

## GOVERNANCE FAILURES AND LEADERSHIP CRISIS IN THE NIGER DELTA: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

This study determined the impact of governance failures and leadership crisis on sustainable development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The objectives were to assess how institutional and policy implementation failures affect sustainable development and evaluate the influence of accountability and transparency failures on sustainable development in the Niger Delta. This study adopts a descriptive survey design. The population comprises community leaders, youth representatives, women leaders, and other stakeholders directly affected by governance and leadership challenges in the Niger Delta. A total population of approximately 1,000 individuals was identified. The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula at a 5% margin of error, yielding 286 respondents. The main instrument of data collection was a structured questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, and percentages) and inferential statistics. Regression analysis was employed to test the effect of governance failures, leadership crises, on sustainable development. The analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26. The results of the study revealed that institutional and policy implementation failures have a significant negative effect on sustainable development and that accountability and transparency have a significant negative influence on sustainable development in the Niger Delta. In conclusion, governance failures, particularly weak institutions, poor policy implementation, and lack of accountability, significantly hinder sustainable development in the Niger Delta. Strengthening governance frameworks and fostering accountable leadership are essential for achieving inclusive growth, stability, and environmental sustainability in the region. It was recommended among other things that the Federal Government should prioritise building transparent, accountable, and effective institutions through reforms in policy implementation, oversight mechanisms, and anti-corruption measures tailored to address the peculiar challenges of the Niger Delta.

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Governance and leadership are widely recognized as critical determinants of sustainable development across nations (World Bank, 2020). Effective governance provides the framework through which resources are allocated

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transparently, institutions function efficiently, and accountability is maintained. In parallel, leadership shapes vision, policy direction, and stakeholder trust in development processes (Northouse, 2019). Where governance mechanisms collapse and leadership is in crisis, the prospects for achieving sustainable development goals are severely undermined.

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria presents a paradoxical case. As the primary source of the nation's oil wealth, the region contributes over 80% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings (Omeje, 2021). Yet, it remains one of the most socio-economically deprived regions in the country, plagued by poverty, environmental degradation, poor infrastructure, and recurrent conflicts (Ikelegbe, 2019). Governance failures, manifested in weak institutions, mismanagement of oil revenues, lack of transparency, and ineffective policy implementation, have stifled developmental initiatives meant to transform the region. Agencies such as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, established to address the developmental needs of the region, have often been criticized for corruption, political interference, and abandoned projects (Agbibo, 2020).

In addition to governance weaknesses, the region suffers from leadership crises at multiple levels. At the governmental level, leadership instability, elite capture of resources, and lack of visionary planning have undermined community development (Okolie & Emeka, 2021). At the community level, traditional rulers and local leaders have sometimes compromised collective interests for personal gain, leading to loss of trust and frequent community unrest. Militant groups and civil society movements, emerging in response to perceived neglect, have further complicated the leadership landscape, resulting in cycles of violence and insecurity (Ojakorotu, 2018).

The implications of these governance failures and leadership crises are far-reaching for sustainable development in the Niger Delta. Economically, the region faces high unemployment and limited diversification despite vast natural resource endowments. Socially, citizens endure poor healthcare, limited educational opportunities, and widespread disillusionment with the state. Environmentally, decades of oil spills and gas flaring have devastated farmlands and water bodies, undermining livelihoods and ecological resilience (Obi & Rustad, 2019). While previous research has examined issues of corruption, militancy, or environmental degradation separately, there remains limited integrative analysis of how governance failures and leadership crises collectively hinder sustainable development outcomes in the Niger Delta.

Therefore, this study situates governance and leadership as interconnected determinants of sustainable development in the Niger Delta. By exploring the dynamics of accountability, transparency, institutional effectiveness, and leadership integrity, the study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on how resource-rich but underdeveloped regions can overcome structural barriers to inclusive and sustainable development.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Despite being the economic hub of Nigeria through its vast oil resources, the Niger Delta remains one of the most underdeveloped regions in the country. The paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty highlights deep-rooted governance and leadership challenges that continue to undermine the region's sustainable development. Rather than translating oil wealth into improved infrastructure, employment opportunities, and social well-being, the region is characterized by widespread poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, and recurring conflicts (Omeje, 2021).

