

## ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF VOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY ON LIFE SUSTAINABILITY IN BAYELSA STATE

BY

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### ABSTRACT

This Study focuses on examining the influence of governance indicators particularly voice and accountability on life sustainability in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The paper employed Stata 17 as a method of analysing Primary Data with the use of questionnaire and face to face interviews to gather viable information for analysis. The findings of the study indicate that voice and accountability have a significant detrimental effect on life sustainability in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Secondly, the empirical findings of this study revealed that life sustainability in Bayelsa State is influenced by a multitude of factors beyond democratic accountability. The result informs those inefficiencies within the government's administrative and institutional frameworks triggered by less democratic accountability and citizens participation poses a substantial impediment to the economic progress of people. The paper recommends a suite of measures including strengthening advocacy and civil engagement as well as creating enabling environment for the voice of the poor to be heard and free press advocacy to hold government to account. Improved governance, strengthening the rule of law and promoting efficient fiscal management to stimulate positive economic growth and sustainability of lives in Bayelsa State.

**Keywords:** *Life-sustainability, Accountability, Bayelsa State, Institutional-framework.*

### 1.0 Introduction

The quality of governance has been identified as a key factor influencing economic performance in developing nations over the years, particularly in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Governance extends beyond formal state institutions to include interactions between formal and informal institutions, rules, processes, and relationships. According to Sharma (2008), it represents a negotiation process between power holders and those seeking to influence them.

Voice and accountability are crucial components of quality governance as they significantly impact a nation's economic performance. A state or country's economic wellbeing and robustness depend partly on effective policy formulation and implementation, which stems from competent decision-makers and legislators. These officials, when selected or elected through full population participation exercising their freedom, contribute to better governance outcomes.

Achieving social justice, equity, and a decent quality of life has unfortunately become a critical challenge for the world's poor, particularly in the local government being studied. The combination of failing democratic institutions and declining state sovereignty has generated pressure to develop new accountability mechanisms for powerful actors, both within and beyond the state, regarding their impact on impoverished populations (Goetz and Jenkins, 2014).

In similar vein, (World Bank, 2012) identified that the Nigerian economy performance has been fluctuating over some decades, owing to poor governance which frustrate effective policy delivery and other essential services for better economy. The global apex bank assert that despite the abundance vast human and natural resources available to Nigeria, numerous initiatives put in place by successive governments to revitalise the

economy have met with dismal failure, due to weak policy implementation occasioned by quack policy decision makers.

In this study, some pertinent questions are well echoed; such as to who actually is demanding accountability like in states like Bayelsa? From whom is accountability being sought? Where are they being held to account? How is accountability being delivered? And, perhaps most problematically, for what are people and institutions being held accountable? And finally, what is the economic gains when people who hold public offices are held accountable?

Various organizations have developed metrics to illustrate the global significance of good governance for economic growth and sustainable development (Adenuga, 2023). Among these, the World Bank's World Governance Indicators (WGI) stand out prominently. The WGI framework evaluates governance quality across six dimensions: Voice and Accountability (VA), Political Stability and absence of violence (PS), Government Effectiveness (GE), Regulatory Quality (RQ), Rule of Law (RL), and Control of Corruption (CC) (Kaufmann, Kraay & Mastruzzi, 2011).

This paper focuses specifically on examining how one governance component impacts life sustainability in Bayelsa State. The study evaluates the importance of Voice and Accountability (VA) for sustainable living conditions in the region. VA encompasses citizens' perceived ability to participate in government selection, exercise freedom of expression and association, and access independent media free from intimidation. However, according to Adenuga (2023), these democratic principles remain largely unrealized in Nigerian governance.

The World Governance Index indicates a discouraging trend in democratic participation and governance quality in Nigeria, reflecting diminished citizen engagement in democratic processes. According to Adenuga (2023), this has resulted in disingenuous legislative bodies, poor policy development, and consequently, weak economic performance.

One might wonder whether improvements in Voice and Accountability (VA) values would correlate with enhanced life sustainability in Bayelsa State. Conversely, what consequences might negate values that VA have on sustainable living conditions there?

The significance of voice and accountability has become a pressing concern among patriotic citizens who care deeply about marginalized populations. These two governance components aim to empower poor and marginalized people by developing their resources, assets, and capabilities needed to exercise greater control over their development and hold decision-makers accountable. When citizens effectively voice their concerns, it creates public awareness and signals to authorities that they must exercise caution regarding the misappropriation of public funds (Eyben, 2011).

