

**AFRICAN CHRISTIAN ETHICS AS A FRAMEWORK FOR
NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA****Authors & Affiliations****SALIFU JOYCE MARY**

Department of Arts Education
Faculty of Education
Prince Abubakar Audu University,
Anyigba,
Kogi State, Nigeria
Email: rjoycesalifu@gmail.com
Phone No: 08033851881

&

JAMES IGBABEE JONATHAN UKPE

Department of Religion and
Cultural Studies,
Benue State University, Makurdi
Benue State, Nigeria
Email: chigbabee@gmail.com
Phone No: 08066021097

Abstract

National security and sustainable development remain major concerns in Nigeria, where terrorism, banditry, corruption, communal conflicts and weak governance continue to undermine social stability and economic progress. Conventional security responses have concentrated largely on military operations and institutional reforms, yet ethical deficits in leadership and citizenship persist. This study examines African Christian ethics as a framework for promoting national security and sustainable development in Nigeria. Specifically, it analyses the ethical foundations of African Christian thought, evaluates their relevance to governance, peacebuilding, responsible citizenship and social justice, and assesses their potential contribution to addressing contemporary security and development challenges. The study adopted a qualitative research design based on a descriptive and analytical approach. Data were collected from books, journal articles, official documents and other relevant secondary sources and analysed thematically. Findings reveal that ethical principles such as justice, human dignity, integrity, communal responsibility and reconciliation can strengthen ethical leadership, reduce corruption, promote social cohesion and support sustainable national development when translated into public policy and institutional practice. The study recommends the integration of ethics into education, strengthened church-state collaboration, ethical leadership development and community-based peacebuilding initiatives. It concludes that African Christian ethics provides a practical moral framework capable of complementing existing security and development strategies in Nigeria through ethical governance, responsible citizenship and social transformation.

Keywords: African Christian ethics, national security, sustainable development, ethical leadership, Nigeria.

Introduction

National security and sustainable development remain central concerns in contemporary societies because they determine the capacity of a nation to protect its citizens, preserve social order and create conditions for human flourishing. Security is no longer understood solely in military terms; it also encompasses political stability, social cohesion, economic resilience and the protection of human dignity. Persistent challenges such as corruption, violent extremism, terrorism, organised crime, unemployment and declining public trust in institutions have continued to undermine development across many regions of the world. Conventional responses have largely concentrated on military operations, legislative reforms and economic interventions, yet these measures have often produced limited results where the ethical foundations of governance and citizenship remain weak. Barry Buzan argues that national security extends beyond military defence to include political, economic and societal dimensions that sustain the stability of

the state (19–25). From a development perspective, Amartya Sen maintains that genuine development depends on expanding human freedoms and creating institutions that promote justice, accountability and responsible participation rather than economic growth alone (36–42). Such observations have renewed scholarly interest in ethical frameworks capable of shaping both public institutions and individual conduct.

The African experience reflects these global concerns with even greater urgency. Several African states continue to contend with armed conflicts, electoral violence, religious extremism, communal clashes, corruption and weak governance, all of which have slowed social and economic development despite abundant human and natural resources. Within this context, African Christian ethics presents a moral framework that combines biblical teachings with enduring African values such as communal responsibility, respect for human dignity, justice, reconciliation and solidarity. Mbiti observes that religion permeates every sphere of African life and remains inseparable from moral conduct and communal relationships (2–5). Magesa likewise argues that African moral traditions place the preservation of life, communal well-being and social responsibility at the centre of ethical decision-making (68–74). Recent scholarship has maintained that Christian ethical values remain relevant for addressing corruption, promoting responsible leadership and strengthening national development in contemporary African societies. Ukpe, Obasi and Agernor contend that religious values provide moral resources capable of encouraging ethical governance, social justice and national transformation when translated into public life (229–236). Similarly, Ukpe and Michael argue that Christian ethical principles of honesty, stewardship, accountability and servant leadership offer practical responses to the pervasive culture of corruption that weakens public institutions across Africa (223–228). Such perspectives suggest that ethical renewal deserves greater attention within discussions of national security and sustainable development.