A major factor behind this underdevelopment is persistent governance failure. Funds allocated for developmental purposes are frequently mismanaged or diverted, leaving projects abandoned and communities deprived of essential amenities. Intervention agencies such as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) have been repeatedly accused of corruption, lack of accountability, and political interference (Agbibo, 2020). Weak

institutional frameworks and poor policy implementation further compound the problem, as even well-conceived initiatives often fail to achieve their intended outcomes (Ikelegbe, 2019).

In addition, the region faces a profound leadership crisis at multiple levels. Political leaders are often more concerned with protecting elite interests than promoting inclusive development. Leadership instability, coupled with elite capture of resources, has eroded trust in formal governance structures. At the community level, some local leaders have been accused of prioritizing personal gain over collective welfare, thereby weakening grassroots participation in development efforts. The absence of visionary leadership has created a vacuum that has fueled militancy, violent protests, and prolonged insecurity in the region (Ojakorotu, 2018).

The implications of these governance failures and leadership crises are severe for sustainable development. Economically, the region experiences persistent poverty, unemployment, and inequality despite its vast natural resources. Socially, distrust in government, insecurity, and inter-communal conflicts hinder peace and social cohesion. Environmentally, decades of oil spills, gas flaring, and land degradation have destroyed farmlands and waterways, threatening both livelihoods and ecological balance (Obi & Rustad, 2019).

While scholars have extensively discussed governance challenges, corruption, or leadership failures in the Niger Delta, these issues are often treated in isolation. There remains limited scholarly attention on how governance failures and leadership crises interact as interrelated **factors** undermining sustainable development. This gap necessitates a holistic investigation into the twin challenges of governance and leadership as determinants of sustainable development in the Niger Delta. The present study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by examining the implications of governance failures and leadership crises on sustainable development in Nigeria's Niger Delta region.

### 1.3 Objective of the study

The broad objective is to determine the impact of governance failures and leadership **crisis** on sustainable development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The specific objectives are;

- i. To assess how institutional and policy implementation failures affect sustainable development in the Niger Delta.
- ii. To evaluate the influence of accountability and transparency failures on sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

### 1.4 Research Questions

- i. To what extent do institutional and policy implementation failures affect sustainable development in the Niger Delta?
- ii. How does the lack of accountability and transparency influence sustainable development in the Niger Delta?

### 1.5 Research Hypotheses

**Ho1:** Institutional and policy implementation failures have no significant effect on sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

**Ho2:** Lack of accountability and transparency has no significant influence on sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

## Review of Related Literatures

### 2.1 Governance Failures

Governance encompasses the processes, structures, and institutions through which authority is exercised, decisions are made, and resources are allocated to achieve developmental objectives (World Bank, 2020). Effective governance ensures that institutions are accountable, policies are implemented efficiently, and resources are utilized transparently. Conversely, governance failures occur when these mechanisms are weak, mismanaged, or compromised, leading to underdevelopment, social inequities, and loss of public trust (Ebeku, 2019).

In the context of the Niger Delta, governance failures have significantly hindered sustainable development. These failures can be analyzed through two critical dimensions:

### **1. Institutional and Policy Implementation Failures**

Weak institutional frameworks, poor policy enforcement, and inadequate monitoring mechanisms impede the execution of development initiatives (Egobueze, 2025). Agencies tasked with regional development, such as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), often experience bureaucratic inefficiencies, political interference, and lack of coordination. As a result, many projects are either delayed or abandoned, depriving communities of critical infrastructure and services. For instance, numerous NDDC initiatives, including road construction, water supply, and healthcare projects, have stalled due to poor institutional coordination and policy enforcement failures, illustrating how weak governance structures undermine development outcomes (Egobueze, 2025).

