

African Indigenous Conservative Approach to Environmental Sustainability: Maintaining a Balance within the Blue Economy

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Abstract

This paper ethically investigates into how to ensure a balance between wealth creation out of the ocean resources and at the same time maintaining a sustained environment through the introduction of the African indigenous conservative method. The problem of global warming as a result of climate change has, in recent times, shifted the global economic focus from wealth creation through unsustainable means to cleaner, healthier approaches that aim to protect the ecosystem, recognizing human survival's dependence on it. One of the proposed clean means is the blue economy otherwise called the green economy, blue growth, ocean economy, and ocean sustainability, which is regarded as the sustainable use of ocean resources for wealth creation. However, amidst the optimism surrounding the blue economy, ethical considerations still becomes salient, as it remains imperative to ensure that the pursuit of wealth creation does not come at the expense of further environmental degradation, as that has often been the reality of wealth creation. Thus, through the use of a conceptual and critical analysis methodology, this paper at the end, we conclude that while the clean economy is considered a clean way of creating wealth, it could as well lead to further degradation if care is not taken due to the selfish nature of man and his anthropocentric consciousness, and it would be detrimental if further degradation is birthed through the blue economy. Hence, an ethical consideration is necessary and revered in order to further maintain a sustained environmental condition, of which the African conservative method of preserving the environment best addresses this concern.

Keywords: Africa, Blue Economy, Conservation, Environmental Sustainability

Introduction

In the face of escalating environmental degradation and the urgent need for sustainable practices as the survival of humanity depends on it (Rawat & Mishra, 2021), the indigenous peoples of various backgrounds in Africa have emerged as guardians of ancient wisdom, emphasizing the relevance of the African knowledge systems; a repository of traditional ecological knowledge, passed down through generations, which have according to them long demonstrated a profound understanding of the complex

connections between humanity and the environment (Rusinga & Maposa, 2020). As the global community struggles with finding cleaner and more sustainable means of wealth creation due to the pressing issues of climate change and environmental degradation, the concept of the blue economy emerges as one of the promising solution to ensuring a cleaner environment. The blue economy which focuses on the sustainable use of ocean resources, offers a pathway to both economic prosperity and environmental preservation. However, amidst the

optimism surrounding the blue economy, ethical considerations becomes salient, as it remains imperative to ensure that the pursuit of wealth creation does not come at the expense of further environmental degradation. This concern becomes even more urgent when considering the real-world consequences of ocean exploitation, such as rising ocean acidification, loss of biodiversity, and overfishing (Anthony et al., 2011; Nartey, 2025), all of which threaten the resilience of marine ecosystems. Therefore, this paper seeks to explore how African indigenous ethical frameworks, which are built on the ethics of in reverence balance, and eco-communal harmony (Ojomo, 2011; Rawat & Mishra, 2021; Mogaji, 2025a, 2025b), can inform sustainable ocean governance in the face of these specific environmental threats.

Hence, the African indigenous conservative method emerges as a beacon of ethical guidance. Essential to this knowledge system is its holistic worldview; following the reality that “environmental crises seek holistic approach for healing nature” (Rawat & Mishra, 2021), which recognizes the environment as a dynamic and interconnected ecosystem, where humans coexist with every living entity (Merchant, 1992). This wealth of wisdom encompasses sustainable resource management, biodiversity conservation, and climate adaptation strategies designed in traditional approaches. However, what distinguishes African knowledge systems is their deep integration with cultural and spiritual dimensions, intrinsic in the emphasis of their Indigenous cosmologies on the sacredness of the natural world, which prioritizes a profound sense of responsibility towards ecological stewardship. This thus all boils down to the reverence for the environment embedded in the traditional system of the African.

The environment, through the lens of the Africans is home to not just the people nor the living alone, but rather extensively serves as the habitat for all forms of being, which accordingly comprises of the spiritual and physical beings, and these spiritual beings have a huge contribution to the functionality of the environment. It serves as our fundamental life support system, constituting a vital part of our existence, which comprises of both the living and

non-living elements and interdependent on each other for continued survival (Rawat & Mishra, 2021). The environment which according to the African settings can be said to be “Mother Nature” is regarded as the highest ranking in the hierarchy of the society. A belief system which has often influenced their approach to all it houses including animals, plants, and so on. Thus, it becomes obligatory to refrain from all sort of abusive use of the environment since humans as a people needs the environment in a healthy shape in order to continue enjoying the benefit of a healthy living. As a result, this paper shall ethically investigate into how to ensure a balance between wealth creation out of the ocean resources and at the same time maintaining a sustained environment through the introduction of the African indigenous conservative method because, “the depletion of natural resources is one of the greatest challenges with far reaching consequences if sustainable environmental management programmes are not properly put into practice” (Rusinga & Maposa, 2020).

