

Participatory Leadership and Rural Transformation in Four Selected States in Niger Delta Region, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined participatory leadership and rural transformation in four selected States in the Niger Delta region. The main objective of the study is to examine how participatory leadership can bring about rural transformation in four selected States in the Niger Delta region. Three research questions were formulated in line with the objectives. The study employed a survey research method, using quantitative and qualitative designs for the collection of data and analysis. Eight thousand (8,000) respondents from the sixteen (16) selected local government areas in Bayelsa State, Rivers State, Delta State, and Akwa Ibom State as the sample size. Structured questionnaires were distributed to the eight thousand (8,000) respondents; however, seven thousand nine hundred and eighty (7,980) copies were retrieved for data analysis. Four-point Likert scale for structured research questionnaires using arithmetic mean for data analysis. The findings revealed that lack of social amenities for the development of the rural areas; lack of modern health facilities in the rural areas thereby increasing the high rate of mortality amongst others are the challenges facing rural transformation in the Niger Delta region. In this light, the research work recommended amongst others that government and non-governmental organization should provide infrastructural development in the rural areas; this will increase employment, youth empowerment, and self-reliance amongst the people that will cushion rural-urban migration and youth restiveness. Rural community development should be based on a bottom-top approach that would give rural dwellers through their community to identify and present their felt needs to the government and non-governmental organization before the execution of any project for sustainability.

Keywords: *Participatory Leadership, Development Agencies, Rural Transformation, Projects, Programmes*

Introduction

Prior to colonialism, people engaged in rural transformation through community service and communal life to meet their socioeconomic needs with the available human and material resources on the philosophy of communal self-help under the auspices of rural community leaders. This exercise continued during the colonial era in Nigeria, because the colonial government was not interested in the socio-economic development of the rural communities (Nwosu, 2010; Okoko, 2023). However, after political independence in 1960, in 1976 Department of Rural Development was created in the Federal Ministry of Agriculture for the transformation of the rural communities. Despite this progressive effort by various governments, it has not succeeded in bringing the needed rural transformation in the rural areas. With particular reference to Niger Delta that are characterized by poor execution, and abandonment of projects due to a top-bottom approach to rural development this means that the community leaders are not actively and effectively involved in the development of their communities for rural transformation. Most of the rural communities in the Niger Delta have four major leadership groups that are actively involved in the realization of rural community transformation. They consist of The Council of Chiefs, Community Development Committee (CDC), Youth Association, and Women Association (Ijere, 1992; Torutein, 2011; Adelubu, 2019). Thus, participatory leadership is a sine qua non to rural transformation. In tandem with the above, World Bank (2022) states that "Community-Driven Development Programmes should operate on the principles of transparency, participation, local empowerment, demand responsiveness, greater downward accountability, and enhanced local capacity". Therefore, to beguile this fact, participatory leadership is a necessity in rural community transformation in Niger Delta and Nigeria at large. Premised on this the study carried out participatory leadership and rural transformation in four selected states in the Niger Delta region.

Statement of Problem

Rural transformation is to improve the quality and standard of living of the rural people. This can only be achieved through active and effective community leaders' participation with the development agencies. This would enable them to identify their felt needs by participating in decision-making, planning, implementation, and protection of the projects. To achieve this, in 1976, the Department of Rural Development was established in the Federal Ministry of Agriculture for rural community transformation (Okoko, 2023). However, this aim has not been achieved to meet the need of rural dwellers; especially in the Niger Delta region where there are categories of manifold poor execution and abandonment of projects. Sequel to the above, the non-involvement of rural community leaders has boasted poor execution and abandonment of rural development projects. Predicated on the fact that community leaders are not actively and effectively involved in the identification of felt need planning, implementation, and protection of the projects after the withdrawal of the development agencies. Thus, there is no workable synergy between the community leaders and the development agencies.