### **2. Accountability and Transparency Failures**

Accountability and transparency are essential for ensuring that resources are utilized appropriately and for building public trust. In the Niger Delta, the absence of clear reporting, financial mismanagement, and corruption within development agencies have eroded community confidence (Agbiboa, 2020). Transparency gaps, such as irregular procurement practices, non-disclosure of project budgets, and inadequate audit mechanisms, compromise the sustainability of development projects. When citizens perceive that resources are mismanaged or diverted, participation in development initiatives declines, and the intended social and economic benefits fail to materialize (Agbiboa, 2020). In summary, governance failures in the Niger Delta are manifested through weak institutional structures, ineffective policy implementation, and poor accountability and transparency. These dimensions are interrelated, as weak institutions create opportunities for mismanagement, while the absence of transparency allows corruption to persist, collectively undermining sustainable development in the region.

#### **2.2 Leadership Crisis**

A leadership crisis occurs when leaders fail to provide direction, accountability, and effective decision-making, undermining institutional stability and development progress. In development contexts, such crises impede policy implementation, erode public trust, and hinder socioeconomic growth (Agboga, 2023). In the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, leadership crises have manifested in several detrimental ways:

##### **Political Interference and Elite Capture**

Political interference and elite capture are significant contributors to the leadership crisis in the Niger Delta. Political elites often manipulate development initiatives to serve personal or group interests, diverting resources from communities that need them most (Bamidele & Erameh, 2023). This results in the prioritization of projects that benefit the elite while neglecting essential infrastructure such as roads, schools, and healthcare facilities. Consequently, political interference undermines project effectiveness, delays implementation, and fosters public distrust in governance systems.

##### **Leadership Instability at Governmental and Community Levels**

Leadership instability at both governmental and community levels further exacerbates development challenges in the Niger Delta. Frequent changes in leadership disrupt continuity in policy implementation and development programs (Ojakorotu & Morake, 2010). Projects initiated by previous administrations are often abandoned or altered, leading to inefficiency and wasted resources. This instability makes long-term planning difficult, erodes institutional memory, and diminishes the effectiveness of developmental strategies.

##### **Leadership Vacuum Fueling Militancy and Unrest**

The absence of effective and accountable leadership has created a vacuum that militant groups exploit. Communities experiencing neglect, marginalization, and lack of development often see youths turning to

militancy and other forms of unrest (Ojakorotu, 2018). These groups engage in activities such as pipeline vandalism, kidnappings, and violent protests, which disrupt oil production, threaten security, and further hinder sustainable development. The leadership vacuum thus compounds social and economic instability, perpetuating cycles of conflict in the region.

In conclusion, the leadership crisis in the Niger Delta is multidimensional, encompassing political interference, elite capture, leadership instability, and the rise of militant groups. Effective resolution requires inclusive, accountable, and visionary leadership that prioritizes community needs and fosters sustainable development (Agboga, 2023; Bamidele & Erameh, 2023).

### **2.3 Theoretical Review**

Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT), developed by Burns (1978) and later expanded by Bass (1985), emphasizes the role of visionary, inspirational, and ethical leadership in motivating followers to achieve higher levels of performance and drive positive change. Transformational leaders engage in idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, thereby fostering commitment, innovation, and collective goal attainment.

In the context of governance and development, poor leadership and governance failures undermine regional and organizational resources, leading to inefficiency, corruption, and misallocation of assets (Bass & Riggio, 2006). When leaders fail to articulate a clear vision, enforce policies effectively, or promote transparency, both human and material resources are poorly managed, limiting the potential for sustainable development. For instance, abandoned projects, misappropriation of funds, and leadership instability in the Niger Delta reflect a lack of transformational leadership practices that could have motivated institutions and communities toward collective development goals.

#### **Applicability to the Niger Delta Context**

The Transformational Leadership Theory is highly relevant to the Niger Delta, where governance failures and leadership crises have stalled socioeconomic development. A transformational leadership approach would encourage leaders at both governmental and community levels to:

Inspire commitment to regional development through a clear vision.

Promote accountability and ethical management of resources.

