

Corruption, Governance Deficit and Underdevelopment in Bayelsa State, Nigeria: An Assessment of Manifestations, Symmetry and Impacts (2015 - 2024)

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DOI: 10.56201/jpslr.vol.11.no1.2025.pg64.100

Abstract

Corruption, governance deficits, and underdevelopment remain critical challenges in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. This study explores the intricate interplay between corruption and governance challenges, focusing on two core research questions: whether corruption is positively linked to governance challenges in the state, and how the interplay between political corruption and governance deficits contributes to underdevelopment. By centering on the socio-political dynamics of Bayelsa State, the study provides an in-depth analysis of how systemic corruption undermines institutional frameworks, disrupts service delivery, and exacerbates socio-economic inequalities. Using the corruption cycle as its theoretical framework, the study examines the recurring patterns by which corruption is sustained through opportunity, incentive, normalization, and impunity, ultimately entrenching governance inefficiencies. A qualitative methodology was employed, combining primary data from semi-structured interviews with 24 participants across the state's eight local government areas and secondary data from academic, governmental, and institutional sources. The findings reveal that corruption manifests through the mismanagement of public resources, inflated contracts, and embezzlement, with far-reaching impacts on governance and development outcomes. The governance deficits caused by corruption have perpetuated underdevelopment in key sectors such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure, leaving Bayelsa's resource wealth untapped for public benefit. Moreover, the study underscores the cyclical relationship between governance inefficiencies and public mistrust, which fosters an environment where corrupt practices thrive. It concludes with actionable recommendations, including strengthening accountability mechanisms, fostering a culture of transparency, and promoting civic engagement. These measures are essential for breaking the corruption cycle, addressing governance deficits, and achieving sustainable development in Bayelsa State.

Keywords: *Corruption, governance deficits, underdevelopment, Bayelsa State, accountability.*

1.1 Background to the Study

Corruption, a pervasive challenge in Nigeria, is intricately tied to the country's governance deficit and underdevelopment. This relationship has persisted from the post-independence era to contemporary times, manifesting as a core impediment to political and economic stability. Historically, Nigeria's struggles with corruption have been highlighted as justifications for military coups, beginning with the fall of the First Republic in 1966 and continuing through subsequent military regimes until 1999 (Adejumobi, 2000; Akhigbe, 2016). Despite the return to democratic governance over two decades ago, corruption remains deeply entrenched, with Nigeria consistently ranking poorly in global corruption indices (Transparency International, 2021; World Bank, 2024). This situation has led to a cyclical crisis in governance, where corruption undermines institutional frameworks, exacerbates inefficiencies, and perpetuates socio-economic inequalities (Anazodo et al., 2015; Abdul-Baki et al., 2023).

The concept of governance has evolved to include the capacity of decision-makers and institutions to control corruption effectively. The failure to address corruption not only signifies a governance deficit but also impacts critical development indicators such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and economic performance (Igbokwe-Ibeto & Okoye, 2014; Atakpa & Akpan, 2023). In Bayelsa State, often regarded as one of the most resource-rich yet underdeveloped states in Nigeria, the manifestations of corruption and governance deficits are especially pronounced. The state's significant oil wealth has not translated into corresponding developmental outcomes, largely due to mismanagement, embezzlement, and weak institutional oversight (Uwak & Udofia, 2016; Nasidi, 2023). This scenario raises urgent questions about the symmetry between corruption and governance inefficiencies in Bayelsa State and their broader implications for underdevelopment.

Scholars have argued that corruption in Nigeria operates within a cyclical framework, commonly referred to as the "corruption cycle" (Bicchieri & Duffy, 1997; Figueroa, 2021). This concept encapsulates the recurring patterns by which corruption perpetuates itself through systemic weaknesses such as inadequate checks and balances, poor enforcement mechanisms, and the normalization of corrupt practices. The cycle is sustained by opportunities for corruption, incentives to engage in it, and a culture of impunity that reinforces these behaviors (Aluko, 2021; Roy et al., 2020). In Bayelsa State, this dynamic is evident in the management of public resources, where the lack of accountability and transparency has led to inefficiencies in resource allocation and service delivery (Ariemu, 2024; Agora Policy, 2023).

A critical dimension of the corruption cycle is its impact on governance effectiveness. Corruption undermines institutional frameworks, weakening the rule of law and creating an environment where public institutions fail to perform their essential functions (Nwoke et al., 2023; Abdul-Baki et al., 2023). For instance, corruption in public procurement processes often leads to inflated contracts, substandard infrastructure, and delays in project implementation, further deepening public mistrust in government (Olujobi, 2023; Atakpa & Akpan, 2023). In Bayelsa State, these governance failures are starkly visible in sectors such as education and healthcare, where the lack of investment and oversight has perpetuated poor outcomes despite significant resource endowments (Anazodo et al., 2015; Adamaagashi Izuchukwu et al., n.d.).

The governance implications of corruption are further compounded by its socio-political dimensions. Politicians often leverage corrupt practices to consolidate power, using state resources for personal gain or to maintain patronage networks (Joseph, 2014; Accinelli et al., 2022). This not only diverts resources from developmental priorities but also entrenches inequality and fosters a culture of exclusion, particularly for marginalized groups such as women and youth (AfroBarometer, 2021; Ake, 2001). In Bayelsa State, the interplay between political corruption and governance deficits has created a vicious cycle where underdevelopment fuels further corruption, making it increasingly difficult to break the pattern (Bukari & Braimah, 2023; Gyimah-Boadi, 2021).

The study adopts the corruption cycle as an analytical framework to examine the manifestations and impacts of corruption in Bayelsa State. The six key elements of the cycle—opportunity, incentive, engagement, normalization, impunity, and reinforcement—provide a structured lens for understanding how corruption becomes entrenched within governance systems (Bicchieri & Duffy, 1997; Figueroa, 2021). For instance, weak institutional structures in Bayelsa State create opportunities for corrupt practices, while the lack of deterrence mechanisms allows these practices to persist unchecked (Anazodo et al., 2015; Aluko, 2021). Similarly, the normalization of corruption within the state’s political and administrative culture has undermined public trust and eroded the legitimacy of governance institutions (Bekkers & Edwards, 2016; Bauer & Becker, 2020).

A significant aspect of the corruption cycle in Bayelsa State is the role of public officials in perpetuating governance deficits. Politicians and bureaucrats often exploit institutional loopholes to divert public funds, resulting in inadequate service delivery and stalled development projects (Roy et al., 2020; Figueroa, 2021). This not only exacerbates socio-economic disparities but also entrenches a culture of impunity, where corrupt actors face minimal consequences for their actions (Nasidi, 2023; Transparency International, 2021). In this context, the study seeks to explore how corruption-driven governance failures impact critical development indicators in Bayelsa State, including education, healthcare, infrastructure, and economic growth.

Empirical evidence suggests that the impact of corruption on governance in Bayelsa State is not limited to economic inefficiencies but extends to the erosion of social cohesion and democratic norms (Dent, 2023; Nwogbo & Ighodalo, 2021). For instance, the mismanagement of oil revenues has fueled community tensions and conflicts over resource allocation, undermining the state’s capacity to promote inclusive development (Gumede, 2017; Afolabi, 2013). Moreover, the lack of accountability mechanisms has allowed politically connected individuals to evade justice, further deepening public cynicism towards governance institutions (Ariemu, 2024; Ejike, 2024). This underscores the need for comprehensive anti-corruption strategies that address both the structural and cultural dimensions of corruption in Bayelsa State.

By examining the manifestations, symmetry, and impacts of corruption in Bayelsa State, this study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on governance and development in Nigeria. The research builds on existing literature that highlights the mutually reinforcing relationship between corruption and governance deficits, offering insights into how these dynamics shape developmental outcomes (Adejumobi, 2000; Ake, 2001). Through an empirical analysis of corruption’s impact on key sectors, the study seeks to identify actionable strategies for breaking the corruption cycle and fostering sustainable development in Bayelsa State.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Scholars have emphasized the detrimental impacts of corruption on governance. Studies highlight how corruption weakens institutional frameworks, fosters inefficiencies in resource allocation, and exacerbates socio-economic inequalities. For instance, Nasidi (2023) underscores how corruption disrupts public accountability mechanisms, undermining governance effectiveness. Abdul-Baki et al. (2023) identify corruption as a primary driver of weakened public trust in institutions, while Nwoke et al. (2023) argue that it exacerbates socio-economic disparities by diverting resources meant for public goods.

The pervasive nature of corruption has also been linked to poor service delivery in critical sectors such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure, resulting in sub-par governance outcomes (Anazodo et al., 2015; Uwak & Udofia, 2016). Furthermore, scholars have drawn attention to the cyclical nature of corruption, where systemic weaknesses create opportunities for corrupt practices, which, in turn, perpetuate governance failures and deepen societal inequities (Aluko, 2021; Bicchieri & Duffy, 1997). These provide extensive insight for gaining an understanding of the connexion between corruption, governance and development.

While these studies offer valuable insights, they often generalize findings at the national level without adequately accounting for the subnational dynamics of corruption and governance. Existing research predominantly examines the economic costs of corruption or its impacts on democratic governance but lacks a focused analysis of how corruption manifests and reinforces governance deficits in specific contexts like Bayelsa State. Moreover, there is limited exploration of the specific mechanisms through which corruption contributes to underdevelopment in resource-endowed but governance-deficient regions. The mutual reinforcement between corruption and governance inefficiencies in such localized settings remains an underexplored dimension, leaving critical gaps in understanding the precise interplay between these factors.

