

INDIGENOUS ECO-ETHICS AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examines how indigenous eco-ethics can contribute to poverty reduction in Nigeria by promoting a deeper connection between environmental stewardship, community responsibility, and sustainable development practices. The methodology applied in this research work is philosophical analysis. This methodology compares traditional indigenous eco-ethical views and practices with modern environmental ethics, demonstrating how African values like communalism and stewardship are uniquely suited to protecting the environment while also promoting economic growth. The findings show that traditional methods, like crop rotation, managing water wisely, and protecting forests, not only help the environment but also reduce poverty by improving local food security and managing resources for sustainable development. These methods allow rural areas to build self-sufficient and balanced lives. The study highlights the need to include indigenous eco-ethical ideas in national policies, suggesting a mixed and balanced approach that respects traditional knowledge while incorporating modern technology. The conclusion states that indigenous eco-ethics could be an effective way to achieve both poverty reduction and environmental health in Nigeria, and it may also be a useful example for other countries with similar social and environmental problems. This research adds to the discussion about sustainable development by focusing on the ethical and cultural aspects necessary for creating fair and lasting poverty alleviation strategies.

Keywords: Indigenous, eco-ethics, poverty alleviation, environmental stewardship, sustainable development, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, faces a significant poverty crisis, with approximately 40% of its population living below the poverty line (World Bank, 2021, p. 23). This persistent poverty is exacerbated by environmental degradation, deforestation, and climate change, which disproportionately affect rural communities dependent on agriculture. The growing environmental crisis, including desertification in the north and flooding in the south, has further marginalized the poor, reducing their access to arable land, water, and other essential resources for survival (Nwoke, 2020, p. 102). In discussions on poverty alleviation, ethics play a crucial role in guiding sustainable development policies that emphasize long-term well-being rather than short-term gains. Ethical theories, particularly those rooted in indigenous knowledge systems, provide moral guidance for balancing human needs with environmental stewardship. Indigenous eco-ethics, as a system of knowledge and beliefs that promote harmony between humans and nature, offer an alternative model for sustainable development in Nigeria (Akinola, 2018, p. 64).

This paper argues that indigenous eco-ethics, with its focus on respect for nature and communal living, presents a viable pathway for addressing poverty in Nigeria. By drawing on traditional practices of environmental stewardship and sustainable resource management, indigenous eco-ethics can provide sustainable, community-driven solutions to poverty. Through understanding and integrating these ethical principles, Nigeria can address both environmental and economic challenges, ensuring the well-being of current and future generations. The methodology used in this study is grounded in the philosophical analysis of indigenous African ethical principles, particularly those that govern the relationship between humans and the environment. This approach involves a comparative analysis of indigenous eco-ethical frameworks and contemporary environmental ethics to highlight the unique contributions of indigenous knowledge to sustainable development. The study adopts a normative approach, examining how traditional African moral values, such as communalism, respect for nature, and stewardship, can be applied to modern challenges of poverty and environmental degradation (Gyekye, 1997, p. 72).

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the discourse on sustainable development and poverty alleviation in Africa. While much of the development literature focuses on economic and technological solutions, this paper emphasizes the importance of ethical and

cultural frameworks in shaping sustainable practices. By foregrounding indigenous eco-ethics, this study highlights the role of cultural values in addressing pressing issues of poverty and environmental degradation, offering insights that are often overlooked in mainstream development discussions. As scholars have noted, the failure to integrate ethical and cultural dimensions into development strategies can result in unsustainable practices that exacerbate poverty (Ifeanyi, 2021, p. 45). Therefore, this study is significant not only for its philosophical contributions but also for its practical implications in the realm of policy-making and poverty reduction. The objective of this paper is to explore how Indigenous ethical principles surrounding environmental stewardship can contribute to poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

Indigenous Eco-Ethics: These refer to traditional ethical principles guiding human relationships with nature, these are values rooted in environmental stewardship, sustainability, and interconnectedness of man and nature. In Nigerian indigenous practices, indigenous eco-ethics involves “communal ownership, respect for nature, and intergenerational equity,” fostering a responsibility to preserve resources for future generations (Olupona, 2011, p. 153). This approach differs completely from individualistic and profit-driven environmental practices found in Western models (Ake, 1982, p. 77).

