, ensuring representation across various age groups within the congregation. The target population is 4000 people. Sample size calculation

$$\text{Sample Size} = \frac{Z^2 \times p \times (1-p)}{e^2} \quad \text{8\% error of margin and 90\% confidence level, the Z-score is approximately 1.645.}$$

$$\text{Sample Size} = \frac{(1.645)^2 \times 0.5 \times (1-0.5)}{(0.08)^2} \quad \text{Sample Size} = \frac{(1.645)^2 \times 0.5 \times (1-0.5)}{(0.08)^2}$$

$$\text{Sample Size} \approx 105.27$$

$$\text{Sample Size} \approx 106$$

Data Collection & Analysis

Data collection was facilitated through ODK, specifically by utilizing Google Forms. Three research assistants were engaged in the process: two concentrated on quantitative data collection to ensure a gender-balanced sample of 120 participants, and a third, specializing in qualitative methods, conducted in-depth interviews. Qualitative data, recorded after obtaining consent, has been transcribed for subsequent analysis. Quantitative data was transferred to Excel for cleaning and analysis. The results have been synthesized into a technical report following the research objectives.

Target population

The target population consisted of one pastor, church elders, workers, and members.

Table 1: Target Population

Description	Numbers
Senior Pastor (K.I.I)	1
Environmental Ambassadors / Non-E. A (K.I.I)	3
Church members (Structured survey	120
Total	124

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics

Gender of the respondents who participated in the study.

Table 2: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentages
Female	65	54.2
Gender	55	45.8
Total	120	100

The demographic breakdown in Table 1 reveals a substantial sample size of 120 individuals who actively engaged in the survey, representing a diverse representation across various

demographics. Notably, the gender distribution demonstrates balanced participation, with 65 respondents (54.2%) identified as female and 55 respondents (45.8%) as male, citing the survey's inclusive nature across different gender identities.

Church Attendance

Table 3: The church attendance

Period in years	Frequency	Percentages
Less than 1	28	23.4
2- 5	55	45.8
6-10	37	30.8
Total	120	100

Based on the data presented in Table 2, it is evident that church attendance patterns vary among respondents. The largest portion of individuals, totaling 55 (45.8%), had been attending Citam-Ongata Rongai for a duration of 2 to 5 years, indicating a significant segment of recent attendees. Following closely behind, 37 individuals (30.8%) reported attending the church for 6 to 10 years, suggesting a substantial presence of long-term members within the congregation.

RQ1 How do people’s practices influence the church’s mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai?

Quantitative Findings

In the quantitative survey, less than 20% of the respondents felt that the church has influenced tree planting and cleanliness initiatives related to the environment. While the majority who are at 80% felt that church has done little.

Qualitative Findings

In seeking to evaluate how peoples’ practices have been influenced by the church's mandate on environmental stewardship at CITAM Ongata-Rongai, the researcher was able to identify that people’s practices have not been influenced by the church's environmental stewardship mandate. Most of the respondents felt like the church needs to do more on its mandate of environmental stewardship. According to respondents 002CR the church has done little in the execution of its mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai. Respondents 003CR felt the church has not done much to influence people’s practice in promoting responsible land use, such as crop rotation and leaving parcels fallow for regeneration, while discouraging littering and improper waste disposal.

RQ2 How do social norms influence the church's mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai?

Quantitative Findings

On the quantitative data, at least 23% of the respondents expressed that social norms within CITAM would influence their attitudes towards environmental stewardship. While 58.3% stated that they do not perceive any influence by the church on its mandate on environmental stewardship, 15.8% expressed uncertainty ("maybe") regarding this influence.

Qualitative Findings

On the qualitative data, some of the participants felt that there is no influence from the church on them for environmental stewardship which has become a faraway thought currently as their main concern is on their primary needs like food and shelter. According to participant 001CR

environmental stewardship is not a priority this is because Society is not keen to easily understand the very fundamentals of stewardship as they do not see the benefit of it in the same time the church is not taking a leading role.

RQ3 How do personal beliefs and values influence the church's mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai?

Quantitative Findings

The findings suggest a link between personal beliefs, values, and the commitment to church environmental stewardship. Only 15% of respondents indicated that they had personal beliefs and values that would strongly contribute to their dedication to environmental stewardship within the church. This highlights the significant role that individual convictions play in motivating active participation in environmental initiatives within the faith community. Conversely, a mere 70% of respondents expressed that their values had little to or no influence on their commitment to church environmental stewardship. Additionally, approximately 15% of respondents remained neutral or did not clearly articulate their stand on environmental stewardship.

Qualitative Findings

The responses from some of the participants revealed that they don't realize the importance of environmental stewardship. According to respondent 002CR, many may not realize that their actions, such as littering or neglecting environmental cleanliness, directly impact their well-being and that of others.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The people's practices on the church's mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai?

The church has not influenced people's practices on the execution of its mandate on environmental stewardship as it does little or almost nothing on its mandate on the environment stewards such as tree planting and cleanliness initiatives related to environment such as tree planting.

Social norms influence the church's mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai

The study has illuminated the important significance of ecclesiastic organizations specifically, CITAM Ongata Rongai in Kajiado, Kenya in which the church ought to play and influence environmental stewardship. The church has not put enough practice on its mandate of environmental stewardship. It was evident that the social norms within CITAM would not influence participants' social norms towards environmental stewardship. Such as community engagement to build partnerships with local communities in Kajiado County to undertake environmental initiatives, such as tree planting drives, clean-up activities, and conservation projects.

Personal beliefs and values influence the church's mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai

The church has not come up with initiatives to ignite personal beliefs and values that would strongly contribute to their dedication to environmental stewardship among the participants and members at large. The participants have put priorities on other aspects of their lives which they feel are more important to them.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

We may work toward a sustainable future where our world thrives through concerted efforts and unshakable dedication (Psalm 8:6-8).

The people's practices on the church's mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai?

The church needs to influence people's practices on the execution of its mandate on the environmental stewardship preaching and engaging experts on environmental stewards, to influence participants in tree planting.

Social norms influence the church's mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai

The church needs to encourage its members on its mandate through its social norms within the church's social norms towards environmental stewardship. Through encouraging community engagement to build partnerships with local communities in Kajiado County to undertake environmental initiatives, such as tree planting drives, clean-up activities, and conservation projects.

Personal beliefs and values influence the church's mandate on environmental stewardship mandate at CITAM Ongata-Rongai

The church needs to develop initiatives to ignite personal beliefs and values that would strongly contribute to their dedication to environmental stewardship among the participants and members at large and this will make them embrace and prioritize environmental stewardship.

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