

# An Ubuntu Remedy for Cognitive Decolonization of Environmental Degradation

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## Abstract

*The issue of environmental degradation globally is considered endemic to human well-being and the environment. This, over the years has attracted various responses from diverse spheres; cultural, religious, and philosophical perspectives. They highlight the role of belief systems in shaping environmental ethics, with much emphasis on stewardship and communitarian values. However, despite all attempts to contain this global issue, persistent psychological barriers, particularly confirmation bias and anchoring bias, continue to hinder progress in addressing environmental degradation. Informed by this problem, this paper examines how these biases in this context built on anthropocentrism, prevent individuals and societies from adopting sustainable behaviors despite global campaigns and awareness of climate change and its effects. Considering that many proposed solutions have failed to adequately address the psychological factors that reinforce environmentally destructive habits, this paper establishes that it is contingent on the lack of a comprehensive approach to recognizing and at the same time overcoming these mental barriers. To bridge this gap, this paper proposes the philosophy of Ubuntu as a remedy for mental decolonization, by encouraging a turn from human-centered thinking to a more interconnected, holistic view of nature. To this end, this study analyses the intersection between psychological biases and environmental ethics, and at the end shows how the Ubuntu philosophy could remedy the problem that exists. The paper argues that by adopting Ubuntu, individuals can deconstruct biases like confirmation and anchoring, which enables them to build a mindset that views the environment as a co-tenant of the Earth rather than a resource for neither exploitation nor abuse. This shift not only addresses the psychological barriers to environmental preservation but also promotes sustainable, ethical practices through a collective sense of responsibility.*

**Keywords:** Anchoring bias, Anthropocentrism, Confirmation bias, Environment, Ubuntu

## Introduction

Environmental degradation occurs on a global scale, given its widespread effects, and therefore requires a holistic approach to solve, as it has become endemic. Currently, the issue of environmental degradation has attracted numerous responses from cultural, historical, religious, and traditional perspectives, all aimed at mitigating future abuse and damage. The cultural perspective urges the global community to consider the relationship and interconnectedness between humans and nature. Similarly, the religious perspective views environmental degradation as a deviation from God’s commandments, as stated in Islamic teachings (Obi). Likewise, environmental communitarians advocate for viewing nature as an equal partner rather than a resource to be exploited or abused, thereby challenging anthropocentric views (Ojomo; Mogaji). However, despite the various efforts of environmentalists, Indigenous people and international institutions against environmental degradation, significant psychological barriers continue to hinder meaningful progress. Two prominent psychological obstacles are confirmation bias and anchoring bias, which influences behaviors and attitudes toward the environment. These biases are introduced in the 1970s to describe People’s behavioural pattern of exhibiting some systematic but

flawed judgment patterns in decision-making as a result of distorted perceptions and reliance on insufficient information (Wilke and Mata; Behimehr and Jamali).

Confirmation bias refers to the tendency of individuals to seek out information that supports their existing beliefs, while disregarding or rationalizing contrary evidence (Peters). This bias leads humans to continue seeking evidence that centers them as the most important factor, reinforcing their hierarchical view over nature for the purpose of self-preservation (Mercier and Sperber; Peters). In a practical term, we might have a situation where an individual believe that their personal actions does not hurt the environment. Even when correct data are presented, although contrary to theirs, they firmly hold on to their initial belief. This, we call selective interpretation of facts, and in the global context of environmental relation, it allows individuals to remain comfortable with their damaging environmental behaviors, which contributes to environmental degradation. On the other hand, Anchoring Bias causes individuals to rely heavily on the initial information they encounter, influencing how they perceive complex issues, even when more accurate and updated evidence becomes available. In the context of environmental degradation, the early misconceptions about climate change; such as the belief that it is a distant problem that does not require immediate action, have clouded judgment about environmental conservation and preservation, that has now led to escalated environmental challenge. In other words, the prevalence of conformation bias in individuals disregard the global climate change consequences, due to misguided perspectives, and keeps on exploiting, abusing, and degrading the environment

In addressing these mental barriers, we propose the adoption of Ubuntu philosophy, an African philosophy that promotes the interconnectedness of all beings and the collective responsibility we share for each other and the natural world. This philosophy directly challenges the notions of Confirmation and anchoring biases and anthropocentrism, which are foundational to the environmental degradation and destruction we witness today. Thus, through Ubuntu philosophy, this paper proposes a solution

that would engage in the mental decolonization of people's psychological states; where they have adhered to confirmation bias and anchoring bias, thereby birthing ecological sustainability and global responsibility in their relationship with nature.