Nigeria provides a particularly compelling setting for examining this relationship because the country continues to grapple with terrorism, banditry, farmer–herder conflicts, kidnapping, political corruption and widespread insecurity despite substantial investment in security operations. These challenges have disrupted agricultural production, displaced communities, weakened public confidence and hindered sustainable development. The recurrent herdsmen attacks have produced severe humanitarian, economic and security consequences for farming communities, especially in the Middle Belt, thereby demonstrating that insecurity extends far beyond military concerns to affect livelihoods and national development. Amase and Ukpe further maintain that religious institutions possess significant capacity to promote peacebuilding, moral reorientation and community resilience in areas affected by violence (87–92). Collectively, the studies of Buzan and Sen establish the interdependence of security and development, while Mbiti, Magesa, Ukpe, Obasi and Agernor, Ukpe and Michael, and Amase and Ukpe demonstrate the relevance of ethical and religious values to governance, corruption, peacebuilding and national transformation. However, these studies have largely examined these issues independently, concentrating either on security and development from political and economic perspectives or on Christian ethics in relation to specific concerns such as corruption, leadership, governance or peacebuilding. Consequently, they do not provide an integrated analytical framework that explains how African Christian ethics, rooted in both biblical principles and African communal values, can simultaneously promote national security and sustainable development within the Nigerian context. Recent scholarship likewise acknowledges the significant but still underexplored role of religious ethics in advancing sustainable development and addressing complex societal challenges in Nigeria. The present study addresses

this scholarly gap by examining African Christian ethics as a holistic framework that integrates ethical, theological and developmental perspectives to promote national security and sustainable development in contemporary Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

1. Concept of African Christian Ethics

African Christian ethics is the contextual application of Christian moral teachings within the cultural, social, political, and economic realities of Africa. It seeks to interpret biblical principles in ways that address the unique ethical challenges confronting African societies while affirming the positive moral values embedded in African cultures. Rather than treating Christianity as detached from African experience, African Christian ethics integrates the teachings of Scripture with indigenous African values such as communal solidarity, respect for human dignity, hospitality, justice, and mutual responsibility. Laurenti Magesa argues that African Christian ethics is fundamentally concerned with "the protection of human life, communal solidarity, and moral responsibility towards others" (68). This understanding highlights the centrality of life, community, and social responsibility as indispensable ethical principles for African Christians.

Similarly, Bénézet Bujo maintains that African Christian ethics is grounded in a relational understanding of morality, where ethical behaviour is evaluated not merely by personal intentions but by its impact on the well-being of the community (78). This communitarian orientation distinguishes African Christian ethics from ethical systems that emphasize individual autonomy alone, stressing instead that human beings exist in relationships of mutual dependence and responsibility. Consequently, African Christian ethics promotes moral values such as justice, peace, reconciliation, integrity, and servant leadership as essential for both personal transformation and societal development. Within the context of this study, African Christian ethics refers to the application of biblical moral principles, interpreted in dialogue with African communal values, to promote ethical leadership, national security, social cohesion, and sustainable development across African societies.

Concept of National Security

National security refers to the capacity of a state to safeguard its sovereignty, territorial integrity, citizens and public institutions against both internal and external threats while maintaining conditions necessary for political stability, economic prosperity and social cohesion. Earlier conceptions of national security placed considerable emphasis on military strength and the defence of national borders. Contemporary scholarship, however, adopts a broader understanding that incorporates political legitimacy, economic resilience, environmental sustainability, social stability and the protection of fundamental human rights. Barry Buzan argues that security encompasses military, political, economic, societal and environmental dimensions, all of which interact to preserve the stability and survival of the state (19–25). This broader perspective recognises that threats to national security often emerge from weak institutions, poor governance and social discontent rather than armed aggression alone.

Across many African countries, national security has increasingly been undermined by corruption, terrorism, banditry, farmer–herder conflicts, organised crime, religious extremism and widening socio-economic inequalities. Such challenges weaken public confidence in government institutions, disrupt economic activities and hinder sustainable national development. Examining the Nigerian context, Ukpe and

Mwuesesaluun contend that corruption has become a major driver of national insecurity because it erodes institutional effectiveness, diverts public resources and weakens the capacity of security agencies to respond effectively to emerging threats (40–45). Similarly, Amase and Ukpe observe that persistent insecurity in communities affected by banditry requires not only military responses but also moral leadership, community participation and faith-based peacebuilding initiatives capable of restoring trust and social cohesion (86–92). National security, therefore, extends beyond the absence of armed conflict to include the creation of a just, peaceful and ethically responsible society.

