
**IDENTITY CRISES: ITS IMPACT AND CHALLENGE ON THE PROGRESS OF AFRICAN
TRADITIONAL RELIGION**

Dr. Innocent Ogbonna Nweke

Department of Religion and Human Relations

Faculty of Arts

Chukwuemeka Odumegwuojukw University- Ignaliam Campus

E-mail:ekedaion@yahoo.com

Abstract

Identity Crisis has affected the entire humanity, most especially Africa and the African Traditional Religion. This has caused a lot of problem to the modern African man such that there is quest for greener pastures, behaving like Westerners and quest to belong to the doers of good things. However, because of this a lot of evil come with it especially when Africans migrate to the west in search of greener pastures. They came back with the mixture of other cultures and these mixtures due cause serious threat to African traditional Religion. The researcher used socio-cultural approach on going through this work. During the cause of the work, the researcher discovered that the crisis of identity has affected the youth of Africans especially in their way of doing things like eating, clothing, dressing and even worshipping their God. It recommends that African should value themselves more, value whom they are, their colour, how they were, created and their continent. It also recommend that the African leaders should sit up and value their subjects and also the available resources to improve African continent.

Keywords: Identity crisis, impact, challenges, progress, ATR.

INTRODUCTION

The interplay between African Traditional Religion (ATR) and the contemporary world is increasingly complex, often fraught with crises that inhibit its growth and influence in modern society. The dualistic tension between indigenous beliefs and external religious systems such as Christianity and Islam has led to a series of challenges that limit the ability of ATR to thrive as a living tradition. These crises manifest in a variety of forms, from ideological conflicts to the erosion of cultural practices, and they underscore the difficult position that ATR occupies within a globalized world. These crises not only threaten the preservation of ATR but also its relevance in a rapidly changing world.

This discourse examines the crises affecting ATR and how they hinder its progress, both spiritually and culturally. Drawing on significant scholarly works, including Nweke (2020), Idowu (1973), and Mbiti (1991), this work explores ATR's role in African societies. It will focus on five key themes: the loss of cultural identity, ideological conflicts with other religions, the impact of modernization, the decline in traditional knowledge systems, and the influence of politics and governance on religious practices. Undergirding this entire discussion is the foundational insight of Nweke (2024, p. 82), who argues that ATR “incorporates the entirety of the Nigerian people’s worldview and understanding of reality” — an aspect which is lacking in other religions found in Africa. This means the crises facing ATR are not merely religious but existential: to lose ATR is to lose the very framework through which Africans understand themselves and their world.

ETYMOLOGICAL DEFINITION OF IDENTICAL CRISIS

The term “Identical Crisis” originates from the English language, with “identical” derived from the Latin “*identicus*,” meaning “the same,” from “*idem*,” meaning “the same” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). “Crisis” comes from the Greek “*krisis*,” meaning “decision” or “turning point,” referring to a pivotal moment in times of difficulty (Merriam-Webster, 2023). The phrase suggests a situation where two or more similar entities face a shared, disruptive challenge, which, in the case of African Traditional Religion (ATR), is the struggle to preserve indigenous practices while contending with the influence of Christianity and Islam. This dual challenge is rooted in Africa’s historical and socio-political dynamics, where ATR faces a survival crisis amid competing belief systems (Nweke, 2020).

For ATR, the “Identical Crisis” reflects the challenge of preserving its beliefs while contending with the pressure from foreign religious systems. Nweke (2020) notes that ATR, once central to African identity, now faces diminishing relevance as Christianity and Islam dominate. This crisis is compounded by the forces of globalization and modernity, which threaten ATR’s continuity. The crisis becomes “identical” as both African religious heritage and its practice struggle under the weight of foreign religious ideologies, eroding their significance in the modern world. To preserve ATR, addressing this crisis is crucial for safeguarding its future in contemporary African societies.

IMPACTS OF IDENTITY CRISIS IN AFRICA

The impacts of identity crisis shall be discussed below under various headings. A perfect understanding of these various factors will give one a clearer picture of the extent to which ATR has suffered under an identity crisis.