Poverty: The word poverty is simply explained as “a state of deprivation where individuals lack basic resources for a minimum standard of living,” impacting health, education, and economic opportunities (World Bank, 2021, p. 23). In Nigeria, marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by poverty due to limited economic access and environmental factors that worsen resource scarcity (Nwoke, 2020, p. 102).

Poverty Alleviation: simply refers to strategic efforts to reduce poverty through improving access to resources, economic opportunities, and sustainable practices. As Ifeanyi (2021) notes, “poverty alleviation is not only about income but also about enhancing people’s ability to sustain themselves” in a way that fosters long-term resilience and economic stability (p. 45). Sustainable resource management is central to poverty alleviation in Nigeria’s rural communities (Okeke, 2018, p. 156).

Environmental Ethics: Environmental ethics focuses on the moral obligations humans have toward nature, emphasizing values of “stewardship, sustainability, and intergenerational justice” (Rolston, 1988, p. 45). Light and Rolston (2003) highlight that environmental ethics “urges humans to consider the broader ecological consequences of their decisions,” promoting an ethical consciousness where the well-being of the environment is integral to human welfare (p. 217).

Philosophical Foundation of Eco-Ethics

Eco-ethics is an ethical structure that examines the moral responsibilities humans have in their interactions with the environment, the idea of eco-ethics is to advocate for respect, stewardship, and sustainability in resource use. Rolston (1988) posits that eco-ethics “focuses on the value of ecosystems, the need for balance, and the obligations humans have toward maintained the health of natural systems” (p. 45). This philosophical ideology suggests that human actions should not simply aim at satisfying immediate needs but should consider the long-term impacts on the environment. By emphasizing the ethical dimensions of our relationship with nature, eco-ethics promotes values such as ecological integrity and balance, urging humans to view themselves as integral members of the ecosystem (Light & Rolston, 2003, p. 217). The main idea treated in eco-ethics is the principle of interdependence, which highlights the mutual reliance between humans and the environment. This principle, articulated by Leopold (1949) in his "land ethic," suggests that humans are "not conquerors of the land community but plain members and citizens of it" (p. 204). According to this view, our well-being is inextricably linked to the health of the environment, making it morally necessary to protect natural resources not only for current needs but also for future generations. Eco-ethics, therefore, places a strong emphasis on intergenerational equity, the idea that we must preserve ecological health for those who come after us (Murove, 2009, p. 212). In addition to interdependence, eco-ethics promotes a sense of stewardship, which calls on humans to act as caretakers of the earth rather than exploiters of its resources. The concept of stewardship is particularly relevant in the face of contemporary environmental crises such as climate change and deforestation, which are often driven by short-term economic goals. Naess (1973) argues that eco-ethics “requires individuals and communities to look beyond their immediate benefits and to consider the broader ecological impacts of their actions” (p. 96). His view discourages practices that deplete natural resources without regard for long-term sustainability, advocating instead for actions that preserve the environment’s integrity.

This approach also challenges the dominant utilitarian view, which values nature solely for its usefulness to humans. Instead, it proposes that nature has its intrinsic value and deserves respect and care regardless of its utility. For instance, Rolston (1988) states, “We must recognize the inherent worth of all living beings and ecosystems, not merely as resources to be consumed but as valuable components of a larger, interconnected world” (p. 50). This moral ethic promotes a more respectful attitude toward nature, one that views environmental preservation as an ethical obligation rather than a mere economic consideration. Eco-ethics is not only theoretical but has practical implications for how societies should structure their economies and development strategies. According to Murove (2009), eco-ethics “encourages policies and practices that prioritize sustainability, resilience, and the responsible use of resources” (p. 218). This ethical structure can inform contemporary approaches to sustainable development by providing ethical guidance for balancing human needs with environmental limits. For instance, eco-ethics suggests that industries should minimize pollution, reduce resource consumption, and consider the broader ecological impact of their operations. By integrating eco-ethical principles into policy-making, societies can work toward development models that are both economically viable and environmentally sustainable. In essence, eco-ethics presents a moral argument for environmental sustainability that is rooted in respect for all forms of life. The eco-ethical perspective encourages a shift away from anthropocentric views, which prioritize human needs, toward a more eco-centric approach that values all aspects of the natural world. This shift, according to Ogunbode (2020), “is essential for creating a world where human and ecological well-being are seen as mutually dependent rather than in conflict” (p. 45). By embracing eco-ethics, societies can foster a more unified relationship with the environment, promoting practices that benefit both human communities and the ecosystems on which they depend.