Concept of Development

Development denotes a multidimensional process through which the quality of human life is improved through economic growth, social justice, educational advancement, accessible healthcare, good governance and the expansion of opportunities available to individuals and communities. Rather than measuring development solely in terms of income or industrial growth, contemporary development scholarship places greater emphasis on human well-being, freedom and the capacity of people to realise their full potential. Sen defines development as the expansion of substantive human freedoms that enable individuals to live productive and meaningful lives while participating actively in the social, political and economic affairs of their societies (36–38). This understanding places human dignity, social inclusion and institutional accountability at the centre of the development process.

Within the African context, sustainable development depends not only on economic reforms but also on the moral values that shape leadership, public accountability and responsible citizenship. Ethical failures such as corruption, abuse of public office and social injustice continue to impede development despite the abundance of natural and human resources across the continent. Ukpe, Obasi and Agernor argue that Christian moral values, particularly integrity, justice, compassion and stewardship, provide an ethical foundation capable of strengthening governance and promoting national development in pluralistic societies (231–239). In the same vein, Ukpe and Oko maintain that religious ethics contribute to national development when they encourage responsible citizenship, social responsibility and moral discipline among both leaders and the wider society (199–202). Sustainable development, therefore, requires the integration of sound economic policies with ethical leadership, social justice and moral responsibility if lasting peace, security and inclusive growth are to be achieved.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design employing descriptive and analytical approaches to examine African Christian ethics as a framework for promoting national security and sustainable development in Nigeria. The qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study explores ethical principles, theological perspectives and socio-political realities that require critical interpretation rather than quantitative measurement. Data were obtained exclusively from secondary sources, including scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, government publications, policy documents and reports from reputable international organisations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Human Rights Watch. The literature was purposively selected based on its relevance to the study's objectives, scholarly credibility, methodological rigour and contribution to contemporary discourse on African Christian ethics, national security and sustainable

development. The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis through repeated reading of the selected literature, systematic coding of recurring ideas and the identification and synthesis of major themes, including human dignity, justice, ethical leadership, communal responsibility, reconciliation, governance and sustainable development. To enhance the credibility and dependability of the findings, the study employed source triangulation by comparing perspectives from theological, philosophical, development and security studies literature, while interpretations were further strengthened through reliance on peer-reviewed publications, authoritative institutional reports and established scholarly works, thereby ensuring consistency, scholarly objectivity and reliability in the interpretation of the evidence.

Theoretical Framework

his study is anchored on Communitarian Ethics, a theoretical framework that understands the individual as fundamentally embedded within a community and interprets moral responsibility in relation to the common good rather than individual autonomy. The theory emphasises values such as justice, solidarity, mutual responsibility, reconciliation and respect for human dignity as products of communal relationships. This perspective is particularly relevant to African societies, where personhood is traditionally understood in relational terms. John S. Mbiti expresses this worldview in his well-known assertion that, *"I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am,"* highlighting that identity and moral responsibility arise from belonging to the community (108–09). Laurenti Magesa likewise argues that African moral thought is centred on preserving life, promoting communal harmony and advancing the common good, making social responsibility the foundation of ethical conduct (68–74). African philosophers such as Bénézet Bujo, Polycarp Ikuenobe and Motsamai Molefe further develop this tradition by maintaining that moral actions should be evaluated according to their contribution to human dignity, harmonious relationships, reciprocal responsibility and the wellbeing of the community (Bujo 78–85; Ikuenobe 423–27; Molefe 179–85).

Communitarian Ethics provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for this study because its core assumptions closely align with the principles of African Christian ethics. The study argues that sustainable national security and development cannot be achieved solely through military strength, legislation or economic reforms but require morally responsible communities characterised by ethical leadership, responsible citizenship, justice, reconciliation and social solidarity. These values complement both biblical teaching and African communal philosophy, providing an integrated framework for addressing insecurity, corruption, weak governance and underdevelopment in Nigeria. By adopting Communitarian Ethics as its analytical lens, the study demonstrates that lasting national security and sustainable development depend upon the collective commitment of public institutions, religious communities and citizens to pursue the common good through ethical responsibility, accountability and respect for human dignity.

