



GOD-FATHERISM AND GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The impact of the godfathers on Nigeria's general elections was unprecedented. Its contemporary manifestations suggest that it has assumed epidemic proportions, becoming one of the greatest threats to democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of godfatherism on governance in Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey research design type as the information collected from the participants (Political science lecturers) were used for the purpose of predicting, describing and interpreting the subject matter. The population consists of some selected Political science lecturers in twenty (20) purposively selected tertiary institutions in South West, Nigeria making a total of One hundred (100) respondents. The main instrument for data collection is a self-structured questionnaire based on the two (2) research objectives raised in the study. The data collected from the respondents was analysed using Chi-square statistical tool at 0.05 alpha level. To ensure the validity of the instrument, the researcher gave the draft of the questionnaire to the experts in Test and Measurement to restructure the instrument in line with the research objectives. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted, the scores were tabulated, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient formula was applied and a correlation coefficient of 0.852 was obtained. Findings from the study revealed that there is significant relationship between godfatherism and governance in Nigeria and there is significant impact of godfatherism on governance in Nigeria. The study concludes that Nigerian political leaders should concern themselves with the welfare and interest of people, which is assumed to be the necessary and sufficient condition of governance and its legitimacy. The study recommends that there is need to reform electoral laws in Nigeria until it can measure to the yearning of Nigerians in such a way that it will discourage godfatherism in electoral process of our political office holders. Also the researcher recommends that Nigerian electoral laws should be reformed to mitigate the funding of political parties and their candidates by individuals and corporate organizations.

Background to the Study

In an emerging democracy, the well-being of the citizens largely depends on the extent to which the democratic institution is strengthened and sustained. This according to Bonnie and Khinde (2007) is because good governance, selfless leaders, and mutual trust between the leaders and the led could be guaranteed if

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the choice of who should govern the society at any given time is solely engineered by the citizens on one hand and on steady and sustained democratic machinery on the other hand. Though, almost all the nations of the world have embraced the principle of democracy because it is perceived as the only mechanism through which the interest, well-being, rights, and lives of the citizenry could be protected and guaranteed. However, its practices have taken different dimensions across the globe. In developing nations, for example, it has been characterized by Godfatherism, party politics, tribal and religious politics, and money-bag politics. Though Godfatherism in Nigerian politics is not new, it has gained more prominence in all the states of the federation, helping many to ride into political power (Onabanjo, 2013). More so, the Political kingmakers cut across party lines irrespective of party affiliations.

The menace of Godfatherism, in recent times, has become a common phenomenon in the entire country and has threatened the democratic institutions in Nigeria thereby undermining the sanctity of the system and the wish of the Nigerian people (Omotola, 2010; Orji, 2013 & Ukaeje, 2018).

Governance according to The United Nation Development Programme (1997) is the totality of the exercise of authority in the management of a country's affairs comprising complex mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, and mediate their differences. The business of governance is made easy in administration by creating structures in channels of communications and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, and mediate their differences (Ojo & Lawal, 2018). The World Bank (1991) views governance as "The manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development". Governance primarily demands that state operators deploy state resources in a manner that ensures material advancement for the people.

Egwu (2005) opined that one of the areas rocking the post-colonial African state is the prevalence of unaccountable government. Hyden and Bratton (1991) refer to governance as "The conscious management of regime structure with a view to enhancing the legitimacy of the public sphere". Effective governance guarantees proper representation of all, in the day to day activities as reflected through the federal character principle that equally allocates vacancies in the civil service.



The impact of Godfatherism in Nigerian politics gave rise to the evaluation of the concept and its implications on the politics of the country. Godfatherism is a symbiotic relationship between two persons namely: the godfather and the godson, where the godfather uses his political power and wealth to secure political position for the godson, who upon ascension into power pays gratification to his godfather in kind or in cash. Godfatherism in politics hinders good governance in the country and adversely contributed significantly to the menace of corruption which not only posed a great threat to good governance but also to the socio-economic development and stability of democratic governance. It is important to know that Godfatherism' became endemic within the Nigerian state by the long rule of military fascism with dynamic creators like Babangida (1985-1993) and Abacha (1993-1998) which bedeviled Nigeria's fourth republic from 1999-till date (Ibeanu, 2011; Tukur, 2014 & Ukaeje, 2018).

