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## **Religious Institutions' Capacity Determinants and Environmental Conservation in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A Case of the Baptist Church in Central Africa in Goma, North Kivu**

**Mr. Joshua Kasereka Lusenge & Dr. Ernest Safari (PhD)**

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# Religious Institutions' Capacity Determinants and Environmental Conservation in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A Case of the Baptist Church in Central Africa in Goma, North Kivu

Mr. Joshua Kasereka Lusenge<sup>1</sup> & Dr. Ernest Safari<sup>2</sup>(PhD)

<sup>1</sup> School of Social Sciences, Master of Art in Development Studies (Environmental Conservation Option), Mount Kenya University, Kigali, Rwanda

<sup>2</sup>Mount Kenya University, Kigali, Rwanda

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## Abstract

This research, conducted in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) with a focus on the Baptist Church in Central Africa (CBCA), explores the relationship between religious institutions' capacity determinants and environmental conservation. Since the 1960s, scholars have increasingly studied the connections between humans, religions, and the environment, emphasizing the role of religion in addressing the environmental crisis. The study, using a descriptive research design and a case study approach, targeted a population of 5,435 individuals aged 18 to 65, with a sample size of 373 units. The main objective was to identify capacity-related obstacles hindering the CBCA's efforts toward environmental conservation in Goma. The researchers acknowledged the important role that religion can play in solving environmental issues, viewing the environmental crisis as a moral imperative requiring spiritual solutions and cultural transformation. Despite the commitment of religious institutions to nature caretaking, the study observed ongoing environmental deterioration, suggesting obstacles impeding their efforts. Data collection involved both a questionnaire survey and face-to-face interviews. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25, was employed for quantitative data analysis, using descriptive approaches such as frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data underwent theme-based analysis to elucidate respondents' perspectives. The study's specific objectives included assessing the relationship between CBCA's capacities and environmental conservation in Goma, examining the link between CBCA's resources and interventions for environmental protection, and evaluating the impact of accountability practices on environmental conservation in the same town. Results indicated that poor capacity stands out as a significant obstacle hampering CBCA's environmental conservation efforts. The findings suggest that the church's response to environmental issues is not yet optimal, emphasizing the need for improvement in capacity-related aspects. In conclusion, this research contributes valuable insights to the understanding

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of how capacity-related obstacles hinder churches, particularly the CBCA, in their efforts toward environmental conservation. The study serves as a reference for researchers, practitioners, managers, planners, and policymakers in the region, offering critical information on capacity-related environmental issues. It calls for a paradigm shift and suggests that future research should delve into strategies for enhancing the church's capacity-building processes to positively impact environmental conservation.

**Keywords:** *Religious Institutions, Capacity Determinants, Environmental Conservation, Baptist Church in Central Africa, Goma, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo*

## 1. Introduction

There is abundant research on the current environmental crisis, and trends are very worrying (Ronan, 2017). Scientists believe the situation continues worsening with the far more rapid rate at which deforestation, which is the core cause of the accelerate biodiversity loss, is estimated and the way it has negatively affected the survival of creation (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2016; Mlaki, 2016; Weisse & Goldman, 2017). According to researchers, the following alarming trends have been documented: (i) A global net loss of forest cover was about 129 million hectares between 1990 and 2015 (about 5.2 million hectares each year) when only from 2010 to 2015 forest decreased by a net loss of 6.5 million hectares per year (Da Silva, 2016, FAO, 2018). (ii) While the rate of global tree loss was said to be on the rise in 2016, reaching a record of 29.7 million hectares of forest loss a year, the equivalent of losing 40 football fields full of trees every minute (Weisse & Goldman, 2017; United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat, 2019), reports show that DR Congo was losing 311,000 hectares of forest each year.

(iii) Only the Virunga National Park around Goma town in North Kivu loosed about 59,000 ha of forest per year to supply charcoal to the Goma population (Kipalu et al., 2016),.

To address the issue, scholars have advocated and encouraged religious institutions, especially the church, to use the proven greatest potential surprisingly identified in their midst, which can strongly handle the actual ecological crisis (Somaratne, 2017). This is testified by the significant influence religious beliefs have had on people's actions and their relationship with the environment in many parts of the globe (Shehu & Molyneux-Hodgson, 2014). However, although the church has been engaged in this fight for a time, the problem remains, raising the question of “why the ecological crisis keeps getting worse while Christian Churches still actively exist?”.

In response to this, Shehu and Molyneux-Hodgson (2014), and even Haluza-DeLay (2014) analyzed different faith-based groups to know how they relate to environmental concerns.

They conclude that: (i) many religions, especially Christian churches, have been actively involved in environmental protection activities for some decades, but (ii) several obstacles have undermined the impact of their actions. One of the many types of obstacles Haluza-DeLay pointed out is related to capacity issues. These kinds of obstacles faced by religions have not yet been studied enough to be clarified, and still, they need to be addressed as a gap.

Therefore, this research prioritized “Environmental Capacity determinants-related issues”. It examined the relationships that exist between ability, resources, accountability approach used in the CBCA, and their environmental conservation commitment in Goma.

### 1.1 1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study was based both on a general objective and on three specific objectives.

### **1.1.1 1.4.1 General Objective**

This research generally attempted to establish the relationship between the Baptist religious institutions' capacity determinants and environmental conservation in DR Congo, taking as a case study the Baptist Church in Central Africa (CBCA) in Goma, North Kivu province.

### **1.1.2 1.4.2 Specific Objectives**

Three specific objectives were pursued by this research as follows:

- i. To assess the relationship between the Baptist Church's ability and the environmental conservation in Goma;
- ii. To establish the link between the Baptist Church resources and their intervention towards environmental conservation in Goma;
- iii. To determine the effect of the accountability approach applied in the Baptist Church on environmental conservation matters in Goma.

### **1.2 1.5 Research Questions**

- i. How does ability in the Baptist Church influence environmental conservation engagement in Goma?
- ii. What link does it exist between the Baptist Church resources and their intervention towards environmental conservation in Goma?
- iii. What is the effect of the accountability practices applied in the Baptist Church on environmental conservation matters in Goma?

### **2.1 Empirical Review**

In recent years, studies (even if very little) have identified the most significant capacities religion has for addressing the actual ecological crisis.

Many empirical researches have focused on how these capacities can have some association with environmental concerns (Philippsen et al., 2017; Harmannij, 2019). Therefore, this section will explore the efforts of some church organizations in environmental conservation in diversified contexts to support the present study's conclusions. These efforts will be examined from the perspective of capacity-related problems by analyzing the three following determinants, namely the institution's ability, resources assets, and accountability practices concerning environmental conservation.

#### **2.1.1 Institution's ability and environmental conservation**

Regarding ability about conservation, studies show that more educated people in an institution, especially those provided with environmental-based knowledge, would have increasing awareness and improved environmental behavior.

Research conducted in 2013 by Yu Yang and Huang (2018) examined religious believers in China and found that more educated people behave in more pro-environmental ways than people with a low level of education. Another study held in 2009 by Douglas in Australia (Harmannij, 2019) led to a similar conclusion.

