

Hospitals as Ecological Actors: Evaluating Environmental Responsibility and Ethical Accountability in Nigerian Healthcare

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Abstract

This article explores how healthcare institutions significantly harm the environment, from their paradoxical role as healing institutions to their status as environmental enemies, with a special focus on healthcare institutions in Nigeria. The research methodology adopted in this article is a qualitative case study, aimed at evaluating how hospitals operate as ecological actors through decisions, technologies, and management practices that influence ecosystems and public health. Findings highlighted some of the activities of healthcare institutions that have a negative impact on the environment, including poor medical waste disposal, contamination from pharmaceutical use, energy dependency, and water use. This study made use of multiple data sources from documents, interviews, and observation in exploring three case studies of Nigerian hospitals that have adopted some ecological approaches in their operation, and their benefits. The study concluded that healthcare institutions in Nigeria have the moral responsibility to go green by prioritising environmental sustainability in their procedures and practices. This will be possible if the healthcare institutions are willing to embrace the moral and ecological path of reforming energy policies, adopting sustainable designs, implementing effective recycling programs, and educating staff on the value of protecting the environment.

Key terms: Environmental ethics, environmental responsibility, healthcare sustainability, hospital ecology, Nigerian healthcare institutions.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Ethical accountability and environmental responsibility are vital for every healthcare institution. This goes a long way toward highlighting the hospital's prominent role as an ecological actor. The hospital is at the heart of human compassion; it is a place where pain intersects with healing, life is renewed, and health is restored. In Nigeria, healthcare institutions stand as both medical and moral institutions and as a symbol of hope and resilience for millions amid the country's social and infrastructural challenges. Unfortunately, some of these healthcare institutions, in the bid to make a profit, and sometimes out of carelessness, exert a heavy toll on the environment that harbours them (Lenzen et al., 2020). It is clear that clean water, electricity, pharmaceuticals, and single-use medical supplies are indispensable to modern healthcare, but their inappropriate use places significant environmental strain, including resource depletion and pollution (WHO, 2024).

Globally, the healthcare sector contributes about 4.4 per cent of total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, reflecting the unintended environmental costs of lifesaving activities (OECD, 2025). In Nigeria, this paradox deepens: many hospitals operate on unreliable electricity systems, often relying on diesel generators that emit harmful emissions into the atmosphere. Waste mismanagement further worsens ecological degradation, and most African hospitals dispose of untreated medical waste in open areas, discharge untreated wastewater, and lack structured recycling systems (Abah & Ohimain, 2011). These practices expose the tension between the ethical duty of the healthcare institutions to heal and the ecological responsibility to protect life beyond the hospital walls. Using case studies, this study reimagines healthcare institutions as both treatment centres and integral parts of an ecological system affecting patient and community well-being (UNICEF Nigeria, 2021). It examines how the operational practices of hospitals in Nigeria's healthcare system, through practices like energy use, procurement, and waste management, shape environmental outcomes. It also outlines hospitals' ethical and institutional duties to minimise harm and promote sustainability in healthcare delivery in Nigeria.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

There is extensive literature on the environmental abuse by healthcare institutions worldwide, with particular emphasis on Nigerian institutions. According to sources such as *The Lancet Planetary Health*, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the World Health Organisation, healthcare systems are responsible for at least 4 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. When it comes to Nigerian healthcare institutions, much of the literature focuses on improper healthcare waste management and points the finger at the low implementation of health policies by the Federal Ministry of Environment. While these studies provide valuable technical insights, they lack a broader ethical and institutional analysis of hospitals as ecological agents embedded within complex environmental systems.