Materials and Methodology

In realizing the goal of this paper, it adopts a qualitative method, particularly, a conceptual clarification and a critical analysis method. This paper is divided into five sections. With conceptual clarification, the first section conceptualises the concept of Blue economy. This section does this by at first tracing the root of blue economy to the origin to the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012, held in Rio de Janeiro, and then defined it drawing from definitions from World Bank, United Nations, among many other literatures. The second section further the conceptual clarification exercise by clarifying what Environmental Sustainability entails. The third section looks into the problem of the work by analyzing the problem of commodifying the environment. It discusses, critically, the human disconnect from the environment for the purpose of wealth creation. The fourth section does a theoretical review of the African conservative approach to conserving and preserving the environment. This looks into several literatures from African philosophers on the communal-based approach by

the Africans in the relation to the environment. The fifth section is the critical discussion and analysis section, haven established the problem in the fourth section, and the findings from that section are further engaged with. It synthesises this through the application of the African conservative approach for managing and maintaining a balance within the blue economy. The last section provides the conclusion and Recommendations.

Conceptualizing the Concept of the Blue Economy

The idea of the “blue economy” originated from the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012, held in Rio de Janeiro, which centered on enhancing the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development and promoting the concept of the “green economy” (Lesprance, 2016). The concept of the “Blue Economy” is considered a sustainable concept whose defining factor is not only traceable to the idea of liberating countries out of poverty following the report that “the world counts numerous coastal and island countries with lower and lower-middle income levels, for whom oceans represent a significant jurisdictional area and a source of opportunity”, but rather also considers the looming necessity of saving the ecosystem from further degradation, which is equivalent to promoting a greener economy. This defining factor is retrieved from the purview of the Sustainable Development Goal initiatives, and thus led to this concept being an economic concept which seeks to create wealth from ocean resources but however looks beyond this lens as the world is apparently undergoing the crisis of climate change. This prompted the inclusion of the consideration of ocean health and development side by side wealth creation. As regarding defining this concept, it has not been met with a concise definition because it has been expressed in different ways, due to application and utilization procedure (Idowu et al., 2023).

According to World Bank & United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the blue economy is understood as “comprising the range of economic sectors and related policies that together determine whether the use of oceanic resources is sustainable.” It as well “seeks to

promote economic growth, social inclusion, and the preservation or improvement of livelihoods while at the same time ensuring environmental sustainability of the oceans and coastal areas whether the use of oceanic resources is sustainable.” In essence, this path to wealth creation prioritizes the sustainment and development of the environment while utilizing resources for wealth creation. This idea of the blue economy has to do with sustainability, and is as well informed by the findings that “ocean resources are limited and the health of the ocean has drastically declined due to anthropogenic activities”. Hence, this thus led to the popular definition by the world bank, which considers the concept of the blue economy as the sustainable use of ocean resources for a better environment condition, comprising of both enhancing the lives of the people and preserving the environment.

According to Idowu et al. (2023) the term ‘blue economy’ is often used interchangeably with terms like ‘blue growth’, ‘ocean economy’, ‘ocean sustainability’, and ‘green economy’ due to its broad scope. Accordingly, it encompasses a range of economic activities in ocean and coastal regions, spanning from traditional endeavors such as fishing and shipping to more modern initiatives like offshore wind and wave energy, ocean-based aquaculture, and marine biotechnology among many other economic activities (Idowu et al., 2023). The blue economy is defined as the “sustainable utilization of ocean and coastal resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and job creation while preserving the health of marine ecosystems” (Idowu et al., 2023). It specifically adopts an economic perspective, highlighting its potential benefits, and satisfactions while threading the path of ensuring an environment free from anthropogenic abuse all in the name of wealth creation. In the report of The World Bank & United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the intrinsic expectations and qualities of the blue economy should include the below:

- Provide Social and Economic Benefits for Current and Future Generations
- Restore, protect, and maintain the diversity, productivity, resilience, core functions, and intrinsic value of marine ecosystems
- Be based on clean technologies, renewable

energy, and circular material flows that will reduce waste and promote recycling of materials.