Again, the problem of lack of commitment, transparency, accountability, and honesty of the development agencies has resulted in corruption, hence the project cannot be established according to specifications and design. For example, interventionist agents such as the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), their motorized boreholes with overhead metal water tanks

at Famgbe- Atissa and Okutukutu-Epie were initiated, executed, and commissioned by the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) without involvement of the community leaders. These and many others are all in the nooks and crannies of the Niger Delta region (Okoko, 2023).

The purpose of rural transformation is to improve the standard of living of the rural people. Thus, the fragrant poor execution of projects not according to specifications and design by development agencies and wanton non-involvement of the community leaders. Therefore, the main thrust of the problem is how to overcome the issue of non-involvement of community leaders in project implementation, poor execution, and abandonment of rural community transformation. To achieve this, the study examined participatory leadership and rural transformation in four selected states in the Niger Delta region.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine how participatory leadership can bring about rural transformation in four selected states in the Niger Delta region. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine the importance of rural transformation to the rural people in the Niger Delta region.
- ii. Identify the role participatory leadership in bringing about rural transformation in the Niger Delta region.
- iii. Identify the challenges facing rural transformation in the Niger Delta region.
- iv. Make recommendations to address the challenges facing rural transformation in the Niger Delta region.

In tandem with the objectives, three research questions were formulated for analyses as follows:

- i. What are the importance of rural transformation to the rural people in the Niger Delta region?
- ii. What are the roles participatory leadership in bringing about rural transformation in the Niger Delta region?
- iii. What are the challenges facing rural transformation in the Niger Delta region?

Literature Review

Conceptualization of leadership

A leader is a person that has the ability to influence a group of people towards the accomplishment of organisation set goals. According to Wang (2023), a leader is "someone who has followers". Wiley- Cordine (2021), the leader is defined as "someone who performs managerial roles in an organization, such as decision making and implementing plans". To Torutein (2011), a leader is anybody in a group who influences the group's actions. This means that a leader is to guide, motivate, direct and show other members of the community or organization to follow and emulate for the successful implementation of the community-set goals or development. This can be referred to as an effective leader (Kakatei &Okoko,2023).

In this light, Adisaya (1990), in Kelvin (2010) state that an effective leader is “a person who is not only able to make his subordinates follow him but recognized that they must be motivated to ensure that goal, objective of the organization is met”. This means that an effective leader would have a workable and harmonious relationship with his subjects to actualize the community and set goals for development as regards rural transformation. Hence, the process of performing the roles of a leader effectively is known as leadership (Okoko, 2017). It is against this backdrop, Nwachukwu (1998), in Anikeze, (2015), defines leadership as "a social influencing process for the attainment of goals". Allen (1958), in Njoku, (2009), sees leadership as the activity of persuading people to cooperate in the achievement of a common objective (Kakatei & Okoko, 2023).

. An analysis of the definitions above, depict that leadership is the process of influencing, motivating and directing the behaviour of subordinates in manner that win their support and cooperation for the actualization of a set goal; in particular reference to socio-economic development for rural transformation. Therefore, a participatory leader must have these attributes in him to be able to coordinate and influence his subordinates such as the Council of Chiefs, Community Development Committee CDC, Youth Association and Women Association to work with him, in conjunction with the development agencies for the transformation of their rural community.

A Discourse on Leadership Styles

Rural transformation through participatory leaders and the people, in conjunction with developmental agencies, brings about sustainable development in rural areas. However, this can be achieved through effective leadership styles. The following are some of the leadership styles listed below:

- i. **Paternalistic Leadership Style:** This leadership style stresses a paternal or fatherly influence in the relationship between the leader and the members of the community or workers. In this regard, the leader manifests the spirit of watchfulness and care for the comfort and welfare of the people whom he is leading. However, it always makes members depend on the leader (Anikeze, 2010).
- ii. **Servant Leadership:** This leadership style stands out to give more attention to the needs and desires of their team members above their own aspirations in life. This leader prioritizes preferentially by focusing on empowerment and support of others, thereby creating a conducive working environment, and fostering trust and harmonious working relationships for further development in the community or the institution (Northouse, 2018).
- iii. **Transformational Leadership:** This style of leadership is charismatic and can induce, motivate, influence and inspire community members or workers in their organization to realize and actualize their set goals and aspirations. Thus, they are visionary leaders that can make things happen out of nothing, because they are creative, innovative and adroit that are working in trajectory of developmental change (Northouse, 2018).
- iv. **Democratic leadership style:** Democratic leadership is practised as an “open door policy” that is contrast to the autocratic leadership style. Democratic leadership is a participatory leadership style that gives subordinates or community members to participate in

