

Evaluating the Efficiency and Feasibility of Renewable Energy Technologies in Combating Climate Change in Africa

Alonge Samuel precious

Graduate of Kwara state university
proflonge0@gmail.com

Jennifer Obiorah

Graduate of Canary Islands Institute of Technology, Spain
obiorahjenifa@gmail.com

Awotundun Oluwagbenga Joshua

Graduate of Kwara State University, Malete
awotundunoluwagbenga@gmail.com

Edeh Maduabuchi Ignatius

Graduate of University of Nigeria, Nsukka
maduabuchi.edeh.pg00603@unn.edu.ng

Corresponding Author: adamaizuchukwu@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examines the efficacy and viability of renewable energy technologies in addressing climate change in Africa. The research utilizes a thorough examination of literature, including academic journals, reports, and policy documents, to provide an enhanced understanding of the effectiveness and practicality of renewable energy technologies in mitigating climate change in Africa. The study finds that Africa has significant untapped renewable energy potential that can contribute to sustainable development and expand access to electricity. It evaluates the efficiency of various renewable energy technologies, such as photovoltaics, wind turbines, hydroelectric power plants, and geothermal systems, considering factors such as energy conversion efficiency, scalability, and reliability. Economic considerations, including investment costs, regulatory frameworks, and development pathways, are also analyzed to determine the feasibility and economic viability of renewable energy technologies. The study emphasizes the challenges posed by climate change in Africa, particularly in relation to energy access disparities and the vulnerability of climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture. Based on the findings, the study recommends strengthening renewable energy policies and regulations, enhancing research and development, promoting public-private partnerships, prioritizing off-grid solutions, focusing on climate change adaptation and resilience, and investing in capacity building and skills

development. International cooperation and funding are also seen as essential in addressing the pressing issue of climate change in Africa.

Keywords: *renewable energy, climate change, efficiency, feasibility, Africa.*

Introduction

Climate change is a pressing global challenge that affects various aspects of human life, including socioeconomic development, food security, and public health (IPCC, 2014). Africa, with its diverse ecosystems and high dependency on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture, is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change (UNEP, 2016). Additionally, the continent faces energy poverty, with approximately 600 million people lacking access to electricity (IEA, 2019). This energy poverty is exacerbated by heavy reliance on fossil fuels, which not only contributes to greenhouse gas emissions but also undermines energy security and economic growth (IRENA, 2019). In the past ten years, renewable energy has experienced significant growth and improvement globally, largely due to the numerous countries that have introduced educational programs focused on renewable energy technology. One of the primary challenges faced by the global energy sector has been ensuring a secure demand for energy while preventing climate change caused by outdated or inefficient methods of energy generation. Therefore, it has become crucial for countries to invest in cleaner and more efficient technologies in order to reduce emissions as much as possible.

The use of fossil fuels for energy generation has long been identified as a leading contributor to global warming, starting from the early stages of industrialization. To address this issue, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) established the Kyoto Protocol in 1995 and the Copenhagen Accord as measures to combat climate change. The Kyoto Protocol required member countries to make collective efforts in reducing emissions through the utilization of Clean Development Mechanism technologies that rely on renewable energy. This was further emphasized by the 13th Conference of the Parties (COP13) in Bali, Indonesia, which focused on the same objective. Consequently, South Africa and other countries committed to the Kyoto Protocol, pledging to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This commitment resulted in noticeable changes within the energy sector and influenced South Africa's industrial strategy.

The DMRE issued the South African IRP in October 2019, known as the IRP 2019, which estimated the country's energy capacity to be just over 52,000MW. About 35,000MW of this capacity was planned to be decommissioned by 2050 due to the age of coal facilities operated by Eskom, the country's coal-fired electricity generator. As coal reserves posed a threat to supply and there was a commitment to phase out fossil fuels, it was widely believed that cleaner energy sources would replace coal. In addition, other African countries have also increased their investments in renewable energy in the past decade as they transition to cleaner energy sources that are less harmful to the environment. Globally, the reduced reliance on fossil fuels due to climate change, energy security concerns, and the availability of natural gas reserves has led to research on alternative fuels. Many countries have realized the negative impacts of climate change and have developed newer and more cost-effective technologies for energy production, which also presents an option for energy supply in Sub-Saharan Africa, where modern energy production technology was previously lacking. This is supported by a study conducted by

Campbell et al., which found that even the wealthiest families in Zimbabwe use various energy production methods, including wood and electricity.

The transition towards renewable energy technologies presents Africa with a significant opportunity to mitigate climate change impacts and address energy poverty. Renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind, hydro, geothermal, and biomass, offer low-carbon alternatives for generating electricity, providing heating, and enabling transportation (IRENA, 2020). These technologies offer a range of advantages, including the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, diversification of energy sources, enhanced energy access, job creation, and promotion of sustainable development (IRENA, 2020; UNEP, 2018). Renewable energy technologies play a crucial role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, one of the primary drivers of global climate change. By replacing fossil fuel-based energy generation, renewable sources help to significantly decrease the carbon footprint associated with energy production. This reduction in emissions supports global efforts to mitigate climate change and transition towards a low-carbon economy, aligning with the objectives set in international agreements such as the Paris Agreement. Moreover, renewable energy technologies enable a diversification of energy sources, reducing the dependence on a single energy resource, which can be subject to price volatility and supply disruptions. By harnessing the diverse natural resources available in Africa, such as abundant sunlight, wind, and geothermal heat, the continent can tap into a range of renewable sources to meet its energy needs, enhancing energy security.