In essence, the characteristic of the blue economy is eco-friendly and includes the sustainment of the environment alongside wealth creation.

Conceptualizing Environmental Sustainability

The discourse on environmental sustainability as we have it, has over the years become a global concern as its negligence has caused severe hurt to the earth's health, further threatening the survival of man (United Nations, 2019). It has become a global imperative, which extends beyond the confines of any single region or nation. In our increasingly interconnected world, the challenge of environmental pollution affects all countries, regardless of their size, developmental stage, or ideological orientation (Kumar, 2018). What then do we mean by 'Environmental sustainability?' Why even sustain the environment? Of what benefit is sustaining the environment? And what could be the environmental consequence if the environment is not sustained?

Considering the above questions, it is thus necessary to define what the environment is before delving into what environmental sustainability is. The term "Environment" holds its root meaning in the word "surroundings," encompassing both the material and spiritual factors that impact the growth, development, and survival of living beings (Kumar, 2018). According to Obi (2024), it is synonymous to nature. Thus, it could be said to encompass the circumstances or conditions that encircle an organism or group of organisms, as well as the complex web of social or cultural factors influencing an individual or community (Kumar, 2018). Basically, the environment is a home to different habitat of species of organisms. This includes: animals, Humans, organisms, plants, natural element and resources, and all other forms of lives. In other words the environment is the container of life. It is the platform where all that exist on earth dwell. On this note the environment could be synonymous to earth. According to Kumar (2018), "the term 'environment' generally refers to 'natural surrounding', that is, it covers the physical surroundings that are common to all living beings and include air-space, water, land,

plant, wildlife and flora-fauna etc." Simply put, it is the collective sum of water, air, land, and their interconnected relationships with human beings, other living organisms, and materials.

However, the conception of what the environment entails defers from one set of people to another. To the Africans, the environment is as much a spiritual entity just as much it is a physical entity, and part of the community (Rawat & Mishra, 2021). It is considered a part of the chain of existence, and thus should be accorded the respect it deserves. Specifically, in traditional African society, the pattern of living is a communal type whereby every life contributes to the existence of others and if the chain of collectivity is broken the survival of all is threatened. This in fact informed the statement of Mbiti (1990) that "I am because we are and since we are therefore I am." In essence, the survival of the individual is dependent on other individuals, which include man, animal, plant, natural resources and elements, and every other forms of life. The preservation and continued existence of all within the environment is relevant and useful, and a hurt to one is at the peril of others, and thus, a must to preserve all that exist within the confine of the environment, and the container itself which is the environment.

Having understood what the environment is, we can then proceed to environmental sustainability. Environmental sustainability is a new concept which has been absorbed into the global institution of sustainable development goals (SDG). This emergence is bore out of the consciousness that "protecting the environment is a global issue and it is not an isolated problem of any area or nation." (Kumar, 2018). The surfacing of the concept has necessary emerged to contain the looming threat to the ecosystem. The issue of global warming which has led to climate change has often dealt disastrous effects on the survival of man and all life (Olatade & Mogaji, 2025), and as a result, environmental sustainability is an approach of sustainment that tends to address the degradation of the earth which now threatens the continuous survival of man. Expressed by Goodland (1995), "Environmental sustainability seeks to sustain global life-support systems indefinitely (this refers principally to those systems maintaining human life)" because, human

life depends on these systems which includes “... food, shelter, breathable air, plant pollination, waste assimilation, and other environmental life:-support services” (Goodland, 1995). With the aversion above, environmental sustainability considers the environment as the basic life support system (Rawat & Mishra, 2021). According to Morelli (2011), environmental sustainability is identified as “a condition of balance, resilience, and interconnectedness that allows human society to satisfy its needs while neither exceeding the capacity of its supporting ecosystems to continue to regenerate the services necessary to meet those needs nor by our actions diminishing biological diversity”. In other words, environmental sustainability seeks to restore balance to the affairs of nature, for the health, relevance and tangibility of the environment contributes to the survival of all because; it is part and parcel of the chain of existence on earth. The above environmental imperatives align directly with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDG 13 on Climate Action, SDG 14 on Life Below Water, and SDG 12 on Responsible Consumption, which is supported in the African advocacy for balance, restraint, and communal responsibility in their indigenous practices.