According to Rochal and Sharma (2008), citizen participation plays a crucial role in achieving a broad spectrum of development objectives. Specifically, they identify citizen voice as an essential prerequisite for ensuring equitable access to and quality of public goods and services, which ultimately supports better health and education outcomes. When the public remains silent, government officials are prone to misconduct and arbitrary decision-making. However, through coordinated civil engagement, citizen participation, and civil society advocacy, governing authorities are more likely to deliver substantial democratic benefits while maintaining transparency regarding their actions and decisions.

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of Voice and Accountability on life sustainability in Bayelsa State, while the specific objectives are:

To determine the effect of voice on life sustainability in Bayelsa State.

To ascertain the impact of accountability on life sustainability in Bayelsa State.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### Conceptual Literature

Voice and accountability represent an overarching framework encompassing diverse concepts regarding how citizens express preferences, defend rights, place demands on government, and ultimately achieve improved development outcomes (Combaz, 2014). These concepts have elevated individuals, civil society, and other agencies to roles that awaken and empower through processes that either facilitate or restrict citizens' ability to articulate and achieve both personal and collective objectives.

Despite their interconnection, voice and accountability remain conceptually distinct terms that continue to generate scholarly debate (Akpan-Atata, Akwang, Akai & Eyene, 2015). Voice is commonly defined as citizens' capacity to express their preferences and receive acknowledgment from the state through either formal or informal channels, whether written or verbal (Rocha Menocal & Sharma, 2008).

As noted by Clunies et al. (2009), voice requires not only democratic elections and civil society engagement but also transparency in decision-making and electoral processes that operate under rule of law and remain largely free from corruption. Voice serves as a mechanism to question authority figures regarding their decisions and actions, regardless of whether these are favorable. Citizens' voices exhibit diversity, with more influential perspectives sometimes overwhelming those of marginalized groups (DFID, 2011). When expressed collectively, societal voice establishes standards of justice and morality against which the actions of those in power can be evaluated.

According to Menocal and Sharma (2008), accountability necessitates transparency, answerability, and enforceability in the relationship between decision-makers and citizens. Goetz and Jenkins (2014) elaborate on this concept, describing it as a relationship where party A is accountable to party B when A must explain and justify actions to B, or when A may face consequences if B finds A's conduct or explanation inadequate. Fundamentally, accountability represents a power relationship.

Conventionally, accountability is conceived as a weapon of providing citizens a means to restrain the behaviour of actors such as politicians and government officials to whom power has been delegated, whether through elections or some other means of leadership selection. In a nutshell, accountability encompasses mechanisms that hold governments and institutions responsible for their actions. It includes transparency, responsiveness, and the obligation to answer the citizens.

In contexts where accountability functions effectively, answerability and enforceability are essential components for achieving desired outcomes. Politicians, for example, should be answerable to citizens, who bear responsibility for holding them accountable for their actions. Accountability is traditionally understood as a mechanism allowing citizens to constrain the behaviour of those to whom power has been delegated, whether through elections or alternative leadership selection processes. Government accountability requires public officials to report their activities to citizens, who then have the responsibility to take action against officials whose conduct they deem unsatisfactory; this represents a fundamental, perhaps the most crucial, element of democracy, often referred to as democracy's dividend. In essence, accountability incorporates mechanisms that ensure governments and institutions answer for their actions, including transparency, responsiveness, and the obligation to address citizen concerns.

The World Development Report (2001) identifies poverty itself as an obstacle to demanding accountability. Key aspects of poverty: lacking assets, security, and power; preventing the marginalized poor from establishing the fundamental platform needed to voice concerns and demand accountability (Uford, 2017; Etuk, Uford & Udonde, 2023). Being unable to effectively demand accountability is both a characteristic of poverty and a factor that perpetuates it. With a large percentage of the population impoverished and unable to speak out, political authorities act with impunity at the expense of the marginalized poor, undermining their basic survival (Okon, Simon & Akai, 2015; Akpan-Atata, Akai, & Jimmy, 2024).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Theory of Voice and Accountability**

The Theory of Voice and Accountability is a body of work that has been developed over time, with contributions from various scholars in the 20th and 21st centuries. The theory was first proposed, shaped and published in the 1970s and 1980s, by John Rawls' known for "A Theory of Justice" (1971) and Jürgen Habermas' "The Theory of Communicative Action" (1981) respectively. The theory argues that citizens should have a say in decision-making process and that government should be transparent and responsive to their needs. The theory further posits that citizens' ability to express their views and interests (voice) is essential for holding those in power accountable (accountability).

