

Abstract

The sacred forests are home to wildlife outside the formally protected areas. Therefore, they play a critical role in maintaining the life of biodiversity. Unfortunately, these valuable sites are disappearing mainly due to modernisation. Thus, this article examines the relevance of cultural practices in conserving sacred forests in the contemporary world. The secondary data were collected through document review while the primary data were collected from 85 respondents through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews. Findings indicated that traditional beliefs played a central role in conserving the sacred forests. Unfortunately, in the contemporary world, traditional beliefs and practices face many challenges associated with modernisation. Moreover, customary laws were applied to restrict women in menstruation from entering sacred forests. This was done intentionally to maintain hygiene in the forest. Cultural practices regulated the access and use of sacred forests, ensuring such sites' sanitation. However, modernisation hampered the existence and operation of cultural practices like ancestral veneration. The death of elders also placed traditional beliefs and practices at risk of disappearing. It is therefore imperative to protect cultural practices from loss for the sustainability of sacred