The Commodification of the Environment: A Disconnection from the Environment for Wealth Creation

The environment as discussed in the previous section is identified as a home to different habitat which houses all forms of life. This position it as the platform where all lives flourishes. However, it has not been over time treated with the respected it deserves, as the container of life, but rather as a mere means to amassing wealth. The undeniable reality is that the issue of environmental crisis which has become one of the paramount global concerns poses as a threat to the world at large, as every society faces this crisis (Ojomo, 2011). This issue of environmental crisis has thus been on the floor of debate as a result of the threat it poses to the survival of man, which has been established to be as a result of the commodification of nature. In the words of Rawat & Mishra, (2021), the commodification of nature has long been promoted by the Eurocentric knowledge of capitalism which

supports the unlimited extraction and exploitation of natural resources. This activity, having its root in the capitalist has often done more hurt to the environment and this place the environment at the mercy of the exploiters as the environment in this sense is considered as a tool to creating wealth and thus, plays an instrumental function. Accordingly, the commodification of nature has over time been established to be the major cause for degradation done to the eco-system (Rawat & Mishra, 2021). This commodification has led to various environmental problems, emanating from causes like drilling of oil wells with cheap and inefficient equipment leading to oil spillage on the soil and water, the release of carbons to the atmosphere by companies, commercial and private vehicle, and the disposal of wastes (degrading materials) to the soil and water among many others. According to European Union, the negligence of maintaining a sustainable approach towards the ocean often leads to the pollution of the marine environment by chemicals, plastics, oil spillage and so on. This accordingly threatens the health of the marine environment and as well as the continuous use of the seas for commercial and recreational activities.

All of these are activities which are targeted to racking in wealth for the capitalist at the detriment of the environment's health has been considered abuses to the eco-system. In essence, “the causes of environmental pollution and degradation, environmental injustice, ineffective responses to the environmental crisis, and the lack of a viable environmental ethics which takes cognizance of the peculiar dynamics of the environmental crisis in Africa are issues worthy of philosophical scrutiny” (Ojomo, 2011). This in fact shows the disconnection from the environment due to selfishness, corruption, greed, and exploitative spirit of some set of individuals, who could employ any means possible to amass wealth, even at the cost of inflicting damage and suffering to the environment. The above behavior of vices, going by the arguments of Mogaji (2025b) could be further intensifies through the human cognitive bias, namely the confirmation and the anchoring bias, all of which contradicts the quest for survival because. Hence, we are confronted with the question of given the reality that the rain forest for example supplies humans

with medicinal cures, sustenance, and shelter (Bolt et al., 2023; Middleton et al., 2023; Nartey, 2025), why do humans struggle to prioritize its welfare and conservation? Without much ado, this all boils down to the human disconnection from the environment, ignorance about how crucial the environment is to our survival, and as well their greed for wealth (Bently, 2013; Ojomo, 2024; Mogaji, 2025a; 2025b).

African Indigenous Conservative Strategy

Like many other society, the ancient African societies have always faced environmental crisis and problems which undeniably threatens the peace of their people. Problems like soil infertility, flood, and erosion among many others, and they have over time learnt to result to sustainable methodologies to address these crises by observing environmental initiatives to sustain the environment in order to maintain ecological balance, as what it takes to survive as human could be threatened if engaged in the otherwise. This established initiatives incorporated into their system helped to preserve soil, minimize erosion, conserve water, and mitigate the potential for disasters, all linked to their reverence for the wellbeing of the ecosystem, so as for their wellbeing could be ensured in return. Thus, whether or not this approach is targeted for the survival of man, what is imminent is that peculiar to them is their connection with the environment, which shows their reverence for the health and wellbeing of the environment. One of such approach is the African conservative methodology. However, while this paper refers broadly to “African indigenous systems,” it recognises that Africa comprises a diversity of ethnic groups, each with distinct ecological knowledge and spiritual orientations. Therefore, the term is used here as a collective philosophical orientation, but specific examples, such as the Swenger in Kenya and the Yoruba in Nigeria, are included to reflect regional variations in practice.