LOSS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY AND HERITAGE

African Traditional Religion is not only a set of spiritual beliefs but is deeply tied to the cultural practices, customs, and worldviews of African societies. However, globalization, colonialism,

and the spread of Christianity and Islam have undermined many of the cultural markers that define ATR. Nweke (2022) argues that the encroachment of foreign religious practices has diluted indigenous spiritual systems. Nweke (2024, p. 82) further contends that ATR is “embedded in the African worldview as well as in the norms and values of the people,” which means that the erosion of ATR is simultaneously the erosion of the entire African value system. These external influences, often politically backed, have redefined African identity, replacing traditional rituals and beliefs with foreign practices. As ATR is increasingly viewed as backward or unprogressive, the younger generation is less inclined to engage with it, leading to the erosion of a once-vibrant cultural identity.

The loss of cultural identity in African societies extends beyond religious practices into everyday life, where traditional customs such as initiation rites, ancestral veneration, and healing practices are increasingly forgotten or replaced by foreign influences. Mbiti (1991) observes that many African communities are now more likely to adopt foreign ideologies than uphold their ancestral practices, viewing them as outdated. This shift erodes the holistic worldview that African traditions once offered, which emphasized the interconnectedness of cultural, social, and natural realms.

Additionally, this crisis has led to the disintegration of traditional leadership structures, which were essential in preserving cultural and social integrity. Opoku (1993) notes that structures like elders’ councils have lost much of their authority in the face of modern political and social systems. Ossai and Nweke (2023, p. 364) provide important institutional detail here, identifying the specific structures that once anchored African community life — the council of elders, the umuanna, the umuada, and age-grade systems — describing them as bodies that were “essential to upholding social order and enforcing the law” and served simultaneously as custodians of cultural heritage and spiritual identity. The collapse of these institutions under the weight of colonialism and modernization removed the very organs through which ATR reproduced itself across generations. This loss of leadership has further fragmented cultural continuity, as younger generations, lacking proper mentorship, become disconnected from their cultural roots.

The breakdown of cultural identity also hampers the preservation of indigenous systems. Nweke (2022) argues that cultural heritage is fundamental to the survival of traditional systems, and the growing disconnection from this heritage threatens their existence. The decline of indigenous languages, once vital for transmitting cultural knowledge, has worsened this crisis, making it harder to preserve and pass down traditions to younger generations.

Afigbo (1981) highlights the role of globalization and the adoption of foreign values in eroding cultural identity. Western education and media have amplified the dominance of foreign customs, marginalizing local traditions. This shift weakens the communal bonds vital to African societies, prompting younger generations to abandon their ancestral practices (Hastings, 1994). As a result, indigenous systems and cultural heritage face increasing neglect.

The decline of traditional institutions, such as communal councils, has further contributed to this loss (Nweke, 2022). These institutions once preserved cultural knowledge, but their weakening has caused a generational disconnect. Economic pressures and the allure of modernity often encourage individuals to prioritize material success, leading to the neglect of cultural preservation. Consequently, indigenous systems face marginalization as global forces continue to dominate (Nweke & Mbama, 2022).

To counter this crisis, it is essential to reclaim and value African cultural heritage. Nweke (2020) emphasizes the need for communities to rediscover and preserve their indigenous languages, rituals, and practices as part of a broader movement toward cultural revitalization. Nweke (2024, p. 84) strengthens this call, urging a “massive return to the African roots” and insisting that ATR must be actively publicized to the upcoming generation as a reminder of their roots from where they have come. He further recommends that African scholars must seize every opportunity to write about ATR, explaining its origins, tenets, and benefits, so that its value is no longer hidden but made accessible and celebrated. The future of African traditions hinges on how well these practices are integrated into contemporary life while resisting the erasure caused by foreign influences.

IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICTS WITH CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

The ideological conflicts between African Traditional Religion and the Abrahamic faiths - Christianity and Islam - have been a longstanding issue that significantly impedes the progress of ATR. Historically, colonial powers, backed by Christian missionaries, sought to replace indigenous belief systems with Western religions. Idowu (1973) points out that this process was not merely religious but also political, as it sought to reshape African societies in the image of European ideals. The introduction of Christianity and Islam led to the demonization of ATR, labeling it as pagan, barbaric, and unworthy of practice. What is often overlooked in this conflict, however, is what Nweke (2024, p. 81) argues is ATR’s moral superiority in one crucial respect: its ethical principles are “founded not on the ethics of individualism, human autonomy and selfishness, but on a common unity-centred” framework. It is precisely this communal ethic — which the imported religions failed to match — that made ATR so threatening to the colonial order and its ideology of individualistic progress.

In contemporary Africa, ideological conflicts continue to suppress ATR, with Christian and Muslim teachings often presenting it as a rival belief system incompatible with their religious truths. Nweke and Mbama (2022) explore how the imposition of these external ideologies has led to the rejection of ATR, particularly among Africans in urban areas exposed to Western education and religious perspectives. This conflict has created a deep divide, leaving many individuals caught between traditional religious practices and the pressures of adhering to Christianity or Islam.

The ideological clash is further exacerbated by religious leaders who view ATR as a threat to the unity of African societies. According to Hastings (1994), Christian and Muslim clerics have often portrayed ATR as a divisive force that hinders the social and moral development of African nations. This perception is compounded by the fact that ATR is often practiced in a decentralized manner, with various ethnic groups adhering to their distinct religious practices, making it difficult to present ATR as a unified religion.

Additionally, ATR's emphasis on ancestral reverence, spiritual mediums, and divination practices often conflicts with dominant cultural norms and scientific approaches prevalent in modern societies. Nweke (2022) discusses how the traditional worldview of ATR, which includes a deep connection with the natural world and the spiritual realm, contrasts with more rationalist and materialist perspectives that prioritize empirical knowledge and technological advancement. This ideological divide creates challenges in reconciling ATR practices with modern societal expectations, where these practices are often viewed with skepticism or dismissed as primitive.

Cultural conflicts with dominant global ideologies have hindered the progress of African Traditional Religion (ATR). The materialist and rationalist frameworks that dominate modern societies often clash with ATR's holistic approach, which incorporates spiritual, ethical, and communal aspects of life (Nweke, 2020). This clash has led many ATR practitioners to modify or abandon their traditions in favor of more widely accepted worldviews (Idowu, 1973). The historical imposition of foreign cultural and ideological systems, particularly during colonial times, has further marginalized ATR and its practices (Opoku, 1993). These tensions have significantly hindered ATR's ability to thrive and evolve in contemporary African societies.

To bridge this cultural divide, scholars and community leaders must engage in constructive dialogue that respects the uniqueness of ATR while recognizing the value of different worldviews. Nweke (2020) suggests that such dialogue should be rooted in mutual respect and understanding, with an emphasis on shared values that promote social cohesion and cultural preservation. This way, it is possible to integrate traditional practices into contemporary society without erasing their significance, creating a space for diverse cultural expressions.

MODERNIZATION ON ATR PRACTICES

Modernization has significantly reshaped African societies, leading to the erosion of traditional practices and values. Urbanization, technological advancements, and globalization have redefined lifestyles, encouraging people to embrace modern conveniences while abandoning ancestral ways. Nweke (2025, p. 151) provides an important theoretical grounding here, explaining that modernization "is understood as a process which indicates the adoption of the modern ways of life and values" and that it has been "one of the major contributors of secularization in Africa." He further identifies secularism — the shift from religious to non-religious values influenced by modernization and rationalization — as the principal mechanism

through which modernization wounds ATR, linking to the foundational work of theorists like Weber and Durkheim. The shift toward urban living has led to a decline in rural traditions central to ATR. The fast-paced modern life focused on efficiency and individualism conflicts with the time-consuming nature of traditional practices, which require community involvement and respect for the environment. This presents a dilemma: preserve cultural heritage or embrace modernity's perceived benefits.

