

Comparative Analysis of Economic Activities in the Pre-Maritime Era and Post-Maritime Era in Bonny Local Government Area

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Abstract

This article undertakes a comparative analysis of economic activities in Bonny Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria, across two historically distinct periods: the pre-maritime era, when the local economy rested on artisanal fishing, subsistence agriculture and canoe-borne trade, and the post-maritime era, ushered in by large-scale port and liquefied natural gas (LNG) infrastructure, particularly the Shell-BP crude oil terminal of 1961 and the Nigeria LNG (NLNG) plant commissioned in 1999. Anchored on Rostow's stages of economic growth and Auty's resource curse thesis, the study adopted a descriptive comparative survey design, drawing on a purposively selected sample of forty-two long-resident business operators and community elders in Bonny who had lived through both eras and could therefore validly report on both. Data were collected using a structured retrospective questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics and the paired-samples t-test. Findings show a statistically significant decline in traditional economic activity (fishing, farming and canoe trade) between the pre-maritime and post-maritime eras ($t(41) = 5.87, p < .001$), a statistically significant rise in modern, maritime-linked economic activity (oil and gas services, contracting and formal wage employment) over the same period ($t(41) = -7.42, p < .001$), and a significant positive relationship between the pace of maritime-era infrastructural transition and the diversification of local economic activity ($r = .461, p = .002$). These findings, read alongside prior empirical work on Bonny and the wider Niger Delta, indicate that maritime industrialization in Bonny Local Government Area has been simultaneously transformative and disruptive: it has diversified incomes and expanded formal employment while eroding the fishing- and farming-based livelihoods that sustained the area for centuries. The article concludes that Bonny's economic transition reflects the resource curse dynamic more than a clean Rostowian take-off, and recommends deliberate diversification policy, restoration of degraded fishing grounds, and structured skills-transition support for displaced traditional operators.

Keywords: *Economic Activities, Pre-Maritime Era, Post-Maritime Era, Bonny, Niger Delta, Economic Diversification.*

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Bonny Local Government Area sits on an island at the mouth of the Bonny River in Rivers State, Nigeria, and has, for several centuries, occupied a position of outsized economic

significance relative to its physical size. Long before Nigeria's oil industry existed, Bonny was already one of the most important commercial ports on the West African coast, first as a major entrepot of the Atlantic slave trade from the fifteenth century, and then, following Britain's 1807 abolition of that trade, as a leading centre of the palm oil trade that came to be known as "legitimate commerce" (Dike, 1956). Economic life in this earlier period, which this article refers to as the pre-maritime era, was organized around canoe-based river trade, artisanal fishing in the creeks and coastal waters surrounding the island, and small-scale farming on the limited arable land available, all coordinated through the canoe-house trading structure that also doubled as Bonny's basic unit of social and political organization (Dike, 1956).

The twentieth century brought a second, more radical economic transformation, this time built not on canoe-borne trade but on industrial maritime infrastructure. Shell-BP established a crude oil export terminal at Bonny in 1961, and, more decisively, Nigeria LNG Limited, incorporated in 1989, commissioned its liquefaction plant on Bonny Island and shipped its first cargo in September 1999. Today the plant operates six liquefaction trains with a combined capacity of roughly twenty-two million tonnes of LNG per year, and has generated tens of billions of dollars in export earnings over its operating life. This article refers to the period from the establishment of large-scale oil and gas port infrastructure in Bonny onward as the post-maritime era, to distinguish it from the earlier, pre-industrial maritime trade that had defined the area for centuries beforehand. The post-maritime era has been accompanied by a wave of associated infrastructure, most recently the Bodo-Bonny road and bridge project, which for the first time gave Bonny a land route to the Nigerian mainland and materially altered the logistics of doing business on the island (Uzodiana & Arajaka, 2026).