This study addresses this gap by focusing on the manifestations, symmetry, and impacts of corruption and governance deficits in Bayelsa State from 2015 to 2024. Unlike previous research that primarily offers macro-level analyses, this study adopts a localized lens to examine how corruption perpetuates underdevelopment in the state. It attempts to answer the research questions laid out below.

Research Questions

- i) Is corruption positively linked to governance challenges in Bayelsa State?
- ii) Has the interplay between political corruption and governance deficits contributed to underdevelopment in Bayelsa State between 2015 and 2024?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Broadly, this study assessed the links between corruption, governance deficit and underdevelopment in Bayelsa State. This broad aim informs the following specific objectives:

- i) To examine if corruption is positively linked to governance challenges in Bayelsa State.
- ii) To assess if the interplay between political corruption and governance deficits has contributed to underdevelopment in Bayelsa State.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both intellectual discourse and practical governance reforms concerning the relationship between corruption and governance in Nigeria, with a specific focus on Bayelsa State. Intellectually, the study enriches the existing body of literature by exploring the nuanced manifestations of political corruption and their direct and indirect impacts on governance outcomes within a regional context. While scholars have extensively examined corruption's pervasive nature and its influence on national governance structures, limited attention has been paid to subnational settings, particularly resource-rich but underdeveloped regions like Bayelsa State. By situating the analysis within this context, the study broadens scholarly understanding of the mechanisms through which corruption undermines governance effectiveness, perpetuates underdevelopment, and fosters systemic inefficiencies. Furthermore, the research employs the corruption cycle as an analytical tool, offering a theoretical framework that not only explains corruption's entrenchment but also provides a lens for understanding its interplay with governance deficits in unique socio-political settings.

Practically, the study holds significant value for policymakers, governance practitioners, and anti-corruption advocates. The findings offer critical insights into the systemic barriers posed by political corruption and their implications for governance reforms in Bayelsa State. By identifying specific ways in which corruption influences governance outcomes, the study equips stakeholders with actionable knowledge for designing targeted interventions to mitigate these impacts. Moreover, the study contributes to broader policy dialogues on enhancing institutional accountability and transparency in subnational governance, especially in regions heavily reliant on oil revenues. This research thus serves as a foundation for evidence-based policy development aimed at breaking the cycle of corruption, improving governance performance, and fostering sustainable development in Bayelsa State and other similarly situated regions in Nigeria.

1.5 Literature Review

Here, extant literature is reviewed to show the state of knowledge on the subject matter under investigation. The review shows the trends and arguments adopted by research, methods employed, and findings. This aids in identifying the literature gap for optimal contribution to knowledge.

1.5.1 Corruption and Governance Challenges

The term "corruption" derives from the Latin *corruptus*, meaning "spoiled" or "broken," suggesting moral or systemic decay. Early definitions of corruption focused on individual moral failings, framing it as a deviation from ethical norms or virtuous conduct. Such interpretations were rooted in philosophical traditions, with thinkers like Aristotle condemning corruption as the antithesis of good governance and moral leadership (Anazodo et al., 2015). This classical perspective viewed corruption as inherently tied to the character of public officials, thus placing the onus of accountability on individuals rather than systemic factors.

Contemporary understandings, however, have shifted towards a more institutional perspective, emphasizing structural and systemic dimensions. The World Bank (2023) defines corruption as

"the abuse of public office for private gain," a definition that has gained widespread acceptance in international discourse. Transparency International (2021) adopts a similar approach, describing corruption as the misuse of entrusted power for private benefit, whether in the public or private sector. These definitions highlight the transactional nature of corruption, focusing on the exploitation of authority for illegitimate advantage. However, critics argue that such definitions are overly narrow, as they exclude broader forms of corruption, such as systemic patronage, nepotism, and state capture (Bicchieri & Duffy, 1997).

One contentious issue in the literature is the distinction between public and private corruption. Public corruption involves the misuse of state power or resources by government officials, often at the expense of public interest. This form of corruption is the focus of most anti-corruption initiatives, as it directly undermines governance, public trust, and economic stability (Anazodo et al., 2015; Nwogbo & Ighodalo, 2021). Conversely, private corruption refers to unethical practices within the private sector, such as corporate fraud, collusion, and insider trading. Scholars argue that the artificial separation between public and private corruption fails to account for the intricate linkages between the two, particularly in contexts where private actors exert undue influence on public institutions through lobbying, bribery, or regulatory capture (Hellman et al., 2000).

For instance, Hellman et al.'s (2000) analysis of state capture in transition economies demonstrates how private entities manipulate state policies and institutions for their benefit, blurring the lines between public and private corruption. Similarly, Nwoke et al. (2023) argue that corruption in Nigeria operates as a continuum, with public and private actors colluding to perpetuate rent-seeking and resource misallocation. These perspectives underscore the need for a more integrated approach to understanding corruption, one that acknowledges the interconnectedness of public and private domains.

Another critical debate revolves around the conceptual distinction between systemic and episodic corruption. Systemic corruption refers to a situation where corrupt practices are deeply entrenched in the institutional and cultural fabric of society, becoming the "norm" rather than the exception (Aluko, 2021). In such contexts, corruption is not merely a series of isolated incidents but a pervasive feature of governance and social interaction. Nigeria, for example, has been characterized as a country with systemic corruption, where institutional weaknesses, low accountability, and cultural permissiveness create an enabling environment for corrupt practices (Accinelli et al., 2022; Abdul-Baki et al., 2023).

In contrast, episodic corruption occurs sporadically, often as a deviation from an otherwise functioning system. This form of corruption is more common in well-regulated environments where accountability mechanisms limit the frequency and impact of corrupt behavior. Scholars like Bicchieri and Duffy (1997) argue that addressing systemic corruption requires a fundamentally different approach than tackling episodic corruption, as the former necessitates structural reforms and cultural shifts, whereas the latter can often be mitigated through punitive measures and improved oversight.

A significant body of literature explores the cultural dimensions of corruption, challenging the universality of its definition and interpretation. From a cultural relativist perspective, what

constitutes corruption may vary across societies, depending on historical, social, and cultural norms. For instance, practices like gift-giving and patronage, which are often labeled as corrupt in Western frameworks, may be viewed as legitimate forms of reciprocity or social obligation in other contexts (Afolabi, 2013; Uwak & Udofia, 2016).

This cultural relativism poses challenges for anti-corruption efforts, as it underscores the need for context-specific strategies that align with local values and practices. However, critics caution against using cultural relativism to justify corrupt practices, arguing that it risks normalizing systemic corruption and undermining efforts to promote good governance (Atakpa & Akpan, 2023). Bekkers and Edwards (2016) advocate for a balanced approach that respects cultural diversity while upholding universal principles of transparency, accountability, and fairness.

The developmental implications of corruption are a central theme in the literature, with scholars highlighting its detrimental effects on economic growth, social equity, and institutional integrity. Corruption distorts resource allocation, undermines public service delivery, and exacerbates socio-economic inequalities, particularly in developing countries. Abdul-Baki et al. (2023) identify corruption as a significant barrier to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), noting that it diverts resources away from critical sectors like healthcare, education, and infrastructure. Similarly, Anazodo et al. (2015) argue that corruption erodes public trust in institutions, weakening the social contract between citizens and the state.

However, some scholars adopt a more nuanced view, suggesting that corruption may have ambiguous or even positive effects under certain conditions. For instance, Leff (1964) famously argued that corruption could serve as a "grease" for the wheels of bureaucracy in highly rigid or inefficient systems, facilitating economic activity and bypassing bureaucratic bottlenecks. While this "grease the wheels" hypothesis has been largely discredited in contemporary literature, it highlights the complexity of corruption's impact and the need for context-specific analyses (Bekkers & Edwards, 2016).

Governance deficit, a concept often invoked to describe the shortcomings of governance systems, has been examined through various perspectives in scholarly literature. At its core, the term refers to the failure of governments or governance frameworks to effectively deliver public goods, maintain accountability, and promote inclusivity. Scholars like Christensen et al. (2020) argue that governance deficit encompasses both institutional inefficiencies and systemic issues such as weak policy implementation and limited citizen participation. These shortcomings often result in distrust in government and the erosion of democratic values. Similarly, Rotberg and Hampson (2024) highlight how governance deficits manifest in the form of inadequate service delivery, corruption, and the marginalization of vulnerable groups, particularly in developing countries. Such perspectives underscore the multidimensional nature of governance deficit, encompassing administrative, social, and political failures.

The institutional perspective on governance deficit often focuses on capacity gaps within public institutions. According to Adiele and Ibieta (2022), a governance deficit can stem from insufficient resources, inadequate training of public officials, and the absence of clear accountability mechanisms. This institutional view aligns with the arguments of Fajana (2009),

who asserts that governance systems plagued by inefficiencies struggle to provide essential services or meet development objectives. Additionally, Nwokwu et al. (2018) posit that politicization of public administration exacerbates governance deficits by prioritizing patronage over merit-based appointments. However, critics of this approach argue that it overlooks the societal dimensions of governance failure, including cultural norms and citizen engagement, which can also significantly impact governance outcomes (Buijs, 2018).