In actualizing the goal of this paper, it will be divided into five sections. The first section on shall focus on Anthropocentrism and environmental degradation, where how and to what extent anthropocentrism has contributed to harming the environment will be explored and exposed. The second section will delve into the conceptual clarification of the terms "confirmation bias" and "anchoring bias," clarifying these concepts to provide a clearer picture of our direction. The third section will discuss the prevalence of anthropocentrism in environmental issues, examining the role played by confirmation bias and anchoring bias in perpetuating these problems. The fourth section will be a presentation of Ubuntu philosophy as a remedy to decolonize people's cognitive biases; confirmation bias and anchoring bias, to pave the way for environmental preservation, conservation, and sustainability. In the final section, we will conclude with recommendations on how to implement the proposed conceptual framework.

### **Anthropocentrism & Environmental Degradation**

Anthropocentrism is the idea that humans are at the center of the universe, and this has over time been argued to be a major cause of environmental crises and challenges (Dzwonkowska). It is also the belief that places humans as the most valuable entities in the entire ecological system, and that everything else exists merely for human ends and survival (Itebiye). This view holds that humans are at the center of everything significant; be it moral, philosophical, and ecological, even if it comes at the expense of jeopardizing the well-being of other entities within the natural world, or the natural world itself. This perspective has over a long period of time influenced human behavior, particularly in how people interact with other entities within the natural world and the environment itself.

Historically, the discourse on anthropocentrism dates back to philosophical, religious, and cultural discussions in which humans are found to be elevated

above all other forms of life. In the Western tradition, for example, philosophers like Aristotle emphasised the hierarchical order of nature, which he however placed humans as the pinnacle of creation (Callicott). Similarly, in the Judeo-Christian teachings, humans are granted dominion over the Earth, which has fortified the idea that the natural world, as we know it today, exists primarily for benefit and interest of humans (Itebiye). This anthropocentric view has, in our contemporary period, led to severe implications, serving as a justification for modern industrial and technological advancements that treat nature as a resource to be controlled, exploited, and manipulated for human benefit. Thus, as humans continue to exercise their anthropocentric control over natural resources built on abuse and exploitation, ecosystems are being destabilized. However, this has had numerous ecological consequences. These consequences often result in severe health conditions, biodiversity loss, climate change, ecological imbalance, and other significant environmental impacts (Itebiye; Dzwonkowska; Kopnina et al.). In other words, the prioritization of human needs over ecological balance has birthed unsustainable development practices that degrade natural habitats, resulting in what some environmental philosophers call the ‘human-centered ecological crisis’ (Brennan and Lo).

In essence, anthropocentrism as popularly practiced promotes disconnect between humans and the environment. This by implication is a utilitarian view of nature that disregards the intrinsic value of other species and ecosystems.

### **Concept of Confirmation Bias and Anchoring Bias**

Confirmation bias is currently one of the most prevalent and problematic epistemic conditions. Its widespread attention in areas such as media (Stibel), the replication crisis in the sciences (Lilienfeld), and even in philosophical discourses (De Cruz and De Smedt; Peters) is due to its challenge to accurate and corroborated belief systems, scientifically proven by facts. These biases, according to Peters, are considered to be people’s tendency to seek information that confirms their already established belief systems, even if a lot of data and facts present

otherwise (Peters). Confirmation bias has been argued to be an epistemic problem in our day-to-day affairs, often without people even knowing they are affected by this dysfunction, as described by Peters. According to him, this state happens when one becomes ingrained in their belief system; even in the face of accurate contrary facts, the individual with confirmation bias holds on to the initial belief, considering it to be above any contrary opinion or opposition (Peters). This, according to (Mercier and Sperber), reduces people’s ability to subject their beliefs to correction, even when necessary; this further result in a situation of being overconfident. As a result of this confidence, (Steel) argues that it eventually leads to favoring only evidences that supports one’s belief considered to be knowledge, which could lead to one’s beliefs becoming absolute and unresponsive to change. According to Karl Popper, this is not a plausible way to progress, scientifically (Popper; Popper).