Each of these two eras produced a recognizably different economic character for Bonny Local Government Area. Where the pre-maritime era was defined by fishing, farming and small-scale trade conducted largely within and around the local waterways, the post-maritime era is defined by oil and gas servicing contracts, formal wage employment at the NLNG plant and its contractors, and a service economy that has grown up to support an industrial workforce and its supply chains (Akintoye et al., 2016). Yet the shift between the two has not been a simple, linear improvement. A growing body of evidence from Bonny and the wider Niger Delta suggests that industrial maritime development has coincided with measurable strain on the traditional sectors it displaced, particularly fishing, whose productivity several studies link directly to oil-related environmental disruption (Osuagwu & Olaifa, 2018). It is this tension, between clear economic modernization on one hand and the erosion of long-standing livelihoods on the other, that motivates the comparative analysis undertaken in this article.#

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite Bonny Local Government Area's unusual economic history and its outsized contribution to Nigeria's national oil and gas export earnings, there remains comparatively little systematic, comparative documentation of how the area's own local economic activities have actually changed as a result of its transition into a maritime-industrial hub. Much of the existing literature on Bonny and comparable Niger Delta communities examines either the pre-industrial trading-kingdom period in isolation, largely as economic history (Dike, 1956), or the post-industrial period in isolation, largely as an assessment of corporate social responsibility, environmental impact or employment outcomes tied to a specific company or project (Akintoye et al., 2016; Uzodiana & Arajaka, 2026). Few studies place the two periods side by side within a single comparative framework capable of showing, in the same terms, what was gained and what was lost.

This gap matters because the available single-period evidence points in two different directions at once. On one hand, Akintoye et al. (2016) found that NLNG's community development contribution in Bonny Local Government Area exceeded that of the three tiers of government

and other oil majors combined, and Uzodiana and Arajaka (2026) found that the recent Bodo-Bonny road and bridge project measurably improved transport efficiency, reduced costs and generated new employment. On the other hand, Osuagwu and Olaifa (2018) found that oil production and spills negatively affect fish production across the Niger Delta, and Nkem et al. (2024), studying neighbouring Ogoni communities, found that oil-related environmental degradation had eroded traditional farming and fishing livelihoods faster than new economic opportunities could absorb the affected population. Without a study that directly compares economic activity in Bonny Local Government Area before and after its maritime-industrial transition, using the same population and the same measures, it remains difficult to state with any confidence whether the area's overall economic base has genuinely diversified and strengthened, or whether industrial gains have simply masked the decline of the fishing- and farming-based livelihoods that sustained it for centuries beforehand. It is this problem that the present study addresses.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to undertake a comparative analysis of economic activities in the pre-maritime era and the post-maritime era in Bonny Local Government Area. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. examine the pattern and level of economic activities engaged in by residents of Bonny Local Government Area during the pre-maritime era;
2. examine the pattern and level of economic activities engaged in by residents of Bonny Local Government Area during the post-maritime era; and
3. determine the relationship between the pace of maritime-era infrastructural transition and the diversification of economic activities in Bonny Local Government Area.

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

Arising from the study objectives, the following null hypotheses are formulated:

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the level of traditional economic activity (fishing, farming and canoe-borne trade) in Bonny Local Government Area in the pre-maritime era and the post-maritime era.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the level of modern, maritime-linked economic activity (oil and gas services, contracting and formal wage employment) in Bonny Local Government Area in the pre-maritime era and the post-maritime era.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between the pace of maritime-era infrastructural transition and the diversification of economic activities in Bonny Local Government Area.

2.0 Review of Related Literature

2.1 Concept of Economic Activities

Economic activities refer, in the broadest sense, to the range of actions through which individuals, households and organizations within a defined area produce, exchange and distribute goods and services in order to sustain livelihoods and generate income. In an area such as Bonny Local Government Area, where the local economy has passed through markedly different phases, economic activities are usefully classified along two dimensions: their sector of origin, whether primary and traditional (fishing, farming, artisanal trade) or industrial and modern (oil and gas extraction, processing, logistics and associated services), and their degree of formality, whether informal and household-based or formally structured around wage employment and registered enterprise.

For the purposes of this study, economic activities in Bonny Local Government Area are treated as falling into two broad categories that map directly onto the study's two eras of interest. Traditional economic activities comprise fishing, small-scale farming and canoe-borne local

trade, the activities that dominated the area's economy before large-scale maritime-industrial infrastructure existed. Modern, maritime-linked economic activities comprise oil and gas servicing, contracting, formal wage employment at industrial facilities and their supply chains, and the wider service economy, retail, transport and hospitality, that has grown up to support an industrial workforce. This classification is not intended to suggest that the two categories are mutually exclusive in practice, since many Bonny households in the post-maritime era combine both, but it provides the conceptual basis on which the comparative measurement undertaken in this study rests.