the decision-making process (Anikeze,2010). This means there is always a dialogue between the leader and his lieutenants working together towards the transformation of the rural community. It practices a human relation approach that always brings about synergy and a workable harmonious relationship for the community or institution. In a nutshell, the democratic leadership style is a “consultative and group-centred approach” for socio-economic development (Anikeze,2010; Torutein, 2011; Okoko, 2017).

- v. **The authoritative leadership style:** Autocratic or authoritarian leadership is "one-man rule" The leader makes the decision without consulting subordinates as power is centred on the leader. Leader expects absolute obedience and control over their team or the members of the community without questions. This implies that an autocratic leader is a dictator, despot tyrant and always conscious of his position; and their team always obey him out of fear and not respect or leadership (Torutein, 2011; Okoko, 2017; Northouse,2018; Ogbomah et al, 2019).
- vi. **Laissez-faire leadership style:** Laissez-faire is a derivative word from French terminology which is referred to as "let the thing go their way". This means that things should be allowed to sort themselves out amongst the team members without leader interference. This may lead to a lack of transparency and accountability because members are allowed to behave the way they like in the organization or community with autonomy. The leader is a symbolic leader who does not exercise authority over the subordinates which gives room for laxity because he lacks self-confidence. However, laissez-faire leadership style gives room for creativity and innovation for developmental advancement (Anikeze,2010; Torutein, 2011; Okoko, 2017; Northouse,2018).

In light of the above leadership styles, it is crystal clear that the development to strive depends on the leader working harmoniously with subordinates toward the actualization of the organizational set goals.

An Overview of Rural Transformation

The purpose of rural transformation is to reduce poverty and enhance livelihood opportunities for a better standard of living in rural areas. Thus, rural transformation simply means the improvement of rural areas by bringing the urban facilities to their domain for better quality and standard of living. Consequent upon this, Berdeque et al (n.d) reiterate that rural transformation is “a process of comprehensive societal change whereby rural societies diversify their economies and reduce their relevance on agriculture: become dependent on distant places to trade and to acquire goods, service and ideas, moving from dispersed villages to towns, and small and medium cities, and large urban agglomeration”. In the words of Timmer and Akkus (2008) see rural transformation “as a process whereby the sharp economic, social and cultural difference between rural and urban gradually blur and bleed into each other along a continuation gradient”. Kruseman et al (2020), rural transformation is a “process through which rural incomes grow, rural economies diversity and linkage with urban and peri-urban areas evolve”. In tandem with the above, World Bank (2013), reiterates that “rural transformation is a comprehensive and structural change in the rural economy, society and environment”

Taking inference from the above excerpts, it shows that rural transformation is not only about changing the rural societies but a comprehensive re-organization of the rural areas in a given space

for socio-economic development and advancement that involves modernization and diversification of economy for empowerment of the rural dwellers for sustainable development.

Role of Participatory Leadership in Rural Transformation Efforts in Nigeria.