In some cases when there are court judgments voiding the establishment of the godson, no one is called upon to account for the state reserves designated and used amid the illicit occupation which sums to both financial and economic loss. The results of this godfatherism in our polity is that economic activities are brought to an end, particularly the critical sectors of the economy like education, security and health, by reason of political wrangling. By implication, godfatherism within the situation relating to the social re-orientation of the individuals is borne out of the reality that mediocrity is celebrated in place of meritocracy. The typical cultural diction in Nigeria is that for a child to be extraordinary in life, that child must have the desire of being educated in life which is able to make a stage for his greatness. Contemporarily the dictates of the political godfather on the child's candidacy to fill-in the accessible opportunities are exclusively borne out of the discretion of the godfather.

In Nigeria today, the activities of godfathers have been on the increase and it is a very sad irony that a country like Nigeria through which trillions of petroleum dollars have passed since the 70's have the most miserable infrastructures, medical services, educational system and standards (Yagboyaju, 2013; Ukaeje, 2018). The worst are unemployment, deplorable roads and non-existent transportation system. The living standard of the average Nigerians does not reflect the oil wealth of the country. The country is quite below in the world's



poverty marginal index because as at 2005, 70.8 percent of the population was estimated to be living below poverty line of \$1 per day. (Statista Report, 2021). The above-mentioned crises and the problems of confidence in our political system offer an opportunity for advocates of new ideas. The barriers to true democratic participation in the political process are serious, landscaping and deeply ingrained. To the extent that our system of political democracy “works” in most instances it works, only for a very small group of the citizenry the “godfathers” (Ikejiani: 2006). Godfather in this sense means, that man who has enormous resources at his disposal with little or no credibility, while godfatherism is the process by which an individual establishes links with a given institutional hierarchy in the expectation of favoured treatment.

The impact of the godfathers on Nigeria’s general elections was unprecedented. Godfathers are those who have the security connections, extended local links, enormous financial weight to plot and determine the success of a power seeker at any level of a supposedly competitive politics. Although Godfatherism has an institutionalized feature in Nigerian politics over the years (Babatope, 2016), its contemporary manifestations suggest that it has assumed epidemic proportions, becoming one of the greatest threats to democratic consolidation in Nigeria. This paper therefore seeks to examine the impact of Godfatherism on governance in Nigeria using Lagos State, Nigeria as a case study.

Statement of the Problem

According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2019, development involves progression, movement and advancement towards something better. Democracy could be said to be better as compared to the time of dictators, but sad enough, our democracy has been characterized by the menace of Godfatherism, politicking of core government policies and programmes against the interest of the Nigerian people. In furtherance to this, the Nigerian democratic system has been threatened with massive corruption, policy reversal, human rights abuse and economic uncertainty. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines Godfatherism and its impact on governance in Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of godfatherism on governance in Nigeria. Specifically; the objectives of this study are to:

- i. Examine the relationship between godfatherism and governance in Nigeria using Lagos State as a case study.
- ii. Investigate the impact level of godfatherism on governance in Nigeria using Lagos State as a case study.

Research Hypotheses:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between godfatherism and governance in Nigeria

H₀₂: There is no significant impact of godfatherism on governance in Nigeria

Literature Review

Concept of Godfatherism

Godfatherism is a well-known phenomenon in Nigerian politics and godfathers are popular in their activities and operations during elections. Godfatherism has become more influential in Nigerian politics because of the increasing level of money politics and weak electoral regulations that allow for private funding (INEC, 2005). Due to exorbitant rate of contesting for an elective position, not all contestants are buoyant enough to finance their campaign expenses therefore; the most successful candidates are those that are financed by wealthy godfathers (Human Rights Watch, 2007). In return, the financiers of elections known as godfathers demand for control of politicians that they sponsored into political offices in terms of sharing of public loots, award of lucrative contracts, offer of juicy political appointments in most cases. (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

Godfathers are investors and contract providers who take the burden of political party voter mobilisation and undertake the responsibilities of candidates' elections expenditure adequately as they wield huge financial muscle (Olarinmoye, 2008). The politics of godfatherism has become a worrisome scenario in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic and most pronounced as a result of the abolition of state sponsorship of parties and increase in private spending (Ayoade, 2008).