This research will fill the gap between the previous studies in this field by synthesising global environmental health research, Nigerian empirical findings, and ecological ethics in the light of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, and Catholic social teachings, in order to evaluate how operational choices of healthcare institutions in Nigeria can materially shape environmental and public health outcomes. Among the prominent phrases the study will encounter in this article are environmental responsibility and healthcare sustainability. Environmental responsibility in this context shall be understood as the duty of individuals and institutions (government and non-governmental) to embrace sustainability by minimising their ecological footprint and adopting eco-friendly practices to protect the environment, which is the

abode of human beings, both now and in the future. While healthcare sustainability is seen as a path to delivering high-quality care with greater patient outcomes, it is equitable and made available to everyone with fewer negative environmental, social, and economic impacts from the healthcare sector. These two phrases will be helpful to us as we explore the research question: Can a hospital, as an ecological actor, be ethically accountable in its operations? The study shall therefore address this question throughout this research work.

The Hospital as an Ecological Actor

Nigeria's hospital system grew as part of the postcolonial nation. These hospitals built during the colonial era do not usually have big structures, but they were naturally vented and often constructed with local materials. Paradoxically, these colonial structures were closer to eco-friendly than modern hospitals. After the 1970s, the federal government, under its Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) status, promoted modernisation and growth that made hospitals into the large, energy-intensive, high-consuming structures that we see around us today (Oluyitan, 2014). These hospitals, built for healing, can actively or passively affect the environmental systems through excessive use of some natural resources, heavy energy consumption, and poor waste control that impose a heavy burden on the environment (Oluyitan, 2014). A hospital is not a neutral structure but an actor that interacts with the environment on a daily basis, benefiting or harming it (Ostrom, 2008). Such a perspective redefines healthcare's responsibilities, making healing and environmental stewardship part and parcel of healthcare institutions (Boivin et al., 2022). The truth remains that many hospitals and clinics are gripped with the problem of service delivery and are unable or unwilling to go beyond it. The healthcare facility carbon footprint has continued to fuel environmental and health challenges in the country, putting a demand on hospitals to be ecological actors, instead of passive observers. There is also the need to integrate environmental health with public health, as a way of preserving both the environment and human life (Abah, 2011). And by so doing, hospitals can become not just a place of healing but also stewards of the human environment (World Bank, 2024).

Environmental Impact of Healthcare Operations

Although hospitals are intended as places of care and recovery, inadequate oversight can turn them into major sources of environmental harm. Globally, the healthcare sector produces more than 4.6 per cent of carbon emissions, of which 3.5 per cent is due to its energy usage. In Nigeria, diesel produces up to 9.0 per cent. Diesel generator burnings bespeak of considerable consequences, with over 20,000 litres of fuel used on average at the Health Centre every month, producing thick smoke, blackening the city, and creating respiratory issues for inhabitants (Tennison et al., 2021). It is ironic that while these institutions are saving the lives of individuals, their day-to-day operations are concurrently releasing pollution into the environment and preventing humans from sustaining that very life. There are many ways that the negative attitude of the healthcare operations can impact health outcomes, and the study discusses some of them below:

Medical and Pharmaceutical Waste Streams

Nigeria is one of those countries that are still facing poor medical and pharmaceutical waste management. In 2009, research conducted on the healthcare institutions in Nigeria came with a finding that segregator bins are not available at Nigerian hospitals, home-community-based services (HCBS) and general hospitals, and the poor management of colour-coded bins, modern incineration, and personnel handling waste has

not changed a decade later (Ezirim & Agbo, 2018). The type of disposal methods currently invoked in many hospitals is hazardous to the environment as they cause toxic gases such as dioxins and furans to contaminate the air in a significant proportion in the surrounding localities, which altogether result in the continued degradation of the environment. Many communities in Nigeria are currently contaminated with open biomedical waste, and a significant proportion of all waste generated is sometimes infectious and can even be radioactive. Most times, discarded items such as syringes, bandaged gowns, gloves, empty medicine containers, outdated and unused medicines, and bed sheets are often disposed of by open burning or dumping in the water bodies, thereby contaminating the environment and making its inhabitants vulnerable to different diseases and illnesses.