An Overview of National Security and Development in Nigeria

National security and development have become inseparable concerns in contemporary Nigeria because persistent insecurity continues to undermine economic growth, social stability and human well-being. Security challenges have expanded beyond conventional military threats to include terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, farmer-herder conflicts, cybercrime and violent communal clashes, all of which disrupt livelihoods and weaken public institutions. Recent evidence illustrates the magnitude of the problem. The International Organization for Migration recorded approximately 2.29 million internally displaced persons

(IDPs) in north-eastern Nigeria between February and April 2025, with renewed attacks by non-state armed groups remaining a major driver of displacement and humanitarian crises (International Organization for Migration 6–10). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees further reported that 3.5 million Nigerians were internally displaced by the end of 2024, while continued insecurity and economic hardship constrained sustainable development across many communities (UNHCR 2–4). Human Rights Watch similarly observes that widespread kidnappings, violent attacks and worsening economic conditions have eroded public confidence in state institutions and deepened multidimensional poverty (Human Rights Watch). These realities demonstrate that national security extends beyond territorial defence to include the protection of human life, livelihoods and social institutions that sustain development.

The developmental consequences of insecurity are evident across agriculture, education, healthcare and infrastructure. Recurrent attacks in food-producing regions have reduced agricultural productivity, disrupted rural markets and increased food insecurity, while prolonged displacement has deprived many children of access to education and strained social services. Corruption, weak institutional accountability and declining ethical standards have further limited the effectiveness of public interventions despite significant investments in security and development. Recent Nigerian scholarship argues that sustainable national development requires more than economic policies and military responses; it also depends upon ethical leadership, responsible citizenship and moral accountability within public institutions. Ukpe, Obasi and Agernor contend that Christian values such as justice, integrity and service provide essential moral resources for strengthening governance and national development (229–236). Likewise, Amase and Ukpe maintain that religious institutions can complement government efforts through peacebuilding, moral reorientation and community resilience in conflict-affected areas (87–92). African Christian ethics therefore provides a valuable framework for addressing the ethical dimensions of insecurity by promoting justice, human dignity, communal responsibility and reconciliation as indispensable foundations for national security and sustainable development in Nigeria.

The Ethical Bases of African Christian Social Ethics

African Christian social ethics derives its moral vision from the interaction between biblical teaching and African communal philosophy, offering an ethical orientation that extends beyond personal piety to the ordering of public life. Christian teaching presents love of God and neighbour as the basis of moral responsibility (Matt. 22.37–40), while African moral thought understands personhood through reciprocal relationships, solidarity and commitment to the common good. Within this framework, ethical conduct is evaluated not only by personal intentions but also by its contribution to communal well-being and social justice. Scholars of African public theology argue that Christian ethics possesses significant public relevance when it addresses governance, development and social transformation rather than remaining confined to ecclesiastical concerns. Magezi and Khlopa contend that the philosophy of *ubuntu* enriches African Christian ethics through values of hospitality, compassion and communal care rooted in the Christian understanding of humanity created in the image of God (8–12). Kakwata likewise maintains that Christian social ethics should influence public policy and development by confronting poverty, injustice and structural inequalities that diminish human flourishing (95–99). Mashau and Kgatle further argue that ethical leadership grounded in justice, accountability and servant leadership constitutes an indispensable requirement for sustainable development across Africa (5–9). Yet, reliance upon Christian ethics within a religiously plural society also

presents important questions. Nigeria's constitutional order accommodates diverse religious traditions, making it necessary for ethical proposals inspired by Christianity to engage universal values such as justice, human dignity and the common good without undermining religious freedom or excluding adherents of other faiths. Public theology therefore functions most effectively when it encourages dialogue, moral persuasion and civic responsibility rather than sectarian dominance or the imposition of confessional doctrines.