Participatory leaders working in conjunction with members of the organization or community usually achieve active and effective participation in socio-economic development, under the guidance of community-based organizations (CBOs). Sequel to the above, (Torutein, 2011; Okoko, 2023; Kakatei et al,2023) in their work identify the following as some of the roles of participatory leader and their representatives as follows;

- i. **Supervision of projects and programmes:** Rural community Carries out projects through community self-help and community service with government and non -non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in socio-economic development. It is therefore implying that after the withdrawal of the development agents, the participatory leader supervises the project and programmes for proper implementation according to specifications and design for sustainability.
- ii. **Creates unity in the community:** It is the duties and responsibilities of the participatory leader to create unity of all the various groups and associations in the community for comprehensive rural transformation. This communal relationship helps to coordinate the activities of various groups towards the realization and actualization of set goals of the organizations or the community.
- iii. **Identification of felt- needs:** Participatory leaders are familiar with the problems, needs, desires and aspirations of the people. Thus, participatory leaders use the democratic leadership style as a process or method to identify their felt- needs through cross-fertilization of ideas in rural communities.
- iv. **Middleman between his community and development agencies:** The participatory leader serves as a middleman between his community and the development agencies either government or non-governmental organisation (NGOs). This is because the successful implementation of projects in the rural community depends on the workable synergy between the community and the development agencies.
- v. **Maintenance of laws and order:** Participatory leader brings about peace, laws and order for harmonious working relationships with various associations in the community, and the development agencies that are sent to the community to implement projects and programmes.
- vi. **Implementation of government policies:** The participatory leader assists the government in educating his subjects on policies of government through democratic means to the members of his community. Thus, enlightening his subjects on the current policy in governance in all the tiers of government.

From the foregoing, it depicts that for the principles of sustainable development to strive in any community, the role of participatory leader cannot be over-emphasized. The community has to work harmoniously with the development agencies through the instrumentality of participatory leader and their representatives for the sustainability of projects and programmes thereby enhancing rural community development.

The Challenges Facing Rural Transformation in Nigeria.

The rural transformation in Nigeria is facing challenges in terms of social and economic development. Thus, developmental restraints have made the condition of the rural people more pathetic in comparison with urban areas. However, the following are some of the challenges facing rural transformation as enshrined below:

- i. **Lack of Social Amenities:** The rural communities like the following facilities which include:
 - (i) School building for teaching and learning,
 - (ii) Pipe borne water,
 - (iii) Dilapidated and abandoned old primary and secondary schools,
 - (iv) Poor and unventilated living house,
 - (v) Poor and unventilated living house,
 - (vi) Lack of health centres,
 - (vii) Lack of electricity etc.
- ii. **High degree of corruption:** Corruption is a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerians' society that are fighting against socio-economic development in rural and urban areas. This factor brings about poor execution, abandonment and unsustainability of projects and programmes in the rural communities.
- iii. **Lack of industries:** Lack of industries in rurality serves as an obstacle to employment and skills acquisition. This has increased youth restiveness and other social vices in rural areas.
- iv. **Social problem disease:** One of the major challenges faced in rural communities is disease mostly during times of epidemics and pandemics in the country, because of the lack of standard health facilities as in the urban areas. It has claimed the lives of the rural people where modern health facilities to meet the needs of the people proved abortive.
- v. **Lack of mechanized system of agriculture:** In the Niger Delta region, the rural areas depend on manual labour for agricultural production. Predicated on this, led to low production of agricultural productions thereby affecting the living standard of the rural people. This ugly trend serves as obstruction to advance to mechanized system of agriculture as in the Western world.
- vi. **High rate of poverty:** In Nigeria, many in the rural areas live below the poverty line. Hence, cannot provide the necessities of life. This has hindered socioeconomic development because many could not afford basic education, good shelter, health needs and other in the rural areas (Mund, 2008; Aroh, 2010; Erondy, 2010; Okwu, 2011; Okoko, 2023; Kakatei et al,2023).

Taking a clue from the above, it reveals that rural transformation cannot advance in terms of agricultural, infrastructural, and technological development in the rural areas. Based on the poverty rate and bad governance that are bedeviling rural transformation in the country.

The Importance of Rural Transformation in Nigeria.

Rural transformation is not only important to rural dwellers, but growth of rural activities to enhance the overall economic expansion for national development. This strategic development brings about improvement in rural creativity and productivity that stabilizes socioeconomic development and equality. Hence, the importance of rural transformation cannot be overemphasized in a developing country like ours. The following are some of the importance of rural transformation.

