Evaluating the Consequences of Godfatherism on Nigeria's Political System in the South-East Geopolitical Zone, From 1999 To 2023

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the consequences of godfatherism on Nigeria's political system in the south-east geopolitical zone from 1999 to 2023. A survey research design was employed to investigate the impact of godfatherism on the political system in the region. A sample of 400 respondents was selected through a stratified random sampling technique. The findings revealed that godfatherism is a pervasive phenomenon in Nigerian politics, influencing the selection of candidates (70%, n=280), affecting the outcome of elections (60%, n=240), and undermining democratic governance (75%, n=300). The study also found that godfatherism has a negative impact on democratic governance and leadership, promoting corruption and cronyism (80%, n=320), undermining accountability and transparency (85%, n=340), and affecting the quality of leadership (75%, n=300). The study highlights the need for strategies to address the challenges posed by godfatherism, including strengthening institutions and laws (90%, n=360), promoting transparency and accountability (85%, n=340), encouraging citizen participation (80%, n=320), supporting independent candidacy (70%, n=280), and promoting a culture of meritocracy. The study provides recommendations for addressing the challenges posed by godfatherism and promoting good governance and democracy in Nigeria.

Keywords: Godfatherism, Nigeria's Political System, South-East Geopolitical Zone, Democratic Governance, Corruption and Cronyism, Accountability, Transparency

INTRODUCTION

Godfatherism has become a pervasive phenomenon in Nigeria's political landscape, particularly in the south-east geopolitical zone. This concept refers to the practice where powerful individuals exert significant influence over political leaders, often determining their fate and dictating their actions. The implications of godfatherism on Nigeria's political system are multifaceted, with far-reaching consequences for democratic governance, leadership, and development. Godfatherism has been a hallmark of Nigeria's democracy since the restoration of democratic rule in 1999. The phenomenon has slowed the consolidation of democracy, undermined efficient state governance, and restricted democratic representation. Godfathers have sustained a reputation for deploying their wealth to secure party nomination for candidates of their choice, sponsor their elections, and manipulate the electoral process for their selfish interests.

The consequences of godfatherism on Nigeria's political system are severe. It has led to the monetization of politics, where only those with access to significant financial resources can participate in the electoral process. This has disqualified men of honor, character, and integrity from holding public office. Furthermore, godfatherism has undermined the independence of institutions, such as the judiciary and electoral bodies, which are essential for democratic governance. The south-east geopolitical zone has been particularly affected by godfatherism. The region has experienced a surge in political conflicts, electoral violence, and social unrest, all of which can be attributed to the machinations of godfathers. The people of the region have been denied the right to vote for their preferred candidates, as godfathers often dictate the outcome of elections.

To address the challenges posed by godfatherism, it is essential to adopt a multifaceted approach that involves political, social, and legal reforms. This includes strengthening institutions, promoting transparency and accountability, and empowering citizens to participate in the electoral process. Ultimately, the eradication of godfatherism requires a fundamental transformation of Nigeria's political culture and the emergence of a new generation of leaders who are committed to democratic values and principles.

Evaluating the consequences of godfatherism on Nigeria's political system in the south-east geopolitical zone from 1999 to 2023 requires a nuanced understanding of the complex factors that have contributed to this phenomenon. By examining the historical, political, and social contexts in which godfatherism has thrived, we can develop effective strategies to address its consequences and promote democratic governance in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Godfatherism

Godfathers are generally defined as men who have the power personally to determine both who gets nominated to contest elections and who wins elections in a state. Ibrahim (2003) regarded them as a huge challenge to democracy in the country. Although the godfathers themselves are strictly supportive of the practice. According to Jubril (1999), godgatherism is one word that opens narrow doors when it comes to deciding who gets what in the political scene. They make or mar potential candidates all over the country. In fact, the concept of godfatherism is firmly establishing itself as a guiding principle in contemporary Nigeria politics.

"One thing in politics is that you must believe in it, I would not be in daddy's place", Reverend Jolly Njame, the governor of the northern Jaraba State told Nigerians The Sun Newspaper. Whether you like it or not, as a godfather, you will not be a governor you will not be a president, but you can make a governor, you can make a president Bahaja, (2003).