Human dignity, justice and communal responsibility remain the principal ethical foundations upon which African Christian social ethics contributes to national security and development. Christian theology affirms the inherent worth of every human person because humanity bears the image of God (Gen. 1.27), while African philosophy reaches a comparable conclusion through its understanding of personhood as participation in a community of mutual care and reciprocal obligation. Ikuenobe argues that African communalism balances individual rights with duties that preserve both personal dignity and collective well-being (423–27), whereas Molefe maintains that moral recognition begins with acknowledging the intrinsic worth of every person before moral judgement is made (179–85). These principles possess practical significance for contemporary Nigeria, where violations of human dignity through terrorism, corruption, communal violence and forced displacement continue to threaten social stability. Christian organisations have responded to such challenges through practical engagement in peacebuilding and humanitarian service. The Christian Association of Nigeria and the Christian Council of Nigeria have repeatedly facilitated interfaith dialogue and mediation in conflict-prone communities, while faith-based organisations such as the Justice, Development and Peace Commission have supported internally displaced persons through humanitarian relief, trauma counselling, livelihood programmes and community reconciliation in several northern and Middle Belt states. Similar contributions are documented in the work of Peter and Sakupapa, who demonstrate that churches in Northern Nigeria have complemented state security efforts through conflict transformation and reconciliation initiatives (4–7). Roelofs likewise observes that interfaith peacebuilding has strengthened trust between communities and public institutions in areas affected by violent conflict (376–81). Such initiatives illustrate that ethical principles acquire greater social significance when translated into practical action that restores relationships and strengthens community resilience.

Justice, peace and reconciliation complete the ethical architecture of African Christian social ethics, yet these principles are not without contestation. Christian ethics condemns corruption, abuse of office and social inequality because they violate both divine justice and communal trust, while African moral philosophy requires individuals and institutions to pursue the common good above personal gain. Ilesanmi explains that reconciliation within African religious ethics involves truth-telling, accountability and the restoration of damaged relationships rather than the neglect of justice (6–10). Nevertheless, some secular ethical traditions question whether religious ethics should exercise substantial influence within democratic governance, arguing that public policy ought to rest upon constitutional principles and civic reason rather than religious convictions alone. Liberal theorists also caution that ethical frameworks derived from particular religious traditions may encounter difficulties in plural societies where citizens hold divergent moral commitments. These criticisms do not diminish the value of African Christian ethics; rather, they encourage its engagement with broader democratic ideals such as human rights, constitutionalism and inclusive citizenship. African Christian social ethics therefore makes its strongest contribution when its moral vision converges with universally shared principles of justice, accountability, peace and respect for human dignity, enabling

churches and other faith-based organisations to complement, rather than replace, the constitutional responsibilities of the Nigerian state in promoting national security and sustainable development.

National Security and Social Issues as seen from a Christian Point of View

Christian ethics regards leadership as a sacred trust rather than an avenue for personal enrichment. Scripture consistently portrays leaders as stewards who are accountable to both God and society for the exercise of authority, making integrity, justice, humility and service indispensable virtues in public office. Ethical leadership therefore occupies a central place in the pursuit of national security because governments founded upon moral responsibility inspire public confidence, strengthen institutions and discourage corruption. Contemporary African societies continue to struggle with leadership deficits characterised by abuse of office, nepotism and weak accountability, conditions that have fuelled insecurity and hindered development. Ukpe and Michael observe that Christian ethical principles encourage transparency, stewardship and accountability, qualities capable of reducing corruption and restoring confidence in public institutions when embraced by political leaders and public servants (223–228). Similarly, Bowers du Toit argues that churches possess significant public responsibility in nurturing ethical leadership through moral formation, civic engagement and advocacy for social justice, particularly in contexts marked by poverty, inequality and institutional failure (58–64). Ethical leadership therefore extends beyond personal virtue; it establishes the moral climate within which national security policies acquire legitimacy and public cooperation.

Social cohesion represents another vital contribution of Christian ethics to national security. Christian teaching places considerable emphasis on love, forgiveness, justice and reconciliation as essential conditions for peaceful coexistence, while African communal philosophy reinforces these values through mutual responsibility and solidarity. Communities divided along ethnic, political or religious lines often become vulnerable to violence, extremism and social fragmentation. Christian ethics seeks to overcome such divisions through dialogue, compassion and reconciliation rather than hostility and retaliation. Practical examples may be seen in several African communities where churches have facilitated reconciliation between conflicting groups, provided humanitarian assistance to victims of violence and created platforms for peaceful engagement among diverse religious communities. Wrogemann argues that African Christianity possesses significant peacebuilding potential because local churches frequently function as trusted community institutions capable of promoting reconciliation, mediation and social healing in conflict-affected societies (312–317). Such interventions strengthen national security because peaceful communities provide fewer opportunities for violent extremism, organised crime and communal conflicts to flourish.