As expressed by (Haidt), confirmation bias is a construct of the mind that appeals only to information correlating with its constructs. In other words, it is a cognitive condition that tends to place one in an advantageous position over others in terms of social relationships and interactions. It considers one’s own ideas to be centric and absolute. This, according to (Del Vicario et al.), often birth extreme opinions and positions in social relationships, accompanied by a superiority complex; a situation that could lead to manipulation, exploitation, and the degrading of other beings. Hence, it is arguable that confirmation bias, although a psychological phenomenon, is also an epistemic hurdle that has, over time, affected individuals’ sense of judgment in interpreting, processing, and validating information. Individuals tend to seek out information that correlates with and confirms their pre-existing beliefs while disregarding evidence that contradicts their initial belief system. Various experts from different sectors consider this an epistemic problem that restricts intellectual growth and hinders the development of critical thinking, thus giving no room for epistemic advancement in society. As argued by (Mercier and Sperber), confirmation bias diminishes critical thinking by preventing individuals from engaging with opposing viewpoints. This intellectual absolutism

which often leads to discomfort when confirmation bias individuals are confronted with contradictory evidence, results in a centric and absolute belief system. Thus, individuals with this bias tend to hold onto their beliefs, and by implication perpetuate social imbalances and undermining the need for a more interconnected understanding of relationships in society.

On the other hand, Anchoring bias, like confirmation bias, is a psychological phenomenon and one of the most robust cognitive heuristics (Furnham and Boo; Yasserli and Reher; Lieder et al.). By analysis, anchoring bias is somewhat akin to confirmation bias, which is considered to be an effect. It is the tendency to place much focus on one piece of information when making decisions (Cho et al.). In the field of psychology, the anchoring bias effect refers to a situation where an individual, during the decision-making process, tends to use their initial knowledge about certain things as a yardstick for measuring future adjustments if the need arises (Bystranowski et al.). According to (Lieder et al.), discourses on anchoring bias in psychology often focus on numerical estimation, which explores how people estimate numerical values while still holding on to their initial calculations and predictions. This firm adherence to their initial knowledge subsequently affects their future judgments. In other words, they tend to use their initial acquaintance as a foundation for judging future acquaintances.

In a social context, anchoring bias can be described as people's judgments being influenced by a rational reliance on their initially acquired information. This, according to (Tversky and Kahneman), is contingent on a cognitive laziness that often fuels individuals desire to rely on previously acquired information when attempting to solve complex tasks or problems. As a result, this set of individuals often limit their scope to what they already know, thereby ignoring new information and making decisions that leads to systematic errors in judgment and arguments. These errors arise from reliance on non-rational information (Yasserli and Reher).

Thus, anchoring bias, like other cognitive biases, particularly confirmation bias, reflects a behavioral pattern in individuals where they stick to the information they already possess, which

thence influences their future actions, dispositions, interpretations, predictions, and approaches to problem-solving.

### **Anthropocentrism amidst Environmental Crisis: The Roles of Confirmation and Anchoring Bias**

Today, anthropocentric attitudes towards nature persist amidst the global environmental crisis. This attitude we argue is contingent to some psychological and cognitive biases, such as confirmation bias and anchoring bias, which has succeeded in supporting this human-centric behavior; the tendency to seek out and favor information that supports pre-existing beliefs, and the reliance on initial impressions or assumptions when making decisions, respectively. Hence, both of these biases help sustain anthropocentrism, even in the face of overwhelming and convincing evidences that challenges its validity, particularly amidst the growing ecological crisis.

Basically, anthropocentrism as a whole has been argued to be supported by biblical and Quranic interpretations, albeit somewhat misconstrued. According to (Obi), the Islamic rulings on the relationship between humans and the environment advocate for a balanced perspective. In his words, he expressed that Allah (SWT) considers both humans and every other living being are communities. As stated in Quran 6:38: "No animal that walks on the earth, nor bird that flies with its two wings, but are communities like you" (Obi). As noted by Obi, this particular verse implies that both humans and other animals are creations of God and should mutually respect one another. Furthermore, (Obi) discusses how the Quran prescribes ethical treatment towards other beings, particularly when it comes to the consumption of animals. He cited the Qur'an that if humans must kill animals for food, they should do so with care and compassion (Obi). This, in other words depicts that the hierarchical relationship of humans towards other beings, as presented in the Quran, is not one of domination or exploitation, but rather, it promotes a coordination of relationships that exist between both parties, emphasizing a balance where the superior intellect of humans should be used to organize society in a way that maintains harmonious relationships, thereby realising a community where love and compassion thrives. In essence,

the principles of theocentrism, including qualities like humility, respect, moderation, selflessness, and mindfulness, can contribute to an approach to environmentalism (Obi).