He found that Clergy often lacked the necessary knowledge for environmental awareness and actions on the ground because little or no attention is given to environmental problems in their formal training. The same issue is vividly observed in the study findings reached by Mlaki (2016) in Tanzania. He examined 100 households about a tree-planting programme, and the findings elucidated that 68% of the interviewed respondents were more pro-environmental, and were of the level of secondary, college, and university education. Their

exposure to these levels of education had a sound contribution to their environmental behavior, allowing them to be more knowledgeable and concerned about the environment than those in primary education (32%). This was due to their capacity to reason, and the skills they had acquired during their school life.

Another investigation done in 2017 by Le Roux in the United Reformed Church of South Africa, it was asked to practice church ministers to elaborate on their level of environmental awareness and environmental literacy (Cheryl, 2017). For this researcher, more than 50% of practicing church ministers acknowledged that during their educational training, they had not received any formal teaching on environmental issues in their curriculum which could have shaped their environmental literacy. The same is the point of view of Werner and Jeglitzka (2016), followed by Harmannij (2019), who notes that many schools of theology, unfortunately, do not prepare future church leaders to understand well the interconnections between theology and day-to-day challenging issues (such as environmental problems) that could determine people lifestyles.

Warui and Kairu (Warui & Kairu, 2018) undertook more investigation in some parishes of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Africa (PCEA) in Limuru (Kenya) 2018. They examined 156 respondents on whether the church had run any environmental activities. The findings indicate that 134 or 86% were either not sure or openly said not. Therefore, the researchers concluded that few leaders mastered the theological fundamentals of environmental stewardship and conservation, on one hand. Besides, they were not well communicated through a good system of training at the grassroots level to allow community ownership.

It means that the relationship between theological teachings and the subject of environmental stewardship and conservation had not been well understood at local levels in a way that would promote mass community mobilization (Warui & Kairu, 2018). This meets what was observed by Mukaria (2017) that while most Christian Churches say they have embraced the environmental protection dynamic, there are few changes in the context of how Christians approach ecological issues. This is why popular ownership and support for radical changes at the grassroots level of the congregations has not been as significant as one might imagine.

### **2.1.2 Institution's resources and environmental conservation**

Scholars now agree that religious institutions have capacity and the power of influence. This can be explained to a high degree by the fact that religious institutions have resources and assets. They even are known as one of the largest groups of investors in the world (Agbiji & Swart, 2015). They possess human, material, and financial resources, which can facilitate educating, inspiring, and engaging their adherents with environmental concerns. Specifically in African society, religious institutions are acknowledged to be strong structures in mobilizing resources that would not have been mobilized in a different manner to address community issues (Agbiji & Swart, 2015; United States Environmental Programme, 2018).

Paradoxically, a study carried out by Koehrsen (2015) on the local process of energy transition (use of renewable energy) within Lutheran and Reformed Churches in Emden, a small city in North Germany, shows that these local churches did not play a significant role in the local energy transition process, based on what they call resources scarcity. For them, "sustainability" competes with other important topics such as "social justice", "peace", etc. and congregations favor these latter rather than the creation preservation because of limited financial, material, human, and time resources.

Despite all this, still there is hope. Another study conducted by Mlaki (2016) in Tanzania indicates that religious communities significantly played their role in tree planting as a form

of environmental remedy practice. Among the reasons, they point out the advantages of their institutional infrastructures and structures. These material resources constitute a well-established platform that provides a particular type of support to activities. The areas owned by this church are endowed with an imposing number of planted trees, while mostly in the neighboring communities the environment is not well protected.

### **2.1.3 Institution's accountability practices and environmental conservation**

It is recognized by scholars that current environmental conditions have been seriously compromised, mostly through human greed, a syndrome strongly opposed by Christianity. Churches and Faith-based organizations are then engaged in fighting it. For this, they acknowledge the importance both of the individuals' accountability for their actions, and the hierarchical account-giving responsibility to different stakeholder groups of interest regarding environmental conservation (Owusu, 2016). However, still there is a lack of research that explores environmental-related hierarchical accountability practices in the religious realm in Africa, apart from the spiritual aspect, where people feel accountable to God (Owusu, 2016). Regular accurate and comprehensive reporting of institutions' performance to the hierarchy in environmental matters is rare, despite policies and other resources provided. Yet, this accountability tool is still important. This is also the understanding of believers in the Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. In the research held there by Mlaki (2016), participants pointed out that for the sake of their Christian faith and a good testimony to other people, they seriously engaged in tree planting as a sign of being in communion with all believers in God. For Mlaki, by doing this, they feel blessed to maintain God's creation in good condition as God wanted it during the creation, as witnessed by the words: "and God saw that it was good". Participants added that backed with biblical teachings they received, this program awakened them to feel that depleting the trees from the environment is sinful before God. Unfortunately, this is not common in all churches as could be expected.

A study conducted by Warui and Kairu (2018) in the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Africa (PCEA) in Kenya demonstrated shortcomings in this matter. Leaders were aware of a divine responsibility that has been conferred upon humanity to safeguard the natural environment, but few are practically implemented at the grassroots level. This is also acknowledged by Mukaria (2017) when remarking that there is still a significant gap between speech and practice at the level of many church institutions.

## **2.2 Research Gap**

The greatest capacity religion has for addressing the actual ecological crisis has gained increasing interest since the 1960s (Ronan, 2017). But, most literature shows that the historian Lynn White's keynote address entitled "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", published in the *Science* magazine of March 1967, is the very paper that helped to birth the large movement of Christians today known as Christian environmentalism (Taylor et al., 2016).

For Lynn White, Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt for the present ecologic crisis due to its environmentally destructive behaviors based on the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence if it is not to serve man's needs. Meanwhile, White also believed that Christianity, through its religious values, was the most effective antidote to environmental degradation. He affirms that "since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious". This is the reason why he suggested rethinking the Christian faith regarding environmental care. As such, White's thesis ignited a deep debate

that has been ongoing ever since (Taylor, 2016). While most findings have supported Lynn's hypothesis to some extent, others found little significant association between Christianity and environmental degradation (Crosby, 2016; Taylor et al., 2016).

However, another group of studies found a positive and conducive relationship between religiosity and environmental concern, especially when religious views on Christians' stewardship duty toward the environment are evidenced. This latter tendency even defends Christianity as a powerful and perhaps unique tool able to generate a compelling environmental ethic in the modern world. They demonstrate a strong compatibility between environmentalism and Christianity, showing how creation care is consistent with Christian faith and values.

Randolph Haluza-DeLay can be considered the figurehead of this trend. In his Article on "Religion and Climate Change: Variety in points of view and practice", *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 5(2), 261–279, he ascertained that based on the greatest potential the church has for addressing today's ecological crisis, it remains the world's best chance of conserving life on earth than all politicians and experts put together (Haluza-DeLay, 2014).