Voice and accountability theory is a concept that emphasizes the importance of citizen's participation in governance and the need for governments to be accountable to their citizens. The Voice and accountability theory advocate strong relationship between the citizens and the public office holders (power holders) who are saddled with responsibility to be accountable to poor masses they are leading.

### **Theory of Change.**

This theory is essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected if things are going wrong in a particular direction. It concentrates on what has been refers to as either 'filling in' or 'missing middle'. In other words, the theory was propounded on the grand that something is wrong or there is a missing link which cause things to go the wrong way, hence a need for change. The theory emerged in the mid-1990s from the field of program theory and evaluation as a new way of analysing the theories motivating people and initiate working for social and political change. When people advocate through civil engagement and voice, it is because they want a political change and thereby influence the decision-making process to ascertain a desire end which is change.

Perhaps, the earlier origin of this theory can be traced back to Peter Drucker's articulation of Management by Objectives, popularized in his 1954 book, *The Practice of "Management"*. It is an explicit theory of how and why it is thought that a social policy or program activities lead to outcomes and impacts. It sets out why a strategic plan of activity will eventually lead to a desired outcome and explain the rationale behind it. In the same vein, voice and accountability, civil engagement as well as strengthening advocacy to influence policy decision-making may be strategic plan and the result may be when the office holders are responsible for their actions with positive results.

### **Empirical Literature**

According to Albeit (2014) focus on the effectiveness of voice and accountability initiatives in achieving intermediate outputs especially capacity development and service satisfaction, but there remain few rigorous evaluations of broader impacts on changing norms or attitudes, increased equity, collective action etc.

He therefore noted that voice and participation have had positive effects on education outcomes in a small number of isolated cases, though evidence of links between participation and inclusive institutions is mixed, secondly that empowerment is positively associated with improvements in health-promoting behaviour. In recent work by Costantiello and Leogrande (2023) on VA and Environmental, Social and Governance, using the data from World Governance Index of 193 countries, they found that the level of VA is positively associated, among others, to Maximum 5-Day Rainfall, and Mortality Rate Under 5 and negatively associated, among others, to Adjusted Savings: Natural Resources Depletion, and Annualized Average Growth Rate in Per Capita Real Survey Mean Consumption or Income.

In addition, Beyene (2022) examined the quality of governance and economic growth in relation to VA, using the Generalized Method of Moments (GMM) to analyze the data obtained from the World Bank database over the period from 2002 to 2020, the result was that composite governance index has a positive

significant effect on the economic growth of the countries; where a unit improvement in the aggregate governance index leads to a 3.05% increase in GDP.

But contrary to the above result was the work done by Robert et al (2023) in the Middle East and North Africa on VA and Economic growth of this nations. The result shows that when the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as a whole is considered, voice and accountability (VA) does indeed appear to be inversely correlated with per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) levels.

However, in what looks like a contrast, was the work done in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) by (Robert and Dyer, 2023), the result shows that Voice and Accountability is inversely correlated with per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) levels. Though, they opined that when one focuses more narrowly upon non-oil states in the region, VA is closely correlated with more robust levels of economic growth.

### 3.0 Methodology

Yenagoa, established as the capital of Bayelsa State in 1996, is situated between latitude 4°47'15" - 5°11'55" N and longitude 6°07'35" - 6°24'00" E. The Local Government Area spans 706 km<sup>2</sup> and recorded a population of 353,344 (187,791 males and 165,553 females) in the 2006 National Census, with a 2.9% annual growth rate. The study employed both quantitative analysis and descriptive research methods in its design. Primary data collection was facilitated through a structured questionnaire, and the research utilized aggregate data analysis to derive meaningful insights from the collected information.

The study targets the population in Bayelsa LGA which stands at 524,400 people. Using Yamane, (1967) simplified sample size determination as recommended by (Uford, Effiong & Charles, 2023), with the formula;  $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$  Where n = sample size

N = population size, e the original margin of error and  $\epsilon$ , the adjusted margin of error of 11%

[e = 0.114 (11.4% margin of error)  $n = \frac{N}{[1 + N(e)^2]}$

An adjusted Yemane's formular is expressed as.

$$n = \frac{N}{[1 + N(\epsilon)^2]}$$

$$n = \frac{524,400}{[1 + 524,400 (0.114)^2]}$$

$$n = \frac{524,400}{(1 + 524,400(0.012996))}$$

$$n = 524,400 / (1 + 6,815.09)$$

$$n = \frac{524,400}{6,816.09}$$

$$n = 76.93$$

$$n \sim 77$$

Where  $\epsilon$  = adjust margin of error  $\epsilon = [\delta^e / t]$

*e = the degree of accuracy expresses as a proportion*

*$\delta$  = the dnumber of standard deviations that would include all possible values.*