Energy and Water Consumption Patterns

Hospitals are highly energy and water-intensive facilities; they operate continuously and require reliable power for lifesaving equipment, lighting, and sanitation. Nigeria's unreliable electricity and water supply amplify these issues. Most hospitals frequently operate diesel generators, which produce high levels of carbon, noise pollution and air pollution. This is due to the inaccessibility and, at times, unavailability of cleaner energy sources in the country, especially in rural areas. And to make matters worse, most private hospitals, for want of space, usually position their diesel generators close to the hospital building, where they pose an even greater risk to the hospital's occupants, who are mainly the sick (Adeniyi & Makinde, 2025). On the other hand, water consumption patterns are no less significant; hospitals require vast amounts of water for sterilisation, cleaning, and patient care, but waste significant volumes due to outdated infrastructure and leaks. Such waste only amplifies the culture of waste, with negative consequences for the environment.

Challenges in Sourcing Materials and Managing Supply Chains Responsibly

Another key aspect of hospital environmental impact is sourcing materials and managing the supply chain. Every single object used by a hospital, whether disposable or otherwise, is a source of environmental pollution, as it is mainly produced through the extraction of raw materials, manufacturing, and transport. In Nigeria, supply chain systems are associated with inefficient distribution of health commodities, due to several factors inherent to the health system (Chukwu et al., 2017). The lifecycle analysis of medical equipment is characterised by a heavy reliance on imported devices, leading to high rates of obsolescence and non-functionality that pose significant challenges for maintenance, infrastructure, and eventual disposal. (Naheemat & Abdul, 2025). This out-of-use medical equipment contributes to greenhouse gas emissions. Moreso, the procurement framework for medical equipment in Nigeria is considered inefficient and weak, heavily plagued by corruption, bureaucratic delays, inadequate funding, and fragmented, decentralised processes (Ejekam et al., 2023). This problem is aggravated by the relatively weak legal regulation in the country and the lack of domestic manufacturing capabilities, leading to uncontrolled purchase of medical equipment (Obia, 2024). There is less pressure on policymakers to pass laws that could force hospitals to work only with suppliers that use easily biodegradable packaging materials and that display a commitment to other social responsibilities. Local producers most times miss out on the opportunity to produce hospital linens, gowns, and waste bags in bulk within the country, and, by so doing, are unable to harness this timely stimulus for green entrepreneurship. These challenges faced by the healthcare institutions continue to have a significant impact on the environment and, by extension, on human health.

Framework for Sustainable Hospital Transformation

Transforming hospitals into ecologically responsible institutions requires more than symbolic actions; it demands structural, cultural, and operational changes. In Nigeria, where hospitals lack sufficient infrastructure and funding, it is necessary to prioritise eco-friendly infrastructure and ensure adequate financial support. Hospital administrators, policymakers, and staff should adopt sustainable systems and equipment (ECN, 2023). With proper regulation, healthcare institutions can implement best practices and guidelines for effective environmental health. The following sections discuss frameworks that support sustainable hospital transformation.

Green Building and Engineering Redesign

As we already know, healing does not only take place because of the medication we take, but also where we find shelter during our sickness can go a long way toward either quickening or slowing our recovery. In Nigeria, virtually all big government hospitals were built long before environmental standards existed. This made them more likely to be reliant on heavy artificial lighting, poor ventilation, and excessive water use. Green redesign, therefore, aims to improve energy efficiency by using ample natural light, passive ventilation, and retrofitting both hospitals and staff quarters with LED lighting and low-flow fixtures. These green redesigns will have a significant impact on health, either in the long term or in the very short term. For example, using natural light can save up to 20 per cent of overall energy and help patients recover faster (NABDA, 2023). It is therefore the role of the government to ensure that all healthcare institutions adopt safer, environmentally friendly hospital structures by following the standards of international bodies such as the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) (U.S. Green Building Council, 2025). They should also follow the guidance of the Nigerian engineering and health authorities, whose onus it is to ensure that best practices are adopted to achieve more efficient outcomes in the healthcare industry.