- i. **Diversification of production pattern and improvement in livelihood.** Rural diversification towards non-agricultural production and the improvement of livelihood into other means of earning a living is the fulcrum of rural transformation. This includes entrepreneurial vocational training and credit facilities for rural dwellers through financial institutions and cooperative societies. It is therefore creating job opportunities, self-employment, and self-reliance amongst other opportunities, thereby improving the standard of living and quality of life of the rural people. On this background, it has also empowered women, men, and youth and eradicated poverty in their localities (Berdegue et al, n.d; Raymond, 2021; Deal, 2021).
- ii. **Human capacity building and human capital development:** Human capacity building and human capital development in the rural areas help to eliminate illiteracy in the rural communities; and ensure the provision of primary education and access to secondary and tertiary education opportunities. Also, vocational and entrepreneurship training for women and youths thereby eradicating youth restiveness and other social vice in rural areas (United Nations, 2022).
- iii. **Provision of infrastructure and services for rural dwellers:** It encourages private and public investments because of the availabilities of social amenities such as roads, electricity, internetwork, transportation and communication, and good drinking water, to mention but a few in the rural areas. Thus, retarding rural-urban migration to the barest minimum (Berdegue et al, n.d; United Nations, 2022).
- iv. **Helps in building social capital and modern technology:** Rural transformation plays an awesome role in empowering women and small-scale businesses through the availability of credit facilities in their domain. Also, promotes harmonizing modern technology with traditional and Indigenous knowledge for sustainable rural development scientifically and technologically. By so doing, advancing the economic development of the rural areas to a modern global technological status (Byju's, 2022; United Nations, 2022).

The foregoing, reveals that rural transformation can break the dichotomy between boys and girls in educational pursuits. This is because there will be gender equality creating equal opportunities for boys and girls, women and men in rural communities. Thus, fast-track development in all phases of the economies to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),2030. Therefore, to set the record straight, development in the Niger Delta region should focus on the rural areas for rural transformation, especially in socio-economic development.

Methodology

The study employed a survey research method using both quantitative and qualitative designs for data collection and analysis. The population of the study comprises of all the inhabitants of the four States selected from the Niger Delta region are Bayelsa State, Delta State, Rivers State and Akwa Ibom State. The four states from the Niger Delta region were randomly selected with four (4) local government areas each, giving a total of sixteen (16) local government areas within the Niger Delta region for this work. The States and the local government areas are Bayelsa State (Sabgama, Southern Ijaw, Kolokuma/Opokuma and Ogbia); Delta State (Bomadi, Burutu, Patani and Sapele); Rivers State (Degama, Okrika, Gokana and Ahoada West); Akwa Ibom State (Uruan, Oron, Ubino and Eket) respectively. The study adopted a purposive sampling technique using eight thousand (8,000) as the sample size. Simple random sampling for the distribution and collection of the eight thousand (8,000) copies of questionnaires; and oral interviews were conducted to substantiate the questionnaires. The instrument for collection of data was twelve (12) items researcher structured questionnaires using the modified Likert scale method (4-point scale) of strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), disagreed (DA), and strongly disagreed (SD) rated 4,3,2, and 1 respectively. Arithmetic mean (\bar{x}) was used to analyse the data collected from the twelve-item structured questionnaire framed from the three research questions. A criterion mean of 2.50 and above was used in making the decision. Eight thousand (8000) copies of questionnaires were administered within the sixteen (16) local government areas that were selected from the four states. However, only 7980 copies were retrieved for analysis with sixteen (16) research assistants, one (1) each from the sixteen (16) local government areas of the four selected states in the Niger Delta region. Oral interviews were also conducted to substantiate the structured questionnaire.

Data Analysis of Research Questions

Research Questions One (1): What are the importance of rural transformation to the rural people in the Niger Delta region?

Table 1: The importance of rural transformation to the rural people in the Niger Delta region.