In addition to environmental and energy security benefits, renewable energy technologies contribute to improved energy access. Many communities in Africa, particularly in rural areas, still lack access to reliable electricity. Distributed renewable energy systems, such as solar home systems and mini-grids, offer decentralized and off-grid solutions, enabling the provision of electricity to remote areas where grid infrastructure is absent or inadequate. This helps bridge the energy access gap, providing opportunities for socioeconomic development and improving the quality of life for millions of people. Moreover, the transition to renewable energy technologies generates employment opportunities across various stages of the value chain, from manufacturing and installation to operation and maintenance. The renewable energy sector has the potential to create a significant number of jobs, promoting economic growth and poverty alleviation. These jobs can range from highly skilled positions, such as engineers and technicians, to more labor-intensive roles in manufacturing and construction. Furthermore, embracing renewable energy technologies supports the principles of sustainable development. As these technologies rely on abundant and locally available resources, they contribute to the promotion of sustainable resource management. Additionally, the decentralized nature of renewable energy systems empowers communities, enhances resilience, and fosters local capacity building.

Efficiency is a crucial factor in evaluating the feasibility of renewable energy technologies. The efficiency of renewable energy systems is measured by the energy conversion efficiency, which determines the percentage of available energy converted into usable power (IRENA, 2020). Solar photovoltaic (PV) systems have witnessed considerable advancements in efficiency, with average conversion rates exceeding 20% in some cases (Fraunhofer ISE, 2021). Similarly, wind turbines have seen significant efficiency improvements, with modern designs capable of converting more than 45% of the wind's kinetic energy into electricity (EWEA, 2011).

Geothermal and hydroelectric power plants also demonstrate high efficiency, as they directly convert thermal or kinetic energy into electricity (Miguel-Ayala et al., 2019; UBA, 2019). Feasibility considerations for renewable energy technologies in Africa involve various factors, including resource availability, infrastructure requirements, costs, and policy frameworks. Africa possesses abundant renewable energy resources, particularly solar and wind, with the potential to contribute significantly to the continent's energy needs (IRENA, 2019). Supporting infrastructure, such as transmission and distribution networks, need to be developed or upgraded to accommodate the expansion of renewable energy systems (IRENA, 2019). Moreover, the availability of financing mechanisms, such as concessional loans, grants, and innovative business models, is crucial to incentivize private investment in renewable energy projects in Africa (IEA, 2019).

Implementing renewable energy technologies in Africa requires supportive policies and regulations. Governments can play a pivotal role in providing a conducive environment for renewable energy deployment by setting renewable energy targets, introducing feed-in tariffs, implementing tax incentives, and streamlining licensing and permitting processes (IRENA, 2019). International cooperation and partnerships are also crucial in mobilizing financial and technical support for renewable energy projects in Africa (IRENA, 2019). Initiatives like the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) further contribute to advancing renewable energy development and combating climate change in Africa (AREI, 2020; United Nations, 2020). Case studies from various African countries demonstrate the successful implementation of renewable energy technologies. For instance, Morocco has launched ambitious solar and wind projects, such as the Noor Solar Complex and the Tarfaya Wind Farm, which have significantly contributed to the country's renewable energy capacity (IRENA, 2018). Kenya has also achieved remarkable progress by implementing geothermal power plants, contributing to the diversification of its energy mix (KenGen, 2021).

Climate change poses intensifying threats to Africa's vulnerable ecosystems, populations, and economies. As traditional energy sources exacerbate the problem, there is an urgent need to evaluate the efficiency and feasibility of renewable energy technologies as sustainable alternatives that combat climate change. The objective of this study is to offer significant insights on the prospective advantages and hurdles related to the implementation of renewable energy technologies in the African continent.

Methodology

This methodology encompasses a meticulous examination of literature to gather and scrutinize pertinent studies from academic journals, reports, and policy documents. The objective of the search strategy was to locate empirical studies that explore the efficacy and viability of renewable energy technologies in addressing climate change in Africa. Through the synthesis of the identified studies' findings, this research offers an enhanced comprehension of the effectiveness and practicability of renewable energy technologies in mitigating climate change in Africa.

Renewable Energy Potential in Africa

Africa possesses immense renewable energy potential that remains largely untapped. Several studies and reports have indicated the vast opportunities for harvesting renewable energy resources across the continent, contributing to sustainable development and expanding access to electricity in remote and rural areas. According to statistics from the African Development Bank (2017), African countries possess a significant untapped potential for renewable energy sources. The estimates suggest that there is a capability for generating 350 GW of hydroelectric power, 110 GW of wind power, 15 GW of geothermal power, and a staggering 1000 GW of solar power within the continent. Additionally, the potential for bioenergy from surplus forest wood is estimated to be 520 GWh/year (International Renewable Energy Agency, 2015). Solar energy, in particular, shows promise due to its widespread geographical distribution. This abundance of renewable resources presents strategic opportunities for the continent and has the potential to revolutionize the energy sector in several countries. Wind and solar energy, in particular, have emerged as commercially viable alternatives to fossil fuels, both in terms of power production and cost competitiveness.

