Godfatherism and Imo State Politics: A Study of Orlu Senatorial Zone (1999-2019).

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Abstract

This study carried out in-depth research to examine the effect of godfatherism on Imo Sate politics. Orlu Senatorial Zone of Imo State was used as a case study. The methodology adopted in conducting this research was descriptive survey design. As such, both primary and secondary sources of data collection were used. Three research questions were raised and questionnaire was developed based on the research questions using Four Point Rating Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), and Disagree (D). The population of study is 10 executives selected from 3 major political parties in Imo State in the 12 Local Government Areas that make up Orlu Senatorial Zone which totaled 360. The analysis of the research questions revealed that godfatherism negatively affects Imo State politics, godfatherism pose serious problems in party politics in Imo State and there are some strategies which can be used to curtail godfatharism in Imo politics. We recommended amongst other that Government should scrap delegate elections and replace it with Option A4 where delegates will be free to elect candidate of their choice without monetary inducement from the godfathers, Government should introduce electronic voting to enable electorates to vote for their choice candidates from the comfort of their homes. This will help reduce contact with the godfathers during elections in Imo State.

Keywords: Godfather, Electoral Process, Political Party, Party Politics, Political System

Introduction

At the emergency of the fourth Republic in 1999, the hope of most Nigerians was that the political system will develop to the extent that democracy will produce the best candidates for Nigerians especially Imo State, hence, sustainable development will be insured. However, the opposite is the case. Since 1999 till date there is the emergence of a very influential group known as Godfathers or money bags (Rose Ackerman 1999). They are found in almost every state in Nigeria but mostly in the South that is, South West, South-East, South-South and North-Central geo-political zones. The emerging group is instrumental to the promotion of electorate frauds and violence. Most of the problems of destructive instruments and behaviors associated with the recent actions in politics are brought about by these groups. Politics in Nigeria and Imo State has become for the rich and those who are ready to pay the price. For candidates to win an election in Imo State, they must look for these Godfathers, who unit will rate them into a particular cult known in their own language as “bathing” or ‘baptism’ before their candidature can be accepted. Worse still, they (Godfathers) subject the candidates to oath taking to ensure that they will not renege on the agreement. As soon as this is done, the godfathers will embark on

unimaginable strategies to make sure their candidates win election by all means, either by hook or crook. This is one of the major reasons that Nigeria after fifty years of independence and Imo State after 44 years of creation have not made any significant impact in democracy while we continue to blame the colonial masters for our own misfortune which we created by ourselves. Most Nigerians especially Imolites are disenchanted with the electoral process because these so-called godfathers involve themselves in rigging, ballot snatching and stuffing, thuggery, falsification of electoral results, etc. in other to make sure their godson win in an election.

They (Godfathers) can go to the extent of indulging in killing, raping, arson and kidnapping in order to prevent the other opponent(s) from winning the election. Coker (2004) opines that elections supposed to be free and fair, and thus, a role model where new breed politicians learn good behavior. In the case of Imo State Politics, some people disappeared, die and even are kidnapped for mere mentioning that they want to contest a particular elective position. When these occur, nothing happens. Many innocent people are killed without the government doing anything to the culprits. The Human Rights Watch (HRW) in its report on the 2007 general elections in Nigeria sees the term Godfatherism in Nigeria politics as a phenomenon in which wealthy and powerful individuals that do not hold public office but multiply corruption and violence to subvert and control the political process by installing their protégés into office. Based on these challenges associated with godfatherism, the research work is poised to examine the effects of godfatherism, problems of godfatherism and strategies to curtail godfatherism in Imo State politics.

Statement of the problem

The transition to civilian rule in 1999 in Imo State has been saddled with enormous challenges and problems caused by the influence and role of godfathers in the state. This is witnessed in the 1999 primary elections of political parties in Imo State especially that of PDP where the gubernatorial ticket was snatched from the winner by the godfathers and was given to the third person on the line by the name Achike Udenwa. This was done against the people's wish. Eventually, during the general election Chief Achike Udenwa of PDP with the help of godfathers in the state was rigged into governorship position. In 2003, Chief Udenwa having gained enough grounds both monetarily and otherwise, and with the help of some party stalwarts and godfathers like Chief Iwuanyanwu, Chief Arthur Nzeribe, Chief Leo Stan Eke, etc. rigged himself into office.