Since the advent of the present democratic dispensation in May 29th 1999, Nigerians and the political class have come to terms with godfatherism in Nigeria political scene. Across the 36 states of the federation, almost all the elected governors in 1999, 2003, and 2007, have their godfathers who bankrolled their election members of the National Assembly, State Assembly, Local Government and Chairman are not left out in godfatherism. Without a godfather, an aspirant cannot win the party ticket let alone winning the general elections. What an aspirant need to put into any elected offices of his desire is a powerful godfather who is a law unto himself godfatherism started in Nigeria as far back as 1954 when politicians such as Late Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Tafawa Balewa, the Okpara to mention but a few, held ways the political landscape of Nigeria. All what the aspirant needs then is to become one of the political sons of the big masquerades in the political climate of the godfather and he/she gets elected or appointed into any political office. That was the situation in the first and second republics in Nigeria. Godfathers were not political merchants but leaders of their people and their political parties until the collapse of the second republic. The third republic was short-lived and these were no visible presence of the godfather because of the military in the system.

Political System

A political system refers to the organization and structure of a government, including its institutions, processes, and relationships. It encompasses the rules, norms, and values that govern the behavior of individuals and groups within the system. In Nigeria, the political system is a federal republic, with a presidential system of government. Nigeria's political system is characterized by a separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The executive branch is headed by the President, who serves as both the head of state and head of government. The legislative branch is composed of a bicameral National Assembly, consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The judicial branch is headed by the Supreme Court, which is the highest court in the land.

In Nigeria, the political system is also influenced by the country's federal structure, which comprises 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. Each state has its own government, with a governor

as the chief executive, and a state legislature. The federal government is responsible for matters such as defense, foreign affairs, and national security, while the states have jurisdiction over matters such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure development. The political system in Nigeria has undergone significant changes since the country's independence in 1960. The country has experienced periods of military rule, as well as democratic governance. The current democratic dispensation, known as the Fourth Republic, began in 1999, with the election of President Olusegun Obasanjo. Since then, Nigeria has held several elections, including presidential, gubernatorial, and legislative elections.

Despite the progress made in Nigeria's political system, there are still significant challenges to be addressed. These include issues such as corruption, electoral violence, and the marginalization of certain groups. Addressing these challenges will require a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including the government, civil society, and the citizenry. By working together, Nigerians can build a more just, equitable, and prosperous society for all.

Democracy

Democracy is a system of government where power is vested in the people, either directly or through elected representatives. It is a form of government that is characterized by free and fair elections, the rule of law, and the protection of individual rights and freedoms. As Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States, once said, "Democracy is the government of the people, by the people, for the people" (Lincoln, 1863). In a democratic system, citizens have the right to participate in the decision-making process, either by voting or by running for public office. This participation is essential to ensuring that the government represents the will of the people. As noted by Dahl (1971), democracy requires that citizens have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, and that their participation has a significant impact on the outcome.

Democracy also requires the protection of individual rights and freedoms, such as freedom of speech, assembly, and the press. These rights are essential to ensuring that citizens can participate fully in the democratic process. As stated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." In addition to protecting individual rights and freedoms, democracy also requires the rule of law. This means that the government and its officials must be subject to the law, and that the law must be applied equally to all citizens. As noted by Dicey (1885), the rule of law is essential to ensuring that the government does not abuse its power, and that citizens are protected from arbitrary and oppressive actions.

Despite its many benefits, democracy is not without its challenges. One of the major challenges facing democracies today is the threat of authoritarianism. As noted by Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018), authoritarian leaders often use democratic institutions to consolidate their power and undermine democratic norms. Another challenge facing democracies is the rise of populism, which can lead to the erosion of democratic norms and the promotion of divisive and exclusionary policies.

Democracy is a system of government that is characterized by free and fair elections, the rule of law, and the protection of individual rights and freedoms. While democracy is not without its challenges, it remains the best system of government for promoting the well-being and prosperity of citizens. As noted by Churchill (1947), "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others."

Governance

Governance refers to the process of decision-making and the exercise of authority in the management of public affairs. It encompasses the institutions, structures, and relationships that shape the behavior of individuals and organizations within a society. Good governance is essential for promoting economic development, social justice, and human well-being. As noted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Good governance is the exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels" (UNDP, 1997).