While many renewable energy sources, such as sunlight, wind, hydro, and underground heat, can be utilized without combustion, others like bioenergy require burning organic materials or biomass to release energy. Biomass has various applications, including cooking, heating, transport, and electricity generation. However, its efficiency, cleanliness, and sustainability vary depending on the processing and utilization methods. Unfortunately, the current reliance on bioenergy in sub-Saharan Africa primarily stems from the use of rudimentary stoves for cooking with wood and charcoal. When discussing modern renewable energy, it is important to consider methods that not only utilize renewable sources but also prioritize cleanliness and efficiency in terms of particulate and carbon emissions. The goal is to replace or enhance traditional uses of renewables in Africa, particularly the direct use of solid biomass.

Solar energy is indeed a highly abundant and promising renewable energy source in Africa. Its potential is directly related to the continent's geographical location and proximity to the Equator, which results in high solar intensity. According to Karekezi (2002), Africa receives the highest solar intensity globally, making it an ideal region for solar energy utilization. The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) has also recognized the immense solar potential in Africa. In their report, IRENA (2016) estimated that Africa's solar potential exceeds 10 terawatts (TW). This substantial capacity provides a significant opportunity for widespread adoption of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems and solar thermal technologies. The deployment of these solar technologies can contribute to meeting the energy demand of both urban and rural areas, thereby improving energy access and reducing reliance on fossil fuels. In addition to solar energy, Africa also possesses promising wind energy resources, especially along its coastal regions. These areas experience consistent and strong winds, making them suitable for wind power generation. As highlighted by Karekezi (2002), wind energy has significant potential in Africa. IRENA (2016) estimates that Africa's wind energy potential is approximately 1.8 TW, which further underscores the viability of wind power development across the continent.

To date, the largest solar markets in Africa are South Africa, Morocco, Algeria, Ghana, and Egypt, as reported by Tiyou in 2017. Unsurprisingly, South Africa and North African countries

lead the rankings not because of a significant advantage in solar resource availability, but rather due to their strong dedication to policies and investments. However, several countries within Sub-Saharan Africa are also making strides in this area, with Ghana already established as a market and others increasingly committed. For instance, Nigeria recently issued the first African green bonds according to Bloomberg in 2017, and Kenya is at the forefront of innovation in micro-grids, as stated by TFE Consulting in 2017, as well as stand-alone solar systems, as reported by Bloomberg New Energy Finance in 2016."

Hydropower plays a significant role as a renewable energy source in Africa, leveraging the vast network of rivers and lakes spread across the continent. These water resources provide ideal conditions for the development of both large-scale and small-scale hydropower projects. IRENA (2016) acknowledges the considerable potential of hydropower in Africa. The Congo River and its tributaries, for instance, have been identified as having a hydropower potential of over 100 GW. This emphasizes the vast capacity for hydropower generation and the opportunity to meet the growing energy demand in the region. Furthermore, the Nile River and the Zambezi River are also recognized for their significant hydropower potential (Karekezi, 2002). Exploiting these resources can diversify Africa's energy mix, contributing to energy security and sustainability. Hydropower projects can range in scale, from large dams that supply power to national grids to smaller micro-hydropower projects that serve remote and off-grid communities. Large-scale hydropower developments, such as the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, offer multiple benefits, including electricity generation, water storage for irrigation, and flood control. These projects have the potential to enhance energy access and support economic development by providing a reliable source of electricity. On the other hand, small-scale hydropower projects can be particularly beneficial for communities situated in remote areas with limited access to the grid. These projects can provide clean and reliable energy to power essential services like lighting, cooking, and healthcare facilities, thereby improving the quality of life for rural populations.

Hydropower plants can be classified based on their capacity or the characteristics of their infrastructure. In this discussion, we will focus on distinguishing between large and small hydropower plants, which make significant or minor contributions to power generation capacity and have major or minor impacts on water flows (International Energy Agency, 2014).

The presence or absence of a dam or reservoir significantly affects water flow alteration. Hydropower plants that do not accumulate water, known as "run-of-river" plants, are common among small hydropower installations. However, some large hydropower plants can also fall into this category if they have access to high and stable flows, such as those found in tropical rivers. Furthermore, hydropower plants with one upper and one lower dam can function as "pump-storage" facilities, pumping water upward during excess energy and releasing it during peak demand. The size and type of hydropower plants bring about different issues, but large projects that exert significant control over water and sediment flows have the greatest environmental impact. Mega projects, with capacities ranging from hundreds to thousands of megawatts (or even gigawatts), are particularly notable in regions with large water flows, such as certain African rivers. Although these projects have the potential for widespread electrification, they are also the most controversial and expensive (International Energy Agency, 2014).

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), with its major river basins including the Congo, Nile, Senegal, Niger, Zambesi, Volta, and Orange, possesses a significant hydropower potential. The Congo basin alone, which has the highest water discharge, accounts for 40% of this potential. The majority of this potential is concentrated in Central Africa, particularly in countries such as Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Cameroon. However, noteworthy estimates can also be found in East Africa (Ethiopia), Southern Africa (Angola, Mozambique, Madagascar), and West Africa (Guinea, Nigeria, Senegal). Unfortunately, there is a significant gap between the hydropower potential and the actual production in SSA. Out of an estimated potential capacity of 280 gigawatts (GW), only 10% is currently tapped. Central Africa, although having the largest technically feasible hydro potential (570,730 gigawatt-hours per year), has the lowest utilization rate at 3%. In comparison, North Africa has about one-tenth of Central Africa's technical potential (59,693 gigawatt-hours per year) but produces a higher amount of hydropower (International Energy Agency, 2014). The development of hydropower projects in Africa does present some challenges. Environmental concerns, such as the impact on ecosystems and displacement of communities, need to be carefully addressed through proper environmental impact assessments and community engagement. Furthermore, the financial and technical requirements of large-scale hydropower projects may be a barrier to their implementation, requiring investments from both domestic and international sources. Interest in geothermal energy in Africa has grown in recent years, driven by the recognition of the substantial geothermal potential in the Great Rift Valley. This geographical feature spans several countries, including Kenya, Ethiopia, and Tanzania, and is believed to hold significant reserves of geothermal energy (Karekezi, 2002).