Western education has contributed to the marginalization of indigenous knowledge systems. It emphasizes Western science and technology, creating a divide between the educated elite and their cultural roots. Many now see traditional practices as outdated or irrelevant, further diminishing their importance. Nweke (2025, p. 155) identifies this process with precision, arguing that because of modernity, many Africans began to "rationalize the core values, customs, indigenous religion and its rituals by equating the teachings of the ancestors with western scientific methodology." This is the deepest wound of Western education on ATR: it did not merely ignore indigenous knowledge but convinced Africans themselves to measure their sacred traditions by foreign standards and find them lacking. This shift away from indigenous knowledge has led to the gradual decline of traditional cultural practices, which are no longer seen as integral to social development. The growing divide between urban centers and rural communities highlights the challenge of preserving traditional knowledge in a globalized world.

The commercialization of cultural practices has altered the authenticity of many traditions. Rituals once deeply embedded in social and spiritual life are now commodified to meet market demands. This process distorts the meaning of these practices, reducing them to consumer goods. As cultural expressions are marketed to attract attention and income, they lose their deep-rooted significance. Mass media and digital platforms amplify this process, presenting traditions as entertainment rather than profound cultural expressions, thereby diminishing their original purpose.

Technology, while facilitating cultural exchange, has also contributed to the erosion of traditional values. The internet and social media expose African cultures to a global audience but often distort and dilute indigenous practices. Digital platforms enable cultural preservation but also expose traditions to influences that undermine their authenticity. As ATR is misrepresented online, it becomes simplified, failing to capture the complexity of African cultural systems. The dominance of foreign ideologies in online spaces further diminishes the visibility of indigenous practices.

To ensure the survival of traditional practices, African societies must integrate modernity with cultural heritage. This integration involves embracing technology while preserving traditional knowledge. Nweke (2020) suggests that ATR can adapt to contemporary life without losing its core principles by leveraging modern tools to promote cultural values. Communities must foster a deeper appreciation for their heritage, especially among younger generations, to prevent the

erosion of traditions. Reimagining ATR in the modern world involves creating spaces where traditional practices remain relevant and necessary for maintaining cultural identity.

URBANIZATION AND THE DECLINE OF RURAL TRADITIONS

Modernization has driven urbanization, leading to the abandonment of rural traditions central to ATR practices. As urban centers expand, traditional rituals, ceremonies, and community life are replaced by modern lifestyles (Nweke, 2020). This urban shift emphasizes individualism and speed, conflicting with the communal and time-intensive nature of ATR rituals. Asante (1990) highlights that the disconnection from ancestral roots caused by urbanization further distances younger generations from their cultural heritage. This divide complicates efforts to preserve ATR as globalized societies continue to reshape African cultural landscapes.

Urbanization not only draws people away from rural areas but also disrupts the community-based structures that sustain ATR practices. Nweke (2020) observes that in urban centers, the focus on economic survival and individual success leaves little room for collective rituals and communal worship, which are central to ATR. Nweke (2025, p. 155) adds a critical dimension to this observation, noting that with the advent of modernization through urbanization, “many sacred spaces had been destroyed or even neglected,” leading to the diminishing of their cultural and spiritual importance. Sacred spaces — shrines, groves, ancestral sites — are not merely locations in ATR but living centres of spiritual power and communal memory. Their destruction under the pressure of urban expansion is therefore not just a physical loss but a spiritual amputation. This urban drift creates a disconnect between individuals and their ancestral homes, and as rural traditions lose their practitioners, the spiritual significance tied to these physical locations gradually fades, weakening ATR’s influence.

THE ROLE OF WESTERN EDUCATION IN MARGINALIZING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

Western education prioritizes science and technology, creating a divide between modern knowledge and traditional African wisdom. This system often devalues indigenous knowledge, framing it as outdated or irrelevant (Mbiti, 1991). Nweke (2020) argues that such perspectives lead to the neglect of ATR, especially among the educated elite, who may view it as incompatible with progress. This marginalization gradually erodes cultural values and undermines ATR’s influence. Idowu (1973) observes that bridging the gap between modern education and traditional practices remains crucial to preserving African religious identity.