Indigenous Knowledge and Environmental Ethics

Indigenous Nigerian communities have long maintained a close and respectful relationship with the environment, as evidenced by their cultural and ethical practices that promote environmental sustainability. Indigenous knowledge, built over generations, provides practical strategies for managing resources, protecting biodiversity, and ensuring long-term ecological health. These practices are guided by a deep-rooted belief in the interconnection of all life forms, as well as a sense of communal responsibility toward nature. Mbiti (1969) highlights this perspective, noting

that in many Nigerian communities, “land and resources are not seen as commodities but as communal assets that hold spiritual and cultural significance” (p. 108). One key aspect of Indigenous Nigerian environmental ethics is communal ownership, where land and resources are shared among the community rather than held by individuals. This communal approach fosters a strong sense of responsibility, as the community collectively manages and protects resources for current and future generations. According to Gbadegesin (1991), “The collective management of land reduces the risk of over-exploitation, as community norms enforce sustainable practices” (p. 92). This is evident in practices such as the rotational farming systems of the Tiv people, which allow land to recover after cultivation, maintaining its fertility and productivity over time (Okoye, 2015, p. 190).

Indigenous Nigerian communities also emphasize sustainable farming practices that align with eco-ethical principles. For instance, the Yoruba people practice intercropping, where multiple crops are planted together to mimic natural ecosystems. This method enhances soil fertility and reduces the risk of pest infestations, providing a sustainable alternative to monoculture farming (Adewumi, 2017, p. 123). By working with the land rather than depleting it, Yoruba farmers demonstrate an environmental ethic that prioritizes ecological health over short-term gains, reinforcing the eco-ethical values of balance and sustainability. Water management is another crucial element of Indigenous environmental ethics. In northern Nigeria, Hausa-Fulani communities use the “Fadama” system, a form of irrigation that captures seasonal water from wetlands for use during dry periods (Mustapha, 2014, p. 87). This practice not only conserves water but also ensures that the community has access to this essential resource throughout the year. By managing water resources sustainably, Indigenous Nigerian communities demonstrate an ethical commitment to conservation that benefits both their survival and the environment’s health.

Biodiversity preservation is also integral to Indigenous environmental practices in Nigeria. Sacred groves, for example, are forested areas protected by cultural and religious beliefs, where human activity is limited or restricted. Iwara (2019) explains that these groves serve as “sanctuaries for biodiversity, allowing ecosystems to thrive without human interference” (p. 55). The preservation of sacred groves not only maintains ecological balance but also reflects a deep cultural respect for nature, as these areas are often considered sacred and are closely tied to the community’s identity. Indigenous Nigerian eco-ethics also emphasize a strong sense of stewardship, where humans are

seen as caretakers of the land rather than its owners. This principle is evident in the practices of the Ogoni people in the Niger Delta, who traditionally leave certain forest areas untouched as sanctuaries for wildlife and natural regeneration (Ekpo, 2016, p. 67). By protecting these areas, Indigenous communities demonstrate their commitment to sustainability, ensuring that natural resources remain available for future generations. This approach contrasts sharply with exploitative practices, such as the uncontrolled extraction of oil in the Niger Delta, which has led to environmental degradation and poverty in local communities (Okonta & Douglas, 2001, p. 72).

Indigenous environmental ethics also contributes to poverty alleviation by providing communities with sustainable resources. For example, agroforestry practices among Yoruba farmers not only improve soil health but also increase crop yields, reducing poverty by enhancing food security (Adewumi, 2017, p. 137). Similarly, communal fishing practices along Nigeria's coast help protect marine biodiversity and support local economies by ensuring a continuous supply of fish (Akande, 2020, p. 135). These practices demonstrate how Indigenous eco-ethical values contribute to both environmental sustainability and economic resilience, providing a model for sustainable development that benefits both people and nature. Indigenous Nigerian environmental ethics offers a powerful moral base for sustainability that aligns closely with eco-ethical principles. By embracing Indigenous knowledge and integrating it into modern development strategies, Nigeria can promote sustainable practices that respect traditional values, protect ecosystems, and alleviate poverty. This approach provides an all-inclusive view of development, where environmental and human well-being are seen as interconnected, reinforcing the eco-ethical principles of balance, stewardship, and responsibility.