Renewable Energy Transition Strategies

Nigerian hospitals rely predominantly on diesel generators for energy supply, making them the second most polluting facilities in the country (Nigeria Health Watch, 2025). These non-renewable sources not only pose a big problem to our planet and human health, but they are also not sustainable in the long term. Healthcare institutions, therefore, must turn their eyes towards cleaner and more renewable energy. The solar PV projects conducted by Nigeria's Rural Electrification Agency in rural clinics have proven that large solar photovoltaic systems and batteries combined with micro-grids in big hospitals are the most beneficial approach (Katundu, 2025). In some parts of the country, such as its northern highlands, it is possible to use micro-hydropower. Bioenergy, which is abundant in the northern part of the country, can also be used to generate gas for cooking and for the agricultural facilities. Making a transition into these cleaner energy sources abundant in the country puts healthcare institutions on a safer side. They are of benefit not only in the long term, but also in the short term by making clean energy available at a cheaper cost, with the assurance of not causing more health hazards to the community they were meant to serve.

Waste Reduction and Circular Supply Systems

Biomedical waste, hospital plastics, and pharmaceuticals are among the hospital waste generated by healthcare establishments (World Bank, 2023). Annually, massive quantities of waste, much of it non-biodegradable, poisonous, and radioactive, are generated. These wastes are mainly produced by hospitals, pharmaceutical industries, and other non-health-related industries (Francis, 2015). There is also atmospheric pollution from exposure to nitrogen dioxide, ozone, particulate matter, and its components,

including organic carbon and volatile organic compounds (Akachi et al., 2009). These atmospheric pollutants produce a broad spectrum of health hazards that are usually harmful, mostly to poor communities, and cause millions of premature deaths (Francis, 2015). The waste management-related problems are mainly because most of these health institutions resort to the old method of burning waste, instead of processing it either for recycling in a healthy manner or disposing of it in a way that they do not pose future danger to either human beings or other organisms. There is also a need to reduce waste in the first place, which should be the first step in the right direction. Most importantly, it is crucial to implement a circular production model that conserves resources for both current and future generations while minimising reliance on non-renewable materials (Francis, 2015). Health institutions need to understand the level of harm they are causing others on a daily basis by their inadvertent negligence, which has an adverse effect on the same human beings they have sworn to save and heal.

Staff Education and Cultural Change

Green transformation cannot be preserved through technology alone; there is also a need for human input. There is a need to educate the staff regardless of their role, by exposing them to relevant training courses and environmental workshops, as well as emphasising environmental audits. Hospitals can adopt approaches that make some ecological results of the hospital among the performance evaluation measures. Such efforts will build a culture that can positively transform the healthcare institutions by increasing the awareness of the dangers of healthcare practices and actions that are directly harmful to the environment and, by extension, to human beings. It is necessary to begin the environmental awareness ahead of time by targeting the universities, which are places where the bulk of people who are going to be future staff of healthcare institutions will be trained; scientists, doctors, nurses, thinkers, professors, and other health-related and non-health-related students can be found (Lee et al., 2022). Environmental education and advocacy should be made a core part of their training by exposing them to the knowledge of the enormous threats that the environmental crisis poses to human health, while also highlighting the need for healthcare professionals to take immediate action.

3.0 CASE STUDIES

Hospitals in Nigeria That Have Adopted Ecological Approaches

In recent years, many Nigerian healthcare institutions have become aware of the environmental impact of their operations, prompting efforts for sustainable practices (Health Care Without Harm, 2019). This study uses a qualitative case study design, drawing on interviews conducted by others, observations, and published documents, both print and online. It employs thematic analysis to identify and report patterns from these sources. The research focuses on select Nigerian healthcare facilities that have adopted eco-friendly practices to reduce energy use, ensure proper waste disposal, and support greener decision-making (ThisDay, 2022). These include Lagos University Teaching Hospital, University College Hospital Ibadan, and Evercare Hospital Lekki. The study examines each to explore subtle operational differences.