Nweke (2020) emphasizes that Western education not only marginalizes ATR but also introduces ideologies that actively undermine its principles. Educated elites often internalize Western ideals that label indigenous systems as primitive or incompatible with modernity. This narrative discourages younger generations from valuing or practicing ATR. Moreover, the exclusion of ATR from formal education curricula perpetuates this marginalization. Nweke

argues that incorporating indigenous knowledge into modern education systems could bridge the divide, fostering respect and understanding of ATR while promoting its sustainability.

COMMERCIALIZATION OF CULTURAL PRACTICES

The commodification of African traditions has stripped many ATR practices of their spiritual significance. Rituals and cultural expressions, once integral to communal life, are now marketed as entertainment or consumer goods (Nweke, 2020). This commercialization distorts ATR's meaning, reducing its spiritual depth and cultural richness. Nweke (2025, p. 152) offers a striking analysis of this vulnerability, arguing that Africans have not been able to resist what he terms the "modernity syndrome" — the uncritical consumption of Western cultural products and styles that are not designed for African contexts. He observes that "the westerners have studied Africans and discovered that they are good in consuming things, so they shift many used things that are outdated in their place over to Africans and Africans glory in them without questioning." This same dynamic applies to the commercialization of ATR: African traditions are packaged, sold, and consumed on terms set by the global market, stripping them of the sacred intentionality that gives them meaning. Appiah (1992) warns that turning sacred traditions into marketable commodities threatens their integrity and diminishes their cultural importance. By prioritizing profit over authenticity, this trend jeopardizes the role ATR plays in maintaining African cultural identity.

The commodification of ATR practices has significant implications for their authenticity and longevity. Nweke (2020) notes that when rituals and symbols are stripped of their sacred meanings and repurposed for profit, they become vulnerable to distortion. For instance, traditional ceremonies once performed with reverence are now tailored for tourist consumption, often losing their spiritual essence in the process. This shift devalues ATR and diminishes its role as a unifying force within communities. To counter this, Nweke highlights the importance of preserving the sacredness of ATR practices amidst growing commercialization.

THE INFLUENCE OF TECHNOLOGY ON TRADITIONAL VALUES

Technology facilitates cultural exchange but also accelerates the erosion of traditional values. Social media and digital platforms expose ATR to global audiences but often misrepresent and simplify its complexities (Nweke, 2020). Online portrayals tend to dilute ATR's depth, creating distorted views of African spirituality (Mbiti, 1991). Additionally, the dominance of foreign ideologies on digital platforms marginalizes ATR, presenting it as less relevant in a modern context. This technological influence highlights the need for balanced approaches to preserve ATR's authenticity amid global digitization.

Technology's dual role in cultural preservation and erosion presents a complex challenge for ATR. Nweke (2020) notes that while digital platforms offer opportunities to document and share ATR practices, they also expose these traditions to reinterpretations that may not align with their

original meanings. Additionally, the global dominance of foreign content on these platforms marginalizes ATR, making it less visible and accessible to younger generations. Nweke stresses the need for African communities to leverage technology wisely, using it to safeguard and promote the depth of ATR rather than succumbing to its diluting effects.

INTEGRATING MODERNITY WITH CULTURAL HERITAGE

Nweke (2020) suggests that African societies must adapt to modernity while preserving their cultural heritage. This involves integrating traditional practices with contemporary tools and technologies to maintain ATR's relevance. Idowu (1973) emphasizes that modernization and ATR can coexist if communities prioritize cultural preservation alongside development. Asante (1990) advocates for a balanced approach where traditional values are protected while embracing the benefits of modernization. Such integration can ensure ATR's survival, offering younger generations a path to honor their heritage in a rapidly changing world.