Indigenous Eco-Ethics and Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria

Indigenous eco-ethics in Nigeria offers a sustainable and community-based approach to natural resource management, emphasizing moral responsibility, collective well-being, and intergenerational stewardship. Rooted in respect for the land and its resources, Indigenous Nigerian philosophies view nature as a shared asset that must be cared for to benefit the community as a whole. According to Murove (2009), Indigenous perspectives see resources not as commodities for individual exploitation but as “gifts from nature that carry a moral obligation to be used wisely and equitably” (p. 212). This perspective differs sharply with extractive practices,

such as oil drilling in the Niger Delta, where the unchecked pursuit of profit has led to environmental destruction and worsened poverty for local communities (Okonta & Douglas, 2001, p. 66). Indigenous eco-ethics, by prioritizing sustainability and equity, presents an alternative guideline where resource management supports both community well-being and environmental resilience. The ethical approach within Indigenous eco-ethics promotes a shared responsibility for resources, ensuring that benefits are distributed equitably and sustainably across the community. In many Indigenous Nigerian communities, land and water resources are managed collectively, with the goal of preserving them for future generations. In coastal areas, for example, traditional fishing practices reflect this commitment to sustainability. Fishermen often adhere to seasonal bans that allow fish populations to regenerate, ensuring that marine resources remain available for both current and future needs (Akande, 2020, p. 132). This practice not only supports local economies but also aligns with eco-ethical principles by balancing immediate livelihood needs with long-term environmental health.

Similarly, Indigenous eco-ethical principles are evident in the agricultural practices of Nigerian communities. Yoruba farmers, for instance, practice intercropping which simply is a technique in which diverse crops like maize, cassava, and melon are cultivated together on the same land. This approach mimics natural ecosystems, enriching the soil and reducing pest outbreaks without the need for chemical fertilizers. As Adewumi (2017) explains, “intercropping enhances soil fertility and maximizes land use,” providing a sustainable and low-cost alternative that benefits both the environment and local food security (p. 134). By protecting soil health and promoting biodiversity, Yoruba farmers can achieve higher, more stable yields, directly contributing to poverty reduction in rural areas where agriculture remains a primary livelihood. Pastoralist communities in Nigeria also illustrate the principles of Indigenous eco-ethics through rotational grazing, a practice rooted in environmental stewardship. Among the Fulani, for instance, herders move their livestock between grazing areas to allow vegetation to regenerate, preventing overgrazing and maintaining the health of the land. Blench (2001) describes this approach as “a sustainable system that balances livestock needs with the environment’s regenerative capacity” (p. 101). By ensuring the availability of pasture, rotational grazing supports not only the Fulani’s economic stability but also reduces the risk of desertification in northern Nigeria. Adamu (2015) observes that this method

allows Fulani pastoralists to sustain their livelihoods while minimizing ecological damage, reinforcing eco-ethical values that prioritize both environmental and economic health (p. 117).

Indigenous eco-ethics also emphasizes the importance of forest conservation as part of a sustainable approach to poverty alleviation. In many Yoruba and Igbo communities, forests are revered as sacred spaces, and sections are preserved as “sacred groves,” where hunting and logging are restricted. According to Iwara (2019), these groves serve as sanctuaries for biodiversity, helping maintain a balance within the ecosystem and providing the community with a continuous supply of resources such as medicinal plants and wood (p. 55). This practice reflects a deep cultural respect for nature, viewing forest conservation not merely as an economic strategy but as an ethical obligation to protect the environment for future generations. By securing natural resources, sacred groves support local needs sustainably, illustrating how Indigenous eco-ethics integrate poverty alleviation with environmental care. In other instances, we can also see Indigenous eco-ethics are evident in water management practices, particularly in arid regions where access to water is limited. The Hausa-Fulani communities in northern Nigeria have developed the “Fadama” system, a lowland irrigation practice that captures and stores water from seasonal wetlands for use during dry periods. This method conserves water efficiently, ensuring year-round availability for farming (Mustapha, 2014, p. 87). In alignment with eco-ethical values, the Fadama system is collectively managed, distributing water equitably and supporting local food production even in challenging environmental conditions. By facilitating food security, the Fadama system directly contributes to poverty alleviation while promoting the sustainable use of water resources.