Godfathers are self centred politicians who rule by proxy. They sponsor politicians in order to manipulate them and control power underground. Sometimes they may not be qualified themselves to contest so they anoint candidates to rule on their behalf (Ayoade, 2008). They subvert democracy through illegal practices as observed above by Olarinmoye (2008). It has been observed that, most candidates that emerged successful during the general elections were those sponsored by godfathers as they take over the control of political parties and impose candidates on them (Kura, 2014).

Thus, it can be summed up from the above divergent views that godfatherism is simply the act of providing political party financing through a group of small elite body that constituted itself into power brokers and king makers, in return for indirect power control and material benefits being an investment that is massively made for profit.

Concept of Governance

The concept of Governance has been in use at least since the fourteenth century. First it was used in France during that period that implied seat of government. It had begun range of meanings from the act or manner of governing its office or power, which made it synonymous with government, to being virtuous or wise in one's general behaviour. Governance refers to a process of the act or function of exercising (usually legitimate) authority to regulate affairs of men in given territory, generally a State. In effect, it is the conduct of business of a policy or society. Again, because of a generally implied orientation of people in favour of a democracy, defined as a government of the people, by the people and so for the people, the "good" and "welfare" or "interest" of people is assumed to be the necessary and sufficient condition of governance (not to speak of good governance) and its legitimacy.(Arora, 2007). In earlier period the term governance was used in a broader sense of government, which is not suitable in present times. Governance means more than maintaining law and order. In other words, we can say that it is a participative system in which those who are called upon to govern on behalf of the people are motivated with a will to giving their best, serving and doing good to the people, solving their day to day problems and making their lives more liveable, satisfying and enjoyable. Governance is the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a nation's



affairs. It embraces all the modes of good and bad that societies uses to distribute power and administer public resources. Governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's social and economic resources for development. (Frey, 2008).

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design where questionnaire was used to acquire necessary data for the research work. Population comprises of all civil servants in Amuwo Odofin Local Government Area, Lagos State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select fifty (50) participants (public servants) who have been in the public service for not less than 10 years as a sample for the study. A self-developed questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The research instrument used for the study was a questionnaire. Two hypothesized research objectives were formulated and tested for the study at 0.05 alpha level. The questionnaire contained items on the main title of study. To ensure the validity of the instrument, the researcher gave the draft of the questionnaire to the experts in Test and Measurement to restructure the instrument in line with the research objectives. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted, the scores were tabulated, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient formula was applied and a correlation coefficient of 0.852 was obtained. On the basis of the corrections done on the questionnaire and the test-retest reliability coefficient computed, the instrument was judged adequate, valid and reliable for the purpose of gathering relevant data for the study.

Also, the instrument was given to experts for construct and content validation. Data collected were analyzed using Chi-square statistical tool.

Presentation of Data Analysis, Results

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between godfatherism and governance in Nigeria using Amuwo Odofin Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria.



Table 1: Chi-square table on the significant relationship between godfatherism and governance in Nigeria

Summary of Chi –Square Table

A	SA	D	SD	TOTAL	L.S	DF	X ² cal	X ² tab	Decision
31	19	25	25	100	0.05	12	45.271	21.026	Rejected
21	18	40	21	100					
38	32	19	11	100					
28	42	16	14	100					
43	26	24	7	100					
161	137	124	78	500					

Decision Rule

At 12 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance , Chi –square tabulated is 21.026. Since the Chi –square calculated of 45.271 is greater than Chi- square tabulated of 21.026 ($X^2_{cal} > X^2_{tab}$), the null hypothesis which says there is no significant relationship between godfatherism and governance in Nigeria was rejected. This implies that there is a relationship between godfatherism and governance in Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant impact level of godfatherism on governance in Nigeria.

Table 2: Chi-square table on the significant impact level of godfatherism on governance in Nigeria.