Integrating modernity with ATR requires a deliberate effort to balance progress with cultural preservation. Nweke (2020) suggests that this integration must involve proactive measures such as creating community spaces where traditional rituals and modern innovations coexist. Nweke (2025, p. 159) sharpens this vision considerably, arguing that for modernization to work effectively in Africa, it “must fully embrace the culture, custom and the traditional religion of the people” and must also “embrace the diverse perspective of the people’s ideologies, fostering resilience and harmony in a rapidly changing world without leaving out any iota of the people’s beliefs that is positive.” This is a demand that modernization be fundamentally reoriented — not as a Western import imposed on Africa, but as a process that grows from African soil, with ATR as its spiritual and ethical foundation. Technology can be used to teach younger generations about ATR, while traditional leaders could incorporate modern tools to enhance the delivery of ATR practices. This synergy ensures that ATR remains relevant and accessible in the modern world while retaining its core principles, fostering a renewed sense of cultural identity among African people.

DECLINE IN TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

A critical crisis facing African Traditional Religion is the decline in the transmission of traditional knowledge, including sacred texts, oral histories, and spiritual wisdom, essential for its survival. The decline in the number of elders who possess this knowledge, coupled with the marginalization of oral traditions, has created a vacuum in spiritual leadership. Idowu (1973) highlights the importance of elders as custodians of sacred knowledge, passing down teachings and rituals that defined African spiritual life. Ossai and Nweke (2023, p. 364) deepen this point by showing how, in traditional Igbo society — which serves as a representative model of broader African communal structures — the traditional institutions of the council of elders and age-grade systems functioned as “keepers of communal wisdom, passing down indigenous knowledge and oral traditions that influenced community policing strategies from one generation to the next.”

The destruction of these institutions therefore did not just disrupt governance; it severed the living chain of knowledge transmission through which ATR sustained itself. With the loss of these systems, many ATR practices have become diluted or extinct.

The erosion of traditional knowledge is particularly evident in the decline of indigenous languages, which were the primary vehicles for transmitting religious and cultural wisdom. Nweke (2022) argues that the loss of language is tantamount to the loss of identity, as language is intrinsically linked to the worldview and cosmology of ATR. As younger generations abandon Indigenous languages in favor of global languages like English and French, they become less able to access the spiritual knowledge that has been passed down through generations.

Moreover, the disintegration of family and community structures, which once served as the primary centers for the transmission of ATR knowledge, has further contributed to the decline of traditional practices. According to Parrinder (1967), the extended family system was vital for nurturing the spiritual and cultural values that ATR espouses. As families become more nuclear and fragmented, the role of elders in teaching the younger generation is diminished, and with it, the survival of ATR practices becomes increasingly uncertain.

The decline in traditional knowledge is also linked to the rise of Western-style education, which often disregards indigenous knowledge systems as unscientific or irrelevant. Nweke and Mbama (2022) suggest that African educational institutions have played a significant role in the devaluation of traditional knowledge by emphasizing Western scientific and philosophical frameworks at the expense of African worldviews. This educational bias has left many young people ill-prepared to engage with ATR in any meaningful way.

Efforts to revitalize traditional knowledge must focus on the intergenerational transfer of wisdom through education and mentorship. Nweke (2020) advocates for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems within formal educational curricula to ensure that future generations can understand and appreciate the spiritual and cultural significance of ATR. By preserving and transmitting these knowledge systems, ATR can regain its vitality and relevance in contemporary African societies.

INFLUENCE OF POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE ON ATR

Political structures and governance systems in African countries have historically shaped societal practices and perceptions, including the broader treatment of indigenous cultural frameworks. The imposition of colonial governments, followed by post-independence political systems, often prioritized Western ideologies, marginalizing indigenous systems and traditions. According to Afigbo (1981), colonial authorities implemented policies that displaced local governance structures, which disrupted indigenous societal norms and values. This displacement continues to influence how African traditions are viewed in contemporary governance.

In many African nations, political leaders frequently align themselves with dominant socio-cultural groups to gain legitimacy and support. This alignment often leads to the exclusion of minority traditional practices from public and policy considerations. Nweke and Mbama (2022) highlight that such exclusionary approaches undermine cultural diversity, creating a perception of indigenous systems as antiquated or irrelevant in the modern era. This fosters societal alienation, as those who practice these traditions feel overlooked and undervalued in national decision-making processes.