In the biblical context, (Itebiye) argues that while the Bible does state that man was sent to Earth by God to dominate over every other entity, this commandment is contextual and not intended to justify the abuse of nature. Argued by Itebiye, the biblical passages that instruct humans to ‘go into the world and have dominion over it’ should be understood not as a mandate for ruthless exploitation, but as a call for responsible stewardship. Considering the vast use of the words “control” or “reign” in the Bible, it reflects a dual identity, signifying both benevolent control and the potential for destructiveness, as illustrated in Micah 7:19. The term “subdue” (Kabash) according to Itebiye is understood to signify God’s compassion rather than an endorsement of destructive dominion. This led Itebiye to point at Leviticus 25:4-5, which condemns anything related to ruthless dominion (radah). He cites other passages, such as 1 Kings 4:24-25, which exuded how Solomon’s dominion resulted in peace and prosperity for his people (Itebiye). To this end, the biblical concept of dominion must be contextually understood, as God is believed to be an omnibenevolent deity (Itebiye). It raises the question of how such a God could instruct His creation to exercise ruthless dominion over nature, especially when He shares the Earth with all His creations. Building on the above premise, (Itebiye) contends that biblical representations are not the root cause of today’s environmental degradation. Hence, the terms “dominate” and “subdue,” as found in biblical passages, should not be interpreted negatively, given that the directive comes from a benevolent and all-good God.

Following the above positions, it is arguable that both Obi and Itebiye argue that the continuous degradation of the Earth by humans stems from ignorance. This ignorance is sustained by individuals’ adherence to beliefs that serve their selfish interests, which resonates with Hobbes view of man as selfish and wicked nature. The ongoing anthropocentric actions that contribute to environmental degradation, as noted by Obi and Itebiye result from a combination of ignorance and malice. Despite the

prevalence of contrary positions and campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the severe effects of this anthropocentric attitude, many individuals continue to believe they have been divinely ordained to dominate the Earth, often interpreting this as a license for survival (Itebiye). This perspective stems from a psychological dysfunction best described as confirmation bias, wherein individuals cling to preconceived notions because they align with their narrative and benefit their interests (Peters; Steel), and Anchoring bias on the other hand complements this phenomenon, as it leads individuals to use their established belief in superiority as a benchmark for interpreting new realities (Furnham and Boo; Yasserli and Reher; Lieder et al.; Tversky and Kahneman; Bystranowski et al.).

For example, consider the global scale and within local communities, we see that various institutions, religious leaders, heads of government, and governmental agencies in charge of environmental management have issued numerous directives on why people should desist from further environmental pollution and abuse (Lagos State Government; Federal Republic of Nigeria; Onwudiegwu et al.; Kumar). However, even with the global and regional outcry, people persist with the indulgence in degrading the Earth despite environmental crises and challenges, which have led to a global outcry and severe health conditions as a result of environmental degradation. This behavior is largely due to a subconscious state where people feel that “this is how it has been done over time, this is how we’ve lived our lives, and this has been happening long before now,” and so they continue to follow that path. In Lagos state, Nigeria for example, even with warnings to stop burning bushes, burning waste, ban on the use of Styrofoam and disposing of garbage in drainage systems (Lagos State Government; CHELD), people still engage in these activities under the notion that “this is how we do it” The psychological dysfunction at play here is confirmation bias, where individuals seek every possible explanation to justify their beliefs and continue their behavior. Even when adjustments are made, they slightly adjust using their anchoring bias effect, of which the individuals remain firm in their position.

As a result, these cognitive biases have contributed to even greater damage to the environment today, as individuals cling to their belief in superiority over all things, perpetuating a cycle of disregard for the well-being of the planet. Such attitudes, whether built on religious interpretations or psychological dysfunction, demonstrate the need for a critical reevaluation of anthropocentrism and its consequences on the environment. Thus, it is deducible that both confirmation bias and anchoring bias promotes an anthropocentric (Self-centered) worldview. This is so because through this lens, individuals are seen themselves as the most important entities in the universe, in the context of environmental relation and held firmly to that belief system. Some selfishly drew this stance from poorly understood religious belief. This mindset has over the years contributed to further exploitation and degradation of the environment, as nature is psychologically viewed merely as a means to human ends. The result has been continuous degradation, abuse, and exploitation of nature, requiring swift, urgent, and effective attention.