His thinking is supported by Shehu & Molyneux-Hodgson (2014), who found that many Christian communities, not only have accepted to bear the moral responsibility to combat environmental changes but have also institutionalized commitments and developed new theologies and even actions to promote environmental sustainability. What reveals particular to Randolph Haluza-DeLay appears in the analysis he holds, which concluded that: (1) Christian churches have been actively involved in environmental protection for some decades, but (2) some obstacles undermined the impact of their actions, and seriously obstruct environmental concerns from becoming part of their day-to-day life.

Haluza-DeLay grouped the obstacles faced by some churches into four types. The first one relates to Conviction issues. This is the type in which the current study is interested the most. In this category of obstacles, barriers on the people's lifestyle level are supported by features referring to capacity-related factors such as level of knowledge, awareness of real issues and appropriate strategies for action, willingness, and motivation to be involved in actions and make changes, etc. These kinds of obstacles have not yet been clarified about religious institutions' environmental interventions, and they still need to be addressed as a gap. Therefore, the goal of this study was to investigate these obstacles.

Regarding the above, our research prioritized "Environmental Capacity-related issues", particularly in examining the relationships that exist between ability, resource assets, and accountability practices in the Baptist church, and their environmental conservation commitment in Goma. This is consistent with the requirements for a successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are strongly aimed at seeing countries make sure they have a new generation of sustainability professionals who have acquired new skill sets and toolkits for sustainability (Jaiyesimi, 2016). It also meets what was noted by O'Connell et al. (2017), warning that capacity development for conservation must be treated with greater urgency, specifically in Africa.

### 2.3 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a logical graphical structure that shows the key variables related to the problem under study, providing a clear picture of the relationships that exist between them. It schematically explains how the phenomenon to be investigated would be explored and shows the series of actions that will be undertaken in the study to answer the research

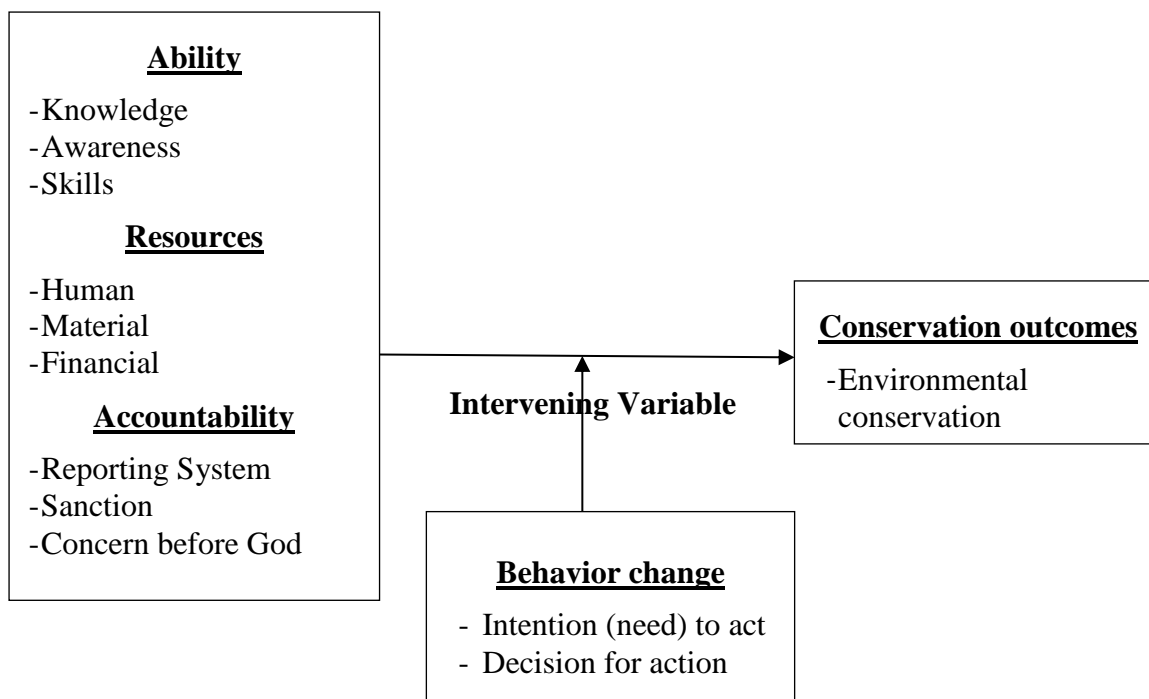
question. It also makes it easy for the researcher to identify the attributes within the main variables (Adom et al., 2018). This is what is demonstrated below.

**Independent Variable**

**Religious Institutions’ Capacity Determinants**

**Dependent Variable**

**Environmental conservation**



**Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework**

**Source:** Author’s construct, 2020

The success of church interventions in environmental conservation will depend on several factors among which capacity-related ones (Mlaki, 2016). The above conceptual framework presents in a diagrammatic fashion how these capacity-related determinants interact in this research. It describes the way the independent variable, which is “religious institutions’ capacity determinants”, influences the dependent variable, the “environmental conservation.”

At the same time, it shows how the intervening variable, which is the “behavior change”, acts upon the relationship between both of the previous variables.

For the conservation outcomes (dependent variable) to take place in the community, capacity-related determinants such as shaped ability, improved resource assets, and enhanced accountability practices (which are independent variables), have to be critically considered, besides demographic and socioeconomic factors. This is because, if particular attention is paid to shaping institutional capacities through good environmental education and the provision of appropriate resources, environmental improvement is likely to happen (Liam et al., 2017).

Furthermore, when these preconditions are reinforced by the intention and decision to act and make things change, which is a sign of behavior change (intervening variable), environmental conservation culture is put in place as an outcome.



### 3. Materials and Methods

The research design serves as a crucial framework, outlining the strategy for selecting methods to collect, analyze, and interpret data to address the research question (Akhtar, 2016). In this study, a descriptive design was adopted, aiming to identify and describe the characteristics of the phenomenon within the CBCA church in Goma. This design facilitated the use of statistical tools for data analysis, allowing the measurement of variables and determination of trends and frequencies. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods, combining statistical data analysis with in-depth face-to-face interviews. The quantitative method enabled the use of statistical tools for analysis, while the qualitative method provided deeper insights into the reasons behind respondents' views and attitudes (Saad-Dad, 2015). This mixed-methods approach aimed to comprehensively explore capacity-related issues within the Baptist Church.

The target population comprised CBCA church members aged 18 to 65, actively participating in Holy Communion and present in Goma from 2015 to 2020. The sample was drawn from ten CBCA parishes in Goma, totaling 5,435 individuals (CBCA, 2020). The sample size determination utilized Slovin's formula, resulting in a sample of 373 participants (Rono, 2018). Stratified random sampling was employed, with three strata representing Church Top-level leaders, Church Local-level leaders, and ordinary congregants.

Data collection instruments included a structured survey questionnaire and in-depth face-to-face interviews. Secondary data were collected from textbooks, journal articles, and reports. Pretesting the questionnaire ensured reliability, with a subsequent test-retest method involving 30 respondents (Ikart, 2019).