The politicization of cultural heritage has also contributed to the exploitation of indigenous traditions for political gain. Hastings (1994) notes that political elites sometimes appropriate traditional symbols and practices to consolidate their power, distorting their original purpose. This misuse devalues indigenous systems, eroding their authenticity and weakening their role as a unifying cultural force. Such political manipulation often creates mistrust within communities and raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of these traditions.

Government policies on education and cultural heritage further marginalize indigenous systems. State-sponsored initiatives often promote Westernized curricula and cultural values, sidelining local traditions. Nweke (2022) observes that this marginalization limits opportunities for indigenous knowledge systems to thrive, perpetuating a narrative of inferiority. The lack of legal recognition or institutional support compounds this issue, as practitioners struggle to preserve their traditions in the face of systemic neglect.

To address these challenges, there is a need for a fundamental reorientation in how African governments perceive and support indigenous practices. Policies that integrate and affirm the value of traditional systems can promote cultural inclusivity and national unity. Nweke (2020) argues that governments should foster policies that acknowledge and protect indigenous rights, ensuring equal opportunities for all cultural systems to flourish. Nweke (2024, p. 86) goes further, making a bold and concrete recommendation: that African governments should formally inculcate in citizens, legislators, the judiciary, and the executive arm of government the “African eschatology concept” and the ethical principles of ATR “through workshops and seminars,” so that these principles can serve as “check and balances between members and leaders” of African societies. This is not merely a cultural aspiration but a governance proposal — one that envisions ATR not as a relic of the past but as a living moral framework capable of reforming African political life. This shift would not only preserve Africa’s rich cultural heritage but also strengthen societal cohesion through diversity.

CONCLUSION

African Traditional Religion (ATR) continues to face significant challenges that impede its progress in contemporary society. These “identical crises,” spanning cultural, theological, and

social dimensions, highlight the need for a deeper understanding of ATR's unique identity and contributions. As shown in this study, ATR has been shaped and often marginalized by external forces such as colonialism, globalization, and the influence of Christianity and Islam. These factors, combined with internal divisions and misconceptions about ATR's practices, have contributed to its diminishing relevance in many African societies. Addressing these challenges requires recognizing ATR as a legitimate and integral part of Africa's spiritual and cultural heritage, rather than a relic of the past.

Efforts must focus on the preservation, adaptation, and promotion of ATR's values and practices. This involves fostering inter-religious dialogue, encouraging cultural education, and empowering communities to reclaim their spiritual identity without fear of stigmatization. Scholars like Nweke (2022) have emphasized the need for ATR to adapt to contemporary realities while remaining true to its core principles. Similarly, initiatives that document ATR's rich traditions and integrate them into broader discourses on religion and society can help combat the misconceptions and biases that hinder its progress. These steps will not only preserve ATR but also highlight its relevance in addressing modern challenges, such as social justice, ecological sustainability, and community cohesion.

Ultimately, the survival and growth of ATR depend on a collective effort by scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to protect and promote its traditions. It is imperative to embrace ATR's diversity and richness as a source of spiritual guidance and cultural pride. By confronting the crises identified in this study, ATR can reclaim its rightful place in Africa's religious landscape, serving as a bridge between the past and the future. Nweke (2024, p. 82) provides the most fitting conclusion to this argument, asserting powerfully that "the moral salvation of Nigerians lies in their immediate and conscious return to traditional socio-religious values and morals system which is the foundation for genuine conscience and national development." This verdict extends beyond Nigeria to encompass the African continent as a whole. The identity crises this paper has examined are, at their root, the consequences of an enforced alienation from ATR. The path to healing those crises must therefore begin where they began — in a deliberate, courageous, and joyful return to the spiritual home that ATR provides. This revitalization will ensure that ATR continues to inspire and guide future generations, contributing to a more inclusive and harmonious understanding of religion in a globalized world

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