*t = the t – value for the selected alpha level of cofidence.*

The higher margin of error (11.4%) is based on several practical and methodological considerations: which include, resource constraints: The study faced significant logistical and financial limitations in accessing the widely dispersed 25 communities across 15 wards in Yenagoa local government, making a larger sample size impractical. Additionally, due to population Homogeneity: The population in Yenagoa local government area exhibits relatively homogeneous characteristics in terms of socio-economic conditions and exposure to governance issues, reducing the need for a larger sample to capture population variance. Moreso, the type of Research: As this is a localized, focused study on voice and accountability specifically in Yenagoa, a slightly higher margin of error is acceptable as the research aims to identify broad patterns and general trends rather than making highly precise population estimates. Finally, precedents in Similar Studies: Previous research in similar contexts and developing regions has successfully employed adjusted higher margins of error due to similar constraints while still producing valuable insights for policy and practice (Adam, 2020).

The sample size calculated is 76.93 therefore, from Yamane (1967), the sample size required as representative of the above population with the aid of Yamane's formula, is 77 respondents which is approximately 0.01% of the total population. The choice of Yamane sample size method is informed by the finite nature of the population of study and the fact that the formula makes provision for margin of error in its computation.

The questionnaire is close ended and was duly administered to respondents in the study areas. A pilot survey of 10 respondents was earlier carry out which is approximately 13% of the sample size. This enable the questionnaire to be validated via the use of cronbach's alpha reliability test. The test shows the internal consistency of the instrument. The analysis was conducted with the aid of the STATA 17 software. The scale reliability result shows a coefficient value of  $\alpha=0.68$ . However, where the alpha value approximate 1 there is high reliability and when it approximates 0 then the instrument is not reliable (Siegiel and Stephen, 1999).

#### 4.0 Data Analysis

This section presents the results and analysis of the responses obtained from the survey in Bayelsa state. From the total of 77 copies of the questionnaire administered, all were retrieved. This represents 100% of the respondents. The analysis in this study is therefore based on the 77 instruments retrieved. The chapter is thus organized as; section 4.1 shows results and analysis of the demographic and socioeconomic attributes of the respondents in the study area, this is immediately followed by section 4.2 which presents results and analysis that help to address objective one of the studies, which is examining the impact of accountability on life sustainability in Bayelsa State. The final section shows result and analysis which helps to achieve the final objective of this study which is centered on determining the Effect of Voice and Accountability on Life Sustainability in Bayelsa State.

Table 1. Socioeconomic attributes of the respondents



tab gender					tab age				
Gender	Freq.	Percent	Cum.		Age	Freq.	Percent	Cum.	
female	28	36.36	36.36		20-29Yrs	51	66.23	66.23	
male	49	63.64	100.00		30-49Yrs	16	20.78	87.01	
					50yrs and above	10	12.99	100.00	
Total	77	100.00			Total	77	100.00		

  

. tab education					tab employstat				
Education	Freq.	Percent	Cum.		Employ Stat	Freq.	Percent	Cum.	
Higher educ qualification	68	88.31	88.31		Civil servant	27	35.06	35.06	
secondary school qualification	9	11.69	100.00		Trader	9	11.69	46.75	
					Others	32	41.56	88.31	
Total	77	100.00			Unemployed	8	10.39	98.70	
					Farmer	1	1.30	100.00	
					Total	77	100.00		

  

tab maritalstat					. tab yrsofresid				
Marital Stat	Freq.	Percent	Cum.		Yrs of Resid	Freq.	Percent	Cum.	
Married	51	66.23	66.23		less than 5Yrs	14	18.18	18.18	
Single	26	33.77	100.00		5-10Yrs	26	33.77	51.95	
					11-20Yrs	23	29.87	81.82	
Total	77	100.00			21Yrs and above	14	18.18	100.00	
					Total	77	100.00		

**Source: Authors Compilation using Stata 17 Output**

This section presents results and analysis to achieve objective one, which is centred on examining the impact of accountability on life sustainability in Bayelsa State. An analysis of responses from a total of 77 respondents is presented in tables 4.3 below. Note all instrument issued online were retrieved from the survey process and the result obtained from an analysis using STATA 17 is presented in Tables below.