Lagos University Teaching Hospital

The Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) is among Nigeria's first public hospitals that actively began to adopt renewable energy sources to develop their facilities in terms of both functional efficiency and the hospital's environmental responsibility (LUTH, 2025). Although the hospital is one of the primary providers of tertiary medical services and training, the facility has registered significant limitations in terms of the frequency of power outages and electricity costs onsite (The Punch, 2025). This power outage has

prompted the hospital management to gradually switch to solar energy, not only because it is cheaper, but also because it is environmentally friendly (The Electricity Hub, 2024). According to information on their official website, the facility's 125 kVA/20 kW solar-powered system was commissioned in Ward A2 in April 2025 by the Moses Adekoyejo Majekodunmi Foundation (Daily Trust, 2024). Prior to that, the authorities adopted similar clean energy in their facility in Ward A, thereby providing electricity for their equipment and lighting. According to reports, in the pilot phase, Ward A sourced more than 90 per cent of its electricity from solar power, with the remaining 8 per cent from the national grid (PvknowHow, 2024).

This achievement prompted the hospital management to dedicate 20 per cent of its yearly budget to the program, demonstrating both visionary planning and a strong commitment to sustainability (UCH, 2024). LUTH's solarisation drive also includes several waste-reduction and water-management initiatives in the early stages (The Nation, 2024). Some hospital administrative programs have adopted operational staff training on environmental awareness, establishing a pathway for cultural transformation within the organisation (Premium Times, 2025). Beyond simply cutting carbon, the shift ensures that care continues for patients who rely on the hospital's services for ventilators, incubators, and diagnostic tools. These initiatives signal an important step toward reimagining public hospitals as forces for ecological restoration, aligning with human healing and planetary care.

University College Hospital, Ibadan

The University College Hospital (UCH) in Ibadan is one of Nigeria's top teaching hospitals. Founded in 1957, it is also illustrative of the challenge many such legacy hospitals confront (BusinessDay, 2024). The infrastructure of such an older institution is not inherently designed to be sustainable, and it was only in the last few years that UCH started embracing renewable power solutions and rethinking its utilities' environmental load (Federal Ministry of Health, 2024). In 2024, the hospital's administrators revealed that they were "working round the clock to provide alternative and sustainable electricity," including "installation of total solar inverters for UCH's Accident and Emergency Department, labor wards, and operating theatres" (UCH, 2025). This development was happening within the context of the nationwide solarisation of major hospitals in a federal renewable energy drive aimed at decreasing dependence on a shaky national grid (Nigeria Health Watch, 2025). UCH's management has chosen to approach sustainability from an ethical and operational standpoint. The institution's leadership, having realised that environmental inefficiency was a threat to patients, especially in critical care units where a lack of energy can have fatal implications, reached a new agreement with its electricity provider for a more efficient power supply (The Guardian, 2025).

Today, UCH has emerged as a prime example of not only healthcare sector reform, but also of their general transition to a more sustainable energy practice (Premium Times, 2025). Aside from putting greater emphasis on energy reform, UCH has also recognised the need to keep its waste processing procedures in line with best practices in responsible waste management (BusinessDay, 2022). All these efforts are geared towards not only making the hospital a safe space but also facilitating the healing of her patients.

Evercare Hospital

Evercare Hospital became the first hospital in Nigeria to be awarded a Final EDGE certificate, a global green-building standard administered by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) (The Nation, 2022).