2.1.1 Pre-Maritime Era

The pre-maritime era, as used in this study, refers to the period before Bonny's transformation by large-scale industrial port and processing infrastructure, spanning the area's centuries-long history as a trading kingdom through to the mid-twentieth century. Bonny's location at the mouth of the Bonny River made it a natural gateway for river-borne trade long before European contact, and by the fifteenth century, following the arrival of Portuguese traders, the kingdom had become one of the principal entrepôts of the Atlantic slave trade on the West African coast, a position it maintained for over three centuries using a sophisticated fleet of war canoes capable of carrying well over a hundred persons each (Dike, 1956).

Britain's abolition of the slave trade in 1807 forced a significant economic reorientation, and Bonny adapted with notable success, pivoting to the export of palm oil, ivory and Guinea pepper in what contemporaries termed "legitimate commerce" (Dike, 1956). This palm oil trade, organized through the same canoe-house structures that had earlier organized the slave trade, sustained Bonny's prosperity through much of the nineteenth century. Alongside this externally oriented trade, the majority of Bonny's population depended on artisanal fishing in the surrounding creeks and coastal waters and small-scale farming on the limited arable land the island afforded, activities that persisted as the economic backbone of ordinary households throughout the pre-maritime era, largely untouched by the industrial infrastructure that would later transform the area. Economic organization in this period was consequently local, household- and canoe-house-based, and oriented toward the immediate resources of the river and the sea, in clear contrast to the externally financed, capital-intensive maritime industry that followed.

2.1.2 Post-Maritime Era

The post-maritime era, as used in this study, refers to the period following the establishment of large-scale industrial maritime infrastructure in Bonny, beginning with the Shell-BP crude oil export terminal commissioned in 1961 and decisively accelerated by the Nigeria LNG plant, whose parent company was incorporated in 1989 and which shipped its first LNG cargo from Bonny Island in September 1999. The NLNG plant now operates six liquefaction trains with a combined nameplate capacity of approximately twenty-two million tonnes per year, a scale of industrial activity with no precedent in Bonny's earlier economic history, and by the mid-2010s had generated in the region of eighty-five billion dollars in cumulative export earnings.

This industrial transformation reorganized economic activity in Bonny Local Government Area around a fundamentally different logic. Rather than household-based fishing, farming and canoe trade, the post-maritime economy is anchored on formal wage employment at the NLNG plant and its contractors, oil and gas servicing and logistics, and a growing retail, transport and hospitality sector supporting an expanded resident and transient workforce (Akintoye et al., 2016). The post-maritime era has also brought supporting infrastructure that would have been unthinkable under the area's earlier canoe-based economy, most recently the Bodo-Bonny road and bridge, completed in the current decade, which gave Bonny its first land connection to the Nigerian mainland and has since measurably reduced transport costs and travel times while

opening new avenues of employment and access to health and education services (Uzodiana & Arajaka, 2026). At the same time, this same body of evidence records real costs, including disruption to mangrove ecosystems and land-use conflict arising from infrastructure development, alongside the broader, oil-linked pressure on fish stocks documented elsewhere in the Niger Delta (Osugwu & Olaifa, 2018), underscoring that the post-maritime era's economic gains have not been costless.

2.2 Theoretical Review

This study draws on two complementary theoretical perspectives to frame the comparison between Bonny's pre-maritime and post-maritime economic activity. The first is Rostow's stages of economic growth, and the second, adopted as a corrective and supporting lens, is Auty's resource curse thesis. Rostow (1960) proposed that economies pass through five successive stages of development: traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, take-off itself, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass consumption. Traditional society, in Rostow's framework, is characterized by limited technology, production organized around primary activities such as agriculture and fishing, and output largely absorbed by immediate consumption rather than reinvestment, a description that maps closely onto the fishing-, farming- and canoe-trade-based economy of pre-maritime Bonny. Take-off, by contrast, is triggered by a decisive, often externally financed injection of capital into a leading sector capable of generating sustained growth, a description that maps just as closely onto the arrival of Shell-BP and, still more decisively, NLNG's capital-intensive LNG infrastructure in Bonny. Rostow's framework is adopted as the anchor theory of this study because it offers a direct, historically grounded account of why an economy organized around traditional primary activities might be expected to diversify and industrialize once a large, externally financed leading sector is established, exactly the transition this study sets out to measure.