**Table 2**

tab say_in_governance									
Say_in_Governance	Freq.	Percent	Cum.						
No	30	38.96	38.96						
Yes	26	33.77	72.73						
Not sure	16	20.78	93.51						
Prefer not to answer	5	6.49	100.00						
Total	77	100.00							

. tab voicerating_in_gov_in_bayelsa					. table ( say_in_governance ) ( voicerating_in_gov_in_bayelsa ) (), stat				
Voice					> istic(frequency) statistic(percent)				
rating_in_G					-----				
ov_in_Bayel					Voice rating_in_Gov_in_Bayelsa				
sa					Poor Good Fair Total				
-----+-----					-----				
Poor					Say_in_Governance				
Good					No				
Fair					Frequency				
-----+-----					Percent				
Total					Yes				
					Frequency				
					Percent				
					Not sure				
					Frequency				
					Percent				
					Prefer not to answer				
					Frequency				
					Percent				
					Total				
					Frequency				
					Percent				
					-----				

Source: Authors Compilation using Stata 17 Output

A cursory look at Table 2 above, on the left top panel, which relates to respondents' say in governance in Bayelsa state, the survey result reveals a relatively even distribution between those who responded "No" (38.96%) and those who responded "Yes" (33.77%), with "No" having a slight edge. About one-fifth of respondents (20.78%) indicated they were "Not sure" about their say in governance, while a small fraction (6.49%) preferred not to answer the question. The total sample size for this survey was 77 respondents. The close split between affirmative and negative responses, combined with the substantial number of uncertain respondents, suggests there appears to be some ambiguity or complexity around governance participation in the state. However, the relatively low number of people who preferred not to answer indicates most respondents were comfortable expressing their position on this subject.

Further, the survey results regarding voice ratings in governance in Bayelsa show a fairly even three-way split among respondents. Out of 77 total respondents, the largest group rated their voice as "Poor" (28 respondents or 36.36%), followed closely by those who rated it as "Good" (25 respondents or 32.47%), and those who considered it "Fair" (24 respondents or 31.17%). This distribution is particularly interesting because there's only a narrow margin separating all three categories - just a few respondents have differences between each rating. The fact that "Poor" ratings slightly outweigh "Good" ones, while "Fair" responses follow closely behind, suggests a mixed perception of a voice in governance in Bayelsa. With over a third of respondents rating their voice as "Poor," there appears to be significant room for improvement in civic participation or representation. However, the combined percentage of those rating their voice as either "Fair" or "Good" (approximately 63.64%) indicates that the majority of respondents perceive at least a moderate level of voice in governance matters.

Table 3



tab voicecount_in_election					> istic(frequency) statistic(percent) nformat(%9.0g) sformat("%s")				
voice									
count_in_el									
ection		Freq.	Percent	Cum.					
-----+					-----				
No	34	44.16	44.16		Participation_in_Election				
Yes	22	28.57	72.73			Agree	Strongly agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Maybe	21	27.27	100.00						Total
-----+					-----				
Total	77	100.00			Voice count_in_election				
. tab participation_in_election					No				
Participation_in_					Frequency	6	21	7	34
Election		Freq.	Percent	Cum.	Percent	7.792208	27.27273	9.090909	44.15584
-----+					Yes				
Agree	36	46.75	46.75		Frequency	18	2	2	22
Strongly agree	2	2.60	49.35		Percent	23.37662	2.597403	2.597403	28.57143
Disagree	30	38.96	88.31		Maybe				
Strongly disagree	9	11.69	100.00		Frequency	12	7	2	21
-----+					Percent	15.58442	9.090909	2.597403	27.27273
Total	77	100.00			Total				
					Frequency	36	2	30	9
					Percent	46.75325	2.597403	38.96104	11.68831
					-----				

**Source: Authors Compilation using Stata 17 Output**

The survey results examining voice count in elections in Bayelsa State reveal a concerning pattern regarding electoral participation and representation. Out of the 77 respondents surveyed, the largest group - 44 respondents (64.16%) - indicated that their voice does not count in elections. This significant proportion suggests widespread skepticism or disillusionment with the electoral process. Only 22 respondents (28.57%) expressed confidence that their voice counts in elections, while 21 respondents (27.27%) were uncertain, answering "Maybe." The fact that less than a third of respondents believe their voice counts in elections raises important questions about electoral integrity and democratic participation in Bayelsa State. The nearly equal distribution between those who say "Yes" and those who are uncertain ("Maybe") indicates a complex electoral environment where citizens' faith in the democratic process appears to be significantly compromised. The high percentage of negative responses, combined with the substantial uncertainty, suggests potential systemic issues in electoral processes, voter engagement, or the translation of electoral participation into tangible democratic representation.