S/N	Items' Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Total	N	\bar{x}	Decision
1	Mitigates illiteracy and poverty in the rural areas	(10,200)	(8,250)	(4,120)	(620)	23,190	7,980	2.90	Accepted
2	Brings modern technology and innovation to rural areas	(9,760)	(7,530)	(5,440)	(310)	23,040	7,980	2.90	Accepted
3	Encourages public and private investors to invest in rural areas	(9,776)	(8,403)	(4,222)	(624)	23,025	7,980	2.90	Accepted

4	Bring about diversion from agriculture to other meaningful ventures	(8,400)	(8,550)	(5,000)	(530)	22,480	7,980	2.80	Accepted
	Arithmetic Mean	2.90							
	Criterion Mean	2.50							

Source: Researchers' Field Work, 2024.

Table 1, shows that the arithmetic mean of (2.90) is greater (>) than the corresponding criterion mean of (2.50). In this regard, it is therefore implied that the response of the respondents of the items' statements (1-4) are some of the important of rural transformation that can bring about socio-economic development to the rural areas in the Niger Delta region.

Research Questions Two (2): What are the roles of participatory leadership in bringing about rural transformation in the Niger Delta region?

Table II. The roles of participatory leadership in bringing about rural transformation in the Niger Delta region.

S/N	Items' Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Total	N	\bar{x}	Decision
5	Helps to maintain laws and order for harmonious working relationships amongst his subjects in the rural community	(12,000)	(7,650)	(2,002)	(1,429)	23,081	7,980	2.90	Accepted
6	Serves as a middleman between the community and the development agencies in projects' execution	(12,040)	(7,950)	(2,100)	(1,270)	23,360	7,980	2.90	Accepted
7	Helps in the implementation of government policies through sensitization and community meetings	(16,004)	(8,100)	(4,004)	(723)	28,831	7,980	3.60	Accepted

8	Helps in the supervision of projects and programmes with his representatives of the community	(15,600)	(8,250)	(3,822)	(581)	28,253	7,980	3.50	Accepted
	Arithmetic Mean	3.20							
	Criterion Mean	2.50							

Source: Researchers' Field Work, 2024

The data in Table II shows that the arithmetic mean of (3.20), is greater (>) than the corresponding criterion mean of (2.50). On this premise, the response of the respondents to the items' statements (5-8), are some of the roles participatory leader carries out in bringing about rural transformation in the Niger Delta region, Nigeria.

Research Questions Three (3): What are the challenges facing rural transformation in the Niger Delta region?

Table III. The challenges facing rural transformation in the Niger Delta region

S/N	Items' Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Total	N	\bar{x}	Decision
9	Lack of social amenities for the development of the rural areas.	(14,000)	(7,665)	(4,020)	(85)	25,770	7,980	3.20	Accepted
10	Lack of mechanized system to meet the demand of agricultural production for rural dwellers and others.	(13,000)	(9,003)	(3,000)	(229)	25,232	7,980	3.20	Accepted
11	High degree of corruption as an impediment to rural community development	(16,000)	(8,997)	(3,000)	(519)	28,516	7,980	3.60	Accepted
12	Lack of modern health facilities in rural areas thereby increasing the high rate of mortality	(15,968)	(7,521)	(4,002)	(520)	28,010	7,980	3.50	Accepted
	Arithmetic Mean	3.40							

Criterion Mean	2.50
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Source: Researchers’ Field Work, 2024

The data in table III shows that the arithmetic mean of (3.40), is greater (>) than the corresponding criterion mean of (2.50). It means that the response of the respondents to the items’ statements (9-12) are some of the challenges militating against rural transformation in the Niger Delta region.