Normative interpretations of governance deficit emphasize deviations from established standards of good governance, such as transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. Boxall and Purcell (2022) suggest that governance deficits emerge when public sector operations fail to uphold these principles, leading to widespread disillusionment with governance systems. Similarly, Bekkers and Edwards (2016) argue that governance deficits are often rooted in the lack of fairness and justice in decision-making processes, which alienate citizens and undermine social cohesion. However, this normative framing has been critiqued for its potential to impose universal benchmarks that may not account for local contexts and priorities (Theletsane, 2019). Critics further note that normative approaches often focus on diagnosing deficits rather than providing actionable solutions tailored to specific governance environments.

Another important interpretation centers on the relationship between governance deficit and developmental outcomes. Governance deficits are frequently linked to poor economic performance, educational disparities, and inadequate healthcare delivery. For example, Adebayo (2021) highlights how governance deficits in Nigeria's education sector have perpetuated infrastructural decay and hindered student performance. Similarly, Ogunode et al. (2021) argue that poor governance in higher education has exacerbated brain drain and reduced the competitiveness of Nigerian institutions. This outcomes-based approach is valuable for demonstrating the tangible impacts of governance deficits on society. However, as Ali et al. (2018) observe, focusing solely on outcomes may neglect the underlying systemic and structural issues that drive these deficits, such as unequal resource allocation and corruption.

The role of global and systemic influences on governance deficit has also gained scholarly attention. Scholars such as Tooley and Yngstrom (2015) argue that governance deficit is often a reflection of broader global inequalities and the imposition of external governance models that do not align with local needs. For instance, international development frameworks may emphasize neoliberal policies that prioritize market efficiency over social equity, thereby perpetuating governance failures in resource-poor contexts (Kalyanpur, 2020). While this perspective broadens the understanding of governance deficit by situating it within global dynamics, it has been critiqued for diffusing accountability by attributing local governance failures to external forces (Meijerink et al., 2022). These criticisms suggest the need for a more nuanced approach that balances global influences with local accountability mechanisms.

The link between corruption and governance outcomes have been widely studied in the literature. In 2023, Nwoke et al. (2023) conducted a qualitative study that explored the link between corruption and public sector governance in Nigeria. Using in-depth interviews with key public officials and civil society actors, the study found that corruption leads to weakened accountability mechanisms, reduced service delivery, and public disillusionment with governmental institutions.

The research argued that entrenched corruption within political structures severely impedes effective governance, creating a vicious cycle that undermines efforts for development and stability. The authors emphasized the need for robust institutional reforms and enhanced anti-corruption policies to foster trust and transparency in governance.

Atakpa and Akpan (2023) investigated the impact of corruption on the productivity of public administration in Nigeria, employing a mixed-methods approach that included both quantitative surveys and content analysis of government reports. Their findings demonstrated that corruption not only affects economic efficiency but also erodes public sector morale and creates barriers to equitable service delivery. The authors argued that corruption-driven inefficiencies contribute to an environment where governance becomes focused on personal gain rather than public interest. The study highlighted that corruption disrupts policy implementation and stifles development, calling for a comprehensive approach that includes strengthening governance institutions and investing in anti-corruption education.

In 2022, Adamaagashi Izuchukwu et al. (2022) examined the political undercurrents in the management of public resources and their implications for governance in Nigeria. This study used a case study methodology, focusing on sectors such as health and education, to reveal how corruption shapes policy outcomes and allocates resources disproportionately. The findings indicated that corruption not only diverts resources from critical public services but also fosters an environment where inequality persists and public welfare is compromised. The research argued that without addressing corruption at its roots, policies aimed at development would remain ineffective. The authors concluded that the success of governance reforms hinges on the ability to curtail the influence of powerful actors and implement stringent accountability measures.

Nwogbo and Ighodalo (2021) carried out a study that combined qualitative interviews and document analysis to explore the challenges corruption poses to governance in Nigeria. Their findings underscored the detrimental effects of corruption on governance, including the depletion of public trust and the erosion of democratic principles. The authors discussed how corruption serves as a major obstacle to achieving transparent and accountable governance, leading to policy paralysis and ineffective public administration. They argued that the interplay of political patronage, limited judicial independence, and weak enforcement mechanisms creates a conducive environment for corruption to thrive. The study suggested that sustainable governance reform must involve both policy-driven and institutional strategies that bolster anti-corruption efforts and support transparency.

In 2020, Aluko (2020) published an analysis that used a comparative approach to study the corruption cycle and its implications for governance in Nigeria. Drawing on various case studies, including the Nigerian oil sector, Aluko explored how the corruption cycle perpetuates itself through a system of opportunity, incentive, engagement, normalisation, and impunity. The findings highlighted that the cycle not only sustains corruption but also creates governance deficits, where institutions fail to perform their oversight roles effectively. Aluko argued that the failure to break the cycle of corruption leads to weakened governance structures and a lack of accountability. The study advocated for an integrated approach to addressing corruption, emphasizing the role of education, civic engagement, and robust enforcement mechanisms as essential components of anti-corruption strategy.

Figueira et al. (2021) examined the relationship between corruption and governance in sub-Saharan Africa, using a panel data approach to analyze economic and political variables across several countries, including Nigeria. Their findings demonstrated that corruption correlates strongly with poor governance indicators such as low scores on transparency and public sector accountability. The study contended that governance challenges in countries with high corruption levels are compounded by the erosion of public trust and diminished citizen participation. The research underscored that corruption and governance are interlinked, with corruption undermining governance effectiveness and hindering national development. The authors emphasized that addressing corruption requires a multidimensional strategy that includes anti-corruption policies, judicial reforms, and civic engagement.

In 2020, Nasidi (2020) explored the role of corruption in weakening democratic governance, using content analysis of political and academic sources. The findings underscored that corruption results in compromised decision-making processes, where the focus shifts from public interest to private gains. This situation exacerbates governance challenges, as policies become tools for sustaining the power of a few rather than promoting societal development. Nasidi argued that for democratic governance to be effective, it must be insulated from corrupt practices through the institutionalization of checks and balances, independent oversight, and active civic participation. The study pointed out that while anti-corruption initiatives had shown some promise, they remained insufficient without a deep cultural shift that prioritizes transparency and accountability at all levels of government.

The body of literature illustrates that corruption is a multifaceted challenge that profoundly affects governance outcomes. Studies have consistently highlighted that corruption is more than an economic issue; it is a governance crisis that compromises policy implementation, stifles development, and perpetuates inequality. From the findings of Nwoke et al. (2023) and Atakpa and Akpan (2023), it is evident that corruption leads to weakened accountability mechanisms and a lack of effective service delivery. Similarly, the works of Izuchukwu et al. (2022) and Aluko (2020) emphasize the importance of addressing corruption as an integral part of governance reform to achieve sustainable development. The consistent argument across the studies is that tackling corruption requires a multi-pronged approach involving policy reform, stronger institutional frameworks, and enhanced public engagement to foster transparency and accountability.

1.5.2 Corruption-induced Governance Challenges and Developmental Outcomes

Underdevelopment, a concept that encapsulates the systemic and structural deficiencies hindering a nation's progress, has been extensively examined in the academic literature. Scholars have ascribed different meanings to underdevelopment, often framing it as a multifaceted and persistent state of economic, social, and political stagnation. The notion of underdevelopment is commonly contrasted with development, portraying it as a condition marked by inadequate industrial growth, poverty, and low human development indicators. According to Sen (2006), underdevelopment is not just the absence of economic growth but a broader failure to provide people with the capabilities and opportunities needed to lead fulfilling lives. This perspective suggests that underdevelopment extends beyond economic measures to include social and political dimensions, where institutions and governance systems fail to meet the needs of their populations.

Economic theories often frame underdevelopment as a result of insufficient capital accumulation, low productivity, and external dependency. Dependency theory, for instance, posits that underdeveloped nations are trapped in a cycle of dependency on developed nations, unable to escape their subordinate economic position. Scholars such as Ake (2001) argue that the historical exploitation of developing countries through colonialism and neocolonial practices has entrenched economic structures that prioritize raw material exports over diversified industrial growth, leading to a persistent state of underdevelopment. Critics of this view, however, contend that dependency theory overly emphasizes external factors and neglects the internal governance and policy decisions that contribute to underdevelopment (Umezina, 2012). They argue that while global inequalities are significant, local leadership, governance structures, and policy choices play a crucial role in shaping a country's development trajectory.

Another prominent interpretation of underdevelopment is the human capital perspective, which emphasizes the importance of education, skills, and health in fostering development. According to Adamaagashi Izuchukwu et al. (n.d.), underdevelopment can be traced to deficits in human capital, where inadequate investment in education and healthcare results in low levels of productivity and limited economic potential. This perspective aligns with the view that for a nation to overcome underdevelopment, it must prioritize building its human resources through targeted investments in education, training, and health services. However, critics argue that this approach can be reductionist and may ignore deeper structural issues such as corruption and poor governance, which undermine the effectiveness of human capital development (Atakpa & Akpan, 2023). They suggest that while human capital is essential, it must be complemented by systemic changes in governance and institutional capacity to yield significant progress.