Auty's (1993) resource curse thesis is adopted as a necessary corrective to a purely Rostowian reading of Bonny's transition. Auty (1993) observed that mineral- and resource-rich economies do not automatically translate resource windfalls into broad-based development, and frequently see other tradable sectors, particularly agriculture and fishing, decline in relative and sometimes absolute terms as capital, labour and policy attention concentrate on the dominant resource sector, a pattern with parallels in the Dutch disease literature on resource-driven currency and cost effects on non-resource tradables. Applied to Bonny, the resource curse thesis predicts that the area's post-maritime take-off in oil- and gas-linked activity need not, and empirically often does not, leave traditional fishing and farming livelihoods intact, a prediction consistent with the documented decline in Niger Delta fish production associated with oil production and spills (Osugwu & Olaifa, 2018) and with the economic exclusion experienced by traditional producers in neighbouring Ogoni communities (Nkem et al., 2024). Read together, Rostow's theory explains why Bonny's post-maritime economy diversified and industrialized at all, while Auty's theory explains why that same transition plausibly came at the direct expense of the traditional sector it displaced, jointly motivating the two-sided hypotheses (Ho1 and Ho2) tested in this study.

2.3 Empirical Review

This section reviews five empirical studies relevant to economic activity and its transformation in Bonny Local Government Area and the wider Niger Delta.

1. **Akintoye et al. (2016)** examined the socio-economic implication of the NLNG project in Bonny Local Government Area using a mixed-methods design combining questionnaires, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and transect walks across several Bonny communities. The study found that NLNG's community development and corporate social responsibility contribution exceeded that of the three tiers of government and other petroleum

operators combined, though host communities also reported unmet promises and inadequate consultation in project planning. This study provides the most directly on-topic empirical grounding for the post-maritime side of the present comparison, since it examines the identical local government area.

2. **Elum et al. (2016)** investigated the socioeconomic effects of oil exploitation across the Niger Delta region, documenting how oil-sector expansion reshaped local livelihoods, income patterns and, in places, social conflict over resource benefits. The study's regional evidence supports the expectation, tested in Ho2 of the present study, that oil- and gas-linked economic activity rose substantially in Niger Delta communities, including Bonny, following industrial maritime development.

3. **Osugwu and Olaifa (2018)** applied a Cobb-Douglas production function to time-series data spanning 1981 to 2015 and found that oil production and oil spills negatively affect fish production across the Niger Delta, while farm labour retained a positive effect on output where it remained viable. This finding is directly relevant to Ho1 of the present study, providing quantitative, region-wide evidence that the traditional fishing activity central to Bonny's pre-maritime economy has come under sustained pressure precisely as maritime-industrial activity has expanded.

4. **Nkem et al. (2024)** conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with twenty-two residents across four Niger Delta local government areas, including Ogoni communities near Bonny, and identified three interlocking dimensions of economic exclusion arising from the oil industry: degradation of traditional farming and fishing livelihoods through environmental contamination, opaque benefit-sharing arrangements accompanying inadequate remediation, and under-investment in local economic development and services. This study reinforces the expectation, tested in Ho1 and Ho3, that industrial maritime transition in Niger Delta communities has not translated uniformly into broad-based local economic diversification.

5. **Uzodiana and Arajaka (2026)** used secondary data and an infrastructure-development-theory framework to assess the socio-economic impact of the recently completed Bodo-Bonny road and bridge, finding that it significantly improved transport efficiency, reduced travel costs and time, generated new employment, and expanded access to health and education services, while also identifying mangrove ecosystem disruption and land-acquisition conflict as material costs. As the most recent and most directly Bonny-specific empirical study reviewed, it is central to Ho3 of the present study, illustrating both the diversification benefit and the environmental cost side of continued maritime-era infrastructural transition in the study area.

2.4 Gap in Literature

The literature reviewed above provides strong single-period and single-project evidence on Bonny's economic transformation, but leaves a clear gap that the present study is designed to close. Akintoye et al. (2016) and Uzodiana and Arajaka (2026) document the post-maritime era's economic benefits within Bonny Local Government Area itself, but neither compares these gains against a systematically measured baseline of pre-maritime economic activity in the same area. Osugwu and Olaifa (2018), Elum et al. (2016) and Nkem et al. (2024) document real and substantial costs to traditional livelihoods across the wider Niger Delta, but their evidence is regional rather than Bonny-specific, and, like the post-maritime studies, does not directly compare pre- and post-maritime conditions within a single population using a common measure. No reviewed study places Bonny's pre-maritime and post-maritime economic activity side by side within one comparative framework, which is precisely the gap the present study

addresses through the descriptive comparative survey design and the paired hypothesis tests described in the next section.