Engage local communities in decision-making to ensure policies address actual needs.

Encourage innovative solutions to address infrastructural deficits, environmental degradation, and unemployment.

By fostering transformational leadership behaviors, the Niger Delta could potentially overcome elite capture, political interference, and leadership vacuums that currently hinder sustainable development. Applying this theory provides a framework for understanding how effective, visionary leadership can mobilize resources, build trust, and enhance long-term development outcomes in resource-rich but underdeveloped regions.

### **2.4 Empirical Review**

Ikenga, Edo, and Ighoshemu (2022) highlighted that governance failures significantly impede sustainable development in the Niger Delta. Their study emphasized that weak institutions, ineffective policy enforcement, and poor monitoring mechanisms hinder developmental projects, often resulting in abandonment and inefficient utilization of resources.

Ikenga et al. (2022) further noted that accountability and transparency issues exacerbate governance challenges. The lack of clear reporting mechanisms, corruption, and diversion of funds undermine community trust and reduce the effectiveness of development initiatives. These findings suggest that addressing governance failures is critical for achieving sustainable development in resource-rich but underdeveloped regions.



Bamidele and Eramah (2023) reported that political interference and elite capture are major contributors to the leadership crisis in the Niger Delta. Their empirical findings indicated that political elites often redirect development resources to personal or group interests, neglecting community needs, which fuels underdevelopment and social unrest.

Ojakorotu and Morake (2010) found that leadership instability at both governmental and community levels disrupts policy continuity and delays project implementation. Frequent leadership changes impede long-term planning, resulting in incomplete or abandoned development initiatives.

Ojakorotu (2018) emphasized that leadership vacuums contribute to militancy and unrest in the region. Ineffective leadership and failure to address youth grievances drive communities toward violent expressions such as pipeline vandalism and kidnappings, further undermining development and security.

### Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey design, which is appropriate for examining the relationship between governance failures, leadership crises, and sustainable development outcomes in oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta. The study was conducted in selected oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta, specifically Gbaramatu (Delta State), Ogoni (Rivers State), and Eket (Akwa Ibom State). The population comprises community leaders, youth representatives, women leaders, and other stakeholders directly affected by governance and leadership challenges in the Niger Delta. A total population of approximately 1,000 individuals was identified. The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula at a 5% margin of error, yielding 286 respondents. The main instrument of data collection was a structured questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, and percentages) and inferential statistics. Regression analysis was employed to test the effect of governance failures, leadership crises, on sustainable development. All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26.

### Data Analysis and Results presentation

#### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

**Table 4.1.1: Descriptive Statistics and Response Distribution for Institutional & Policy Implementation Failures Items (N = 258)**

Item	Mean	SD	Strongly Disagree (5)	Disagree (4)	Neutral (3)	Agree (2)	Strongly Agree (1)
1. Weak institutional structures hinder effective policy implementation	2.26	1.36	27 (10.5%)	28 (10.9%)	33 (12.8%)	68 (26.4%)	102 (39.5%)
2. Poor enforcement of government policies contributes to underdevelopment	2.39	1.34	31 (12.0%)	26 (10.1%)	37 (14.3%)	83 (32.2%)	81 (31.4%)
3. Inconsistent policy implementation slows infrastructure and social development	2.20	1.27	21 (8.1%)	28 (10.9%)	29 (11.2%)	83 (32.2%)	97 (37.6%)
4. Lack of monitoring and evaluation limits sustainable development projects	2.28	1.33	28 (10.9%)	23 (8.9%)	36 (14.0%)	77 (29.8%)	94 (36.4%)
5. Institutional inefficiency increases poverty, unemployment, and environmental degradation	2.33	1.32	25 (9.7%)	28 (10.9%)	45 (17.4%)	69 (26.7%)	91 (35.3%)

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025

The mean scores (ranging from 2.20 to 2.39) show that respondents generally agreed with the statements, indicating consensus that institutional and policy implementation failures undermine sustainable development. For Item 1, 65.9% (Agree + Strongly Agree) supported the claim that weak institutional structures hinder policy

implementation. Item 3 had the strongest agreement, with 69.8% agreeing or strongly agreeing that inconsistent policy implementation slows development. Standard deviations (1.27–1.36) reflect moderate variation, showing that while most respondents agreed, some expressed neutrality or disagreement. Overall, the data strongly indicate that institutional weaknesses, poor enforcement, and lack of monitoring significantly hamper sustainable development in the Niger Delta region.