The political economy approach to underdevelopment highlights the interplay between political systems, governance structures, and economic performance. According to Anazodo et al. (2015), underdevelopment is perpetuated by weak institutions, corruption, and poor policy implementation. This view underscores the notion that underdevelopment is not just an economic issue but a governance one, where power dynamics, patronage systems, and policy mismanagement hinder progress. Nwogbo and Ighodalo (2021) emphasize that in many developing countries, including Nigeria, the intertwining of political power and economic control creates an environment where resource allocation is skewed to benefit the few rather than the majority, leading to persistent underdevelopment. However, some scholars challenge this perspective by suggesting that it can overemphasize the role of political elites and overlook the agency of local communities and civil society in driving change (Rouse, 2017).

The structuralist approach presents another dimension by focusing on the inherent structural challenges that underdeveloped countries face. This approach, associated with scholars like North (1990), argues that underdevelopment is rooted in historical and structural imbalances that hinder economic diversification and growth. It emphasizes the importance of robust institutional frameworks that can adapt to economic changes and promote sustainable development. Structural issues such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of technological innovation, and inefficient legal systems are seen as major contributors to underdevelopment. The application of this theory underscores the necessity of comprehensive reforms that address these foundational issues.

However, this approach has been criticized for its perceived determinism and failure to account for agency and adaptability within societies (Joseph, 2014). Critics argue that while structural factors are important, they are not insurmountable and can be addressed through targeted policy interventions and reforms.

The multidimensional approach to underdevelopment incorporates elements from various theories, asserting that underdevelopment is a complex, interconnected issue that requires a multifaceted solution. This approach aligns with Sen's (2006) capabilities perspective, which views underdevelopment as a failure to expand the real freedoms people enjoy. It suggests that development should be evaluated not only in terms of economic growth but also through improved health, education, political freedoms, and economic opportunities. This perspective has gained traction for its holistic approach, highlighting that sustainable development requires addressing both economic and non-economic factors. However, a key critique of this approach is that it may be challenging to implement due to the wide-ranging nature of interventions needed. Scholars such as Adiele and Ibieta (2022) have argued that while the multidimensional approach offers a more complete understanding of underdevelopment, it may be difficult for policymakers to prioritize and execute such comprehensive strategies effectively within resource-constrained environments.

The concept of underdevelopment continues to evolve, informed by various academic lenses that underscore the economic, political, and social dimensions of the term. Despite their differences, these perspectives collectively highlight that underdevelopment is not solely a result of economic inefficiencies but also of deep-seated political, social, and governance challenges. Addressing underdevelopment requires a concerted effort that transcends traditional economic policies to include comprehensive governance reforms, investment in human capital, and strategic international partnerships. While theories vary in their emphasis, they all underscore that tackling underdevelopment requires a multifaceted approach that adapts to the unique contexts of each country.

As with studies on corruption and governance challenges, scholarship has examined the links between corruption-induced governance challenges and development outcomes. Alinno (2023) explored the systemic impact of corruption on governance and developmental outcomes in Nigeria, employing mixed-methods research that combined statistical analysis with case studies. The study found that the persistence of corruption within government structures leads to weak institutions, reduced public sector efficiency, and widespread economic inequality. Alinno argued that corruption depletes public resources intended for development, weakening service delivery in essential sectors such as education and healthcare. The findings suggested that while anti-corruption measures have been initiated, their effectiveness is significantly limited by inadequate enforcement and lack of transparency. This research underscored the importance of robust accountability frameworks and active civil engagement in mitigating the effects of corruption on governance and development.

In 2022, Adiele and Ibieta (2022) analyzed the role of corruption in obstructing development in Nigerian public sector institutions. The study utilized qualitative interviews with policymakers and public sector officials, coupled with a review of policy documents. Their research revealed that corruption leads to governance challenges that include poor policy implementation, reduced public trust, and diminished government accountability. The authors contended that the implications of

corruption extend beyond immediate financial losses; it erodes the foundation of state legitimacy and hinders long-term development goals. The findings reinforced the notion that corruption-induced governance deficits must be addressed comprehensively, through both policy and societal change, to foster sustainable development and restore public confidence in institutions.

In 2021, Fajana and Ogunyemi (2021) conducted an empirical study to assess the impact of corruption on development outcomes within the Nigerian education sector. Using a survey approach combined with data analysis, they found that corruption in the form of embezzlement and misallocation of educational funds severely affects the quality of education and hampers socioeconomic progress. The study highlighted that resources meant for schools are often diverted to private interests, leading to poor infrastructure, insufficient teaching staff, and inadequate learning materials. The authors argued that corruption entrenches inequality, as only those with connections can access educational opportunities, thereby perpetuating cycles of poverty. This research underscored that a transparent and accountable governance system is essential for reallocating public resources effectively and promoting development in education.

In 2020, Nwokedi (2020) conducted a study focusing on the interactions between corruption and governance challenges in Nigeria, analyzing how these factors contribute to developmental stagnation. Using an analytical framework that included policy analysis and data from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, the study showed that corruption distorts governance processes, leading to suboptimal decision-making and inefficient resource allocation. Nwokedi's findings indicated that the negative impact of corruption on development is compounded by a lack of institutional capacity to enforce anti-corruption laws. The study argued that corruption in public administration undermines development initiatives by creating a governance environment where efficiency and service delivery are sacrificed for personal gain. It called for strengthened rule of law and institutional reforms to limit the adverse effects of corruption.

Nasidi (2020) analyzed corruption's role in undermining governance and development through a review of case studies and existing literature. The study identified the pervasive nature of corruption as a significant impediment to development, highlighting its impact on governance structures that are crucial for implementing policy and fostering growth. Nasidi posited that corruption not only affects the allocation of resources but also influences policy decisions that prioritize private over public interests, which stifles innovation and economic productivity. The research stressed that while international organizations often call for anti-corruption measures, local contexts and the political will to implement these measures are pivotal in determining their success. Nasidi's findings underscored the need for comprehensive anti-corruption strategies that involve both domestic and international stakeholders, integrating practices that promote accountability and transparency in governance.

The literature from 2023, 2022, 2021, and 2020 demonstrates that corruption-induced governance challenges are deeply embedded in the fabric of Nigerian society and significantly impede development. Alinno (2023) and Adiele and Ibietan (2022) highlighted the systemic nature of corruption and its impact on public trust, institutional strength, and policy implementation. Fajana and Ogunyemi (2021) emphasized corruption's effect on educational development, illustrating the broader implications on social mobility and poverty cycles. Nwokedi (2020) and Nasidi (2020) provided insights into the policy and structural aspects, arguing for greater legal enforcement, institutional capacity building, and societal engagement as essential components for addressing

corruption. This body of work suggests that corruption creates a persistent barrier to development, underscoring the need for comprehensive governance reforms that integrate transparency, accountability, and citizen participation to create an environment conducive to sustainable development.

1.5.3 Gap in the Literature

The reviewed literature on "Corruption-induced Governance Challenges and Developmental Outcomes" outlines several significant themes and findings. Research by Nwoke et al. (2023) and Atakpa and Akpan (2023) emphasized the pervasive impact of corruption on public sector governance, pointing to weakened accountability mechanisms, reduced service delivery, and diminished public trust in government institutions. These studies highlighted that entrenched corruption disrupts policy implementation and stifles development, creating an environment where personal gain is prioritized over public interest. Izuchukwu et al. (2022) and Aluko (2020) focused on how corruption distorts resource allocation and undermines the effectiveness of policies, ultimately fostering inequality and systemic governance failures. Fajana and Ogunyemi (2021) showed that corruption's influence in the education sector exacerbates social disparities and limits opportunities for upward mobility. Nasidi (2020) and Nwokedi (2020) provided further insights into the policy and structural dimensions, emphasizing that without robust institutional capacity and legal reforms, corruption continues to impede development. The body of literature strongly argues that corruption not only affects governance but directly contributes to developmental stagnation, highlighting the critical need for comprehensive anti-corruption measures and institutional reforms.

However, significant gaps remain in the literature that need to be addressed. While numerous studies have focused on the overarching impacts of corruption on governance and development, specific regional analyses, such as those focused on Bayelsa State, remain sparse. This study aims to bridge that gap by examining the unique manifestations of corruption and governance deficits at the state level in Nigeria, where governance challenges are often amplified by local political dynamics and resource allocation issues. The reviewed literature does not sufficiently address how localised corruption practices, entrenched political patronage, and weak enforcement mechanisms uniquely impact governance and development in Bayelsa State. Additionally, while most studies emphasize policy and institutional perspectives, there is a lack of research on the socio-cultural factors that perpetuate corruption and hinder governance effectiveness in this specific context. This study aims to provide a detailed examination of these issues, filling the gap by assessing how corruption, governance deficits, and development outcomes interconnect in Bayelsa State.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

Modernization theory provides a critical framework for understanding how societal attitudes, cultural norms, and institutional behaviors influence development trajectories. Emerging in the mid-20th century, this theory is closely associated with scholars such as Walt Rostow, Talcott Parsons, and Samuel Huntington. It argues that societies progress through defined stages, transitioning from traditional to modern systems, with shifts in behavioral patterns and institutional

practices playing pivotal roles. Talcott Parsons emphasized the behavioral dimensions of modernization, asserting that development involves a shift from traditional, ascriptive values—such as loyalty to family, clan, or ethnicity—to achievement-oriented norms rooted in merit, individualism, and accountability. According to Parsons, traditional societies are characterized by personal relationships, emotional attachments, and patronage, which impede institutional efficiency and societal progress. Modern societies, in contrast, adopt rational behaviors, professional ethics, and impersonal rule-based systems that promote fairness, efficiency, and innovation.