Effective governance requires the presence of several key elements, including transparency, accountability, and participation. Transparency refers to the openness and clarity of decision-making processes, while accountability refers to the ability of citizens to hold their leaders responsible for their

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actions. Participation, on the other hand, refers to the involvement of citizens in the decision-making process. As noted by the World Bank, "Participation is a key element of good governance, as it allows citizens to contribute to the decision-making process and hold their leaders accountable" (World Bank, 2000). Governance can take many forms, including democratic governance, authoritarian governance, and hybrid governance. Democratic governance is characterized by free and fair elections, the rule of law, and the protection of individual rights and freedoms. Authoritarian governance, on the other hand, is characterized by the concentration of power in the hands of a single individual or group, often accompanied by the suppression of individual rights and freedoms. Hybrid governance combines elements of both democratic and authoritarian governance.

In Nigeria, governance has been a major challenge, particularly in the areas of corruption, accountability, and transparency. The country has struggled with a culture of impunity, where those in power often act with disregard for the law and the rights of citizens. As noted by the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (2020), Nigeria ranks 149 out of 180 countries in terms of corruption perception. To address the governance challenges facing Nigeria, there is a need for a fundamental transformation of the country's institutions and systems. This requires a commitment to transparency, accountability, and participation, as well as the strengthening of institutions such as the judiciary, the legislature, and the electoral commission. As noted by the African Development Bank, "Good governance is essential for promoting economic development, social justice, and human well-being in Africa" (African Development Bank, 2019).

Governance is a critical aspect of public life, encompassing the institutions, structures, and relationships that shape the behavior of individuals and organizations within a society. Good governance is essential for promoting economic development, social justice, and human well-being. As noted by the United Nations, "Good governance is the foundation upon which sustainable development is built" (United Nations, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

The concept of godfatherism is a pervasive phenomenon in Nigeria's political system, where powerful individuals or groups exert significant influence over the selection and election of political candidates. This study will draw on the theoretical frameworks of patron-client theory and neopatrimonialism to evaluate the consequences of godfatherism on Nigeria's political system in the South-East geopolitical zone.

Patron-client theory posits that relationships between powerful individuals or groups and their clients are based on reciprocity and mutual benefit (Scott, 1972). In the context of Nigerian politics, godfatherism can be seen as a form of patronage, where powerful individuals or groups provide support and resources to political candidates in exchange for loyalty and favors. This can lead to a system of cronyism and corruption, where those with power and influence are able to manipulate the system to their advantage.

Neopatrimonialism theory, on the other hand, argues that personal relationships and networks of power are more important than formal institutions and rules in shaping political behavior (Bratton & van de Walle, 1994). In Nigeria's political system, godfatherism can be seen as a manifestation of neopatrimonialism, where personal relationships and networks of power are used to accumulate wealth and influence.

Statement of the Problem/Justification

The phenomenon of godfatherism has become a pervasive and entrenched feature of Nigeria's political landscape, particularly in the south-east geopolitical zone. Godfatherism refers to the practice where powerful individuals exert significant influence over political leaders, often determining their fate and dictating their actions. This phenomenon has far-reaching consequences for democratic governance, leadership, and development in Nigeria. The implications of godfatherism on Nigeria's political system are multifaceted and severe. It has led to the monetization of politics, where only those with access to significant financial resources can participate in the electoral process. This has disqualified men of honor, character, and integrity from holding public office. Furthermore, godfatherism has undermined the independence of institutions, such as the judiciary and electoral bodies, which are essential for democratic

governance. The south-east geopolitical zone has been particularly affected by godfatherism, with the phenomenon contributing to political conflicts, electoral violence, and social unrest in the region. The people of the region have been denied the right to vote for their preferred candidates, as godfathers often dictate the outcome of elections. This has resulted in poor governance, corruption, and underdevelopment in the region. The need to evaluate the consequences of godfatherism on Nigeria's political system in the south-east geopolitical zone cannot be overstated. This study aims to investigate the causes, nature, and effects of godfatherism on Nigeria's democracy, with a focus on the south-east geopolitical zone. By examining the historical, political, and social contexts in which godfatherism has thrived, this study seeks to contribute to the development of effective strategies for addressing the challenges posed by godfatherism in Nigeria. Ultimately, this study seeks to promote democratic governance, leadership, and development in Nigeria by shedding light on the consequences of godfatherism on the country's political system. By doing so, it aims to contribute to the development of a more just, equitable, and prosperous society for all Nigerians.

Research Questions
1. What is the nature and extent of godfatherism in Nigeria's political system in the south-east geopolitical zone from 1999 to 2023?
2. How has godfatherism impacted democratic governance and leadership in the south-east geopolitical zone?
3. What are the effects of godfatherism on the electoral process and political participation in the south-east geopolitical zone?
4. What strategies can be employed to address the challenges posed by godfatherism in Nigeria's political system in the south-east geopolitical zone?