The hospital buildings use 38.8 per cent less energy in operation than the national baseline, consume 20.5 per cent less water, and require 42.1 per cent less embodied energy in materials. Some of the essential features of their innovation include high-efficiency lighting, low-flow plumbing systems, thick roof and wall insulation, and designed roof gardens (The Nation, 2022). Moreover, the buildings are structured to let in daylight without the heat. The management has further instated digital health systems to reduce paper waste, and they also adopted green procurement, reusing local materials (Evercare Group, 2021). The hospital also collects and assesses environmental performance indicators to ensure that the savings are maintained (Evercare Hospital Lekki, 2022). However, the primary reason for Evercare Hospital's success is its ecological design advantage, visible in its medical function and its business model. The owners have succeeded in reducing the cost of running the hospital, yet achieved a healthier, more comfortable building in which to work. The hospital makes a lot of savings from buying less water, but also from having more to spare: while LUTH and UCH suffered water insecurity, Evercare could bring in extra water delivery (LUTH, 2025). They designed a system that handles the used water so that it doesn't become waste; rather, it remains within the cycle of the hospital's laundry and sewage facilities (The Guardian, 2025). Hence, Evercare Hospital facility is designed specifically with the current and future needs in mind, demonstrating the innovative approach that new hospitals may undertake in the Nigerian context (Evercare Group, 2021). Her numerous contributions to green health make a bold statement that it is possible and necessary for hospitals in Nigeria to go green in their operations.

Ecological Ethics and Institutional Responsibility

The neglect of ecological consideration in the operations of many healthcare institutions in Nigeria today can be said to be a contradiction of the dictum of medical ethics, which commands us to "do no harm". This is below expectations for institutions that symbolise humanity and healing. It is therefore imperative that healthcare institutions should lean towards environmental stewardship, which ensures the protection of life and the environment as a key component of their operations.

The Principle of the Common Good

Nigerian hospitals must exercise their stewardship by mainstreaming ecologically sustainable operations such as efficient energy use, procurement guidelines, and green waste, with the aim of not only attempting to cure sickness, but also to protect the community they serve from environmentally induced illnesses. They must be able to focus on what benefits not only the hospital, but also the environment. Their operation should prioritise the common good, which is "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment" (Paul VI, 1965). Access to healthcare should be given to all in such a way that everyone is given the opportunity to attain their full health potential without having to face any form of discrimination. Common good will therefore imply the 'respect for the person', and it extends an invitation for public authorities to respect the fundamental and inalienable rights of each person (John Paul II, 1987). Following the principle of common good, therefore, will enable healthcare institutions to be on guard against tilting towards egoistic interest, but instead focus on the good of everyone.

The Moral Accountability of Healthcare Institutions

Health institutions, by the mere nature of their business, are morally accountable to act in the best interests of their patients. They are not to cause harmful effects not just to their patients but also on the whole population and ecosystems. Health institutions should not only allow the government to monitor

and correct them, but they should also be their own watchmen. This is true especially in countries like Nigeria that have a weak enforcement system of laws; the healthcare institutions should be able to shun selfish interest and always stick to the right conduct. This is necessary, especially with respect to waste management in Nigerian hospitals, which calls for an inward motivation and realisation of the moral duty of their profession. Environmentally responsible health institutions need not wait for any stringent government regulation for them to do the right thing. Hospitals should be able to use biodegradable plastics, energy-saving equipment, and reduce emissions, if they have the health of the community they serve as a priority. Environmental ethics, therefore, challenges healthcare institutions to toe the path of social responsibility, in order to protect the poor communities that are often victims of the pollution of the big hospitals near them.

The Healing Mission of the Hospital and Environmental Ethics

In a broad sense, the primary aim of healthcare is to heal. They heal physically, emotionally, and mentally. Healing can take place by calming and reassuring an anxious patient, by putting the patient's pain under control, helping to slow the progress of diseases, and giving a patient comfort care when it is becoming obvious that the patient's sickness is noncurative (Awdish & Berry, 2019). However, holistic healing is achieved when people also give priority to the safety of the environment where they live. There is a huge connection between human beings and their environment; a symbiotic relationship that cannot be ignored. It is such that the "violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life" (Francis, 2015). Just as the earth depends on healthy and rational human beings to thrive, human beings also depend on the natural environment. Any attempt to harm the natural environment will end up harming human beings (John, 2024). The mandate of ecological ethics is that the responsibility of healthcare is not confined within the walls of the hospital rooms, but it is extended to the health of the plants and trees around, the safety of the air we breathe, the purity of our water, and the care of the social welfare of the community that hosts the healthcare facility.