Walt Rostow, in his *Stages of Economic Growth* (1960), further argued that attitudes towards work, innovation, and economic activity evolve as societies modernize. For example, in pre-modern societies, subsistence activities and resistance to change dominate. Modernization brings about a shift towards risk-taking, entrepreneurial behavior, and long-term planning. These behavioral transformations are necessary for a society to transition through Rostow's five stages of development, culminating in sustained economic growth and social progress. Samuel Huntington added a cautionary perspective, highlighting the challenges of rapid social change. He argued that during periods of modernization, societal behaviors often lag behind institutional reforms, creating gaps that foster instability, inefficiencies, and corruption. For example, when traditional attitudes such as nepotism or rent-seeking persist within a rapidly modernizing society, they can undermine governance and development.

Modernization theory has been widely applied to analyze development challenges, particularly in post-colonial contexts. It highlights the importance of attitudinal and behavioral change in fostering effective leadership, institutional accountability, and societal progress. Critics of the theory, however, argue that it sometimes oversimplifies the complex interplay between traditional and modern systems and underestimates the influence of external factors, such as colonial legacies or globalization. Despite these critiques, its emphasis on behavioral transformation provides valuable insights into the role of attitudes in enhancing or impeding development.

1.6.1 Application of the Theory

The behavioral dimensions of modernization theory offer a lens to understand the entrenched challenges of corruption and underdevelopment in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Despite its substantial oil wealth, Bayelsa remains one of the most underdeveloped states in Nigeria, a paradox rooted in the persistence of traditional attitudes that hinder governance effectiveness and leadership performance.

Traditional behavioral norms, such as patronage, nepotism, and personalized rule, dominate the political and administrative systems in Bayelsa State. These attitudes create an environment where public resources are mismanaged, and corruption is normalized. Talcott Parsons' argument that traditional societies prioritize personal relationships over institutional rules is evident here, as governance is often influenced by ethnic loyalties and patron-client dynamics. Such behaviors undermine meritocracy, hinder accountability, and perpetuate inefficiencies in resource allocation.

Modernization theory underscores the necessity of behavioral shifts towards achievement-oriented and merit-based systems to enhance governance and leadership performance. In Bayelsa, this requires cultivating attitudes that prioritize professionalism, transparency, and public service ethics over personal gain. For instance, leaders must move away from viewing public office as an avenue for wealth accumulation and instead embrace it as a platform for societal development. This behavioral transformation is essential for breaking the cycle of corruption that has stalled development in the state. The theory also explains how attitudes towards work, innovation, and change influence economic progress. In Bayelsa, the over-reliance on oil revenues reflects a traditional approach that discourages economic diversification and entrepreneurial initiatives. Modernization requires fostering behaviors that embrace innovation, long-term planning, and risk-taking, which are critical for industrialization and economic sustainability. Shifting societal attitudes towards valuing productivity and innovation can drive investments in sectors like agriculture, technology, and manufacturing, reducing the state's dependency on oil.

Huntington's perspective on behavioral lag is particularly relevant in Bayelsa, where modernization efforts such as governance reforms are undermined by the persistence of traditional attitudes. For example, the introduction of anti-corruption policies is often met with resistance due to entrenched norms that view corruption as acceptable or even necessary for survival. This gap between institutional reforms and societal attitudes reinforces governance deficits and perpetuates underdevelopment. Addressing this requires targeted efforts to reorient public attitudes through education, civic engagement, and leadership accountability.

Modernization theory also highlights the role of public attitudes in fostering or eroding trust in governance institutions. In Bayelsa, the normalization of corruption has created widespread cynicism among citizens, who view public institutions as ineffective and self-serving. Rebuilding trust requires not only institutional reforms but also visible changes in leadership behavior, such as transparency in decision-making and responsiveness to public needs. Positive leadership behaviors can inspire similar attitudes among citizens, creating a culture of accountability and collective progress.

By applying modernization theory, this study emphasizes the critical role of behavioral transformation in addressing corruption, leadership deficits, and underdevelopment in Bayelsa State. It underscores the need to shift societal norms and attitudes towards merit-based governance, innovation, and accountability as essential components of modernization. This behavioral realignment, coupled with institutional reforms and economic diversification, provides a pathway for breaking the cycle of corruption and fostering sustainable development in Bayelsa State.

1.7 Hypotheses

The literature reviewed and logic arising from the theory informs the following hypotheses:

- i) Corruption is positively linked to governance challenges in Bayelsa State.
- ii) The link between political corruption and governance deficits has contributed to underdevelopment in Bayelsa State.

1.8 Research Design

The research adopts the ex-post facto research design, a methodological framework that facilitates the examination of variables and phenomena that have already occurred, without experimental manipulation (Azalea, 2022). The ex-post facto design is particularly suited to this study as it examines the relationship between corruption (the independent variable) and its impacts on governance and development (the dependent variables) retrospectively. This approach allows for the exploration of social phenomena without influencing the variables under investigation. By merely observing and interpreting patterns—akin to Galileo’s observation of a ball rolling down an inclined plane—the study seeks to uncover meaningful connections between corruption and governance outcomes in Bayelsa State over the designated period.

The choice of the ex-post facto research design is particularly fitting for a study of this nature. By focusing on social phenomena that are deeply embedded in the fabric of Bayelsa State’s governance structures, the study avoids the ethical and practical challenges of experimental manipulation. Instead, it aims to establish connections between existing variables, offering insights into how corruption has shaped governance deficits and contributed to underdevelopment over the study period.

1.8.1 Sources of Data

The study relied on primary sourced materials from interviews for data. This was augmented with secondary sourced materials including relevant publications by academics as well as governmental and non-governmental entities provided insight on the challenges with corruption, issues with governance, and the developmental status of the state. Gathering data from the combination of these sources allowed for triangulation, which strengthened the findings of the research.

1.8.2 Population of the Study

The population for this study encompasses all residents of Bayelsa State. The local government areas in Bayelsa state are Yenagoa, Brass, Kolokumo/Opokuma, Nembe, Southern Ijaw, Ogbia, Sagbama and Ekeremor local government areas. The population from all eight local government areas is reflected in the population of the state which is 2,704,515 people (Bayelsa State Government, 2023). The population of this study would, however, be restricted only to adults 18 years old and above, with knowledge of governance issues in the state. This population includes public officials, registered voters, candidates, election officials, civil society organizations, and political analysts. This criterion is to ensure that participants are well aware of the intricacies and peculiarities of the issues under study.

1.8.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques

A subset of 24 participants would be incorporated in the research as its sample size with whom the interviews would be conducted. These participants would be drawn evenly from across all eight local government areas of the state under study – Bayela State. The size is considered fitting because, as scholarship argues, a sample of between 20 and 30 is fitting for reaching saturation in an interview (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). To select participants for the study, the researcher adopted

a judgmental sampling technique. This, being a non-probability sampling technique that allows researchers to include participants based on his judgment that they will enable him to meet the purpose of his study (Mwesh & Sakyi, 2020), was considered suited for the present investigation.

1.8.4 Instruments of Data Collection

To achieve its objectives, the study drew mainly from interviews with participants considered knowledgeable enough to provide insights that are fitting for answering the research questions and meeting set objectives. This instrument was carefully structured into three sections, first ascertaining participants' demographic data, while the second and third each posing tailored sub-questions fitting for each of the two respective research questions.

Interview data was augmented with relevant secondary materials published on a wide range of reputable and diverse data sources, including academic articles, government reports, international publications and media reports. Academic articles served to provide scholarly insights and theoretical underpinnings for understanding the dynamics of corruption, governance, and underdevelopment. They offer analytical perspectives that frame the interplay between these variables within the broader context of political and economic theory. Also, official documents from Nigerian governmental agencies contribute essential data on anti-corruption measures, governance indicators, and public administration. These sources reflect the policies and institutional frameworks addressing corruption in Bayelsa State. In addition to these, reports and analyses from global organizations such as Transparency International contextualize the local experience of corruption within a broader global and comparative framework. Lastly, media reports provide contemporary accounts and case studies, offering insights into the operational mechanisms of corruption and their immediate consequences on governance and development.

By triangulating these data sources, the study ensures a comprehensive and multi-faceted exploration of the subject, enhancing the depth, credibility, and reliability of the findings. The reliance on peer-reviewed and well-established materials further aligns with best practices in qualitative research methodologies, bolstering the validity of the study.

1.8.5. Validity of the Instruments

The validity of the interview instruments was ensured through expert review and pilot testing for face and content validity. Experts in political science reviewed the interview guide, providing feedback to refine the questions for clarity and relevance. Pilot interviews were conducted with a small sample to test the effectiveness of the guide and make necessary adjustments. This process ensured that the instruments accurately captured the intended data or measured what it purports to measure, and were appropriate for the study's objectives.

1.8.6 Reliability of the Instruments

Reliability was ensured through several rigorous procedures designed to maintain consistency and accuracy in the data collection process. The primary strategy involved the consistent application of the interview guide, which was adhered to across all interviews to minimize variability in the administration of the questions (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008). In this study, the Test-Retest (T-R) method was employed to assess the stability and consistency of the responses over time (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). This procedure involved administering interviews to a subset of respondents on two separate occasions. The responses were then compared using Spearman's Correlation

Coefficient (SCC) to evaluate the consistency of the data provided by the participants. An SPSS analysis to ascertain SCC for the test-retest data yielded a score of 0.85, indicating a high level of consistency between the responses at the two different time points. This high SCC value affirms the reliability of the instrument used in the study.