The integration of these eco-ethical practices has had a significant impact on poverty reduction across Nigerian communities. For example, sustainable fishing practices in coastal areas help protect marine biodiversity and provide a steady source of food and income. Customary regulations in the Niger Delta restrict certain fishing methods to avoid overfishing, thereby maintaining fish populations and securing the livelihoods of local fishermen (Akande, 2020, p. 135). Similarly, Yoruba farmers who adopt agroforestry a method of incorporating trees into farmland benefit from improved crop resilience and additional resources like fruit and timber, enhancing food security and creating new income streams (Adewumi, 2017, p. 137). These practices, deeply rooted in Indigenous eco-ethical principles, provide a model of sustainable development that prioritizes environmental stewardship and economic resilience. This all-

encompassing view of resource management embedded in Indigenous Nigerian eco-ethics not only fosters a healthier relationship with the environment but also strengthens communities' abilities to support themselves. By incorporating these values into modern development strategies, Nigeria can promote an approach that simultaneously reduces poverty, preserves cultural values, and safeguards ecological balance. This Indigenous perspective on eco-ethics provides a powerful groundwork for a sustainable future, where human and environmental health are seen as interrelated and mutually supportive.

Challenges and Ethical Dilemmas

Indigenous eco-ethics faces significant challenges in modern Nigerian society, where tensions between traditional knowledge systems and modernization have created complex ethical and philosophical dilemmas. Modernization characterized by industrialization, urbanization, and Westernized economic models, often conflicts with Indigenous eco-ethical principles. Industrial farming methods, for example, favor high-yield mono-cropping, which can deplete soil nutrients, reduce biodiversity, and displace sustainable Indigenous practices like intercropping and agro-forestry. Onwuegbuna (2018) notes that “such methods, while efficient in short-term yield, overlook the long-term ecological health that Indigenous practices naturally promote” (p. 214). Adding to this, modern technologies and mechanized farming techniques are increasingly attractive to younger generations, leading to a decline in traditional knowledge and methods. In order to Reconcile modernization with Indigenous eco-ethics, it will require a hybrid approach that acknowledges the value of traditional knowledge while integrating sustainable technological advancements. For instance, agro-ecology an approach that combines Indigenous biodiversity and soil conservation practices with modern precision techniques has been suggested as a model for sustainable development. Altieri (2018) describes agroecology as “a bridge between traditional wisdom and scientific innovation, allowing communities to benefit from improved productivity without sacrificing ecological principles” (p. 21). This synthesis provides a pathway for balancing economic development with the eco-ethical values of environmental stewardship and community well-being.

Resource management is also another ethical dilemma to look at, particularly in areas dominated by extractive industries like oil, mining, and timber. The demand for resources on a global scale

has driven these industries to operate in ways that frequently disregard Indigenous eco-ethical standards, leading to severe environmental degradation and exacerbating poverty among local communities and marginalized groups. Okonta and Douglas (2001) highlight the Niger Delta as a prime example, where “unchecked oil extraction has caused widespread pollution, destroying farmlands, fisheries, and water sources” (p. 72). This dilemma highlights a core conflict that points out that while extractive industries may generate immediate financial gains, their operations often undermine local economies, increase poverty, and harm the environment over the long run. In contrast, Indigenous eco-ethics emphasizes resource management that is equitable, sustainable, and community-focused, raising critical questions about the ethical responsibility of both national and global industries to prioritize collective welfare over individual profit. Policy and governance further complicate efforts to maintain Indigenous eco-ethical practices. In Nigeria, many policies favor rapid industrial development and resource extraction at the expense of traditional practices and environmental conservation. For instance, land tenure laws that prioritize private ownership and large-scale agriculture frequently displace Indigenous communities, stripping them of their ability to manage land sustainably through communal ownership. As Ibrahim (2021) points out; “such policies often sideline Indigenous rights and reduce the resilience of local communities to environmental and economic challenges” (p. 60). Although the Nigerian government has taken some steps to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into environmental policy such as the ‘National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan’ (NBSAP) the implementation at the grassroots level remains limited, as many Indigenous communities lack political influence over resource management decisions (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2016, p. 12). In order to overcome these challenges, policy frameworks must protect Indigenous rights to land and resources while promoting community-led initiatives. This would require collaboration between traditional leaders, government agencies, and external organizations to align development projects with sustainability and environmental justice. Effective governance is essential to ensuring that Indigenous communities have a voice in decisions about resource use, especially in a way that safeguards traditional eco-ethical practices.