In 2007, following a strictly contested primaries of PDP for guber tickets amongst, Hope Uzodinma, Ifeanyi Ararume, Festus Odimegwu, Tony Ezinna, etc, there were internal crises amongst the party stalwarts, the godfathers and the contestants. This made the godfathers to pick Ikedi Ohakim from another party PPA and rig him into office as governor of his state. In 2011, Governor Ikedi Ohakim having fallen out with the godfathers coupled with the slapping, flogging a Rev. Fr. failed to reelect himself into office. This gave an ample opportunity for Rochas Okorocha of APGA to clinch on the opportunity with massive support of the electorate, ascended the governorship position of Imo. In 2015, Rochas Okorocha having completed his 8 years tenure, tried to position himself as the new Godfather in Imo Politics. He boasted that he has abolished Godfatherism in Imo having retired the likes of Chief Iwuanyanwu, Chief Arthur Nzeribe and co. Assuming himself to be an unchallenged godfather, wanted to rig his son in-law into governorship position by hook or crook. This move led to chaos in the state which led to several kidnapping, arson, killing, thuggery etc. At the end, election was conducted and his son in-law lost to Emeka Ihedioha of PDP. One way or the other, Hope Uzodinma of APC later reclaimed his mandate through Supreme Court judgment. The issue of godfatherism in Imo State

Politics has caused a lot of challenges and problems ranging from rigging, ballot snatching, thuggery, falsification of electoral results, killing, raping, arson, kidnapping etc. Based on all these challenges, the research work examined the effects of godfatherism, problems of godfatherism and strategies to curtail godfatherism in Imo State Politics.

Purpose of Study

The general purpose of this study is to x-ray the role of Godfatherism on Imo State Politics but the specific purpose is to:

1. To examine the effects of Godfatherism in Imo State Politics
2. To access the problems associated with Godfatherism and party politics in Imo State
3. To examine the strategies to curtail Godfatherism in Imo state Politics.

Research Questions

The research questions are as follows;

1) To what extent has Godfatherism affected Imo State Politics?
2) What are the problems associated with Godfatherism and party politics in Imo State Politics?
3) What are the strategies to curtail Godfatherism in Imo State Politics?

Literature Review

Godfatherism:

The godfather is popularly known by the Hausa's as "Maigida" (Master of the House). The word "Maigida" goes beyond its literal meaning. Abner (1971), Polly (1966) and Pally (2004) used the term in their works to refer to those who provided brokerage services to Hausa traders in transit in different parts of West Africa. In the Yoruba society, a godfather is referred to as "Baba Kekere" (the small great father) 'Baba Isale' the father of the underground world or Baba Nigbejo (a great helper in time of trouble). Dickson (2003) also noted that the philosophy of godfather is grounded in the sociology of traditional Igbo society. He further showed evidence to the popular relationship between Nnam-Ukwu (My Master) and Odibo (the servant) in the Igbo traditional concept. Therefore, the triple cases showcased above shows those persons of lesser social status attaches themselves to other persons of higher social integrity usually for economic benefits. Through this practice is not alien to Nigeria but what is strange is the replication of these practices into our political system. Olawale (2005) observed that this phenomenon has far-reaching negative effects on our democratization process in Nigeria.

Historical Overview of Godfatherism in Nigeria.