### **Decolonizing Environmental Biases through Ubuntu Philosophy**

In recent years, efforts have been made to challenge anthropocentric actions and promote alternative worldviews that recognize the interconnectedness of all life within the environment. Ecocentrism, for example emphasizes the intrinsic value of ecosystems and all living beings (Naess; Nnaemeka et al.). This ecocentric principle advocates for a more balanced and sustainable relationship between humans and nature. Similarly, indigenous philosophies, such as the African concept of Ubuntu, highlight the interdependence of humans and the natural world, which serves as a framework for rethinking our relationship with the environment. The philosophy of Ubuntu serves as a tool for decolonizing the mental state of people with respect to their cognitive biases, such as confirmation bias and anchoring bias, in relation to environmental degradation.

The philosophy of Ubuntu has been approached and defined by different scholars from various perspectives, all of which highlight a sense of collective responsibility either relative to humans

or extended to non-humans and non-animals. It is a philosophy peculiar to the Bantu-speaking people of Southern Africa, often defined as humanness (Samuel and Omosulu). It encompasses and recognizes the existence of others as being important and relevant, just like that of other beings. In other words, it posits that a person is a person because of other persons, or as noted, "I am because we are" (Kyei-Nuamah and Peng). This, hence, brings focus to the notion of personhood in Ubuntu philosophy. Contained in the philosophy of Ubuntu, the notion of personhood is divided into two main aspects: the ontological aspect, which is also peculiar to Western thought and which everyone is born with, and the ethical aspect, which is attained by considering one's moral responsibility to other beings (Samuel and Omosulu). In other essence, ethical personhood is earned when one fulfills their moral obligations toward every other being (Samuel and Omosulu). Now the question arises: who are the other beings?

In traditional African society, the collective belongingness of all life is not limited to human beings alone because recognition is extended to non-humans and non-animals as well (Aliyu). Evident in the work of Rawat and Mishra, the earth and all it houses have life, and they shoulder a much greater responsibility than humans. This extended recognition in traditional African society is contained within the Ubuntu philosophy, as a result of humans' interdependence on nature for survival. The environment at large, including the air we breathe, water, rocks, trees, and animals, fulfills certain obligations toward us as humans by contributing to and aiding our survival. This, in turn, is reciprocated by humans toward nature in African traditional society; this idea thus aligns with the Kantian position that suggests treating others the way you want to be treated (Samuel and Omosulu). As Duijvenboden notes, human relations with nature are inevitable because we need nature to survive due to the various services and obligations it fulfills toward us. Obligations such as "... clean air and water, pollination of crops, decomposition of organic matter, regulation of climate, and nutrient cycling". Hence, nature can be considered a life-supporting system for human existence and flourishing (Ojomo; Mogaji; Rawat and Mishra).

Having established the principles behind the Ubuntu philosophy, we then proceed to use these principles to decolonize the people's mental state from confirmation bias and anchoring bias. In previous sections, we explained confirmation bias as the tendency to favor information that aligns with one's existing beliefs (Peters), while anchoring bias refers to a state where individuals excessively rely on initial information to make subsequent judgments (Bystranowski et al.). These biases often perpetuate an exclusionary worldview. We argued that such biases fuel incorrect and false positions, often arising from anthropocentrism in the context of environmental relations; a situation where people maintain a long-standing belief in their superiority over the environment, viewing it solely as a means to their ends. This has led to disastrous consequences, including the depletion of natural resources and harm to human life, affecting agricultural yields, causing ecological crises, and more.

In respect of decolonizing the bias state of the people's cognition, we propose the Ubuntu philosophy. Decolonizing, in this sense, refers to replacing individualistic beliefs with the Ubuntu principles of interconnected relations (Fanon), however, in a strategic way that does not incur violence or forcefulness in order to ensure compliance and conform with our current liberal society (Mogaji and Motadegbe). Through this interconnected framework, we aim to replace the individualistic worldview that fuels confirmation and anchoring biases with Ubuntu's principles of communal and collective responsibility, where everything within the environment is considered valuable, important, and an end in itself. In actualising this paper proposes a process of sensitization and reorientation using Ubuntu philosophy to make people see the intrinsic value of the environment and the responsibilities it shoulders. Ubuntu establishes personhood not only within human society but also extends this recognition to the environment itself. It teaches us that every part of the ecosystem, every existence, is just one of many manifestations of life, and they are not in opposition but rather complementary to each other. This position points at a harmonious society that, in turn, ensures environmental conservation and preservation (Rawat and Mishra). By making people

see themselves not as isolated individuals but as part of a whole, of which the environment, the streams, the air, the earth, and the sky are co-tenants, we advocate for respect and care for all beings within this ecological framework. As an extension of this, we propose a counter-saying, akin to the Golden Rule: Treat others (animals, plants, streams, trees, humans, and so on) in the same way you would want to be treated; apply principles to others that you would want to be the general law for everyone, including yourself (Samuel and Omosulu).