Reviving Indigenous eco-ethics in Nigeria is not only an ethical imperative but also a practical necessity for sustainable poverty alleviation. Indigenous eco-ethical principles emphasize harmony with nature, collective responsibility, stewardship, and long-term sustainability values

that are often overlooked in conventional economic development strategies. Murove (2009) argues that these Indigenous ethics inherently view humans as part of “an interconnected ecological system where the well-being of the environment directly influences human welfare” (p. 219). This well-integrated perspective encourages resource management that prioritizes ecological balance and social equity over short-term profits. Indigenous eco-ethical principles, particularly those that view land as a “sacred trust” meant to support both current and future generations, offer an alternative guide for policy-making. By embedding these values in national policies, Nigeria could promote a model of development that distributes resources equitably, protects the environment, and fosters social cohesion. As Altieri (2018) notes, “Local knowledge systems are essential for developing practices that are resilient to climate change, land degradation, and other challenges that disproportionately affect poor communities” (p. 34). Such policies could ensure that development in Nigeria respects both ecological and cultural sustainability, helping mitigate the adverse effects of modernization.

In order to cover up these lapses a promising future direction lies in synthesizing Indigenous eco-ethics with modern development strategies, creating a pluralistic approach to poverty alleviation. This integration would recognize the strengths of both traditional moral imperative and contemporary approaches. Indigenous eco-ethics provides an ethical groundwork rooted in sustainability and community well-being, while modern practices bring technological advances and economic opportunities. The challenge is to reconcile these approaches in a way that preserves cultural values and environmental integrity while addressing Nigeria’s socio-economic needs. For example, agroecology presents an innovative model that combines Indigenous farming methods such as crop rotation and biodiversity management with modern ecological science. This approach allows communities to achieve sustainable agricultural production without depleting natural resources. Altieri (2018) highlights that agroecology “not only enhances food security but also reinforces eco-ethical principles by respecting natural systems and supporting community livelihoods” (p. 38). Such a collaborative approach would enable Nigerian communities to retain control over their resources while benefiting from advancements in technology and access to global markets. Another collaborative model is community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), a strategy that has been successful in other parts of Africa. CBNRM programs are grounded in collective decision-making, sustainable resource use, and equitable benefit-sharing,

closely aligning with Indigenous eco-ethical values (Ibrahim, 2021, p. 61). By involving local communities in resource governance, these programs enhance the sustainability of poverty alleviation efforts, ensuring that development initiatives do not undermine the environmental and social foundations on which these communities depend. In Nigeria, adopting CBNRM would empower Indigenous communities to manage their resources autonomously, fostering a development model that balances economic growth with environmental stewardship.

Conclusion

To Round off this paper we see indigenous eco-ethics offers a viable and sustainable guideline for addressing poverty in Nigeria. Rooted in principles of environmental stewardship, collective responsibility, and long-term sustainability, indigenous eco-ethical practices provide valuable insights into how natural resources can be managed equitably and sustainably. By aligning with the ethical principles inherent in these traditional knowledge systems, national and local development efforts can be more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive. This paper has argued that by embracing indigenous eco-ethics, Nigeria can foster a development model that reduces poverty while preserving its environmental and cultural heritage.

Philosophically, the significance of re-centering Indigenous ethics in poverty alleviation discourse cannot be overstated. Indigenous eco-ethics challenges dominant paradigms of resource exploitation and individualism, offering a more ethical and community-centered approach to development. By emphasizing the connection and relationship of humans and nature, Indigenous ethics provides a moral foundation that respects both the environment and the social fabric of communities. These implications extend beyond Nigeria, suggesting a universal model of development where sustainability and justice are central. In the context of global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and increasing inequality, the revival and integration of indigenous eco-ethical principles provide a much-needed alternative to exploitative and unsustainable development models. These principles can guide future efforts to create a more just and equitable world, where poverty is tackled through practices that honor both the earth and the communities that depend on it.

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