Summary of Chi –Square Table

A	SA	D	SD	TOTAL	L.S	DF	X ² cal	X ² tab	Decision
63	24	10	3	100	0.05	12	62.039	21.026	Rejected
48	41	6	5	100					
38	44	10	8	100					
41	37	18	4	100					
31	14	42	13	100					
221	160	86	33	500					

Decision Rule

Table 2 shows that at 12 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance, Chi – square tabulated is 21.026. Since the Chi –square calculated of 62.039 is greater than chi- square tabulated of 21.026 ($X^2_{cal} > X^2_{tab}$), the null hypothesis which says that there is no significant impact of godfathersism on governance in Nigeria was rejected. Hence, it can be submitted that there is significant impact of godfatherism on governance in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

From the data obtained in table 1 for null hypothesis one, the hypothesis which states that “there is no significant relationship between godfatherism and governance in Nigeria” was rejected because the Chi- square calculated value (45.271) is greater than the critical value (21.026) at 0.05 alpha level. This study was in support of Dickson (2016) who posit that the philosophy of godfather is grounded in the sociology of African culture and not in democratic values. He further showed evidence to the popular relationship between ‘Nnam-ukwu’ (my master) and ‘Odibo’ (the servant) in the Igbo traditional concept. A younger person is entrusted to a more mature and experienced person for training in social, economic and moral adulthood. The role played by the man in this kind of relationship is akin to that of a godfather. Also, Soyinka (2004) noted that the present-day godfatherism is a primordial tradition taken to a criminal extent. The relationship between godfather and godson is not free floating, it is contractual and the contract is sometimes written and even sealed spiritually with an oath, or at the extreme, in a ‘shrine’ at the expense of the Nigerian people. Therefore, it can be submitted that there is significant, but negative relationship between godfatherism and governance. That is to say, with any involvement of godfatherism in political affairs of a state, good governance cannot be guaranteed. In null hypothesis two which states that “there is no significant impact level of godfatherism on governance in Nigeria” was rejected. The data in table 2 revealed that the Chi-square calculated value (62.039) is greater than the critical value (21.026). The findings of this study is in conformity with Ayoade, 2006 and Attah *et al.*, (2014) that posit that Democracy, in liberal perspective, is “government by popular representation; a form of government in which the supreme power is retained by the people, but is indirectly exercised through a system of representation and delegated authority periodically renewed with a constitutional



representative government. Therefore, democracy can literarily be submitted as government of the people by the people and for the people. It is accepted that liberal democracy has some universal values such as, free press, openness and transparency of government, respect for the rule of law and constitutionalism, accountability, equity and inclusiveness, participation, consensus orientation and effective and efficient service delivery. In Nigeria, the concept of democracy has been misconstrued with mere civil rule due to the influence of godfatherism, because the practice has not witnessed freedom of choice, constituted authority, respect for the rule of law, sagacity and service delivery (Ohiole & Ojo, 2016).

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it was revealed that politics of godfatherism is an obstruction to Nigeria's democracy. It has gained prominence and assumed dominant feature of electoral politics and governance. Implicitly, political godfatherism encourages corruption, breeds acute unemployment, electoral malpractices, abject poverty and political instability. This pattern of relationship poses a great threat to not only good governance but also the socio-economic and political development and stability of democratic governance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is therefore recommended that:

1. There is need to reform electoral laws in Nigeria until it can measure to the yearning of Nigerians in such a way that will discourage godfatherism in electoral process of our political office holders.
2. Nigerian electoral laws should be reformed to mitigate the funding of political parties and their candidates by individuals and corporate organizations.
3. The present Independent Electoral Commission Act signed by President Buhari that enables automatic uploading of electoral results into INEC database for onward transmission should be enforced by all the stakeholders. This will ensure that the popular and best candidate is voted into positions in Nigeria.
4. There is need for a purposeful leadership that has a vision of how to place Nigerians at the centre of political project without recourse to patron-client

relationship, which will see acquisition of political power as not an end in itself but a means for serving the collective interest of its people regardless of their ethnic origin.

5. Politics of godfatherism should be discouraged and our democratic institution should be reinforced to evade from the politics of godfatherism of central government policies and programmes.

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