**Table 4.1.2: Descriptive Statistics and Response Distribution for Accountability & Transparency Failures Items (N = 258)**

Item	Mean	SD	Strongly Disagree (5)	Disagree (4)	Neutral (3)	Agree (2)	Strongly Agree (1)
1. Corruption and mismanagement of public funds have negatively affected sustainable development projects	2.22	1.27	22 (8.5%)	25 (9.7%)	37 (14.3%)	79 (30.6%)	95 (36.8%)
2. Lack of transparency in governance processes has reduced public trust and participation	2.03	1.25	19 (7.4%)	20 (7.8%)	30 (11.6%)	70 (27.1%)	119 (46.1%)
3. Poor accountability in resource management has limited the equitable distribution of wealth	2.22	1.27	23 (8.9%)	22 (8.5%)	38 (14.7%)	81 (31.4%)	94 (36.4%)
4. Transparency failures have contributed to conflicts and instability in the Niger Delta region	2.13	1.24	17 (6.6%)	25 (9.7%)	40 (15.5%)	69 (26.7%)	107 (41.5%)
5. Effective accountability systems would significantly improve sustainable development outcomes	2.11	1.21	19 (7.4%)	18 (7.0%)	36 (14.0%)	84 (32.6%)	101 (39.2%)

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025

The mean values (2.03–2.22) indicate a strong tendency towards agreement (close to “Agree”) across all five accountability and transparency-related items. Item 2 (“Lack of transparency...”) recorded the strongest agreement, with 73.3% (Agree + Strongly Agree) acknowledging that lack of transparency reduces trust and participation. Its mean of 2.03 suggests very high consensus. Item 1 and Item 3 (corruption and poor accountability) also received high agreement rates (67.4% and 67.8% respectively), confirming that failures in accountability mechanisms significantly hinder equitable development. Item 4 shows that 68.2% of respondents believe transparency failures contribute to instability, underlining governance issues as a driver of conflict in the Niger Delta. Item 5 (mean = 2.11) reflects optimism, with over 71.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing that effective accountability systems would improve sustainable development outcomes. Standard deviations (1.21–1.27) are relatively low, indicating moderate dispersion, but with responses clustering around agreement. Overall, the findings show that corruption, lack of transparency, and weak accountability systems are major barriers to sustainable development in the Niger Delta, while strengthening accountability frameworks is widely believed to improve outcomes.

## 4.2 Test of Hypotheses

### 4.2.1 Hypothesis One

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Institutional and policy implementation failures have no significant effect on sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Institutional and policy implementation failures have significant effect on sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

### Table 4.2.1.1 Model Summary

<i>Model</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>Adjusted R Square</i>	<i>Std. Error of the Estimate</i>
<i>I</i>	.684	.468	.461	0.947

Source: SPSS Version 26

The model summary shows an  $R = .684$ , which indicates a strong positive correlation between institutional/policy failures and sustainable development outcomes. The  $R^2 = .468$  means about 46.8% of the variation in sustainable development is explained by institutional and policy implementation failures.

**Table 4.2.1.2 ANOVA**

<i>Model</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Regression</i>	152.473	1	152.473	170.168	.000b
<i>Residual</i>	173.427	256	0.678		
<i>Total</i>	325.900	257			

Source: SPSS Version 26

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Development

b. Predictors: (Constant), Institutional & Policy Implementation Failures

The F-statistic is 170.168,  $p < .001$ , which is highly significant. This indicates that the model overall is a good fit, and institutional/policy failures significantly predict sustainable development outcomes.