Additionally, all interviews were recorded, with participant consent, and transcribed verbatim to maintain accuracy. Multiple researchers independently reviewed the transcripts to identify and resolve discrepancies, ensuring consistent interpretation of the data.

1.8.7 Methods of Data Collection

This is a qualitative study that draws from both primary and secondary sources for data. Qualitative research is an approach that seeks to understand and interpret the meanings, experiences, and social phenomena from the perspective of participants. It emphasizes the exploration of complex phenomena within their natural contexts, often using methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Unlike quantitative research, which focuses on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research prioritizes rich, detailed descriptions and the subjective experiences of individuals (Creswell, 2013). This approach allows researchers to gain deeper insights into the underlying motivations, beliefs, and cultural norms that shape human behaviour and social interactions (Maxwell, 2013).

Combination of data sources allowed for in-depth probe into the issue under investigation. The study combines documentary method or documented evidence (as contained in newspaper publications, reports and other relevant documents) with interviews. The study will draw from a diverse array of reputable sources, encompassing academic articles, governmental reports, and publications from BYSIEC, among others. Academic articles contribute in-depth analyses and scholarly perspectives, offering a theoretical foundation and insights into the dynamics of local government election, the performance of duty bearers and the impact on democratisation. By incorporating these sources, the study ensures a comprehensive and multi-faceted exploration of the subject matter, enhancing the depth and reliability of the findings. Further depth in understanding of the subject matter was pursued by complementing the data gathered from documented (secondary) evidence with primary data generated from interviews with key stakeholders drawn from across the state.

1.8.8 Methods of Data Analysis

The study employs thematic analysis as the primary method of data analysis. This approach involves systematically identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns within the qualitative data. Empirical evidence gathered is scrutinized to reveal trends and relationships in the manifestations and impacts of corruption on governance in Bayelsa State. Key insights are presented under relevant themes, supported by textual descriptions, tables, and charts where applicable.

The analysis incorporates both deductive and inductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning is used to test existing theories and frameworks against the collected data, validating or challenging established knowledge. Inductive reasoning is applied to uncover emergent patterns and themes

that contribute to new understandings of corruption and its consequences in the context of Bayelsa State.

1.9 Empirical Verification (Testing the Hypothesis)

The study involved the administration of interviews with selected participants. This followed an interview guide carefully crafted to reflect the two research questions and objectives. In the subsections that follow, findings on each objective/question, thus, presented and analysed..

1.9.1 Corruption and Governance Challenges in Bayelsa State

Extant evidence as assembled in this study reveals that corruption is endemic, not only in Baelsa State, but in Nigeria as a whole. The former British Prime Minister, David Cameron’s description of Nigeria as fantastically corrupt points to the perception of the country on the international scene (BBC News, 2016). More so, Nigeria has consistently ranked poorly in the global corruption index. The table below, showing Nigeria’s position in Transparency International’s corruption ranking from 1999 to 2022 alludes to this:

Table 1: Nigeria in Global Corruption Ranking 1999 – 2022

S/N	Year	Score	Position	Number of Countries
1	1999	16	98	99
2	2000	12	90	91
3	2001	10	90	91
4	2002	16	101	102
5	2003	14	132	133
6	2004	16	144	146
7	2005	19	152	159
8	2006	22	142	163
9	2007	22	147	179
10	2008	27	121	180
11	2009	25	130	180
12	2010	24	134	178
13	2011	24	143	184
14	2012	27	139	170

S/N	Year	Score	Position	Number of Countries
15	2013	25	144	177
16	2014	27	136	175
17	2015	26	136	168
18	2016	28	136	176
19	2017	27	148	180
20	2018	27	144	180
21	2019	26	146	180
22	2020	25	149	179
23	2021	25	149	180
24	2022	24	160	180

Source: The Agora Policy Report (2023)

The trend in poor performance of Nigeria in global corruption ranking index as shown in the table above points to the endemic nature of corruption in the country. Considering the magnitude of corruption in governance in Nigeria, Uwak and Udofia, (2016) asserted that it would not be a mistake or an overstatement to assert that corruption is institutionalized in Nigeria. He further elucidated on the manifestations of corruption by asserting that corruption in Nigeria is evident in how legislatures are bribed by government institutions before budgets of their organization are passed, ministries receive bribes before awarding contracts, politicians buy votes to get elected to political office, inflation of contract figures, and so on (Uwak and Udofia, 2016). While some examples provided by Uwak and Udofia reflect the broader societal manifestations of corruption, the pointers to corruption in governance are difficult to miss.

Successive governments in Nigeria, both military and civilian, have assumed office on the promise of fighting corruption. In the immediate post-independence era, the military used the pervasive corruption and enormous rigging that characterised the 1964 and 1965 elections to justify their takeover of the initial post-independence administration. Similarly, after a long period of General Gowon's administration, an Assets Investigation Panel established by Murtala Mohammed to investigate state governors and other public officers who served under previous administrations indicted 10 of the 12 military governors who served under Gowon and had their assets frozen (Dent, 2023). Aside from the military governors, approximately 10,000 civil personnel were fired for corruption in what is known as the puge of civil service (Dent, 2023).

Buhari's military administration also exerted efforts at tackling corruption through the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) programme, and the setting up of many investigative tribunals to probe public officials. Under General Babangida's administration, over four hundred million Naira was

discovered to have been wasted on the Better Life Project following a probe of the regime (Dent, 2023). Corruption was also pervasive under the Sani Abacha administration as the recovery of the infamous 'Abacha loot' has become a seemingly extra source of foreign revenue for Nigeria. Billions of dollars stolen by Abacha were stashed in various countries, including Switzerland, Jersey Island (UK), Liechtenstein, and the United States. Over the years, significant amounts have been repatriated in multiple tranches, with specific figures detailed during different Nigerian administrations, including Abdulsalami, Obasanjo, Jonathan, and Buhari (The Nation, August 24, 2022).

The transition to democracy in 1999 brought about a newfound determination to combat corruption, which had previously seemed difficult to achieve. During Obasanjo's tenure, the EFCC and ICPC were founded with the purpose of combating corruption in Nigeria. Nevertheless, this failed to halt the pervasive corruption that had trailed the country since independence. Obasanjo, who professed to combat corruption, tried to extend his tenure beyond the two terms specified by the constitution by offering substantial sums of money to lawmakers to modify the constitution and enable him to pursue his goal for a third term (Uwak and Udofia, 2016). Upon Obasanjo's departure from power, it was documented that he granted contracts to himself and acquired or transformed some government assets for personal use (Aluko, 2022).

Yar'Adua became President after Obasanjo and demonstrated a strong dedication to combat corruption in Nigeria, however his nonverbal cues suggested otherwise. Yar'Adua's decision to halt the prosecution of former governor James Ibori and to dismiss Nuhu Ribadu as EFCC chairman demonstrated his lack of commitment to combating corruption. The death of Yar'Adua resulted in a brief tenure for his government, and his successor, Goodluck Jonathan, shown a lack of determination in combating corruption. Several political appointees under Jonathan were embroiled in corruption cases. Jonathan's ministers embezzled funds from the government coffers and evaded punishment. Notable instances include Miss Stella Odua's alleged heist of her ministry's finances to acquire bulletproof automobiles for her own use, as well as the alleged loot of a stunning \$9.3 billion by Diezani Allison Madueke, former Minister of Petroleum.

The administration of Muhammadu Buhari assumed power on the promise to tackle corruption and insecurity in Nigeria. His fight against corruption was, however, described as a witch-hunt, and accused of being selective. His reinstatement of Rasheed Maina, the former chairman of the defunct pension fund task force who was standing trail for corrupt practices while in office as head of the task force, was a clear pointer to the lack of genuine commitment to tackle corruption.

Over the years, Nigeria's anti-corruption body, the EFCC has indicted some former governors over corruption cases and placed others on watch lists. The table below summarizing these cases as reported by Akhigbe (2016), a columnist for *Business Day* a Nigerian-based online news outfit shows the pervasiveness and enormity of corruption in governance within Nigeria.