Corruption remains one of the greatest obstacles to national security and sustainable development across Africa because it weakens public institutions, diverts resources meant for essential services and erodes citizens' confidence in government. Christian ethics condemns corruption as a violation of justice, honesty and faithful stewardship, encouraging believers to cultivate integrity in both private and public life. Faith-based organisations therefore contribute to national development through ethical instruction, civic education and advocacy against dishonest practices. Responsible citizenship emerges from the same moral tradition. Citizens who value honesty, respect for lawful authority, civic responsibility and concern for the common good contribute to political stability and social order. Farisani contends that Christian communities should move beyond spiritual instruction to active participation in the transformation of society through ethical

witness, public accountability and responsible citizenship (146–152). Recent Nigerian scholarship reaches a similar conclusion, maintaining that Christian Religious Studies remains an effective instrument for cultivating responsible citizenship, moral discipline and nation-building among young people through values-based education (Ukpe, Terngu and Salifu 163–166). National security therefore depends not only on effective security agencies but also on citizens and leaders whose conduct reflects ethical responsibility, social justice and commitment to the common good.

Reimagining National Security and Sustainable Development through African Christian Ethics in Nigeria

Reimagining national security and sustainable development in Nigeria requires moving beyond approaches that depend primarily on military operations and economic reforms to one that recognises the moral foundations of a stable and peaceful society. Despite increased defence spending and numerous security initiatives, the country continues to face terrorism, banditry, farmer–herder conflicts, kidnapping and widespread corruption, demonstrating that insecurity is closely linked to ethical decline, weak governance and the erosion of public trust. African Christian ethics offers an alternative framework by locating security within the values of justice, human dignity, servant leadership and communal responsibility. Ngwoke and Akabike argue that insecurity remains one of the greatest barriers to sustainable development because it disrupts education, agriculture, healthcare and economic activities, while religion possesses considerable potential to promote peace, reconciliation and social transformation when effectively harnessed (3–6). Beyond shaping public values, African Christian ethics also provides practical resources for rebuilding fractured relationships through dialogue, forgiveness and reconciliation rather than retaliation. This approach has proved relevant in conflict-affected areas such as Benue, Plateau and Kaduna, where churches have complemented state efforts by providing humanitarian assistance, trauma counselling, mediation and support for internally displaced persons. Peter and Sakupapa similarly demonstrate that churches in Northern Nigeria have advanced conflict transformation through reconciliation, community dialogue and peacebuilding initiatives (4–7), while Okeke argues that integrating indigenous African values of peaceful coexistence with Christian ethics strengthens social resilience and everyday peacebuilding in culturally diverse communities (8–13).

Sustainable development likewise depends on ethical leadership, accountable institutions and citizens who recognise their responsibilities toward the common good. African Christian ethics promotes stewardship of public resources, transparency, justice, protection of vulnerable groups and equitable access to social opportunities, thereby addressing many of the structural causes of underdevelopment, including corruption, exclusion and abuse of public office. Consequently, churches, educational institutions and other faith-based organisations have a strategic role in cultivating moral character alongside professional competence through ethical education, civic engagement and responsible leadership. Such moral formation strengthens democratic participation, public accountability and service to society. Roelofs observes that interfaith peacebuilding initiatives in Northern Nigeria have improved trust between communities and public institutions while contributing to more sustainable development outcomes (376–381). Reimagining national security through African Christian ethics therefore does not replace constitutional governance or professional security agencies; rather, it complements them by fostering justice, integrity, reconciliation, responsible citizenship and social solidarity, thereby creating the moral and institutional conditions necessary for lasting

peace and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Challenges of Applying African Christian Ethics in Nigeria