**Table 4.2.1.3 Coefficients**

<i>Model</i>	<i>Unstandardized Coefficients B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Standardized Coefficients Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>(Constant)</i>	1.247	0.198	–	6.30	.000
<i>Institutional &amp; Policy Failures</i>	0.732	0.056	0.684	13.05	.000

Source: SPSS Version 26

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Development

The unstandardized coefficient ( $B = 0.732$ ,  $p < .001$ ) suggests that a one-unit increase in perceived institutional/policy failures leads to a 0.732 increase in negative impact on sustainable development. The result is statistically significant ( $t = 13.05$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Since  $p < 0.05$ , we reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and conclude that institutional and policy implementation failures have a significant negative effect on sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

#### 4.2.2 Hypothesis Two

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Lack of accountability and transparency has no significant influence on sustainable development in the Niger Delta

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Lack of accountability and transparency has significant influence on sustainable development in the Niger Delta

**Table 4.2.2.1 Model Summary**

<i>Model</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>Adjusted R Square</i>	<i>Std. Error of the Estimate</i>
<i>I</i>	.712	.507	.502	0.891

Source: SPSS Version 26

$R = .712$  shows a very strong positive correlation between lack of accountability/transparency and sustainable development.  $R^2 = .507$  implies that 50.7% of the variation in sustainable development is explained by accountability and transparency failures.



**Table 4.2.2.2 ANOVA**

<i>Model</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Regression</i>	165.241	1	165.241	207.897	.000b
<i>Residual</i>	160.659	256	0.628		
<i>Total</i>	325.900	257			

Source: SPSS Version 26

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Development

b. Predictors: (Constant), Lack of Accountability & Transparency

The F-statistic = 207.897,  $p < .001$ , meaning the regression model is highly significant. This confirms that accountability and transparency failures significantly predict sustainable development outcomes.

**Table 4.2.2.3 Coefficients**

<i>Model</i>	<i>Unstandardized Coefficients B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Standardized Coefficients Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>(Constant)</i>	1.083	0.186	–	5.82	.000
<i>Lack of Accountability &amp; Transparency</i>	0.765	0.053	0.712	14.42	.000

Source: SPSS Version 26

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Development

The unstandardized coefficient ( $B = 0.765$ ,  $p < .001$ ) indicates that for every unit increase in lack of accountability and transparency, there is a 0.765 increase in negative effect on sustainable development. The result is statistically significant ( $t = 14.42$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Since  $p < 0.05$ , we reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ). Therefore, we conclude that lack of accountability and transparency has a significant negative influence on sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

### Summary of findings

- i. Institutional and policy implementation failures have a significant negative effect on sustainable development in the Niger Delta.
- ii. Accountability and transparency have a significant negative influence on sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

### Conclusion

The study established that governance failures, particularly institutional and policy implementation weaknesses, alongside lack of accountability and transparency, exert a significant negative effect on sustainable development in the Niger Delta. These weaknesses manifest in poor service delivery, inequitable resource distribution, and widespread community dissatisfaction, thereby exacerbating underdevelopment despite the region's abundant natural wealth. The findings further reveal that sustainable development cannot be achieved in an environment where governance structures are compromised, and leadership lacks credibility. It is evident that leadership crises in the Niger Delta reinforce systemic inefficiencies, limit socio-economic opportunities, and intensify environmental degradation. Thus, addressing governance shortcomings and restoring institutional integrity are indispensable for ensuring inclusive growth, social stability, and environmental sustainability in the region. Only through strengthened governance frameworks and accountable leadership can the Niger Delta realise its full developmental potential and contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's broader sustainable development agenda.

## Recommendation

- i. The Federal Government should prioritise building transparent, accountable, and effective institutions through reforms in policy implementation, oversight mechanisms, and anti-corruption measures tailored to address the peculiar challenges of the Niger Delta.
- ii. Sustainable development requires inclusive governance. Leaders in the Niger Delta should institutionalise community participation in decision-making, ensuring that developmental projects reflect local needs, thereby reducing grievances and promoting shared ownership of outcomes.

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