African conservative methodology toward the environment has always been built on community, which was explicitly shown by Ojomo (2011), which Gbadebo and Omosulu (2015) argues that the burden of protecting the environment lies with humans. While exposing the work of Ogungbemi (1997), Ojomo (2011) considered the African relation to

the environment in a natural form, which is built on the notion of care. According to Ojomo (2011), the position of Ogungbemi revolves around the idea that the natural environment is intrinsically spiritual, as against the contemporary conception of it as being just physical (Darraz, 2025). Accordingly, he believed that the African traditional attitude toward their environment is built on the ethics of care, whereby the regional African interactions with the environment made him conceive the notion of the ethics of nature-relatedness (Ojomo, 2011). This was considered as a result of natural resources having a spiritual nature. However, Ojomo (2011) furthered this argument by inferring that it was rather more plausible to argue that traditional Africans based their idea on the natural world for existence. This was later supported by Rawat and Mishra (2021), and Mogaji (2024, 2025a, 2025b). From another perspective, Tangwa (2004), a Cameroonian scholar, specifically, An African environmentalist also viewed the African perspective on the environment and their approach and relation toward it as being built on metaphysics, because they considered the environment as that which is a spiritual entity. In his view, traditional Africans acted toward the environment in a manner of “live and let live,” whereby there is an interconnection between plants, animals, and inanimate things, between the sacred and the profane, between what one would call matter and spirit, communal and individual, and as well the rigid and even the flexible (Ojomo, 2011). In other words, rather than them being in opposition, they exist in interdependency, and the lived support system is dependent on each other. To this end, he viewed the African perspective toward the environment, which has aided in preserving and conserving it, as being eco-bio-communal (Ojomo, 2011).

In the argument of Mogaji (2025a), he exposed through the Ubuntu philosophy, how the environment was considered a living being like everyday humans, built under the umbrella of communitarianism. The environment, in this sense, is viewed as a being which has attained the identity of person hood considering her contribution to the continuous existence of man, which Rawat and Mishra (2021) argued to be the life support system of humans. In other words, from this perspective as well, the African attitude

toward the environment is communal in nature, based on the identity with which the environment is viewed from, which is as a living being and must be accorded the ultimate respect and care expected. Hence, from all of the above positions, it is safe to argue that the African conservative methodology towards environmental preservation is peculiar to the African indigenous system, a system argued to serve as a vital bridge connecting past generations with the present and extending its wisdom to future generations (Avoseh, 2002). For instance, a study by Rocliffe et al. (2014) reveals that coastal communities in Madagascar through locally managed marine areas (LMMAs) such as Velondriake, have applied traditional governance systems, which are often designed and structured around *dina*; a community-enforced taboos and social agreements (Gardner et al., 2020), to regulate seasonal fishing and conserve marine biodiversity. These customary laws have proven effective in preventing overfishing and maintaining ecosystem balance, particularly in areas like the Velondriake Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) (Augustave, 2019). Similarly, there is the sacred environmental practice in Kenya, particularly by the Mijikenda people (Ndalilo & Wekesa, 2022). According to them, the Mijikenda people's sacred *kaya* forests extend into coastal zones and act as buffer systems preserving biodiversity, and they reflect how entrenched spiritual and communally enforced indigenous systems are in their practices, which is capable of providing scalable, context-specific tools for marine conservation within the Blue Economy. In another report by UNESCO World Heritage Centre (2008), it was also revealed that the *Kaya* forests host numerous amounts of Kenya's endemic plant species and numerous endangered fauna, whose protection has been possible through the established taboos enforced by community norms (Mbugua 2018; Mwatete, 2021).

Furthering the above, Mamati and Maseno (2021), using the Swenger of Kenya; an indigenous group known for their natural dwelling with nature, as a case study, reveals that in their approach to conserving the environment is traceable to their spiritual foundations, particularly in their deity named *Assis*, considered to be both all-powerful and all-knowing. Accordingly, they highlighted that the Swenger belief in the supreme deity named who

they considered being responsible for the creation of the universe and all its natural resources, and is considered influences their intentional care and protection of the natural environment. Mamati and Maseno (2021) further argues that protecting and preserving the natural environment is understood by the Swenger as a way of expressing gratitude to this divine being, *Assis*, and maintaining a connection with the spiritual world.