A salient feature of politics in Nigeria is the practice of Godfatherism. Historically, the operationalization and the attendant dynamics of political Godfatherism in Nigeria predate the political independence of Nigeria. This is because the social and political features of pre-colonial Nigeria have always resembled the phenomena of what Richards (1999) defines as prebendalism, clientelism and patron-client transactional relationships in Nigeria, Albert (2005) explain that the word godfather appears in parenthesis in many Western Political Studies. The situation is different in Nigeria. The Patron-Client relationship that popularized the term in Nigeria Politics has cultural roots among many Nigerian people. It is not a totally new experience in the sociology of the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbos, for the people to have one or other type of godfather. For example, the word godfather has a local equivalence in Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo language and these words have been in use since the pre-colonial era. Richards (1999) states the pre-colonial Patron-Client prebendal cultural words of Nigerians were easily carried over to colonial

and past colonial political arrangements in Nigeria. Albert (2005) in agreeing with these claims asserts that the founding fathers of party politics in Nigeria were godfathers of a sort. They were preceded by the first generational Nigerian elites to establish contact with the European in the late 1800s. The leading figures were the traditional rulers who later became the hub of the indirect rule policy of the British in country. As the colonial administration was coming to an end in the 1950s, with nationalist activities holding away, the few educated elite of just about six parents of the Nigerian population became the Vanguard for the struggle for independence (Coleman 1963). Politics that were regionally based were formed in the categories of Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) for the North, the Action Group (AG) for the Yoruba South West and the National Council for Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) for the Igbo areas of eastern Nigeria. Albert (2005) in reporting on the political patrons of this period and maintains that the political godfathers of this era included the then Sarduana of Sokoto, Sir Almadu Bello, who led the AG and Nnamdi Azikiwe of the NCNC. The other elder statesmen that fell into this category in Nigerian politics include Mallam Aminu Kano and Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim.

These political leaders up to the point of death dictated who could occupy political offices in the geo political regions they led. They were clearing houses for political opportunities. The above stated political godsons in the later political dispensation who occupied various political positions are as follows; Sir Almadu Bello's political godsons known in Nigeria as the "Kaduna Mafia", Chief Awolowo's political godsons known in the South West as the "Afenifere" (those who wish others well) among whom are Chief Bola Ige, Alhaji Lateef Jakande and Chief Bisi Onabanjo (All former State Governors, 1979-1983) and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's Political godsons in the Eastern Igbo areas of Nigeria like Chief Jim Nwaobodo and Chief Sam Mbakwe (All former Governors of States). All these godsons of the first-generation godfathers later became godfathers in subsequent Nigerian Politics.

Incidence of Godfatherism in Selected State in Nigeria (1999-2019).

Godfatherism which is a phenomenon that allows political heavy-weight unlimited powers to dominate the political scene, influence the victory of candidates (the godsons/daughters) and dictate the direction of policies and programmes, remained a major element of the Political Culture of Nigeria from 1999-2019. In the treaties on the civilian regime of Obasanjo and its relationship with Godfatherism in Nigeria, myriads of social commentators are Soyinka (2004), Adeoye (2009) and others. For Soyinka (2004), the greatest disservice President Obasanjo has done to the nation was to have promoted the cult of godfatherism, its illegalities, its naked violence and its corruption. However, Adeoye (2009) in discussing the dynamics of godfatherism in Nigeria during Obasanjo's Civilian regime did argue that, it got so bad under the watchful eyes of Obasanjo-led government that godfathers assumed different names; gangsters, mafia and criminal. The worst manifestations of Godfatherism in Nigerian history came to life under President Obasanjo's democratic rule for one simple reasons, he promoted and allowed it. Some of the godfathers truly possessed all the characteristics of mafianism, many of them AI capon in a criminal world; but these set of godfathers perpetuated their criminality in enduring political environment.

Anambra State:

According to Bello (2011) Anambra's Political history can be described as awesome weird and unique depending on the aspect one turns to. It is a state with a long list of "firsts" in the Nigerian history for godfathers' politics; hence, the case of Anambra State is most spectacular. Mbadinuju was sworn in as civilian governor of Anambra State,

after many years of military rule. Between 1999 and 2003, the fight was between Emeka Offor (Godfather) and the Governor of the State Chinwoke Mbadinuju (godson), who refused to dance to the tune of the godfather. In this respect, Omisore (2009) admits that Governor Chinwoke Mbadinuju was supported by Chief Emeka Offor to win election in 1999 and throughout his tenure as a Governor expended more energy and time struggling to free the resources of the State from the predator grips of his godfathers, and the struggle was so much that the critical issues of Governance were ignored. The conflict between the Governor and his estranged godfather got so pronounced that it crippled the machinery of governance in Anambra State and the repercussion was gross deficit of democratic dividends recorded by the State Government and which led to Mbadinuju loosing re-election into office in 2003. This led Mbadinuju to dump the PDP for Alliance for Democracy (AD) and his subsequent loosing election in 2003. Mbadinuju claimed that he was excluded from the governorship contest in 2003 despite winning the PDP primaries but Chris Uba and President Obasanjo opposed his candidature (Wikipedia 2012).