Validity was ensured through a pretest involving 30 individuals to examine clarity and understanding of questions. Ethical considerations included principles of autonomy, informed consent, beneficence, and non-beneficence. Participants were assured of confidentiality, privacy, and the voluntary nature of their participation (Akaranga & Makau, 2016). Data analysis employed the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 for descriptive statistical analysis of quantitative data. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis to highlight the underlying causes of respondents' positions (Nahrin, 2015).

The ethical principles of autonomy, informed consent, beneficence, and non-beneficence were strictly adhered to, fostering a trusting relationship between researchers and participants (Resnik, 2018). The study received protocol approval from Mountain Kenya University and obtained permission from the CBCA institution (Appendix 3). Hence, this research design provides a robust framework for investigating capacity-related issues within the CBCA church in Goma. The mixed-methods approach, encompassing quantitative and qualitative methods, ensures a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The study's ethical considerations and rigorous sampling techniques contribute to the reliability and validity of the research findings.

#### 4.1 Presentation of findings

##### 4.1.1 Objective one: To assess the relationship between the Baptist Church's ability and the environmental conservation in Goma

Ability is the proven capacity a person has to provide an appropriate solution to a specific problem in the right place and at the right time. In this line, the present study refers to knowledge, awareness, and skills.

#### 4.1.1.1 Environmental conservation knowledge of respondents

From the questions to interviewees on the level of knowledge related to environmental protection, the result is that:

**Table 4. 1: Specific courses on environmental care in the curriculum of pastoral education**

		Do pastors in the CBCA have specific courses in the curriculum of their formal pastoral education, which can enable them to properly handle environmental issues as environmental technicians?			Total
		None	Yes	I do not know	
Profession of the respondents	None	40	1	19	<b>60</b>
	Agriculture	9	0	6	<b>15</b>
	Teacher	14	4	8	<b>26</b>
	Health	9	3	7	<b>19</b>
	professional				
	State	6	0	5	<b>11</b>
	employee				
	Business	44	7	23	<b>74</b>
Pastor	15	1	0	<b>16</b>	
Other	97	10	45	<b>152</b>	
<b>Total</b>		<b>228</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>373</b>

Source: Author's construct, 2020

Table 4.1 demonstrates that of the 373 participants, 228 or 62% declare there are no specific courses in the curriculum of their formal pastoral education, which can enable them to handle properly environmental issues as environmental technicians, 119 or 31% do not know about this when only 26 or 7% affirm such courses exist.

In addition, of all respondents, 16 are pastors, among whom 15 or 94% confirm they did not have such courses in their formal pastoral education curriculum.

**Table 4. 2: Where respondents have heard about environmental protection for the first time**

		If yes, where did you hear of it from for the first time?								Total
		Media: Radio or television, Newspaper, internet, etc.	School	Church	Family	Conversations with friends	Journal articles, Books, etc.	Other		
<b>Have you ever heard about Ecology and Environmental protection?</b>	No	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>14</b>
	Yes	0	74	167	63	16	12	10	17	<b>359</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>14</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>373</b>

Source: Author's construct, 2020

Table 4.2 demonstrates that out of 373 participants, 359 or 96% had heard about environmental protection, while 14, or 4% had not heard of it, and only 63 of the 359 (17% of the total participants) heard of it in the church for the first time.

**Table 4. 3: Systematic and permanent environmental education training schedule, and times of preaching on the subject in the church**

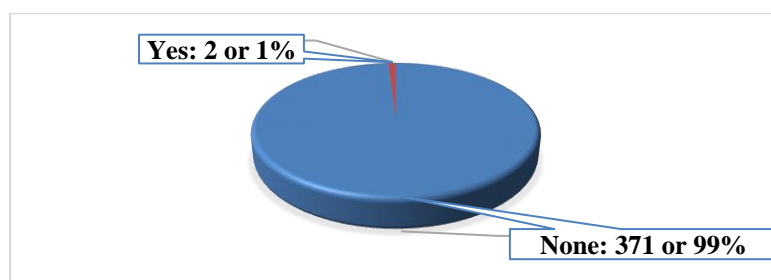
		How often, in the 5 past years, do you usually listen to preaching in your parish, specifically dedicated to the importance of environmental protection?					Total
		Never	Once or more every 2 years	Once every 12 months	Once every 6 months	Don't know	
Since the 5 last years, has there been any systematic and permanent environmental education training schedule in your parish that is respectfully handled almost like the catechism for baptism?	No	81	56	164	20	25	<b>346</b>
	Yes	3	6	16	1	1	<b>27</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>84</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>373</b>

Source: Author's construct, 2020

Results in Table 4.3 reveal that only 27 of 373 participants (7%) claim that a systematic and permanent environmental education training schedule exists in their parishes, which is handled almost like the catechism for baptism when 346 of the 373 (93%) avow that such a schedule has never existed during the 5 past years.

Besides, 84 of the 373 respondents (23%) affirm that they have never listened to preaching specifically dedicated to the importance of environmental protection in their parishes while 180 or 48% say they usually listen to it once every 12 months, 62 or 17% once every 2 years, 21 or 5% once every 6 months and 26 or 7% declare they do not know about it.

About students sponsored by the church to study environmental conservation during the 5 past years, the following is the result:



**Figure 4.1: Students in environmental conservation studies whose scholarship had been paid by the church**

Source: Author's construct, 2020

Results in Figure 4.1 show that 371 or 99% of 373 participants declare that the CBCA has not given any scholarship to students for environmental studies, while only 2 or 1% say yes.

**4.1.1.2 The environmental awareness level of respondents**

From questions to interviewees on the level of awareness of environmental related-issues, the result is that:

**Table 4. 4: Awareness of respondents about the way trees are decreasing in our environment**

		<b>Do you feel concerned about the way trees (forests) are decreasing more and more in our natural environment and about its consequences in the coming days?</b>			<b>Total</b>
		<b>Not concerned</b>	<b>Concerned a bit</b>	<b>Strongly concerned</b>	
<b>Have you ever heard about Ecology and Environmental protection?</b>	No	14	0	0	<b>14</b>
	Yes	16	114	229	<b>359</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>373</b>

Source: Author’s construct, 2020

Table 4.9 shows that 359 of 373 participants (96%) have just heard about Ecology and Environmental protection while 14 of 373 participants (4%) have not heard about it. In addition, this Table assesses the state of environmental conservation revealing that 229, or 61% feel strongly concerned about the way trees (forests) are decreasing more and more in our natural environment 114, or 31% feel concerned a bit, and 30 or 8% feel not concerned at all.