Policy and Governance Implications

In a country like Nigeria, where the Federal Ministry of Health and the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria place more emphasis on patient care and ethics, with lesser attention to ecological standards, there is a need to embrace a kind of transformation capable of decreasing ecological degradation and boosting healthcare quality, efficiency, and ethics in the country. To achieve this task, it will be necessary to embed environmental sustainability in the hospital accreditation process in the country, to improve accountability from the onset (Omonisi, 2022). The revised accreditation systems should mandatorily include indicators, such as energy, waste and water reduction, and green procurement. However, for healthcare institutions to be transformed into sustainable footprints, such responsibility should go beyond companies' individual choices to also include systemic policy and reform, and governance alignment (WHO, 2018). Public-Private Partnerships should be designed to enhance the rollout of renewable energy and waste recycling. The Nigeria Climate Change Act guides the governments and companies, but there is a need to tailor it adequately to the healthcare institutions and to enhance its implementation and local enforcement (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2023). Such an approach will awaken the healthcare institutions to their responsibilities as healers and hold them accountable for any kind of anti-life activities that endanger the health of their patients and their host communities.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: This research work has established that a hospital is not merely a clinical institution but also an ecological actor whose operational decisions materially shape environmental and public health outcomes. As a healing institution, a hospital is not immune to abusing the very reason for which it was created, by directly or indirectly contributing to ecological degradation through fossil-fuel dependency, improper waste disposal, inefficient water use, and poorly regulated procurement systems. By prioritising sustainability, hospitals can become active ecological actors, conscious of the well-being of the environment and proffering effective biological cures to illnesses. Hospitals can accept the premise that healing people and healing the planet are not two different missions, but one.

The case studies of some of the hospitals in Nigeria that have already taken proactive steps towards green health are a testament that ecological transformation within Nigerian healthcare is both possible and practical. Embedding sustainability into hospital operations enhances positive clinical outcomes. Hence, the adoption of solar energy systems, green building standards, waste reforms, and environmental monitoring frameworks has proven that environmental responsibility can reduce operational costs, strengthen energy security, and improve patient safety, while aligning institutional practice with ethical commitments. Relying on ecological ethics and the principle of common good, this study argues that healthcare activities producing and mismanaging waste disregard the planet's health, and those that prioritise profit creation over holistic health have lost their essence.

Recommendations: This study recommends that healthcare institutions institutionalise environmental accountability by ensuring that environmental sustainability metrics are embedded in hospital accreditation and licensing frameworks. The government should encourage healthcare institutions to transition to renewable energy by making it easier for them to access incentives, grants, and tax relief for their investments in renewable energy. Healthcare institutions should be encouraged to manage their waste more effectively by implementing circular procurement policies that prioritise reusable and biodegradable materials. Procurement and supply chains should be reformed to prioritise eco-friendly suppliers, encourage local manufacturing, and reduce reliance on imported disposable medical equipment. Hospital buildings are to follow internationally recognised green building standards adapted to Nigerian conditions.

There is a need to build an ecological culture by training the staff to be ecological stewards and by incorporating ecological education in medical schools. Eco-friendly policies should be enforced in healthcare institutions, given the delicate services they render to human beings. Above all, there is a need for healthcare institutions in Nigeria to consider structural reform and ethical commitments if they honestly wish to assume their role as ecological actors. And by reconciling the healing mission with environmental stewardship, healthcare institutions will not only protect human lives today, but also those of the generations yet unborn.

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