The dust raised by these two (2) political bigwigs was yet to settle when two (2) other actors emerged; Chris Uba and Chris Ngige. Uba was the godfather responsible for the installation of Ngige and the majority of other Politicians in the State who succeeded in being elected to other various positions. In announcing his grandson Godfatherism rating in the State in particular and Nigerian in general in the 2003 election, Chris Uba (2003) states; I am the greatest of all godfathers in Nigeria because this is the first time, one simple individual has simple handling put in position every politician in the state, the state governor and his deputy, 10 out of 11 members of the Federal House of Representatives and twenty-nine state House of Assembly members. I also have the power to remove any of them who does not perform up to my expectations anytime I like. Based on the forgoing, Hussaini (2012) States Chris Uba as a multi-millionaire who invest in politics and reap dividends from his Political Investment. In total arrangement of Uba's Patron-Client arrangement, Hunijenu Kon (2011) affirms that Ngige went as far as pledging his loyalty to Uba at Okija Shrine where he agreed some propositions. Based on the pledge, Uba bankrolled the gubernatorial election to the tune of three billion naira. Commenting further on this, Omisore (2009) notes that on reflection, Governor Ngige refused to honor the agreement and fought back to save the resource of the state for the common good of the people. Chief Uba allegedly demanded for #3 billion from Ngige as compensation for the cost of financing the governor's election which Ngige declined to honor. It is no wonder that what was supposed to be a cold war became public with the abduction of Ngige and his purported resignation. To break the camel's back, Uba publicly confessed that he rigged the election that saw Ngige into office as governor and the election was consequently invalidated by the court of Appeal (Omisore 2009). Hence, Ngige was defeated at the election petition tribunal for rigging the gubernatorial polls by the All-Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) Candidate, Mr. Peter Obi. Osumali (2010) States the July 10, 2003 political gangsterism against Governor Ngige in Anambra State with the aid of police led by AIG Raphael Ige is clearly a new development in the Patron-Client relation in Nigerian Politics. Dike (2004) asserts Obasanjo's silence indicates that he is either in support of those working to destabilize the State or that he is not interested in solving the political crisis in Anambra State and the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria.

Kano State:

Kano State was created on May 27, 1967 and created in North Western Nigeria. The capital of Kano State is Kano; Kano State is regarded as Northern Nigeria's commercial center. According to the 2006 census figures from Nigeria, Kano State had a population totaling 9,383,628. Darma (2006) States Kano State is the most politically

prominent State in Nigeria because its population guarantees it a higher proportion at the national level. Its political history has also been lively. Zanna (2007) says the current godfather politics was evidenced in Kano in the person of Olusegun Obasanjo, Abubakar Rimi and Rabiu Kwankwaso amongst others. Abubakar Rimi has been a political figure since his debut with politics in the first republic when he was elected a member of House of Representatives courtesy of late Aminu Kano's Goodwill. Zanna (2007) contends that as at 1979, Rimi was among the fanatical supporters of Aminu Kano just as he emerged as Governor of Kano on the platform of the PRP. Apparently due to his radical stance on matters of governance and politicking, Rimi fell apart with Aminu Kano just close to the 1983 polls and later joined PDP as one of the 34 founding members-christened G34.

In 1999, at the beginning of Obasanjo's civilian regime, Zanna (2007) admits that Kano for the first time found its place in mainstream national politics largely because of the consensus of the two Kano political gladiators Abubakar Rimi leader of the leftist wing of the behemoth PDP. Rabiu Kwankwaso who was aligned to the Yar'Adua (Padama) group emerged as the Governor of Kano State under PDP, largely because those who call the shots in Abuja were not willing to accept a loyalist of Rimi (Abdulahi Umar Ganduje) as the Governor. Thereafter, Rimi's faction was compensated with the Deputy Governor while the Aminu Wali was betrayed and denied the State of the Sectary to the State government.