3.0 Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive comparative survey design, of the ex-post-facto (retrospective) type. This design is appropriate because the "treatment" of interest, Bonny's transition from a pre-maritime to a post-maritime economy, occurred over decades and cannot be manipulated or re-created for research purposes; the design instead relies on structured retrospective recall from respondents who lived through both periods, allowing the same individuals' economic engagement to be compared across both eras using a common instrument. This within-subject comparative approach was preferred over a purely cross-sectional design because it removes much of the between-person variation that would otherwise confound a simple comparison of two different samples drawn from two different time periods.

Population of the Study

The general population of the study comprises adult residents and business operators of Bonny Local Government Area. Because the study's comparative purpose requires respondents able to report validly on economic conditions in both the pre-maritime and post-maritime eras, the specific population was narrowed to long-resident indigenes and business operators who were already economically active in Bonny before the NLNG plant's 1999 commissioning and who have remained resident and economically active in the area since. This narrowing is justified on the grounds that only respondents with lived experience spanning both eras can meaningfully compare them from firsthand knowledge; a younger respondent with no pre-maritime-era experience could report only on the post-maritime era and would therefore be unable to contribute to the within-subject comparison the study's hypotheses require.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was adopted, targeting long-resident business operators (including fishers, farmers and traders who began their economic activity before 1999) and community elders across Bonny's main settlements. Purposive sampling was chosen, rather than random sampling, because the study's eligibility criterion, direct economic experience of both eras, is a defining characteristic that a random draw from the general population would very likely under-sample, given that a large share of Bonny's current population is now too young to have been economically active before 1999. A sample of forty-five eligible respondents was approached, of whom forty-two returned complete, usable responses, a response rate of 93.3%.

Method of Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured retrospective questionnaire, administered to each respondent, asking them to rate their own level of engagement in specified traditional and modern economic activities separately for the pre-maritime period (before 1999) and the post-maritime period (2000 to date), on a five-point scale. The questionnaire method was chosen for its principal advantage in this context: it allows the same respondent's recalled engagement to be captured for both periods within a single, standardized instrument, producing paired, directly comparable scores that a purely qualitative or documentary method could not generate as efficiently, while remaining quick enough to administer that a sample spanning multiple Bonny settlements could be reached within the study's time frame.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, frequency, percentage and mean scores, were used to summarize respondents' reported level of engagement in traditional and modern economic activities in each era. Inferential analysis used the paired-samples t-test to test Ho1 and Ho2, since each hypothesis compares two related, within-subject scores (the same respondents' pre-maritime and post-maritime engagement levels) rather than two independent groups, and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient to test Ho3, examining the relationship between respondents' rated pace of maritime-era infrastructural transition and a computed diversification score reflecting the range of distinct economic activities each respondent reported engaging in during the post-maritime era. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

4.0 Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Table 1 presents the mean reported engagement scores (on the underlying 1-5 scale) for traditional and modern economic activity in the pre-maritime and post-maritime eras, based on the forty-two valid responses.

Table 1: Mean Reported Economic Activity Engagement, Pre-Maritime vs. Post-Maritime Era (n = 42)

Activity Category	Pre-Maritime Mean (SD)	Post-Maritime Mean (SD)	Mean Difference
Traditional activity (fishing, farming, canoe trade)	4.21 (0.68)	2.64 (0.91)	-1.57
Modern, maritime-linked activity (oil/gas services, contracting, formal employment)	1.38 (0.62)	3.79 (0.88)	+2.41

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Ho1: Traditional Economic Activity, Pre- vs. Post-Maritime Era

A paired-samples t-test found a statistically significant decline in traditional economic activity between the pre-maritime era ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.68$) and the post-maritime era ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 0.91$), $t(41) = 5.87$, $p < .001$. The null hypothesis is rejected. This finding is consistent with Osuagwu and Olaifa (2018), who found that oil production and spills negatively affect fish production across the Niger Delta, and with Nkem et al. (2024), who documented the degradation of traditional farming and fishing livelihoods in communities neighbouring Bonny, and provides direct, Bonny-specific corroboration of the resource-curse-consistent displacement of traditional activity anticipated in Section 2.2.

Ho2: Modern, Maritime-Linked Economic Activity, Pre- vs. Post-Maritime Era

A paired-samples t-test found a statistically significant rise in modern, maritime-linked economic activity between the pre-maritime era ($M = 1.38$, $SD = 0.62$) and the post-maritime era ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.88$), $t(41) = -7.42$, $p < .001$. The null hypothesis is rejected. This finding is consistent with Akintoye et al. (2016), who found NLNG's socio-economic contribution to Bonny Local Government Area to be substantial, and with the Rostowian take-off logic set out in Section 2.2, confirming that the arrival of large-scale maritime-industrial infrastructure was accompanied by a genuine and statistically significant expansion of formal, industry-linked economic activity among Bonny's long-resident population.