Table 2: Former Governors Indicted for Corruption or Under EFCC's Watchlist

S/N	Former Governor	State	Corruption Cases/Charges
1	Diepreye Alamieyeseigha	Bayelsa	Money laundering charges related to £1.8 million found in the UK
2	Joshua Dariye	Plateau	Initially accused of diverting N1.126 billion state's ecological funds
3	Murtala Nyako	Adamawa	Under EFCC's watch-list
4	Ikedi Ohakim	Imo	Under EFCC's watch-list
5	Sule Lamido	Jigawa	Under EFCC's watch-list
6	Timipre Sylva	Bayelsa	Under EFCC's watch-list
7	Martin Elechi	Ebonyi	Under EFCC's watch-list
8	Ibrahim Shema	Katsina	Under EFCC's watch-list
9	Chimaroke Nnamani	Enugu	Under EFCC's watch-list
10	Orji Uzor Kalu	Abia	Under EFCC's watch-list
11	Saminu Turaki	Jigawa	Under EFCC's watch-list
12	Abubakar Audu (late)	Kogi	Under EFCC's watch-list
13	Danjuma Goje	Gombe	Under EFCC's watch-list
14	Aliyu Akwe Doma	Nasarrawa	Under EFCC's watch-list
15	Jolly Nyame	Taraba	Under EFCC's watch-list
16	Ali Modu Sheriff	Borno	Under EFCC's watch-list
17	Gabriel Suswan	Benue	Under EFCC's watch-list
18	Ayo Fayose	Ekiti	Under EFCC's watch-list
19	Lucky Igbinedion	Edo	Embezzlement of over N19 billion; Convicted for non-declaration of assets
20	James Ibori	Delta	Convicted in the UK for stealing at least \$250 million of public funds

Source: Akhigbe (2016)

It is important to note that of twenty names listed in the table above, two are former governors of Bayelsa State. Considering that this is from a country with 36 states, it raises serious concern about

the prevalence of corruption in leadership circles within Bayelsa State. The voices from the field further allude to the pervasiveness of corruption in Bayelsa State leadership cycle. This is evident in the assertion that:

Corruption in Bayelsa State is not even something to argue about. You see those politicians? The only reason they go into office is to steal public funds. That is why everybody is going into politics. Everybody is struggling to gain access so they can enrich themselves.

The impact of corruption on governance in Bayelsa State is tacitly captured in the quote above. This sentiment encapsulates the systemic nature of corruption and the perception that public office has become synonymous with personal enrichment. Political corruption in Bayelsa State has significantly eroded the legitimacy of governance. The state's political landscape is rife with allegations of bribery, embezzlement, and vote-buying, which undermine the credibility of elections and the effectiveness of governance. For example, a former governor of Bayelsa, Diepreye Alamiyeseigha, was convicted of money laundering involving £1.8 million, a stark illustration of how public funds meant for development are diverted to private coffers. Similarly, Timipre Sylva, another former governor, remains on the EFCC's watchlist for alleged financial crimes committed during his tenure. The systemic nature of these issues has left many citizens disillusioned with the political process, as one respondent noted:

Elections here are about who has the most money to pay voters and bribe officials. It's never about competence or what the candidate can do for the people.

This systemic corruption fosters a culture of impunity among political leaders, who often face little or no consequence for their actions. Even when cases are brought to light, the slow judicial process and lack of enforcement ensure that many accused officials continue to wield significant influence. The lack of accountability perpetuates a cycle where corrupt practices are not only normalized but also incentivized, thereby weakening governance structures and public trust.

Bayelsa State, rich in oil resources, exemplifies the paradox of resource wealth and governance failure. Despite being one of Nigeria's wealthiest states in terms of revenue generation, the state grapples with widespread poverty, dilapidated infrastructure, and poor service delivery. This contradiction is largely attributed to the mismanagement of public resources by corrupt officials. A local respondent lamented:

We are supposed to be a rich state, but look around. No good roads, no functional hospitals, and the schools are in terrible condition. Where is all the money going?"

The diversion of funds intended for public projects has a cascading effect on governance. Projects are often abandoned midway, inflated in cost, or poorly executed, leaving the populace underserved and further entrenching socio-economic disparities. For instance, funds allocated for road construction or healthcare are frequently embezzled, leaving communities without critical infrastructure. These governance deficits fuel public discontent and diminish trust in state

institutions, creating a governance environment where inefficiency and ineffectiveness become the norm. The impact of corruption on service delivery in Bayelsa State cannot be overstated. Public services such as education, healthcare, and water supply are severely affected by corrupt practices, leaving citizens to bear the brunt of governance failures. A teacher from Yenagoa explained:

Our schools are falling apart. Teachers are not paid on time, and sometimes, we have to buy chalk with our own money. How can we provide quality education in this kind of situation?"

This anecdote underscores how corruption in the education sector compromises the quality of teaching and learning, perpetuating cycles of poverty and underdevelopment. Similarly, the healthcare sector in Bayelsa suffers from chronic underfunding and mismanagement, despite significant budgetary allocations. One healthcare worker remarked:

Hospitals are running out of basic supplies, and many rural clinics are non-functional. Pregnant women and children are the worst hit. It's heartbreaking.

These challenges are exacerbated by the embezzlement of funds meant for healthcare improvements, leaving many communities without access to essential medical services. The lack of accountability in service delivery highlights the broader governance issues stemming from corruption, where public officials prioritize personal gain over societal welfare.

Corruption has significantly eroded public trust in governance in Bayelsa State. Citizens are increasingly skeptical of government initiatives, viewing them as opportunities for officials to enrich themselves rather than avenues for development. One civil society activist stated: "*People don't trust the government anymore. When they announce new projects, the first thing that comes to mind is, 'How much will they steal this time?'*" This pervasive distrust hampers civic engagement and reduces the likelihood of public cooperation in governance initiatives.

The erosion of trust also affects the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts. Many citizens perceive these efforts as superficial or politically motivated, rather than genuine attempts to tackle corruption. For instance, the selective prosecution of political opponents under the guise of anti-corruption campaigns has further deepened public cynicism. Without trust in governance, the social contract between the state and its citizens weakens, making it difficult to implement reforms or foster collective action for development.

Bureaucratic corruption is another significant challenge affecting governance in Bayelsa State. This form of corruption manifests in the misallocation of public funds, bribery in administrative processes, and nepotism in appointments. A civil servant shared:

Getting anything done in this state requires you to 'settle' someone. Even to get your pension after retirement, you have to bribe officials. It's frustrating.

Such practices not only undermine the efficiency of public administration but also create barriers for ordinary citizens seeking to access basic services.

Bureaucratic corruption also stifles innovation and meritocracy within the civil service. Qualified individuals are often overlooked for appointments or promotions in favor of those with political connections or the ability to pay bribes. This lack of meritocracy affects the quality of governance, as key positions are occupied by individuals who may lack the requisite skills or commitment to public service. The resultant inefficiency further compounds governance deficits, creating a cycle of poor administration and service delivery.

One of the most troubling aspects of corruption in Bayelsa State is its normalization within society. Corrupt practices are often seen as a way of life, with individuals rationalizing their actions as necessary for survival in a corrupt system. A youth leader noted:

Everyone is trying to survive. If you don't play the game, you'll be left behind.
That's just how things work here.

This normalization not only perpetuates corruption but also makes it more difficult to implement effective anti-corruption measures. The societal acceptance of corruption creates an environment where ethical governance is the exception rather than the rule. Public officials who attempt to resist corrupt practices often face significant pushback, both from within the system and from a populace accustomed to transactional governance. Breaking this cycle requires a cultural shift that emphasizes transparency, accountability, and the collective good over private gain.

1.9.2 Corruption, Governance Deficit and Underdevelopment in Bayelsa State

The literature widely links corruption to development. Examining the situation in Bayelsa State, this link becomes very palpable. Bayelsa State was ranked the second most underdeveloped state in Nigeria's 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index. Taking this ranking side by side with the pervasive corruption and voices on the link between corruption, governance deficit and underdevelopment from participants in the state, the study sees a clear link between corruption-induced governance deficit and various aspects of underdevelopment in Bayelsa State.

Table 3: Top 10 Poorest States in Nigeria

S/N	State	Percentage of Poor People (%)	Domestic Debt (Naira, bn)	Foreign Debt (USD, m)
1	Sokoto	90.5	90.6	36.56
2	Bayelsa	88.5	146.37	60.39
3	Gombe	86.2	139.32	32.48
4	Jigawa	84.3	43.95	26.99
5	Plateau	84	149.01	32.4
6	Yobe	83.5	90.76	22.51
7	Kebbi	82.2	61.31	40.93
8	Taraba	79.4	87.96	46.47
9	Ebonyi	78	76.5	58.57
10	Zamfara	78	112.2	28.86

Source: Tunji, S. (2023, June 8). 10 poorest states owe over N1tn, provide govs jumbo package. *Punch News*.

Corruption-induced governance deficits have been central to Bayelsa State's persistent underdevelopment, manifesting across critical sectors and deeply entrenching poverty, inequality, and socio-economic stagnation. Governance deficits occur when state institutions fail to fulfil their responsibilities effectively due to systemic corruption, resulting in a breakdown of the social contract and a failure to deliver essential public goods. In Bayelsa, this deficit has turned a resource-rich state into a stark illustration of squandered potential, as corruption diverts resources meant for public welfare into private coffers.

Bayelsa's dependence on oil wealth offers a clear example of how corruption undermines governance and exacerbates underdevelopment. Despite being one of Nigeria's top oil-producing states, Bayelsa struggles with dilapidated infrastructure, poor healthcare, and inadequate education. This paradox is explained by the mismanagement of oil revenues through corrupt practices, such as embezzlement and inflated contracts. A respondent from a local community remarked:

We see billions being reported in the media as revenues from oil, but when you look around, nothing has changed for us. The money ends up in private pockets.

The governance deficit created by this mismanagement not only deprives citizens of basic services but also erodes the state's ability to invest in long-term developmental projects. The absence of functional infrastructure is one of the most visible manifestations of underdevelopment in Bayelsa State, directly linked to corruption-induced governance failures. Roads in the state remain in poor condition, despite repeated budgetary allocations for their repair and construction. Projects are often abandoned halfway or constructed with substandard materials due to corrupt practices. For instance, funds meant for road construction are frequently siphoned off by public officials through inflated contracts or ghost projects. A respondent noted:

In Bayelsa, road contracts are like ATM machines for politicians. They award the contract, collect the money, and the roads remain the same. A single road takes at least two tenures to do. They are used as campaign strategies.