This expanded framework, through the lens of Ubuntu philosophy, encourages individuals with confirmation and anchoring biases, especially in the context of environmental degradation, to abandon such tendencies. Instead, they should begin to view themselves not as isolated individuals within society but as part of a broader community, where their actions have significant consequences on others who share the same identity as co-tenants within the environment.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In the face of modern anthropocentric actions, which have been supported by individualism and consistently fueled by cognitive biases such as confirmation and anchoring biases, this paper argues for a decolonization approach. It proposes that decolonizing the minds of the people with the Ubuntu philosophy can replace the individualistic approach to the environment. A more communal approach would allow people to see their belongingness to the environment as part and parcel of life, which should be respected. They would also develop an understanding of their responsibility toward the environment as a whole, akin to the collective responsibility nature shoulders for the welfare of all. This shift in mentality would promote the identity of collective personhood, which gives the environment leverage to be respected and cared for. Reflecting on this, it becomes clear that addressing environmental degradation requires not only policy and awareness but a deep-seated transformation of how people relate to nature and each other. By embracing this philosophy, the cognitive state would experience a form of decolonization of some cognitive biases by replacing them with a more eco-friendly and

communal mindset that recognizes everything that exists as a striver for survival. However, this principle might face several challenges. The first challenge is the persistence of confirmation bias and anchoring bias among individuals, which could lead them to hold on to their individual beliefs despite the introduction of the Ubuntu philosophy. Secondly, there may be resistance from religious beliefs, which influence how people perceive their environment, particularly where dominion over the earth is interpreted as domination (Itebiye; Obi). However, upon careful examination, these challenges reveal not an impossibility but a call for thoughtful engagement with existing belief systems and mental models.

To address the prevalence of confirmation bias and anchoring bias in the context of the Ubuntu philosophy, reorientation and sensitization efforts can be conducted on a global scale within cultural, traditional, and religious settings, through involving the necessary stakeholders at each level. With the involvement of the necessary stakeholders, this can be done by integrating the Ubuntu approach into the people's existing beliefs and worldviews, increasing the likelihood that these newly integrated norms will take root and flourish. At the individual level, environmental education and ethical reorientation programs could be used to cultivate personal responsibility and empathy for the environment, which in turn would build a sense of responsibility and care towards the environment. At the community level, traditional institutions and local leaders can model Ubuntu-based practices that prioritize shared ownership and protection of the environment. Institutionally, organizations can embed Ubuntu values into their environmental governance structures and practices, and possibly incorporate it into the goal of their CSR. On the part of the government, they could explore the incorporation of Ubuntu into environmental laws and public policies to, just as Mogaji recognized the need for governments to consider some sort of abusive actions towards the environment as being a form of domestic violence, and punishable under the law. Hence, a more compassionate and sustainable framework for ecological management could be realized through these recommendations. These reflective shifts, though gradual, can foster a deeper

sense of environmental stewardship that goes beyond surface-level awareness.

Regarding the religious belief aspect, biblical texts with certain literature have shown that many belief systems, particularly Islam and Christianity, suggest that humans have dominion over the earth in a way that humans' relationship with nature is moderated by compassion. It is not a ruthless domination, but rather one that acknowledges God's compassion and love for all creation (Itebiye; Obi). If God, who created humans and animals, is compassionate, it would follow that humans should not be ruthless toward other forms of life. To the above, the superiority of humans as outlined in religious texts is recognition of their role as regulators, moderators, and overseers of nature. They are only obligated with the responsibility of ensuring the sustainability of the environment through compassion in their relationship with it, and not a relationship built on abuse or exploitation. With this in mind, and by implementing the Ubuntu philosophy alongside religious values through engaging religious leaders as part of the decision-making process, the environment could become a more compassionate one, whereby human interests with sustainable and compassionate interactions with nature is balanced, hence, preventing the excessive exploitation and foster harmony within the entirety of nature.

Thus, Future research could further build on this, and policymakers could examine how these recommendations could inform environmental policy-making, legal reforms, and international environmental treaties.

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