The African Rift Geothermal Development Facility estimates that there is a geothermal potential of 15 GW across the rift (IRENA, 2016). This highlights the immense opportunity for geothermal energy development and the potential to contribute significantly to Africa's energy transition. Kenya has emerged as a leading country in geothermal energy development on the continent. The country's Olkaria geothermal field, located within the Rift Valley, is one of the largest geothermal power generation sites in the world. With an installed capacity of over 700 MW, it plays a crucial role in Kenya's energy mix, providing a reliable and sustainable source of electricity (Karekezi, 2002). The success of Kenya's geothermal projects has inspired neighboring countries to explore and tap into their own geothermal resources.

Ethiopia is another country in the Rift Valley region that has recognized the potential of geothermal energy. The country has already made significant progress in geothermal exploration and development, with the Aluto-Langano geothermal field being one of its key projects. Additionally, Tanzania has also identified geothermal energy as a valuable resource and has initiated geothermal exploration activities. A major advantage of geothermal energy is its ability to provide stable baseload power, as it is not affected by weather conditions or fluctuations in solar or wind resources. This reliability makes it particularly attractive for countries seeking to enhance their energy security and meet the growing electricity demand. Like any energy resource, geothermal development does come with challenges. The upfront costs of exploration and drilling can be substantial, making finance a key hurdle in many geothermal projects. Furthermore, technical expertise and capacity building in geothermal development are important for successful implementation. Africa's biomass and bioenergy resources, including agricultural

waste and forestry residues, offer opportunities for decentralized energy production and rural electrification (IRENA, 2016). These resources can be harnessed through various technologies such as biogas, biomass combustion, and biofuels, providing affordable and sustainable energy solutions in rural communities.

Efficiency of Renewable Energy Technologies

Renewable energy technologies have gained significant attention in Africa in recent years due to their potential to address the continent's ongoing energy crisis and reduce its reliance on fossil fuels. This section evaluates the efficiency of various renewable energy technologies in Africa, considering factors such as energy conversion efficiencies, scalability, and reliability, with a focus on photovoltaics, wind turbines, hydroelectric power plants, and geothermal systems.

1. Photovoltaics:

Photovoltaic (PV) systems have emerged as a significant renewable energy technology in Africa, harnessing sunlight directly to generate electricity through solar cells. Over the years, there have been notable improvements in the efficiency of PV systems, with modern panels achieving conversion efficiencies of 15-20%, and advanced technologies pushing the boundaries with efficiencies surpassing 40% (Alam et al., 2018). The efficiency of PV systems can be affected by various factors, including temperature, soiling, and shading. Higher temperatures can lead to reduced efficiency, as excessive heat affects the performance of solar cells. Soiling, caused by dust, dirt, or pollution, can block sunlight and further diminish energy conversion efficiency. Shading from nearby structures or vegetation can create shadows, resulting in localized power losses. However, continuous advancements in PV technology, including the use of anti-reflective coatings, bypass diodes, and maximum power point tracking, have mitigated these issues to improve overall efficiency.

One of the key advantages of PV systems is their scalability and adaptability to diverse African contexts. PV systems can be easily installed on rooftops, open land, or integrated into building structures, allowing for flexible implementation across both urban and rural areas. Their modularity enables easy expansion or addition of capacity as the energy needs of communities evolve (Ishaque et al., 2011). PV systems have demonstrated reliability, particularly in rural areas. They can function as stand-alone systems, providing electricity to off-grid communities that are not connected to the central electricity grid. Alternatively, they can be integrated into hybrid configurations with diesel generators in areas where grid connectivity is intermittent or unreliable. This hybrid approach ensures a continuous and reliable power supply, effectively addressing the energy needs of remote communities (Renewables Global Status Report, 2020). Moreover, PV systems offer significant environmental benefits, such as reduced greenhouse gas emissions, minimal water consumption, and negligible noise pollution. These advantages make PV systems an increasingly attractive option for governments and communities striving to achieve sustainable energy solutions in Africa.

2. Wind Turbines:

Wind energy has emerged as a promising option for Africa due to its abundant wind resources. Over the years, there have been significant improvements in the efficiency of wind turbines,

particularly onshore turbines. Modern onshore wind turbines are now capable of achieving energy conversion efficiencies ranging from 40% to 50% (Renewables Global Status Report, 2020). These advancements in efficiency have contributed to making wind energy a competitive and viable renewable energy source. However, the reliability of wind energy is largely dependent on wind speed and consistency. Areas with low wind resources may not be suitable for large-scale wind power installations. The intermittent and variable nature of wind can affect the continuous generation of electricity from wind turbines. As a result, wind energy is often complemented with other renewable energy sources or integrated into hybrid systems to ensure a stable and reliable energy supply (IRENA, 2020).