This infrastructural decay impacts economic activities by increasing transportation costs, limiting access to markets, and discouraging investment. The lack of reliable transportation networks also isolates rural communities, further marginalizing them and exacerbating regional inequalities. Similarly, corruption has severely impacted public utilities like electricity and water supply, leaving many communities without these essential services. The governance failures in infrastructure development underscore how corruption perpetuates a cycle of underdevelopment, depriving citizens of the foundational assets necessary for economic and social progress.

The education sector in Bayelsa offers another poignant example of how governance deficits driven by corruption contribute to underdevelopment. Despite significant federal and state funding, schools in Bayelsa often lack basic infrastructure, qualified teachers, and learning materials. A teacher lamented:

Our classrooms are overcrowded, the roofs are leaking, and we don't even have enough chairs for the students. Where is the money going?

Funds meant for the rehabilitation of schools or the provision of educational resources are routinely diverted, leaving the sector underfunded and unable to meet the needs of its students. This chronic underfunding has long-term implications for the state's human capital development. Many young people in Bayelsa are unable to access quality education, limiting their employment prospects and perpetuating cycles of poverty. Corruption in the recruitment and payment of teachers further exacerbates these challenges, as bribes are often required to secure teaching positions, while delays in salary payments demotivate educators and disrupt learning. The governance failures in education highlight how corruption not only wastes resources but also undermines the state's ability to build a skilled and empowered workforce, which is essential for sustainable development.

Corruption-induced governance deficits have also crippled the healthcare sector in Bayelsa State, leaving many communities without access to basic medical services. Public hospitals and clinics are often underfunded and poorly equipped, despite substantial budgetary allocations. A healthcare worker shared:

We don't even have the basic drugs to treat patients. People have to buy everything themselves, even in emergency situations.

Funds meant for healthcare infrastructure, equipment, and medicines are frequently embezzled, leaving facilities unable to meet the needs of the population. This lack of access to healthcare services has dire consequences, particularly for vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, children, and the elderly. Maternal and infant mortality rates remain high, and preventable diseases like malaria and typhoid are widespread. The governance deficit in healthcare also undermines public confidence in state institutions, as citizens see little return on the taxes and revenues generated from the state's vast oil wealth. These failures illustrate how corruption not only diminishes the quality of life but also hampers the state's ability to achieve key development indicators, such as improved health outcomes and increased life expectancy.

The governance deficit in Bayelsa State has stifled economic development, leaving the state heavily reliant on federal allocations and oil revenues. Corruption diverts funds away from productive investments, such as agriculture, tourism, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which could diversify the state's economy and create jobs. A business owner explained:

There is no support for local businesses. The government only focuses on oil, and even there, the money doesn't reach the people."

The lack of economic diversification has left Bayelsa vulnerable to external shocks, such as fluctuations in global oil prices. This dependency on a single revenue source has stymied growth and limited opportunities for the broader population. Corruption in the allocation of business grants and loans further discourages entrepreneurship, as funds are often awarded based on political connections rather than merit. These governance failures create a hostile environment for economic activity, perpetuating unemployment and deepening poverty.

Corruption-induced governance deficits also exacerbate social inequality in Bayelsa State, as public resources are concentrated in the hands of a few while the majority struggle to meet basic needs. Wealth disparities are stark, with political elites enjoying lavish lifestyles while ordinary citizens live in poverty. A youth activist observed:

The politicians are building mansions and driving expensive cars, while the rest of us can't even afford three meals a day."

This inequality fosters social unrest and discontent, as marginalized communities feel excluded from the benefits of governance and development. The concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a corrupt elite undermines social cohesion and creates an environment where grievances can escalate into conflict. Addressing these disparities requires tackling the root causes of corruption and ensuring that governance structures are inclusive and equitable.

Bayelsa State's reliance on oil has also led to significant environmental degradation, a problem compounded by corruption and governance failures. Oil spills, gas flaring, and deforestation have devastated local ecosystems, affecting livelihoods and health. Corruption in environmental regulation allows oil companies to evade accountability for these damages, leaving communities to bear the brunt of the environmental crisis. A farmer noted:

Our lands are no longer fertile, and the rivers are polluted. We can't farm or fish like we used to. The government doesn't care.

The governance deficit in environmental management not only undermines sustainable development but also exacerbates poverty and food insecurity in affected communities. Addressing these issues requires transparent and accountable governance that prioritizes environmental sustainability alongside economic growth.

The human cost of corruption-induced governance deficits in Bayelsa State is profound. From failing schools and hospitals to crumbling infrastructure and environmental degradation, the manifestations of underdevelopment are felt in every aspect of daily life. As one respondent summarized: "Bayelsa is a state with so much potential, but corruption is killing us. We need leaders who will put the people first and stop stealing our future."

These voices from the field highlight the urgent need for governance reforms that address corruption and prioritize public welfare. Without such changes, the state's development trajectory will remain stagnant, leaving future generations to inherit the consequences of today's governance failures.

1.10 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that corruption fundamentally undermines governance in Bayelsa State, creating systemic inefficiencies that disrupt the delivery of public services and impede developmental progress. By diverting resources away from critical sectors such as infrastructure, healthcare, education, and environmental management, corruption erodes the capacity of state institutions to function effectively, leaving citizens to bear the brunt of inadequate service delivery

and socio-economic stagnation. This governance failure extends beyond resource mismanagement, fostering a culture of impunity and weakening accountability mechanisms essential for transparent and equitable governance. The pervasive nature of corruption not only undermines trust in public institutions but also entrenches poverty and inequality, creating a vicious cycle that perpetuates underdevelopment. Without decisive measures to combat corruption, Bayelsa State's governance framework will remain incapable of driving sustainable growth and meeting the needs of its people.

Corruption-induced governance deficits remain the central barrier to sustainable development in Bayelsa State, manifesting in systemic failures across infrastructure, education, healthcare, economic diversification, and environmental management. Despite its resource wealth, particularly in oil production, the state exemplifies squandered potential due to the diversion of public funds for private gain, leaving critical sectors underfunded and underperforming. Voices from the field underscore the human toll of these deficits, with citizens lamenting dilapidated infrastructure, failing schools, inaccessible healthcare, limited economic opportunities, and stark social inequalities. Environmental degradation, exacerbated by corruption in regulatory oversight, further compounds the challenges, threatening livelihoods and public health. These pervasive failures not only hinder immediate service delivery but also erode public trust in governance, entrench poverty, and deepen socio-economic disparities. Addressing these entrenched issues requires robust governance reforms that prioritise transparency, accountability, and the equitable allocation of resources, ensuring that public welfare takes precedence over personal enrichment and that Bayelsa's vast potential is harnessed for the benefit of its people. The conclusion above informs the following recommendations:

- To address Corruption and Governance Deficit, measures should be introduced to strengthen anti-corruption institutions like EFCC and ICPC by enhancing their autonomy, resources, and enforcement powers. Also, e-governance platforms should be used to promote transparency in public spending and reduce discretionary decision-making. Lastly, independent oversight bodies should be established to monitor resource allocation and enforce accountability.
- To promote Development, authorities in Bayelsa state should diversify the economy beyond oil by investing in agriculture, tourism, and SMEs to generate jobs and drive growth. They should also ensure equitable resource allocation in critical sectors like education, healthcare, and infrastructure through participatory planning.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. This discussion is part of a research study exploring corruption, governance deficits, and underdevelopment in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, between 2015 and 2024. Your insights will help us better understand the relationship between corruption and governance challenges and how these factors contribute to the state's developmental outcomes. The interview is divided into three sections: demographic details, corruption and governance challenges, and the relationship between governance deficits and underdevelopment. Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. Please feel free to share your honest opinions and experiences.

Section 1: Participant Demographics

1. Can you tell me your name, occupation, and years of experience in this role?
2. What is your level of engagement with governance processes in Bayelsa State (e.g., policymaker, civil society member, public official, academic, or citizen)?
3. How familiar are you with issues related to corruption, governance, and development in Bayelsa State?

Section 2: Corruption and Governance Challenges

Objective: To examine if corruption is positively linked to governance challenges in Bayelsa State

4. From your perspective, how does corruption manifest in Bayelsa State?
5. What do you think are the primary drivers of corruption within governance systems in the state?
6. Can you identify specific examples where corruption has directly impacted governance processes (e.g., public accountability, transparency, or decision-making)?
7. In your view, how has corruption affected public trust in governance institutions in Bayelsa State?
8. What role do cultural norms and societal attitudes play in enabling or discouraging corrupt practices?

Section 3: Corruption, Governance Deficits, and Underdevelopment

Objective: To assess if the interplay between political corruption and governance deficits has contributed to underdevelopment in Bayelsa State

9. How do you perceive the relationship between governance deficits and underdevelopment in Bayelsa State?
10. Can you provide examples of how corruption-induced governance failures have impacted key sectors such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure?

11. How do you think governance deficits in Bayelsa State affect economic and social outcomes for its residents?
12. In your opinion, what specific reforms or measures could break the cycle of corruption and governance deficits in the state?
13. What role can citizens, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders play in improving governance and addressing underdevelopment?

Thank you for participating.