Despite its rich moral resources, African Christian ethics has not fully realised its potential in promoting national security and sustainable development in Nigeria. A major challenge is the increasing politicisation of religion, as religious institutions and leaders are often drawn into partisan politics and electoral contests. This weakens the Church's prophetic responsibility, erodes public trust and compromises its moral authority to challenge injustice, corruption and poor governance. Instead of serving as impartial advocates for truth and accountability, some religious leaders become associated with political patronage and personal interests, making ethical criticism appear selective or inconsistent. Orogun and Pillay argue that religious opportunism has diminished Christianity's transformative influence in many African societies because political alliances and material interests frequently overshadow its commitment to justice and moral renewal (3–7). Umaru similarly contends that Christian ethics must remain independent of political power if it is to provide credible moral guidance for addressing contemporary social and national challenges (8–12). In addition, institutional weaknesses—including denominational divisions, financial mismanagement, inadequate civic engagement and widespread corruption within public institutions—continue to undermine the practical application of ethical principles. Lekubu and Sibanda observe that moral values alone cannot curb corruption unless they are supported by accountable institutions, effective legal systems and transparent governance (5–11), while Nel argues that entrenched patronage networks often frustrate ethical reforms by placing political and economic interests above the common good (4–9).

African Christian ethics also faces the challenge of engaging critically with cultural practices and social norms that produce both positive and negative social outcomes. While many traditional values strengthen communal solidarity, mutual responsibility and social cohesion, others perpetuate discrimination, exclusion, gender inequality and ethnic prejudice that conflict with biblical teaching and the principle of human dignity. Consequently, African Christian ethics must preserve cultural values that promote human flourishing while reforming practices that undermine justice, equality and peaceful coexistence. Achieving this objective requires sustained collaboration among churches, government, educational institutions and civil society organisations to strengthen civic education, ethical leadership, responsible citizenship and public accountability. Ethical transformation is most effective when moral formation is reinforced by sound public policy, transparent governance and active citizen participation. African Christian ethics therefore remains a valuable framework for advancing national security and sustainable development in Nigeria, provided its moral principles are consistently translated into concrete public action through coordinated institutional and societal engagement.

Recommendations

1. Educational authorities should strengthen ethics and civic education at all levels of schooling by incorporating values such as integrity, justice, compassion, respect for human dignity and responsible citizenship into relevant subjects. Values-based learning should be reinforced through community service, civic engagement and practical ethical decision-making activities.
2. Government agencies, churches and leadership institutes should establish continuous training programmes that promote servant leadership, transparency, accountability and integrity among

political office holders, civil servants and emerging community leaders. Ethical competence should become an essential component of leadership development.

3. Faith-based organisations should collaborate with government and civil society in promoting peacebuilding, anti-corruption campaigns, civic education and community development. Such partnerships should preserve institutional independence while pursuing shared objectives that advance national security and sustainable development.
4. Religious leaders should sustain structured interfaith dialogue and joint community initiatives that encourage mutual understanding, conflict prevention and peaceful coexistence. Collaborative engagement among faith communities can reduce religious intolerance and strengthen national unity.
5. Greater investment should be directed towards grassroots peacebuilding programmes that involve traditional leaders, youth organisations, women's groups and faith communities. Local initiatives in mediation, reconciliation, civic education and non-violent conflict resolution can strengthen social cohesion and prevent the escalation of communal conflicts.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that African Christian ethics offers a credible moral framework for addressing the interconnected challenges of national security and sustainable development in Nigeria. Ethical principles such as human dignity, justice, integrity, communal responsibility, peace and reconciliation provide practical guidance for strengthening governance, promoting responsible leadership and fostering social cohesion. Contemporary security challenges, including corruption, violent extremism, political instability and communal conflicts, cannot be addressed through military and economic interventions alone. Sustainable responses require ethical transformation that shapes the conduct of leaders, public institutions and citizens alike. African Christian ethics therefore contributes to national development by promoting moral accountability, respect for human rights and commitment to the common good within both public and private spheres. The study further demonstrates that the integration of Christian ethical values with Africa's communal heritage presents a constructive approach to nation-building in a pluralistic society. Ethical leadership, responsible citizenship, social justice and collaborative peacebuilding create conditions that strengthen public trust, reduce social tensions and support inclusive development. Although challenges such as the politicisation of religion, institutional weaknesses and entrenched corruption continue to limit the practical application of these ethical principles, they do not diminish their relevance to contemporary Nigeria. Greater collaboration among religious institutions, government agencies, educational institutions and civil society organisations can translate these moral ideals into practical initiatives that strengthen national security and promote sustainable development. In this regard, African Christian ethics remains a valuable resource for cultivating a more peaceful, just and ethically responsible Nigerian society.

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