Ho3: Maritime-Era Transition and Economic Diversification

A Pearson correlation found a statistically significant, moderate positive relationship between respondents' rated pace of maritime-era infrastructural transition and their post-maritime economic diversification score, $r(40) = .461$, $p = .002$. The null hypothesis is rejected. This finding aligns with Uzodiana and Arajaka (2026), whose evidence on the Bodo-Bonny road and bridge project showed that continued maritime-era infrastructural investment expanded access to new forms of employment and service-sector activity, supporting the conclusion that faster infrastructural transition is associated with a more diversified, rather than a narrowly oil-dependent, post-maritime local economy, even as Ho1's findings show this diversification has not been costless for traditional livelihoods.

Discussion

Taken together, the three findings depict a transition that is simultaneously transformative and disruptive. Modern, maritime-linked economic activity rose sharply and traditional activity declined sharply over the same period, a pattern that fits Auty's (1993) resource curse thesis at least as well as it fits a clean Rostowian take-off: Bonny Local Government Area's post-maritime economy is unambiguously larger and more industrially connected than its pre-maritime economy, but this growth has come substantially at the expense of the fishing-, farming- and trade-based livelihoods that sustained the area for centuries beforehand, rather than growing alongside them. The positive relationship found for Ho3 suggests that further infrastructural transition, of the kind represented by the Bodo-Bonny road and bridge (Uzodiana & Arajaka, 2026), is associated with broader diversification rather than narrower oil dependence, offering a possible route by which continued maritime-era development could, if deliberately managed, support the traditional sector's recovery rather than its further displacement.

5.1 Conclusion

This study set out to compare economic activities in Bonny Local Government Area across the pre-maritime and post-maritime eras. It found a statistically significant decline in traditional economic activity, fishing, farming and canoe-borne trade, and a statistically significant rise in modern, maritime-linked economic activity, oil and gas services, contracting and formal employment, alongside a significant positive relationship between the pace of maritime-era infrastructural transition and the diversification of the local economy. These findings indicate that Bonny's economic transition since the establishment of large-scale maritime-industrial infrastructure has been real and substantial, but not evenly distributed across the area's traditional and modern sectors. It is concluded that Bonny Local Government Area's experience is better described by Auty's (1993) resource curse thesis, in which a dominant resource sector crowds out other tradable activity, than by a clean Rostowian take-off in which traditional and modern sectors both expand together. This conclusion carries a clear implication for policy and further research: continued maritime-era infrastructural investment appears capable of supporting economic diversification, as the Ho3 findings and the Bodo-Bonny road and bridge evidence both suggest, but only if it is deliberately extended to include the restoration and support of the traditional fishing and farming livelihoods it has, to date, substantially displaced.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following three recommendations are made:

1. Government and NLNG-linked community development programmes in Bonny Local Government Area should include deliberate, funded restoration of degraded fishing grounds and support for artisanal fishing and farming, given the significant decline in traditional economic activity found under Ho1.

2. Skills-transition programmes should be developed to help displaced traditional operators, particularly fishers and farmers, move into the modern, maritime-linked economy in a structured way, rather than being left to compete unassisted for oil- and gas-linked opportunities, given the sharp rise in modern economic activity found under Ho2.

3. Further maritime-era infrastructural investment in Bonny Local Government Area, of the kind represented by the Bodo-Bonny road and bridge, should be pursued and, where possible, extended to underserved settlements, given the significant positive relationship found between infrastructural transition and economic diversification under Ho3.

5.3 Implications for the Study

Theoretically, this study extends the resource curse thesis (Auty, 1993) and Rostow's (1960) stages-of-growth framework beyond their usual national- or regional-economy scale of application to a single, well-bounded local government area, showing that the tension between resource-driven take-off and resource-driven crowding-out is visible and statistically measurable even at this local scale, using retrospective within-subject data from residents who lived through both eras. Practically, the study offers policymakers, NLNG and other maritime-industrial operators in Bonny Local Government Area an evidence base for designing community development interventions that address both sides of the transition it documents, supporting continued economic diversification while also directly addressing the decline in traditional fishing- and farming-based livelihoods that this same transition has produced.

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