However, the very low number of "Strongly agree" responses (only 2.60%) suggests a lack of enthusiastic engagement with the electoral process. The significant proportion of those who disagree or strongly disagree (combined 50.65%) points to substantial barriers to electoral participation or possible disillusionment with the electoral system. The high correlation between feeling voiceless and non-participation suggests a cycle of disengagement that could affect economic policymaking. When citizens don't participate in electoral processes, their economic interests may not be adequately represented in policy decisions, potentially leading to less inclusive economic development. This could particularly impact resource allocation, infrastructure development, and social service delivery. Among those who responded "Maybe" about their voice counting (21 respondents), 12 (15.58%) still agree to participate in elections, showing some level

of hope or commitment to the democratic process despite uncertainty. This group represents the potential for increased engagement if voice and accountability mechanisms are strengthened, which could lead to more representative economic policies.

Table 4

Table 1

. tab masses_disenfranchise				
Masses_disenfranchise				
hise	Freq.	Percent	Cum.	
Agree	36	46.75	46.75	
Strongly agree	2	2.60	49.35	
Disagree	27	35.06	84.42	
Strongly disagree	12	15.58	100.00	
Total	77	100.00		

. tab stakeholderengagement_in_decisio				
Stakeholder				
engagement_in_dec				
ision_making	Freq.	Percent	Cum.	
Agree	17	22.08	22.08	
Strongly agree	1	1.30	23.38	
Disagree	30	38.96	62.34	
Strongly disagree	11	14.29	76.62	
Somehow	18	23.38	100.00	
Total	77	100.00		

table ( masses_disenfranchise ) ( stakeholderengagement_in_decisio ) ( ), statistic(frequency) statistic(percent)						
-----						
	Stakeholder engagement_in_decision_making					
	Agree	Strongly agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Somehow	Total
-----						
Masses_disenfranchise						
Agree						
Frequency	11	1	14	3	7	36
Percent	14.28571	1.298701	18.18182	3.896104	9.090909	46.75325
Strongly agree						
Frequency	2	2				
Percent	2.597403	2.597403				
Disagree						
Frequency	4	13	2	8	27	
Percent	5.194805	16.88312	2.597403	10.38961	35.06494	
Strongly disagree						
Frequency	3		6	3	12	
Percent	3.896104		7.792208	3.896104	15.58442	
Total						
Frequency	17	1	30	11	18	77
Percent	22.07792	1.298701	38.96104	14.28571	23.37662	100
-----						

. tab freedomofspeech			
Freedom of speech	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Agree	30	38.96	38.96
Strongly agree	28	36.36	75.32
Strongly disagree	8	10.39	85.71
Maybe	11	14.29	100.00
Total	77	100.00	

  

. tab suppresseddemocracy			
Suppressed democracy	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
No	56	72.73	72.73
Yes	9	11.69	84.42
Maybe	12	15.58	100.00
Total	77	100.00	

  

. table ( freedomofspeech ) ( suppresseddemocracy ) (),				
	Suppressed democracy			
	No	Yes	Maybe	Total
Freedom of speech				
Agree				
Frequency	21	4	5	30
Percent	27.27273	5.194805	6.493506	38.96104
Strongly agree				
Frequency	20	2	6	28
Percent	25.97403	2.597403	7.792208	36.36364
Strongly disagree				
Frequency	7	1		8
Percent	9.090909	1.298701		10.38961
Maybe				
Frequency	8	2	1	11
Percent	10.38961	2.597403	1.298701	14.28571
Total				
Frequency	56	9	12	77
Percent	72.72727	11.68831	15.58442	100

**Source: Authors Compilation using Stata 17 Output**

Looking at the survey results regarding suppressed democracy, there is a notably strong consensus among respondents. Out of the total 77 participants, a substantial majority of 56 respondents (72.73%) indicated "No" to the presence of suppressed democracy. This overwhelmingly suggests that most respondents do not perceive their democratic rights and processes as being suppressed. Only 9 respondents (11.69%) answered "Yes," indicating they believe democracy is suppressed, while 12 respondents (15.58%) selected "Maybe," showing some uncertainty about the state of democratic freedom. The combined percentage of those who either perceive suppression or are uncertain amounts to 27.27%, which is significantly lower than those who deny democratic suppression. These findings paint an interesting picture when considered alongside other governance indicators. The strong rejection of democratic suppression (72.73%) suggests that despite potential challenges in specific areas of governance, the overall democratic space is perceived as relatively open and functional. The relatively small percentage of those who perceive suppression (11.69%) might indicate that while there may be some democratic challenges, they are not viewed as systemic or widespread by the majority of respondents. The presence of 15.58% uncertain responses ("Maybe") suggests that there might be some aspects of democratic practice that are either unclear to respondents or may vary in different contexts, though this uncertainty does not translate into a negative perception of democratic freedom.