Despite this challenge, wind farms have been successfully implemented in various African countries. For instance, Kenya has made considerable strides in developing wind energy projects, such as the Lake Turkana Wind Power project, which is one of the largest wind farms in Africa. This wind farm, with a capacity of 310 MW, significantly contributes to Kenya's energy grid and has the potential to meet a considerable portion of the country's electricity demand (IRENA, 2020). Egypt is another African country that has seen successful implementation of wind energy projects. The country's Zafarana wind farm, with a capacity of 550 MW, has played a crucial role in diversifying Egypt's energy mix and reducing its reliance on fossil fuels. The wind farm not only contributes to the national electricity grid but also helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change (IRENA, 2020). The growth of wind energy in Africa is driven by various factors, including supportive government policies, favorable investment climates, and technical expertise. Countries across the continent are recognizing the potential of wind energy in meeting their increasing energy demands and reducing their carbon footprint.

3. Hydroelectric Power Plants:

Hydropower has been widely utilized in Africa as a reliable and efficient renewable energy source. The technology and infrastructure for hydropower have matured over the years, resulting in high energy conversion efficiencies that often exceed 90% (Liu et al., 2020). This high efficiency is primarily due to the well-established hydroelectric power generation systems and their ability to convert the potential energy of water into electricity. One significant advantage of hydropower is its ability to respond quickly to fluctuating energy demands, contributing to grid stabilization. Unlike some other renewable energy sources, hydropower plants can adjust their output rapidly, ensuring a stable and reliable electricity supply to meet the needs of consumers. This flexibility is especially valuable in regions with a rapidly growing energy demand and varying power needs. However, the implementation of large-scale hydropower plants can present social and environmental challenges. The construction of dams for these projects may lead to the displacement of local communities, causing social disruption and economic challenges for those affected. Additionally, the reservoirs formed by these dams can result in environmental degradation, including habitat loss and altered ecosystem dynamics (Liu et al., 2020).

To address these challenges and ensure sustainable hydropower development, micro-hydropower systems are often more suitable, particularly in remote and rural areas. Micro-hydropower refers to small-scale hydroelectric power systems that typically have a capacity of less than 100 kW. These systems can leverage local water resources, such as small rivers or streams, to generate electricity for local communities. By providing energy in a decentralized manner, micro-

hydropower systems can improve access to electricity and contribute to rural development (Kaygin et al., 2020). Micro-hydropower projects offer several advantages over large-scale hydropower plants. They have lower environmental footprints, as they require smaller dams or water diversion structures. Furthermore, they can often be implemented with less social disruption, as the smaller scale minimizes the displacement of local communities. Additionally, micro-hydropower systems can provide energy independence for remote or off-grid communities, reducing their reliance on fossil fuels and improving their overall quality of life.

4. Geothermal Systems

Geothermal energy is an untapped resource with significant potential in Africa, especially in regions that experience active volcanism. Geothermal power plants have the capability to achieve high energy conversion efficiencies, typically ranging from 10% to 30% or higher (Alkan, 2018). This efficiency is mainly due to the fact that geothermal energy harnesses the heat stored within the Earth's crust to generate electricity. Although the initial capital costs for geothermal projects can be relatively high, they offer long-term operational cost benefits. Geothermal power plants have low operational expenses once they are established, as the fuel source is essentially free and continuously available. This provides a reliable and constant power supply for the long term, making geothermal energy an attractive option (IRENA, 2020).

Some African countries have already made significant progress in geothermal development. Kenya, for instance, has been at the forefront of geothermal power generation in Africa, with successful geothermal projects like the Olkaria Geothermal Power Plant. This plant has a capacity of 823 MW, making Kenya the ninth-largest producer of geothermal energy in the world as of 2019 (IRENA, 2020). Similarly, Ethiopia has also made remarkable strides in geothermal development, with ongoing projects such as the Aluto-Langano Geothermal Power Plant. Expanding geothermal power generation in Africa offers numerous benefits. Geothermal energy is a renewable resource that has the potential to contribute to the continent's energy transition and reduce its reliance on fossil fuels. Furthermore, geothermal power plants produce baseload electricity, which contributes to grid stability and can complement other intermittent renewable energy sources like solar or wind power.

Feasibility and Economic Considerations

The feasibility of renewable energy technologies in African countries is greatly influenced by economic factors such as investment costs, regulatory frameworks, and development pathways. This section aims to analyze the economic viability of renewable energy technologies and their potential for creating local job opportunities, attracting investments, and fostering energy independence.

Investment costs are a significant factor in assessing the economic viability of renewable energy projects. While the initial capital required for implementing renewable energy technologies can be high, research and developments in the sector have led to cost reductions and improved efficiencies over time. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the costs associated with renewable energy technologies, such as solar photovoltaic (PV) and wind power, have seen a consistent decline in recent years. IRENA's report on "Renewable Power

Generation Costs in 2019" highlights the decreasing costs and increasing competitiveness of renewable energy technologies. The data provided in the report supports the idea that investment costs for renewable energy projects have become more economically attractive. For instance, the global weighted-average levelized cost of electricity (LCOE) for utility-scale solar PV has decreased by 82% between 2010 and 2019, making it a financially viable option in many regions (IRENA, 2020).