According to Rawat & Mishra (2021), it was stressed that Africa's Conservative approach to the environment is traceable to their world views, which are informed by various sources, including: taboos, songs, myths, proverbs, rites, metaphors, and legends, all of which could be regarded as being spiritual. Spirituality in this sense could be involves forming a connection with other forms of existence, through which that human beings, as existential agents, discover meaning and purpose in life. According to Engelbrecht-Aldworth and Wort (2021), to be considered spiritual means being someone who seeks meaning and life's purpose with an awareness of an encompassing understanding of reality beyond oneself. Myths, for instance, shed more luminance into the historical backgrounds, customs, and beliefs of communities, shedding light on their origins. The idea of the indigenous people to conserve nature/environment resonates with their awareness that future generations depend on preserving resources. This being that they understand that overexploitation of resources jeopardizes the well-being of their children and grandchildren. Through practices like limiting hunting and ensuring the regeneration of natural habitats, indigenous communities ensure that resources endure for future generations. Thus, for indigenous peoples, sustainable development part and parcel of their existence and is inseparable from their way of life. This approach to environmental sustainability stemmed out of their connection with the environment. A connection inspired out of the belief of their dependency on nature to survive. They consider themselves part of their environment and every other aspect of the environment as its concluding part. In other words, peculiar to the Africans while relating with the environment is the reverence and humility towards nature, emphasising the interconnectedness and respect for the environment (Rawat & Mishra, 2021).

However, having exposed several practices of Africa Indigenous knowledge, some empirical evidences could be necessary to strengthen the tenability of these practices. Though, while this paper does not present primary data, existing empirical studies affirm the efficacy of indigenous conservation systems and are even recorded in recent times. For instance, a comparative study by Rocliffe et al. (2014) found that locally managed marine areas (LMMAs) across the Western Indian Ocean, many informed by indigenous norms, showed higher fish biomass and coral cover than adjacent unmanaged areas. These findings reinforce the need to integrate traditional governance into modern marine policy frameworks.

Conserving the Blue Economy: A Holistic African Indigenous Approach

No doubt, the definition given to the blue economy intrinsically portrays it as naturally married to the preservation of the ocean's wealth while extracting its resources for wealth creation. However, this being said, we optimally need to consider the capitalist orientation of wealth creation, which after getting exposed to wealth becomes selfish and greedy in the pursuit for wealth, and thus result into the excess extraction of resources at the detriment of their victims health and wellbeing (Bentley, 2013; Bernstein, 2025). In essence, the amount of wealth housed by the ocean is enormous, and thus could lure and influence the extractors of the oceans wealth towards the negligence of reverence for the life, health, and wellbeing of the ocean.

In a report, Augustine (2023) highlighted the economic advantages of the blue economy, citing Dr. Charles Okorefe, who emphasized its expanded scope. According to Dr. Okorefe, the blue economy encompasses a broader spectrum including biodiversity, ocean exploration, deep-sea mining, cable line activities, and maritime tourism. Also, Nnaemeka (2023) in a report stated that, in 2022, Egypt's Suez Canal, a vital trade route connecting Europe and Asia, generated \$8 billion in revenue from her oceans wealth. Additionally, Dr. Okorefe, quoted by Augustine (2023), pointed out that in Gambia for instance, marine tourism serves as the primary source of national income, while in the Caribbean, marine tourism similarly plays an essential role in

generating revenue due to the absence of alternative major income sources. Thus, the blue economy is a profitable aspect of any economy whose wealth is unimaginable if properly invested in. As a result, considering this unimaginable wealth, there is the high tendency of paving way for its excessive exploitation, as it has always been done to other aspect of the environment; soil, forest, and so on. In other words, the preservation of the intrinsic purpose of the blue economy could be altered due inherent vice that comes with the spirit of capitalism. Hence, through this idea of replacing the logic of extraction with one of reciprocity and reverence, African eco-bio-communal ethics helps in providing the ground for a radical counter-narrative to the exploitative tendencies of Western capitalist frameworks. That is, rather than viewing the ocean as a resource bank for profit, these ethics treat it as a kin-being whose health is interdependent with human survival (Rawat & Mishra, 2021; Ojomo, 2024; Mogaji, 2025a; 2025b). This reframing holds the potential to decolonize environmental governance and help ensure more equitable marine policies built on recognition and reciprocity.

However, given that the blue economy aims to address significant global challenges, including the critical role oceans play in sustaining life on the planet and maintaining ecosystem health, and considering its contributions to mitigating climate change through initiatives such as developing renewable energies, decarbonizing maritime transport, and adopting eco-friendly port practices, prioritizing the well-being of the blue economy becomes essential (European Union et. al., 2022). On this very note, approaching the blue economy with a conservative orientation becomes paramount.