This distribution reveals that while preventing disenfranchisement is important, the majority of respondents are more concerned with the integrity of the electoral process itself, either through ensuring votes are properly counted or preventing monetary influence in elections. The combined emphasis on vote counting and preventing vote buying (collectively 76.62% of responses) suggests that citizens are particularly concerned with the quality and integrity of the electoral process rather than just access to it. This could indicate that while access to voting is important, the bigger challenges in Bayelsa's democratic process may lie in ensuring that votes are both genuine (not

bought) and properly counted, pointing to potential areas for democratic reforms and strengthening of electoral institutions.

Overall, there is strong evidence that while a strong majority (62.34%) prefer "allowing free voicing out without interference" and favor peaceful democratic engagement over protests, the same percentage (62.34%) cite fear of victimization as their main obstacle to speaking out. This contradiction highlights a significant gap between citizens' democratic aspirations and the reality of political participation, suggesting that while there is a clear desire for peaceful civic engagement and electoral integrity, systemic fears and institutional barriers are significantly hampering actual democratic participation and free expression in the state.

### Determining the Effect of Voice and Accountability on Life Sustainability in Bayelsa State

Table 7

. tab accountabilitymatters					. table ( accountabilitymatters ) ( govt_accountability )				
Accountabil					Govt_Accountability				
ity Matters		Freq.	Percent	Cum.	No	Yes	Maybe	Total	
No	1	1.30	1.30						
Yes	72	93.51	94.81						
Maybe	4	5.19	100.00						
Total	77	100.00							
. tab govt_accountability					Accountability Matters				
Govt_Account					No				
tability		Freq.	Percent	Cum.	Frequency	1		1	
No	34	44.16	44.16		Percent	1.298701		1.298701	
Yes	25	32.47	76.62		Yes				
Maybe	18	23.38	100.00		Frequency	32	23	17	72
Total	77	100.00			Percent	41.55844	29.87013	22.07792	93.50649
					Maybe				
					Frequency	2	1	1	4
					Percent	2.597403	1.298701	1.298701	5.194805
					Total				
					Frequency	34	25	18	77
					Percent	44.15584	32.46753	23.37662	100

**Source: Authors Compilation using Stata 17 Output**

From an economic perspective, this accountability gap could impair public trust in economic initiatives, potentially reducing participation in development programs and limiting the effectiveness of economic policies. The high percentage of respondents who value accountability but don't see it in practice suggests a need for stronger oversight mechanisms in economic management and resource allocation. This situation could affect investment confidence, resource utilization efficiency, and the overall sustainability of economic development initiatives in the region. The significant proportion of uncertain responses (23.38%) regarding government accountability also indicates a transparency issue that could hamper effective economic planning and implementation of sustainable development programs.

Table 7

. tab sustiableaccountability				. table ( sustiableaccountability ) ( stateproperaccountability )				
Sustiable				-----				
Accountability	Freq.	Percent	Cum.	State Proper Accountability				
				Agree	Strongly agree	Disagree	Total	
-----+				-----+				
Agree	17	22.08	22.08	Sustiable Accountability				
Strongly agree	8	10.39	32.47	Agree				
Disagree	44	57.14	89.61	Frequency	14	3	17	
Strongly disagree	8	10.39	100.00	Percent	18.18182	3.896104	22.07792	
-----+				Strongly agree				
Total	77	100.00		Frequency	6	2	8	
				Percent	7.792208	2.597403	10.38961	
				Disagree				
				Frequency	33	9	2	44
				Percent	42.85714	11.68831	2.597403	57.14286
				Strongly disagree				
				Frequency	4	4	8	
				Percent	5.194805	5.194805	10.38961	
				Total				
				Frequency	57	18	2	77
				Percent	74.02597	23.37662	2.597403	100
				-----				

Source: Authors Compilation using Stata 17 Output

Probing further on the sustainable accountability in Bayelsa state, result from table 7 represents the survey results on state proper accountability and sustainable accountability in Bayelsa State. The result shows a remarkably positive perception among respondents. An overwhelming majority express favorable views, with 74.03% agreeing and 23.38% strongly agreeing that the state has proper accountability mechanisms in place, totaling 97.41% positive responses. Only a minimal 2.60% of respondents disagree with this assessment, and notably, there are no "strongly disagree" responses. This strong positive perception of state proper accountability has significant implications for economic sustainability. Such high confidence in state accountability mechanisms suggests a favorable environment for economic development, potentially attracting investments and fostering public trust in state-led economic initiatives. The near-unanimous positive response (97.41%) indicates that formal accountability structures exist and are recognized by stakeholders. However, when considered alongside other accountability metrics from previous data, this suggests an interesting contrast between the recognition of proper accountability structures and their practical implementation. This high level of confidence in state proper accountability could serve as a foundation for strengthening actual accountability practices, ultimately contributing to more sustainable economic development and improved life sustainability in Bayelsa State.