The cost reductions in renewable energy technologies are driven by several factors. Firstly, advancements in technology have led to improved efficiency in solar panels, wind turbines, and other renewable energy systems. This, in turn, has resulted in increased energy output per unit invested, effectively lowering the cost per generated unit of energy. Additionally, economies of scale have played a role in cost reductions as the global deployment of renewable energy technologies has expanded, leading to higher production volumes, reduced manufacturing costs, and improved supply chain efficiencies. Furthermore, IRENA's report indicates the potential for further cost reductions in the near future. It states that continued technological advancements and favorable policy frameworks can enable further declines in the cost of renewable energy technologies, making them even more economically viable (IRENA, 2020). The declining costs of renewable energy technologies have significant implications for the African continent. As Africa possesses abundant renewable energy resources such as solar, wind, hydro, and geothermal, the decreasing costs make renewable energy an increasingly attractive option for meeting the region's growing energy demands sustainably. This opens up opportunities for African countries to invest in and deploy renewable energy technologies, leading to long-term cost savings, increased energy access, and reduced dependence on fossil fuel imports.

In addition to the environmental benefits, renewable energy projects in African countries can have a significant impact on job creation and economic growth. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has highlighted the potential for the renewable energy sector to generate a substantial number of jobs in Africa. According to the ILO, the renewable energy sector could create up to 1.2 million jobs in Africa by 2030 (ILO, 2019). These jobs encompass various skill sets and roles, including construction and installation of renewable energy infrastructure, as well as operation and maintenance of renewable energy systems. The construction and installation phase of renewable energy projects can create numerous job opportunities. Solar and wind energy projects, for instance, require the installation of solar panels, wind turbines, and related infrastructure, which in turn requires a skilled labor force. This can lead to job creation in the local construction industry, as well as in manufacturing sectors that produce the necessary equipment. Furthermore, the operation and maintenance of renewable energy facilities require ongoing support, creating long-term employment opportunities in local communities. This can include roles such as technicians, engineers, and managers who oversee day-to-day operations, monitoring, and maintenance of renewable energy systems.

The ripple effect of job creation in the renewable energy sector extends beyond the direct employment opportunities. It can also drive economic growth by stimulating related industries. An increase in the renewable energy sector requires local suppliers to provide materials and services, leading to further job creation in areas such as logistics, transportation, and manufacturing of renewable energy components. The potential for job creation in the renewable

energy sector is significant in Africa and is recognized by various organizations and initiatives. The African Development Bank, for example, has been actively supporting renewable energy projects in the continent through its New Deal on Energy for Africa initiative, aiming to provide universal access to energy by 2025 (African Development Bank, 2021). Moreover, initiatives such as the Africa-EU Renewable Energy Cooperation Programme (RECP) and the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) collaborate with governments, businesses, and local communities to foster the renewable energy sector and promote green jobs in Africa.

In addition to job creation, attracting investments is a crucial factor in the economic viability and success of renewable energy technologies in African countries. The availability of favorable regulatory frameworks and investment incentives often plays a key role in attracting private capital for renewable energy projects. African countries that have implemented measures such as feed-in tariffs, tax exemptions, and streamlined approval processes have proven successful in incentivizing investment in renewable energy. These measures provide a stable and predictable framework for investors, reducing risks and increasing the attractiveness of the renewable energy sector. One example of successful implementation of investment incentives can be seen in Morocco. The country has introduced attractive feed-in tariffs for renewable energy projects, providing a fixed payment rate for electricity produced from renewable sources. This predictable income stream has helped attract private investors to Morocco's renewable energy sector. As a result, the country has witnessed significant growth in its renewable energy capacity, including the development of large-scale solar power plants (REN21, 2020).

Another example is South Africa, which has implemented a combination of feed-in tariffs, tax incentives, and procurement programs to attract private investments in renewable energy. The country's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Program (REIPPPP) has successfully attracted private investors through long-term power purchase agreements. This program has led to the development of numerous renewable energy projects, such as wind and solar farms, contributing to the country's energy transition and economic development. These examples highlight the importance of creating a favorable regulatory environment that provides clarity, stability, and attractive financial incentives for renewable energy investments. Such mechanisms enable private investors to assess the risks and rewards and make investments in African countries' renewable energy sector. The Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21) reports on the progress of renewable energy deployment globally, including in African countries. Their reports provide valuable insights into successful policies and mechanisms that have attracted private investments in the renewable energy sector (REN21, 2020).

Renewable energy technologies have the potential to significantly contribute to energy independence for African countries. Africa boasts immense renewable energy resources, including solar, wind, hydro, and biomass, which can be harnessed to meet the energy needs of the continent. Increased investment in renewable energy projects can help African countries reduce their reliance on expensive imported fossil fuels. One prominent example is Morocco, which has made substantial progress in developing its renewable energy sector. The country has invested heavily in solar energy, particularly through the Noor Solar Complex, the largest concentrated solar power (CSP) plant in the world. This project has helped Morocco reduce its

dependence on imported fossil fuels and increase its energy independence. It is estimated that by 2030, Morocco's renewable energy production will cover 42% of its electricity needs, further enhancing its energy self-sufficiency. This shift towards renewable energy has also had positive impacts on Morocco's economy, creating jobs and attracting foreign investment.