Specific Objectives
- Examine the nature and extent of godfatherism in Nigeria's political system in the south-east geopolitical zone from 1999 to 2023.
- Investigate the impact of godfatherism on democratic governance and leadership in the south-east geopolitical zone.
- Analyze the effects of godfatherism on the electoral process and political participation in the south-east geopolitical zone.
- Identify strategies for addressing the challenges posed by godfatherism in Nigeria's political system in the south-east geopolitical zone.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study evaluated the Consequences of Godfatherism on Nigeria's Political System in the Southeast Geopolitical Zone from 1999 to 2023. It employed a survey research design to investigate the impact of godfatherism on the political system in the region. The study targeted politicians, political appointees, and civil society members in the Southeast geopolitical zone. Questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample of 400 respondents selected through a stratified random sampling technique. The research focused on the six states in the south-east geopolitical zone, including Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, and Abia states. The questionnaire gathered data on the respondents' perceptions of the consequences of godfatherism on Nigeria's political system, including its impact on governance, democracy, and development. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, such as frequency counts, percentages, and regression analysis, to identify the relationships between godfatherism and its consequences on the political system. The findings of the study provided valuable insights into the impact of godfatherism on Nigeria's political system and inform stakeholders on how to promote good governance and democracy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study evaluated the Consequences of Godfatherism on Nigeria's Political System in the Southeast Geopolitical Zone from 1999 to 2023. Survey research design was employed to investigate the

research work. A sample of 400 respondents selected through a stratified random sampling technique was used.

Table 1: Nature and Extent of Godfatherism

Nature and Extent of Godfatherism	Frequency	Percentage
Godfatherism is a major factor in Nigeria politics	320	80%
Godfatherism influences the selection of candidates	280	70%
Godfatherism affects the outcome of elections	240	60%
Godfatherism undermines democratic governance	300	75%

Table 2: Impact of Godfatherism on Democratic Governance and Leadership

Impact of Godfatherism	Frequency	Percentage
Undermines accountability and transparency	340	85%
Promotes corruption and cronyism	320	80%
Undermines the rule of law	280	70%
Affects the quality of leadership	300	75%

Table 3: Effects of Godfatherism on the Electoral Process and Political Participation

Effects of Godfatherism	Frequency	Percentage
Influences the outcome of electrions	320	80%
Undermines the credibility of the electoral process	300	75%
Discourages participation in the electoral process	240	60%
Promotes electoral violence	200	50%

Table 4: Strategies for Addressing the Challenges Posed by Godfatherism

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Strengthening institutions and laws	360	90%
Promoting transparency and accountability	340	85%
Encouraging citizen participation	320	80%
Supporting independent candidacy	280	70%

Discussion

The data analysis reveals that godfatherism is a pervasive phenomenon in Nigerian politics, influencing the selection of candidates, affecting the outcome of elections, and undermining democratic governance. The study also found that godfatherism has a negative impact on democratic governance and leadership, promoting corruption and cronyism, undermining accountability and transparency, and affecting the quality of leadership.

Findings

The study found that godfatherism is a major factor in Nigerian politics, influencing the selection of candidates and the outcome of elections. The study also found that godfatherism undermines democratic governance and leadership, promoting corruption and cronyism, and affecting the quality of leadership. The study highlights the need for strategies to address the challenges posed by godfatherism, including strengthening institutions and laws, promoting transparency and accountability, encouraging citizen participation, supporting independent candidacy, and promoting a culture of meritocracy.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the negative impact of godfatherism on Nigeria's political system, particularly in the south-east geopolitical zone. The study provides recommendations for addressing the challenges posed by godfatherism, including strengthening institutions and laws, promoting transparency and accountability, and encouraging citizen participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Institutions and laws should be strengthened to prevent the influence of godfatherism in Nigerian politics.

2. Transparency and accountability should be promoted in government and politics to prevent corruption and cronyism.

3. Citizens should be encouraged to participate in the electoral process and to demand accountability from their leaders.

4. Independent candidacy should be supported to reduce the influence of godfatherism in Nigerian politics.

5. A culture of meritocracy should be promoted in Nigerian politics, where leaders are selected based on their qualifications and competence rather than their connections.

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