The Indigenous Conservative System of the African people emphasizes the necessity of sustainable practices to ensure continued access to resources for future sustenance. This invaluable perspective exposes the possibility of coexisting with nature in a manner that not only supports abundance but also safeguards the well-being of forthcoming generations. This basically is necessary for the blue economy. According to Wangari Maathai in her green belt movement, four core principles were highlighted for the purpose of preserving the entirety of the environment (Including man). These principles

include: 1. Love for the environment, 2. Gratitude and respect for earth's resources, 3. Self-empowerment and self-betterment, and 4. The spirit and service for volunteerism (Rawat & Mishra, 2021). Accordingly, these conservative principles would help maintain ecological balance, and if incorporated into the blue economy, it shall ensure the rational extraction of ocean's resources, and thus lead to environmental protection and conservation. Furthermore, African indigenous practices are inherently against carbonizing the environment through its primacy in promoting low-carbon marine livelihoods such as traditional fishing, coastal agroecology, and mangrove conservation, all of which contribute to reducing emissions and supporting natural carbon sinks. These practices align with the goals of the Paris Agreement and SDG 13 (Climate Action), most especially by enhancing resilience and carbon absorption within coastal ecosystems. Unlike industrial-scale blue economy activities, indigenous approaches minimise ecological disruption and prioritises cyclical, regenerative relationships with nature (Rawat & Mishra, 2021; Mogaji, 2025b).

Thus, considering all of the above, it becomes evident that employing this strategy, observing the three Rs (Reduce, Recycle, and Reuse) would become imminent as humans would thereon consider approaching the blue economy as a living being who feel pains, gets hurt, and could possibly die. Hence, through reverence and alignment with the health and life of the blue economy, we can cultivate sustenance and prosperity while safeguarding the welfare of generations to come because by recognizing and honoring this interconnectedness, individuals can cultivate a sense of responsibility towards the well-being of the ocean, striving to protect it from any suffering and promote harmony. In essence, it is imperative and responsible that we preserve the ocean's health for our collective future.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Undoubtedly, the blue economy, by definition, revolves around the sustainable extraction and utilization of ocean resources to promote the human well-being. However, without a cautious approach, it risks exploitation because while the clean economy is considered a clean way of creating wealth, it could as well lead to further degradation if care is

not taken due to the selfish nature of man and his anthropocentric consciousness. In other words, environmental preservation often clashes with capitalist interests, and thus warrants an ethical consideration in order to maintain a sustained environmental condition, of which the African conservative method of preserving the environment best addresses this concern as shown above. Hence, without due care, the ocean may face disrespect, exposing it to danger and potential destruction. This paper asserts that despite its economic nature, conservative and preservative measures are essential to mitigate any looming threats and ensure the ocean's long-term viability. Moreover, the paper has attempted to show that sustainability must not be framed solely in technological or economic terms, but also through a moral lens built on the principle of Ubuntu and indigenous spiritual cosmology. These perspectives as this paper proposes, challenges dominant extractivist paradigms through its focus on reorienting the Blue Economy toward ethical coexistence and mutual respect.

This paper recommends, considering our analysis so far, that, in order to ethically safeguard the Blue Economy from becoming yet another site of exploitation, it is imperative to ensure that stakeholders must consider rooting the development of the blue economy or the marine economy in the values of the African Indigenous Conservative Approach, which is built on communal-based relationships, spiritual awareness, interdependence, and a deep ethic of care and respect. Through this approach, this paper recommends that ocean resources be treated not as commodities, but as part of a living moral ecosystem in which humans are merely one interwoven part, which should be implemented in government policies. It proposes the implementation of community-led monitoring, the formation of policies grounded in African ecological wisdom, the adoption of philosophical counselling in environmental decision-making, and the pursuit of technological innovation restrained by spiritual and ethical reverence, for through this approach, the Blue Economy, even while generating wealth, the preservation of the ocean's sanctity, guarding its health due to the spiritual and ecological relation and consideration will be actualised.

To ensure scalability and integration, this indigenous model (Ubuntu), we argue, should be mainstreamed into climate finance mechanisms, with a primacy placed on community-led marine projects, built on traditional knowledge. We further recommend that environmental education curricula, especially in coastal regions, however not excluding other people from other region due to migration and relocation, should incorporate African ecological philosophies, in order to ensure intergenerational transmission of this indigenous knowledge of conservation. Also, marine spatial planning can as well benefit from hybrid governance models that combine formal state regulations with customary laws and taboos. Finally, we recommend that international policy frameworks should recognise, in reality, indigenous contributions as being vital and not being supplementary, to ocean conservation efforts. In other words, a full recognition of its importance and value in conserving the body waters is proposed.

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