Similarly, Kenya has made significant strides in renewable energy development. The country has relied heavily on hydroelectric power for decades, but it has now diversified its renewable energy portfolio by investing in geothermal, wind, and solar power projects. This diversification has not only reduced Kenya's reliance on imported fossil fuels but has also helped address energy access challenges in rural areas, improving energy security and contributing to economic growth. Kenya's ambitious renewable energy targets envision achieving universal access to electricity and meeting its energy demand solely from renewable sources by 2022.

Another example is South Africa, which has implemented various renewable energy initiatives to enhance energy independence. The country's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPPP) has successfully attracted private investment in renewable energy projects. This program has led to the addition of significant renewable energy capacity, such as wind and solar power plants, reducing South Africa's dependence on coal-fired power generation and contributing to a more reliable and sustainable energy supply. It is worth noting that international support and cooperation play a crucial role in promoting renewable energy development in Africa. Initiatives such as the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI), launched at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21), aim to mobilize investments and support African countries in constructing renewable energy infrastructure. The African Development Bank, along with other international organizations and financial institutions, has also been actively involved in providing financial assistance and technical expertise for renewable energy projects across the continent.

Challenges Posed by Climate change

Africa's energy landscape faces significant challenges, particularly in the context of climate change. The continent is characterized by a unique set of environmental, social,

- **Dependency on Fossil Fuels**

The current energy mix in numerous African nations relies heavily on fossil fuels, such as coal, oil, and natural gas, posing challenges in terms of sustainability, cost, and vulnerability to global market fluctuations (IEA, 2020; African Development Bank Group, 2020). Fossil fuel consumption in these countries not only contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, which are the primary drivers of climate change (IEA, 2020), but also exposes them to the economic risks associated with dependence on imported energy sources. The burning of coal, oil, and natural gas releases carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the atmosphere, resulting in the accumulation of greenhouse gases and exacerbating climate change. Energy-related CO₂ emissions in Africa have seen a significant increase of 40% between 2000 and 2019 (IEA, 2020). This increased emission rate is primarily attributed to the heavy reliance on fossil fuels for energy production. and economic factors that contribute to its vulnerability to climate change impacts and exacerbate energy access disparities.

Moreover, many African countries depend on imported fossil fuels due to limited domestic production capacities. This dependence on imported energy sources exposes these countries to the vulnerability of price fluctuations in the global market (World Bank, 2021). For instance, fluctuations in global oil prices can have significant impacts on energy costs for consumers and governments. Changes in global oil supply, disruptions in transportation routes, or political conflicts in oil-producing regions can also lead to adverse effects on energy security and affordability. Additionally, the reliance on fossil fuels for energy production presents challenges in terms of affordability and access. Fossil fuel-based energy systems tend to be costly, which affects the affordability of energy services, particularly for low-income households and communities. These costs are associated with the extraction, transportation, and infrastructure development required for fossil fuel utilization (African Development Bank Group, 2020).

- **Limited Energy Access**

Approximately 600 million people in Africa still live without access to electricity, representing a major barrier to economic development, education, healthcare, and overall quality of life in the region (International Energy Agency [IEA], 2020). This lack of access to modern energy services is especially prevalent in rural areas, where communities heavily rely on traditional biomass, such as wood and charcoal, for cooking and heating purposes. Dependence on traditional biomass has several negative consequences. Firstly, the use of inefficient cooking methods and fuels in poorly ventilated spaces leads to indoor air pollution, resulting in respiratory diseases, particularly affecting women and children. Household air pollution from traditional biomass use has been linked to an estimated 700,000 premature deaths in Africa each year (World Health Organization [WHO], 2018). Secondly, the reliance on traditional biomass as a primary energy source leads to deforestation and environmental degradation. As communities cut down trees for fuel, it exacerbates the loss of forest cover, soil erosion, and the disruption of ecosystems. Deforestation not only harms biodiversity but also contributes to climate change due to the reduction in carbon sequestration potential. Moreover, the lack of access to electricity hampers economic development in Africa. Without reliable and affordable energy, businesses struggle to operate efficiently and productively. Limited access to electricity also impedes the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises, stifling entrepreneurship and job creation.

Insufficient access to energy disproportionately affects education in Africa. Without electricity, schools often lack proper lighting, making it challenging for students to study and do homework in the evenings. Limited access to electronic devices and internet connectivity further exacerbates the educational disparities between urban and rural areas (United Nations Development Programme, 2020). Access to electricity is a critical component for healthcare delivery. Without reliable power, medical facilities face challenges in providing essential services, including emergency care, refrigeration for vaccines and medications, and various diagnostic and treatment technologies. This lack of access compromises healthcare outcomes and significantly impacts the well-being of communities, particularly in rural areas. To address these underlying issues, various approaches and initiatives are being implemented. The development of off-grid and mini-grid solutions that provide decentralized electricity services to rural communities has gained momentum (IEA, 2020). These solutions utilize renewable energy

sources, such as solar and wind power, to meet the energy needs of remote areas. In addition, public-private partnerships and international organizations are actively engaged in supporting electrification efforts in Africa. Initiatives like the African Development Bank's "New Deal on Energy for Africa" and the United Nations' Sustainable Energy for All are working towards expanding energy access, promoting renewable energy deployment, and improving energy efficiency in the region (African Development Bank Group, 2018; United Nations, 2020).