**Table 4. 5: Awareness of respondents about individuals’ need in terms of volume of oxygen over a year**

		<b>Are you aware that a single individual to survive over a year needs six or seven healthy trees of about 10 meters high each to satisfy his annual need in terms of oxygen volume?</b>		<b>Total</b>
		<b>No, it is my first time to hear that</b>	<b>Yes, I am aware of that</b>	
<b>Do you feel concerned about the way trees (forests) are decreasing more and more in our natural environment and about its consequences in the coming days?</b>	Not concerned	30	0	<b>30</b>
	Concerned a bit	108	6	<b>114</b>
	Strongly concerned	205	24	<b>229</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>343</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>373</b>

Source: Author’s construct, 2020

Table 4.5 establishes the same results about concerns related to the negative state of environmental conservation. It demonstrates how about 343 (114+229) of the 373 respondents (92%) feel concerned about the way trees (forests) are decreasing more and more in our natural environment.

However, curiously only 30 of the 373 respondents (8%) are aware that a single individual to survive over a year needs six or seven healthy trees of about 10 meters high each to satisfy his annual need in terms of oxygen volume.

#### 4.1.1.3 Environmental conservation skills of respondents

Questions to participants about skills regarding environmental protection result in the following:

**Table 4. 6: Environmental skills of respondents in environmental protection activities**

		If yes, thanks to that training, in the 5 past years you have tried to perform							Total
		Nothing	Tree planting	Separation of waste by categories	Manufacturing eco-economic stoves	Gardening	Other		
<b>Have you ever participated, during the 5 past years, in a training specifically dedicated to ecology and the consequences of not protecting the environment ?</b>	No	195	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>195</b>
	Yes	0	5	92	47	6	19	9	<b>178</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>195</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>373</b>

Source: Author’s construct, 2020

Results from Table 4.6 elucidate that 178 of the 373 participants (48%) have participated in training specifically dedicated to ecology and the consequences of not protecting the environment during the 5 past years, and that only 92 or 25% of the 373 had tried tree planting.

From the interview with respondents on the value placed by the CBCA on environmental education and training, the result is:

**Table 4. 7: The value placed by the CBCA on environmental education and training**

	Frequency	Percent
Do not know	73	19
Not a priority for the church because of a lack of interest, and they ignore both its importance and the danger of not caring for the environment	228	61
Not applicable	2	1
Lack of information	70	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Author’s construct, 2020

Table 7 shows that 228 or 61% of the 373 respondents say this area of study is not yet a priority for the church and that more interest is in areas such as theology and medical studies. Moreover, 19% think it is because of a lack of information, and 19% do not know why.

#### **4.1.1.4 Discussion on Ability and Environmental conservation in the Baptiste church**

Capacity is simply understood as the power one has to bring an appropriate solution to a specific problem at the right place, and the right time. Ability is one of the capacity’s dimensions, whose attributes comprise Knowledge, awareness, and skills. Concerning these elements, research findings within the Baptist Church in Table 4.1 show that out of 16 pastors who took part in the study, only one (6%) recognizes to have had an environment-related course in the curriculum of his formal pastoral education, when 15 or 94% confirm they had not. Yet, it is generally accepted that Pastors are the engine of the church’s development in all its aspects.

How can they handle environmental issues as technicians, or even train the congregants in environmental care if they do not have courses related to environmental conservation in the curriculum of their formal pastoral education?

Data in Table 4.2 also indicates that among the 359 of 373 respondents who have heard about environmental protection, only 63 (17% of 373) heard this for the first time from the church.

Furthermore, only 27 of 373 participants (7%) testify there exists a systematic and permanent environmental education training schedule in their parishes, against 346 (93% of the 373) who avow that such a schedule does not exist at all (Table 4.3).

Regarding times of listening to preaching related to caring for nature in the church, Table 4.8 indicates again that 242 of the 373 (65%) assure they usually listen to it either once every 12 months, or once every 2 years, while 84 (23%) testify they have never listened to such preaching in the church during the 5 past years. This is supported by scholars like Werner and Jeglitzka (2016), Cheryl (2017), and Harmannij (2019), whose findings demonstrate that more than 50% of practicing church ministers acknowledge they had not received any formal teaching on environmental issues in their curriculum which could have shaped their environmental literacy.

They also note that many schools of theology, unfortunately, do not prepare future church leaders to understand well the interconnections between theology and day-to-day challenging issues such as environmental problems, which could determine people's lifestyles.

This corroborates Ndunzi's thesis (2015), claiming that the church's commitment to the fight against environmental degradation in DR Congo is very poor since it is very rare to listen to preaching inviting Christians to be involved in creation protection.

The same shortfall stands for awareness. About 343 of 373 participants (92%) declare they feel concerned by environmental degradation (229 or 61% feel strongly concerned, 114 or 31% feel concerned a bit). On the other hand, only 30 of 373 participants (8%) are aware of the huge threat of deforestation on human life, taking into consideration that a single individual needs almost seven healthy trees of about 10 meters high each to satisfy his annual need in terms of oxygen volume over a year (Table 4.10).

This is in contradiction with what Akintunde (2017) tries to highlight, ascertaining that environmental awareness is a sign of ownership, which equals feeling concern and responsibility for the environment. Without a good level of awareness, no person can feel motivated and pushed to act now, and not wait later. No one can personally invest in identifying environmental problems, mastering knowledge of behavior consequences, and actively committing to finding solutions at an appropriate moment to the identified issues.

Such a very low degree of awareness can also probably explain the poor level of environmental skills in the Baptist Church, where only 92 of the 373 respondents (25%) had tried tree planting as a strategy for environmental protection and remedy (Table 4.6).

The above situation conflicts with Akintunde (2017).

He points out that Environmental conservation skills relate to the power one has acquired through strong and well-systemized training, which enables him to get relevant knowledge of appropriate actions that help to achieve the most effective solution to the identified issues and to confidently rely on himself in taking the right actions at the right time. The CBCA remains far from this objective.

To the open question of why the CBCA does not put particular stress on environmental education and training, 228 or 61% of the 373 respondents evidenced by the thematic analysis in a qualitative approach, declare that Not a priority for the church because of a lack of interest, and they ignore both of its importance and the danger of not caring for the environment (Table 4,12). They added that more interest is in areas such as theology and medical studies.

This setting is opposite to Akintunde (2017), who affirms that knowledge, awareness, and skills are effectively enhanced only when focused on through solid education and well-organized training. This is the only way that can offer an in-depth understanding of what ecology means and its importance, putting a particular focus on ecological-related problems, their consequences, and potential solutions to them.

Unfortunately, few initiatives in the Baptist church in Goma go in this direction. The framework in place seems not to enable the ability to reach the level that allows this church to properly deal with environmental care. This is plausible because, to the open question on what participants recommend after the survey conversation, the thematic analysis reveals that a group of more than half of them are aware of the dangerous ignorance they live in.

So they recommend that a strong, well-organized, and permanent training system be put in place in their parishes to educate on environmental care and that a department in charge of

this matter is set up at the top-level office of the CBCA, which will ensure the sustainability of this new approach at all levels within the church.

Therefore, given that not any significant mechanism of systematic environmental education and training is put in place in the Baptist church to develop knowledge, awareness, and skills in the environmental conservation area, poor ability would be a major obstacle that undermined the impact of the church’s actions in their environmental commitment in Goma.