Discussion of Findings

The findings in Table I of the study revealed that rural transformation mitigates illiteracy and poverty in rural areas as well as encourages public and private investors to invest in rural areas. The findings are in agreement with (Raymond,2021; Deal,2021; and United Nations,2022), they affirmed that rural transformation creates job opportunities, self-employment, eradication of poverty in rural areas and establishment of primary and secondary education to eliminate illiteracy in rural communities that have helped improved standard of living of the rural dwellers. Also, depicted that rural transformation brings modern technology and innovation; and diversion from agriculture to other meaningful ventures in the rural areas. The findings are in tandem with (Byju’s,2022; Berdeque et al, n.d), which affirmed that rural transformation brings modern technology and innovation as well as rural diversification towards non-agricultural production and improvement of livelihood for rural dwellers. In substantiating the findings in Table 1, oral interviews were conducted and asserted that the above are some of the benefits rural areas stand to derive through rural transformation for the betterment of their standard of living.

Table 11, shown that participatory leadership helps to maintain laws and order for harmonious working relationships amongst subjects in the rural community; serves as a middleman between the community and the development agencies in projects’ execution; helps in the implementation of government policies through sensitization and community meetings; and helps in supervision of projects and programmes with his representatives of the community. The findings are in congruence with (Torutein, 2011; and Okoko, 2023; and Kakatei et al,2023), which affirmed that the above roles of participatory leadership help to maintain laws and order in rural communities; implementation and supervision of projects and programmes in his community amongst others that lead to rural community development and sustainability of rural projects and programmes for rural transformation. To substantiate the findings in table II, oral interviews were conducted and affirmed that the above are some of the roles of participatory leadership that help in creating a synergy and harmonious working relationship between his representatives and development agencies in monitoring, protection, supervision and execution of projects and programmes.

Table III revealed that lack of social amenities for the development of the rural areas; a lack of a mechanized system to meet the demand of agricultural production for rural dwellers and others; a high degree of corruption as impediments to rural community development; and a lack of modern health facilities in the rural areas thereby increasing high rate of mortality are some of the challenges facing rural transformation in Niger Delta region. The findings are in consonance with (Mund, 2008, Aroh, 2010; Erundu, 2010; Okwu, 2011; Okoko, 2023; and Kakatei et al,2023), they avowed that the above some challenges facing rural transformation in the Niger Delta region,

Nigeria. In validating the findings in table III, oral interviews were conducted in rural areas of some of the selected local government areas of Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta and Akwa Ibom State. It was confirmed that the challenges facing rural transformation in Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta and Akwa Ibom State as stated in table III, and others are the obstructions and barriers to rural transformation in Bayelsa Rivers, Delta and Akwa Ibom State in Niger Delta region, Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study examined participatory leadership and rural transformation in four selected states in the Niger Delta region. The central objective is to examine how participatory leadership can bring about rural transformation in four selected states in the Niger Delta region. The research work revealed that lack of social amenities for the development of the rural areas; a lack of mechanized system to meet the demand of agricultural production for rural dwellers and others; a high degree of corruption as impediments to rural community development; a lack of modern health facilities in the rural areas thereby increasing high rate of mortality are some of the challenges facing rural transformation in Niger Delta region. amongst others are the challenges facing rural transformation in the Niger Delta region. This has led to underdevelopment in the rural areas in the Niger Delta region. However, if the recommendations are implemented will bolster rural transformation in the region and Nigeria at large.

Recommendations

- i. Government and non-governmental organization should provide infrastructural development in rural areas. This would increase employment, youth empowerment, and self-reliance amongst the people will cushion rural-urban migration and youth restiveness.
- ii. Rural community development should be based on a bottom-top approach that will give rural dwellers the prerogative to identify and present their felt needs to the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) before the execution of any project for sustainability.
- iii. Participatory leaders and their representatives, and development agencies should work harmoniously as a partner in embarking on rural development projects for rural transformation through monitoring and maintenance, effective execution, supervision, protection, and sustainability of the projects and programmes in rural areas.
- iv. Development agencies and rural community representatives should walk and work on the path that would promote honesty, transparency and accountability, through a democratic leadership style in the administrative dexterity, erudition and acumen in the management of rural community development projects and programmes.
- v. In case of embezzlement and misappropriation of funds, disciplinary measures should be taken against the culprit or culprits no matter whose ox is gored to entrench transparency and accountability to enhance rural transformation.

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