- **Impact of Climate Change**

Africa is among the most vulnerable regions to climate change due to its high dependence on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture. Climate change is projected to intensify extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods, which pose significant challenges to energy infrastructure and exacerbate energy poverty.

a. **Increased Droughts:** Changing rainfall patterns and rising temperatures have led to more frequent and severe droughts in various parts of Africa. This directly impacts hydropower generation, which relies on stable water supply for electricity production. For example, a study conducted in Kenya found that droughts can reduce hydropower capacity by up to 24%.

b. **Flooding Risks:** Climate change increases the risk of flooding events in many African regions. Floods can damage power infrastructure, disrupt electricity supply, and hamper the development of renewable energy resources, such as solar and wind. For instance, floods in Mozambique in 2019 caused extensive damage to energy infrastructure, leaving thousands without electricity for an extended period.

c. **Reduced Agricultural Productivity:** Climate change alters rainfall patterns and temperature regimes, impacting agricultural productivity and exacerbating food insecurity. This, in turn, affects the availability and affordability of biomass energy sources, such as firewood and crop residues, further straining energy access in rural areas.

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study highlight the pressing issue of climate change in Africa and its impact on various aspects of human life, including socioeconomic development, food security, and public health. The study emphasizes the vulnerability of Africa to the impacts of climate change, given its diverse ecosystems and high dependency on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture.

The study also emphasizes the energy poverty in Africa, with a significant number of people lacking access to electricity. It highlights the need for alternative energy sources to address the continent's ongoing energy crisis and reduce its reliance on fossil fuels.

The study highlights the immense renewable energy potential in Africa, which remains largely untapped. It cites various studies and reports that indicate the vast opportunities for harvesting renewable energy resources across the continent. This presents an opportunity for sustainable development and expanding access to electricity in remote and rural areas.

The study evaluates the efficiency of various renewable energy technologies in Africa, such as photovoltaics, wind turbines, hydroelectric power plants, and geothermal systems. Factors considered include energy conversion efficiencies, scalability, and reliability. These evaluations are important for identifying the most suitable renewable energy technologies for Africa.

The study also considers the feasibility and economic considerations of renewable energy technologies in African countries. It analyzes factors such as investment costs, regulatory frameworks, and development pathways. The economic viability of renewable energy technologies is assessed, along with their potential for creating local job opportunities, attracting investments, and fostering energy independence.

Lastly, the study highlights the challenges posed by climate change in Africa's energy landscape. It emphasizes the continent's vulnerability to climate change impacts and how they exacerbate energy access disparities. Factors such as dependency on fossil fuels, limited energy access, and the projected intensification of extreme weather events contribute to these challenges.

Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the potential of renewable energy technologies in addressing climate change in Africa. It highlights the importance of harnessing Africa's renewable energy potential to mitigate climate change impacts, promote sustainable development, and enhance energy access in the continent.

Recommendation

1. Strengthen Renewable Energy Policies and Regulations: African governments should develop and implement comprehensive policies and regulations that prioritize renewable energy development. This includes setting ambitious renewable energy targets, providing financial incentives, and establishing supportive regulatory frameworks to attract investments and promote the adoption of renewable energy technologies.

2. Enhance Research and Development: Continued investment in research and development is crucial to drive innovation and improve the efficiency of renewable energy technologies in Africa. Governments, academic institutions, and international organizations should collaborate to fund research projects that focus on addressing specific challenges, such as improving energy conversion efficiencies, developing energy storage systems, and optimizing hybrid renewable energy solutions.

3. Promote Public-Private Partnerships: Collaboration between the public and private sectors is essential to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy technologies in Africa. Governments should create an enabling environment for private investments by offering incentives such as tax breaks, access to financing, and simplified regulations. Public-private partnerships can also facilitate knowledge sharing, technology transfer, and capacity-building initiatives.

4. Prioritize Off-Grid Solutions: Given the limited access to electricity in many rural and remote areas of Africa, off-grid renewable energy solutions hold great potential. Governments should prioritize the deployment of decentralized renewable energy systems, such as solar home

systems and mini-grids, to improve energy access and stimulate economic development in underserved communities.

5. Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience: African countries should develop robust climate change adaptation and resilience strategies that consider the impacts on energy infrastructure. This includes investing in climate-resilient renewable energy technologies, promoting energy diversification, and incorporating climate risk assessments into energy planning and decision-making processes.

6. Capacity Building and Skills Development: To ensure the successful deployment and maintenance of renewable energy technologies, there is a need to invest in capacity building and skills development programs. Governments should collaborate with educational institutions and training centers to provide specialized training and vocational programs that equip individuals with the necessary skills to operate and maintain renewable energy systems.

7. International Cooperation and Funding: International cooperation and financial support are crucial to accelerate the transition to renewable energy in Africa. Development partners, multilateral organizations, and international financial institutions should provide increased funding, technical assistance, and knowledge sharing to support African countries in their efforts to mitigate climate change and achieve sustainable energy development goals.

By implementing these recommendations, African countries can unlock the vast renewable energy potential, enhance energy security, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and build climate-resilient energy systems that contribute to sustainable development and improved livelihoods.

Conclusion

This study has shed light on the urgent need to address climate change in Africa and its profound impact on socioeconomic development, food security, and public health. The vulnerability of the continent, with its diverse ecosystems and heavy reliance on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, cannot be understated. Moreover, the existence of energy poverty, with a significant portion of the population lacking access to electricity, further exacerbates the challenges faced by Africa.

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