**4.2.2 Objective two: To establish the link between the Baptist Church resources and their intervention towards environmental conservation in Goma**

A resource is a necessary source of wealth, equipment, a person, or any other thing that can be used at any time we want to solve a problem. In this study, resources consist of human capital, materials, and finances.

**4.2.2.1 Human Resources and Environmental Conservation**

When a person has acquired competencies that enable him to provide solutions to specific problems in a particular area, he is a human resource. Questions to participants concerning human resources with environmental protection led to the following result:

**Table 4. 8: Professions of respondents and students sponsored by the church for environmental studies**

**Do you know any person in your parish who had been sent to school to study environmental conservation, whose scholarship had been entirely paid by the CBCA as it is done for theologians, and who has full full-time employed for that by the church in the 5 past years?**

		None	Yes	Total
<b>Profession of the respondents</b>	None	59	1	<b>60</b>
	Agriculture	15	0	<b>15</b>
	Teacher	26	0	<b>26</b>
	Health professional	19	0	<b>19</b>
	State employee	11	0	<b>11</b>
	Business	73	1	<b>74</b>
	Pastor	16	0	<b>16</b>
	Other	152	0	<b>152</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>373</b>

**Source:** Author’s construct, 2020

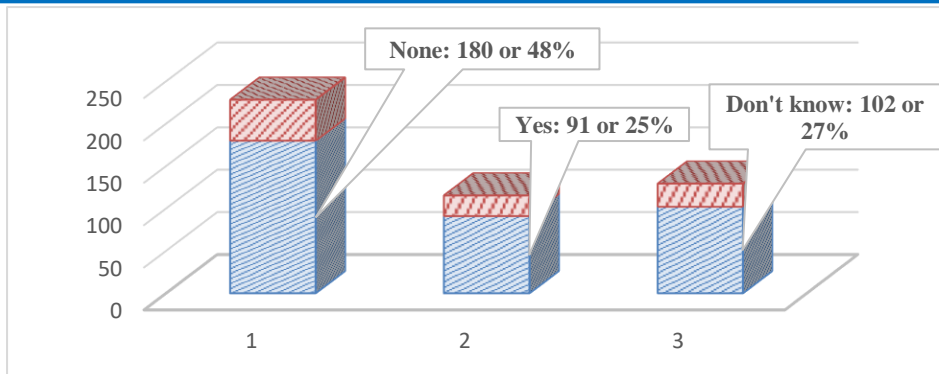
Results in Table 4.8 above reveal that 371 or 99% of participants, among whom all 100% of 16 pastors, declare that the CBCA has not given any scholarship to students for environmental studies during the 5 past years when only 2 or 1% say yes. The 371 or 99% of participants ascertained that they did not know any person working in the church, whose scholarship was supported by the Church,

**4.2.2.2 Material Resources and Environmental Conservation**

About the availability of material resources dedicated to environmental care activities in parishes in the 5 past years, questions to participants led to the following findings:

<https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t2272>





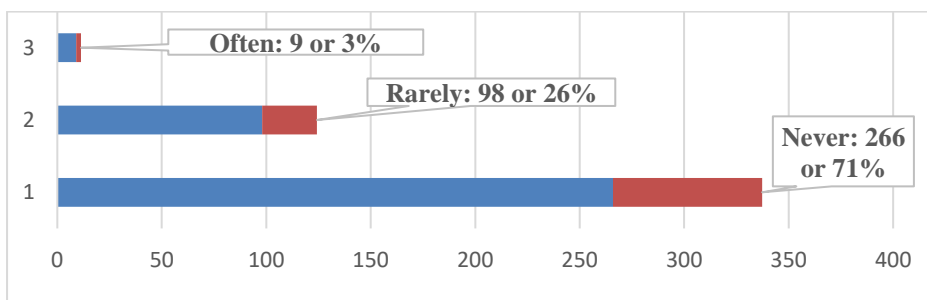
**Figure 4.2: Available material resources for environmental protection activities in parishes**

**Source:** Author’s construct, 2020

Results in Figure 4.2 establish that for 180 of the 373 participants (48%), there are no existing material resources specifically dedicated to environmental activities in their parishes, 102 or 27% avow they don’t know about it, against 91 or 25% who claim such material exists.

#### 4.2.2.3 Financial Resources and Environmental Conservation

It was also asked participants if they had ever seen parochial church leaders mobilizing believers to give a financial contribution to support environmental activities, and the result is as follows:



**Figure 4.3: Knowledge of respondents about financial resources mobilization by church leaders for environmental protection activities**

**Source:** Author’s construct, 2020

From the results in Figure 4.3, 266 or 71% of participants plead that they have never seen parochial church leaders mobilizing believers to give a financial contribution to support environmental activities, against 98 or 26% who suggest church leaders do mobilize believers, but rarely, followed by only 9 or 3% who opine church leaders often do it.

About the question related to respondents’ readiness to give an annual financial contribution to support environmental activities, the result is:

**Table 4. 9: Annual financial contribution to support environmental activities and readiness of respondents to give it**

		If yes, how much are you willing to give per year?							Total
		Less than 1\$	Between 1 and 5\$	Between 6 and 20\$	Between 21 and 50\$	Between 51 and 100\$	More than 100\$		
<b>If today the church asks you to give annually a financial contribution to support environmental activities, do you feel ready to do so?</b>	No	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
	Yes	0	43	199	95	14	2	3	356
<b>Total</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>373</b>

Source: Author’s construct, 2020

Results in Table 4.9 prove that 356 of the 373 participants (96%) are ready to give an annual financial contribution to support environmental activities in their parishes, against only 17 or 4% who are not ready for this.

#### 4.2.2.4 Discussion on resources and environmental conservation

Experts ascertain that resources, which include humans, materials, and financial assets are important for an institution to address effectively environmental issues.

However, the results of the survey in Table 4.8 far above reveal a shortcoming. Only 2 of 373 participants (under 1%) declare that the CBCA has given some scholarships to students for environmental studies to develop human resources in this specific area during the 5 past years, against 371 or more than 99% of participants, among whom all the 100% of 16 pastors, who certify that this has never happened. For them, they do not know any person working in the church, whose scholarship was supported by the church in the area of environmental conservation.

Besides, the study demonstrates that only 91 of the 373 participants (25%) establish that there exist material resources specifically dedicated to environmental activities in their parishes while 180 of the 373 participants (48%) say not, and 102 or 27% avow they do not know about it (Figure 4.2). Additionally, 266 or 71% of interviewees attest they have never seen, during the 5 past years, parochial church leaders mobilizing believers to give a financial contribution to support environmental activities, against 98 or 26% who suggest church leaders do mobilize believers, but rarely, followed by only 9 or 3% who opine church leaders do it often (Figure 4.3). What is surprising most here is that financial resources exist in

parishes, because believers are ready to offer, but church leaders are not collecting this money to perform environmental activities.