Having fallen out of Governor Kwankwaso favours and unable to wrestle the Party's governorship ticket in 2003 from Kwankwaso, Rimi decided to use all his political war arsenals at his disposal to fight and finish Kwankwaso. Rimi returned to PDP. Set Kano PDP for the revival and birth of fresh crisis as the battle for the control of the party between him and Kwankwaso was a do or die affair (Zanna 2007). Based on this conflict between Kwankwaso and Rimi, Kwankwaso was defeated at the polls by a new entrant into partisan politics and class teacher, Ibrahim Shekarau though later compensated by his own godfather (President Obasanjo) with minister of defense under Obasanjo's administration. In his analysis of Rimi's Godfatherism, Uju dud (2007) remarks as follows: Rimi was described as a constant denominator in Kano's Politics to the extent that when he sneezes, the State and the Nation catch cold. One major contribution Rimi brought to Kano politics is the instituting of a big Crack in the leadership and followership of politicians in the State. On this, Rafindadi (2012) reports that Rimi is now using politics as a merchandize and in addition using thuggery and intimidation to achieve his selfish and parochial ends. Regrettably, Rimi died on April 4, 2010. Also, Dr. Kwankwaso was re-elected as Kano State governor on 27 April 2011 and sworn in on 29th May, 2011for a second term in office. Taking a cue from the analysis of godfatherism in the two States of Nigeria as seen above, there is no gain saying that Olusegun Obasanjo's former military general and ex-president promoted the legacy of godfatherism and was (and still) a mentor to many Political chiefs. Also, there was no stringent measure adopted for punishing perpetrators during his civilian administration which strongly demonstrated his complicity on the issue.

Factors that Sustain Godfatherism in Nigeria:

The phenomenon of Godfatherism in Nigeria has confirmed unabated because of so many factors. These factors include:

1. Corruption:

Corruption in its popular conception is defined as the exploitation of public position, resources and power for private gain. Dobel (1978) defines corruption as "The betrayal of public trust for individual or group gain". Corruption as a phenomenon is a global problem and exists in varying degrees in different countries (Agbu 2003). In Nigeria, corruption now appears to have become a permanent feature of the Nigerian polity. The Nigerian Godfathers today are thriving on ill-gotten wealth acquired under questionable

circumstances that are secured through surreptitious Patron-Client transaction relationships. Majority of them are fraudsters, drug barons, government contractors and the likes. An example is Governor Mbadinuju who made the people of Anambra State to experience various aspects of misgovernance through inability to deliver democracy dividends. The education system was a mess, social life and basic amenities were not for the people of the State, the streets of Onitsha were littered with rubbish and total neglect, Mbadinujus godfathers were the beneficiaries of juicy contracts and pay backs that ran into billions of Naira. (Wikipedia 2012).

The same level of corruption was witnessed in Imo State during the administration of Rochas Okorocha. Rochas took power in 2011 from Governor Ikedi Ohakim who fell out with his godfathers in the State. Ikedi Ohakim fell to yield to agreement with his godfathers (Achike Udenwa, Arthur Nzeribe, and Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyawu) who put him in office. As a result, he was pushed out. The godfathers with the support of the masses enthroned Rochas into the governorship position. On the other hand, Rochas on becoming the governor chose to fight the godfathers and at some occasions, Claimed and bragged that he has retired all the godfathers in Imo State (Wikipedia, 2015). He turned the State treasury and machineries to the benefits of his immediate family which Imolites later termed familiocracy. Juicy appointments and contracts were given to his immediate family and in-laws. He Rochas diverted several funds meant for developmental projects and the worst of it all was the diversion of the bailout fund meant for the payment of pensioners and pension arrears. In 2019 general election in Imo State, Rochas positioned himself as a godfather and wanted to impose godson/son in-law Uche Nwosu as the Guber candidate and Governor of Imo State. This move was vehemently fought to stand still by angry Imolites with the help of some political bigwigs, juggernauts and kingpins like Senator Hope Uzodinma, Senator Ifeanyi Ararume, Late Uwajimogu, Chief Ekechi and the host of others.