Ironically, despite having a proper accountability mechanism in place within Bayelsa state yet, the statistics suggest a disquieting trend in terms of the sustainability of the accounting system in the state, this has significant implications for economic development and life sustainability. A substantial majority of respondents express negative perceptions, with 57.14% disagreeing and 10.39% strongly disagreeing with the current state of sustainable accountability framework within Bayelsa state, totaling 67.53% negative responses. Only 32.47% express positive views, with 22.08% agreeing and 10.39% strongly agreeing. This overwhelming negative perception of

The disconnect between formal structures and sustainable practices suggests that while Bayelsa State has established appropriate accountability mechanisms, their consistent application and long-term effectiveness face challenges. This situation could affect economic sustainability by creating uncertainty in governance processes, potentially deterring investment, hampering efficient resource allocation, and limiting the effectiveness of development initiatives. For life sustainability, this implies a need to bridge the gap between formal accountability structures and their sustainable implementation to ensure more effective economic governance and development outcomes. In summary, it appears that despite the existence of a proper accounting structure in place within the state, its sustainable implementation remains a challenge.

Table 6					
. tab fiscaltransparency					
Fiscal					
transparency	Freq.	Percent	Cum.		
-----+					
Agree	43	55.84	55.84		
Strongly agree	12	15.58	71.43		
Disagree	19	24.68	96.10		
Strongly disagree	3	3.90	100.00		
-----+					
Total	77	100.00			
. tab economicdiversification					
Economic Diversification	Freq.	Percent	Cum.		
-----+					
Rendering proper account	15	19.48	19.48		
Improving resource mgt	30	38.96	58.44		
execution of effectibe devt plan	32	41.56	100.00		
-----+					
Total	77	100.00			

The economic implications of these findings suggest that voice and accountability mechanisms in Bayelsa State are positively associated with life sustainability efforts. The high percentage of support for fiscal transparency (71.4%) across all economic diversification categories indicates that stakeholders recognize



the importance of transparency in achieving sustainable economic development. This is particularly evident in resource management and development plan execution, where the majority of respondents favour transparent fiscal practices. These results suggest that strengthening voice and accountability mechanisms could enhance the effectiveness of economic diversification efforts and, consequently, improve life sustainability in Bayelsa State. The data particularly emphasizes the need for transparent resource management and effective development planning as key drivers of sustainable economic growth.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The empirical evidence has shown that voice and accountability seriously influence life sustainability in Bayelsa state Nigeria, suggesting that there is a dare need for improve governance to see economic growth and hence improvement in economic welfare of the masses. This is not surprising as government continues to remain central to decision making that ultimately reflect on economic activities including investment (both foreign and domestic), production and consumption which are the different component of growth indices. Thus, a poor governance indicator will only continue to produce a weak pace of economic growth which is detrimental to life sustainability of Bayelsa people. However, out of the possible outcomes, it became evidence that high voice and accountability as indicated in the last table largely drives quality life sustainability, while lower voice and accountability threatens the wellbeing and economic condition of the people.

Based on these findings, the following policy recommendations were proposed:

1. Improved Voice and Accountability: since it is evidence that high voice and accountability seems to result in increasing life sustainability of the people, government should allow people to speak whenever the political and economic decision of the leadership is going wrong. This can be achieved by withdrawing threats and intimidation or victimizing individuals or groups who decides to advocate on behalf of the general public.
2. Balancing democratic accountability with economic pragmatism: it is obvious that proper accountability results in improved economic growth which also positively affects the economic wellbeing of the citizens. Policymakers should strive to maintain democratic principles by ensuring proper accountability of the public office holders and enact law and sanctions to deal with any defaulter, this will put political and economic class to render adequate account to the masses.
3. Since it is obvious that one of the simple ways in which citizens voice can be amplified is through full participation in democratic selection or election of those who represent them, government should ensure nobody is disenfranchise during voting and people should be giving equal opportunity to vote the candidate of their choice not by force or coercion.
4. Government must also as a matter of urgency embark on developmental project that will improve the life sustainability of the people. This can be done by inculcating the representatives of the people into critical decision making that will affect the economic life of the citizens.

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