This is corroborated by Table 4.9, of the 373 participants, 356 or 96% declare they are ready to annually give a financial contribution between less than 1\$ to more than 100\$ to support environmental activities in their parishes. Conversely, only 17 or 4% avow they are not ready for this. Curiously, nothing is practically done by leaders in such a direction.

This appears new and surprising, compared to findings in the existing body of knowledge. Religious institutions are acknowledged to be strong structures in mobilizing resources, including financial assets (Agbiji & Swart, 2015; United States Environmental Programme, 2018). However, as demonstrated by Koehrsen (2015) about the process of energy transition in North Germany, local churches complain of resource scarcity to deal with environmental issues, especially limited financial resources. For them, "sustainability" competes with other priority topics like "social justice", as is the case of theology in the CBCA, and these are favored most rather than creation preservation.

What is contrasting here is that in the Baptist church in Goma, financial resources for environmental care are available. Congregants are ready to give their money annually to reinforce environmental activities, but church leaders do not mobilize this money.

Based on the findings, it is evident that there is no significant willingness and effort in the Baptist church to mobilize human, material, and financial resources to support environmental activities. For that, the lack of resources dedicated to this cause would be one of the obstacles that ruin the effect of the church's intervention towards environmental protection in Goma.

#### **4.2.3 Objective three: To determine the effect of the accountability practices used in the Baptist Church on environmental conservation matters in Goma**

In the present study, accountability is dealt with in line with the reporting system, sanction against employees, and concern before God.

##### **4.2.3.1 Reporting System and Environmental Conservation**

Participants were questioned on any entity in the CBCA hierarchy from where, in the 5 past years, their parishes have usually been asked for a specific and separate report about activities they have run in the area of environmental protection, and the following is the result:

**Table 4. 10: Authority level in the CBCA hierarchy from where parishes are asked to report about activities realized in the area of environmental protection**

		If yes, which entity (authority) is that?						Total
		CBCA Head Office	Diaconal and Development Department	Women and Family Department	Ecclesiastic District	JPIC		
<b>Since the 5 past years, is there any authority level in the CBCA hierarchy from where your parish is usually asked to report about activities you have realized in the area of environmental protection apart from the ordinary parochial report?</b>	No	270	0	0	0	0	0	270
	yes	0	4	4	2	53	40	103
<b>Total</b>		<b>270</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>373</b>

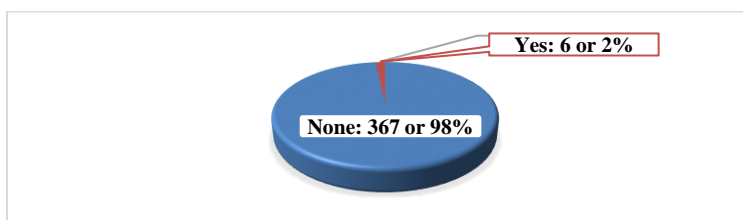
Source: Author’s construct, 2020

Results in Table 4.15 suggest that 270 of the 373 participants (72%) ascertain that no report is asked from any authority level in the CBCA hierarchy that wants parishes to account for activities realized in the area of environmental protection while 103 or 28% say yes.

Furthermore, among the 103 respondents assuring the report is asked from the hierarchy, 53 or 14% claim report is asked from the CBCA Ecclesiastic District, 40 or 11% from Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation structure (JPIC), 10 or 3% from CBCA Head Office Administration, Diaconal and Development Department, and Women and Family Department.

**4.2.3.2 Sanction and Environmental Conservation**

Questions to participants on workers in the CBCA who had been sanctioned, in the 5 past years, for they did not adequately handle what is assumed to be their responsibility regarding environmental programme led to the following result:



**Figure 4.4: Workers who are known to have been sanctioned for they did not adequately handle their responsibility regarding the environmental program**

Source: Author’s construct, 2020

Results in Figure 4.4 acknowledge that 367 of the 373 participants (98%) affirmed no worker is known to have been sanctioned during the five past years for he did not adequately handle what is assumed to be his responsibility regarding the environmental program, against 6 or 2% who said yes.

#### 4.2.3.3 Concern before God and Environmental Conservation

Participants were asked if they were aware that cutting trees without panting others to replace them is a sin that will be condemned before God, and the following is the result:

**Table 4. 11: Position of respondents on the idea that cutting trees without panting others to replace them is a sin that will be condemned before God**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	40	10.7
Disagree	76	20.4
Agree	100	26.8
Strongly agree	70	18.8
I do not know	87	23.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Author’s construct, 2020

Results in Table 4.11 show that 100 of 373 participants (27%) agree that cutting trees without panting others is a sin that will be condemned before God, and 70 or 19% strongly agree.

On the other hand, 76, or 20% disagree, 40, or 11% strongly disagree, while 87, or 23% state that they do not know whether it is a sin or not.

**Table 4. 12: Position of respondents on why they think cutting trees without panting others to replace them is a sin or not**

#### Explain your position

	Frequency	Percentage
It is a fault, not a sin because no biblical verse testifies it to be a sin, and nowhere in the church had they preached that it is bad. Therefore, it depends on the one who cuts the tree.	136	37
It is a sin because it is an act of disobedience to God, and of killing	169	45
It is not a sin, because God created nature for man’s benefit	33	9
No information on this	35	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Author’s construct, 2020

To the open question asking respondents to explain their positions about the idea that cutting trees without planting others to replace them is a sin that will be condemned before God, the thematic analysis in Table 4.12 shows that 169 of the 373 (45%) affirm that it is an act of disobedience and a transgression before to God, which can be assumed as an indirect killing or murder of human being. God gave humans the responsibility of taking care of it and not destroying it. For that, it is fully a sin. In addition, 136 of them, or 37%, claim that it is a fault, not a sin because they have never heard preaching certifying from the Bible that this can be a sin before God. Therefore, it depends on the purpose aimed by the one who cut trees. On the other hand, 33 or 9% argue that nature was created for the sake of human well-being. For this, when people cut trees to serve human needs it cannot be a sin.

Other 35, also 9% assert that they are not informed at all if it is a sin or not, and they do not have enough information that can enable them to take any position.

Finally, participants were asked to formulate some recommendations based on the interview, and the result is as follows:

**Table 4. 13: Respondents’ recommendation after the conversation**

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>CBCA</b> has to initiate a large and systematic campaign of sensitization and mobilization of congregants to engage in environmental protection activities, together with increasing the number of preaching and training for capacity building on environmental-related issues, so that believers can be convinced that God talks of this subject from the Bible and learn to fight nature destruction	308	83
<b>CBCA</b> has to elaborate sound strategies and plans and put in place a strong and well-organized structure, provided with very competent and highly skilled persons to properly handle environmental care matters and enable believers to practically commit to environmental activities	55	15
<b>CBCA</b> has to awaken up the JPIC structure so that they can commit to this work	10	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Author’s construct, 2020

In Table 4.13, out of 373 participants, 308 or 83% impel the CBCA to initiate a large and systematic campaign of sensitization and mobilization of congregants, backed by putting in place a systematic and permanent environmental education training schedule in parishes. They have also to increase the number of preaching on environmental-related issues so that believers can be convinced that God talks of this subject from the Bible, and engage in environmental protection activities.