2. Illiteracy:

Illiteracy is one of the factors sustaining godfatherism in Nigeria. Hence, to UNDP (2011) the illiteracy rate of the total population in Nigeria is 57.1%. The implication is that there is high percentage of Nigerian citizens who are stark illiterates and can neither read nor write. This is because of poverty, poor infrastructural facilities, cultural beliefs and biased traditions amongst others. However, capitalizing on their ignorance, the godfathers inculcate their values into these people, recruit them, arm them with firearms and ammunitions and protect them to carry out their violent act.

3. Poverty:

Poverty is the deprivation of basic necessities that determine the quality of life including food, clothing, shelter and safe drinking water. This canker worm in Nigeria called poverty exposed the citizens to various kinds of danger including recruiting them as political thugs and foot soldiers by godfathers. The incidence of poverty has a strong influence in the emergence of those who see themselves as owners of government where citizens are not capable of taking care of themselves and their basic needs in life. Nnamani (2003) opined that poverty rate in Nigeria might have risen to 71.5%, 61.9% and 62.8% using the relative absolute and dollar per day measures respectively. Poverty has gone to a very high level so much that it is now a matter of do or dies for Nigerians to acquire power. Politics in Nigeria has become so lucrative that people are ready to do anything to be involved in it, as it is the quickest source of wealth and this has brought about leadership crisis in the country (Ovasuyi, 2011). This has led so many Nigerian youths to mortgage their future for peanuts from these godfathers while the children of these so-called godfathers are busy studying abroad.

4. Incessant Desire for Power:

The zeal of getting to position of authority by all means is another factor that is making this phenomenon of Godfatherism in Nigeria more popular. According to Nnamani (2003) the quest for power which mortgages the interests of the governed is direct evidence of endemic corruption and godfathers would naturally emerge because of the vulnerability of such disposition of power seekers. Their overzealous inclination to control, dominate and rule motivate them (the political chiefs and their protégés) to use any means thereby lending evidence to Machiavelli's principle which states thus "the end justifies the means". This makes our potential leaders to go into any agreement with their godfathers so as to clinch to power against the wishes of electorates.

5. Unemployment:

This is a situation where people who are willing, able and qualified to work are out of jobs. The rate of unemployment of Nigerian graduates and other categories of the youths have also boosted the phenomenon of godfatherism. Grains that are meant to be utilized for the development of the nation are being employed by politicians most of whom are godfathers to one political office or the other. To Ogbomivan (2005) school leavers and university graduates are therefore made jobless and this has provided a fertile ground for recruiting foot soldiers that will do the evil biding of these godfathers. These exchange their futures and that of their unborn children for mere amala, tuwo and akpu offered by these godfathers as was done by the strongman of Ibadan Politics.

Godfatherism and Development Process in Nigeria:

Development is the process of economic, social, political and cultural change engineered in a given society by the effort of all stakeholders, both internal and external (communities, government, private sector, civil society etc.) with a view to improving the conditions of life of the populace. However, in the political realm, developments are as follows:

(1) Bad Governance:

Governance is regarded as a nebulous, ambiguous and vague word. Asogwa (2008) defined governance as "the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a nations or states affair". To him, it entrances all the methods-good and bad that societies use to distribute power and manage public resources and problems. Bad governance is a type of governance which is not anchored on transparency, rule of law, due process, equity and justice. In Nigeria's political development, governance is seen as ductless and unstable. Barrack Obama in Accra Ghana stated that "development depends upon good governance". (Harris, 2009). It has now become a fact that in Nigeria, self-seeking politicians have continued to misgovern the nation to their own selfish interest, and have since independence of the nation made development elusive to the generality of the populace. There is no gain saying the fact that these godfathers and their godsons who prefer to be representing the generality of the Nigerian people have in one way or the other manipulate in selfish ways the national resources. Hence there is failure of government to provide the people with all the basic necessities which will enhance their standard of living.