Others, 55 or 15% urge the CBCA to put in place a strong and well-organized structure provided with very competent and highly skilled persons to properly handle environmental care matters.

Finally, 10 or 2% advise making every effort to waken up the JPIC structure so that they can truly commit to this work because it is indeed this structure that is called to implement environment protection-related activities everywhere at the grassroots level in the CBCA.

#### 4.2.3.4 Discussion on accountability practices and environmental conservation

Practitioners have proved the importance of a robust accountability approach for improving the quality of the quality of services in any institution. In the current study, accountability consists of the reporting system, sanction, and “concern before God”.

However, concerning reporting back about activities in the environmental protection area, the survey results in the CBCA (Table 4.10) reveal that only 103 of the 373 participants, or 28%, assure report is asked by some authority level in the church hierarchy, against 270 or 72% who certify that this is not done. This validates Owusu’s point of view (2016), according to which regular accurate and comprehensive reporting of institutions’ performance to the hierarchy regarding environmental matters is rare, despite policies and other resources provided.

What is also unanticipated in Table 4.11 is that among 103 respondents (28%) assuring report is asked by the hierarchy, only 40 or 11% of total respondents declare report is asked by Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC), the only existing structure in the CBCA that could properly deal with the environmental care-related issues.

Such a state of accountability practices cannot help to achieve the expected improvement in the area of conservation. Urgent improvements should be made to move up the slope because, as believed by McGrath & Whitty (2018), accountability becomes a practical reality when someone executing a certain activity is aware that people around him are interested in his action’s results. This leads him to be responsive-minded and to act with responsibility in all of what he is called to do. Moreover, all this takes shape only when one takes responsibility to report to others (around him and through the hierarchy) about what he is doing and waits for their appreciation.

This means that, even if the JPIC structure is well appreciated for the services it provides in the justice area to the disadvantaged, still it has a lot to do in the field of environmental care.

Relating to sanction, the survey noted that of the 373 participants, only 6 or 2% established that, during the 5 past years, some church workers have been sanctioned for they did not adequately handle what is assumed to be their responsibility regarding the environmental program when 367 or 98% affirm the opposite (Figure 4.4).

This does not augur well for the CBCA as far as it is known that sanction is what gives strength to the whole accountability approach. On the other hand, McGrath and Whitty (2018) support that where there is no sanction, no performance is to be expected. It means that as long as a mechanism of sanction is not put in place in the church to deal with people who do not adequately handle their environmental responsibility, a strong culture of accountability will not be established in this institution.

Regarding “concern before God”, research shows that 170 of the 373 participants (46%) either strongly agree (19%) or agree (27%) with the idea that cutting trees without panting others is a sin before God, against 116 or 31% who either strongly disagree or disagree, and 87 or 23% who didn’t give a clear position on this matter (Table 4.16).

This goes hand in hand with the results in Table 12, where a pro-ethical position of a group of 165 of the 373 respondents (46%) was detected through the thematic analysis (qualitative). To the open question on explaining their positions, all 46% agree that cutting trees without replacing them is a sin, as far as it is an act of disobedience before God, which is to be assumed as an indirect killing or murder of human beings by reducing the existing volume of oxygen they needed to survive.

This reinforces the findings of Mlaki (2016) in the Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. In that institution, congregates were awakened enough to the extent of feeling that depleting the trees from the environment is sinful before God, and they seriously engaged in tree planting to maintain God's creation remaining in good condition (Mlaki, 2016).

Therefore, “concern before God” appears to be a key pillar for the CBCA. It is a solid foundation this church can build on to raise its level of responsibility in conservation and put in place a very solid and long-lasting approach to accountability for environmental care.

Absolutely, with such a very defective reporting system about environmental concerns in the CBCA, coupled with a critical lack of a sanction mechanism, the accountability approach is negatively affected. This is a sign that a weak accountability culture could be an obstacle that collapses the Baptist church’s efforts toward environmental protection in Goma.

### **5.1 Conclusion**

After considering all the findings discussed in chapter four that address the three research questions about the relationship that exists between religious institutions’ capacity determinants and environmental conservation in DR Congo, based on the Baptist Church in Central Africa (CBCA) in Goma, the conclusions drawn were as follows:

(i) The critical lack of mechanisms of environmental education and training in the Baptist church in Goma seriously hinders the development of knowledge, awareness, and skills in the area of environmental conservation. This results in the deficiency of institutional ability, which would be among the obstacles that lower the impact of the Baptist church’s actions in their environmental commitment in Goma. (ii) The absence of any system capable of developing human resources for environmental care in the church, and mobilizing material and financial resources is a huge issue. Though several congregants are ready to contribute financially to such a project annually, leaders do not collect this money although it is available.

In terms of resources, this shortfall would be an obstacle that highly reduces the effect of the Baptist church’s intervention towards environmental care in Goma. (iii) A faulty reporting system, together with the sanction mechanism deficiency to deal with workers, is a serious hindrance. However, “concern before God” found in almost the average of respondents gives hope. Still, the church can have a well-strengthened accountability system. Therefore, an accountability approach deficiency also could be an obstacle that ruins the Baptist church’s efforts toward environmental care in Goma.

Based on the findings, we can conclude that capacity determinants are not developed enough in the Baptist church in Goma regarding environmental conservation. These include ability, resource assets, and accountability practices. In this setting, deficient capacity prevents congregants from adequately engaging in the fight against environmental degradation. As a result, the Baptist church’s response to the environmental issues in Goma has not been appropriate up to now. For this reason, putting in place a strong mechanism of capacity development can enhance the impact of the Baptist church’s efforts in environmental care matters.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The study, while original in its exploration of capacity-related obstacles hindering environmental conservation efforts within the Baptist Church in Goma, acknowledges certain limitations. Methodologically, the research sampled only 10 parishes, limiting the



generalizability of findings to the broader Christian church context in the region. The study highlights a capacity deficit but doesn't delve into the specific capacity development process within the religious institution. Recommendations include implementing robust environmental education, developing human and material resources, enforcing accountability mechanisms, and fostering congregational engagement through sensitization campaigns and increased preaching on environmental issues. Establishing a dedicated department for environmental matters is also proposed.

### 5.3 Acknowledgement

I begin by acknowledging the Almighty God, whose grace and wisdom have illuminated my path throughout this academic journey. My profound gratitude extends to Dr. Ernest Safari, my dedicated supervisor, for his invaluable guidance and unwavering support in shaping this thesis. I am indebted to the Department of Development Studies at Mount Kenya University for their hard work and encouragement. Special thanks to my beloved wife, Kanzira Kikoli Aimée, for her immeasurable care. I also appreciate my daughters and sons for their unwavering encouragement. My sincere thanks to all who directly or indirectly contributed to this research.

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