(2) Election Crisis and Political Violence:

Election is the process through which the people select those who will represent them in government. It is open secret in Nigeria that the godfathers recruit the terming unemployed youths and arm them with firearms and ammunitions in order to carryout violence during elections. This is because they see it as a zero-sum game in which the winner takes all through the history of Nigerian elections, free and fair election has constantly eluded the Nigeria's politics. This is because of political violence caused by the godfathers. Anifowose (1999) in Obasi (2012) explains that political violence is the use or

threat of physical act carried out by an individual or individuals within a political system against another individual or individuals and/or property with the interest to cause injury or death to persons and/or damage or destruction to property that have political significance. According to Ayodda (2006) godfatherism is one of the causative factors responsible for electoral malpractices and violence in Nigeria. The seriousness of the problem here is better appreciated when the fact is that there are many godfathers contesting for recognition at every election.

(3) Subversion of Democracy:

The purpose of democracy is for free and fair election and participation of the masses in the political process. It has become accepted that godfatherism is pathology to Nigeria fledgling democracy. Public opinion does not count; rather the masses are governed capriciously by the elites. An example is the subversion of democracy in Anambra State the June 10, 2003 political crisis between Chris Uba (godfather) and Chris Ngige, (the then governor of Anambra State) in which the governor was kidnapped for so many days (Onwumere, 2007). Also, the crisis has merely been solved when the self-declared strongman of Ibadan politics. Adedibu Formally declared an unconditional war against his godson, Ladoja, governor of Oyo State (Ifowodo, 2007). Fagge (1985) commented in a poem that godfatherism, a menace to democracy like a tick on a cow or the weed to the crops, like HIV virus in a bloodstream with a weak defense mechanism, it kills our hard-earned democracy and militates against its progress. In support of the above claim, Fagge (1985) the phenomenon of godfatherism has been allowed to dominate the political scene in Nigeria and the electorate has been denied the right of the value of his vote in the market democracy. Hence, Nigeria's democracy has been subverted for the values and preferences of the elites.

(4) Political Corruption:

Corruption is a common term at the local, national and international level. Asogwa (2008) says political corruption is a symptom of something gone wrong in the management of the State. Politically, corruption entails the extortion and misuse of public goods for the utilization of privileged few. In Nigeria, it is incontestable that corruption has assumed a ludicrous dimension. The Nigerian situation suits what Myrdal described in Amuwo (2005) as the "folklore of corruption". Ogundiya (2010) the consequences of political corruption are manifested in cyclical crisis of legitimacy, fragile party structure, institutional decay, chronic economic problem and underdevelopment and above all, general democratic volatility. Godfatherism has undoubtedly freckled Nigeria's corruption epidemic as politicians use every means available to them, legal or illegal to win political position. Some Western diplomats estimated that Nigeria lost a minimum average of $4 billion to $8 billion per year to corruption over the eight years of the Obasanjo administration (HRW, 2007). The point was made earlier that the relationship between the godfather and godson is instrumental: the godfather assures the later of electoral success and the godson uses this politics power after winning the election to advance the social, economic and political influence of his mentor. This explains why politics in Nigeria is usually a contest of power between godfathers. They come out with all the tricks that could help to give their candidates victory. The tricks include multiple voting, exchanging official ballot boxes with unofficial boxes, already filled with forged voting papers, stealing electoral boxes, chasing voters away from constituencies where their candidates are likely to have few votes, killing and wounding political opponents, bribery etc. In the socio-economic realm, godfatherism impacts on development through various high crime rate and economic instability among others.

Party Politics:

Party politics is the politics engaged in by or expressed through the channel of or considered from the ideal if political parties as opposed to national interest (Nwandewo, 2001). Azeez (2009) also sees party politics as activities of political parties in a democratic environment to dominate the polity through democratic institution. To this end, party politics exist when election ideals are present in a democratic system and the views, opinions or political philosophers are debated with the consciousness of promoting and practicing the interest of the party in power. In addition, party politics are activities of formal structures, institutions and organization which competes through electoral mechanism to influence the people's policies and programmes as well as allocation of public wealth through a stipulated and articulated procedure (Okoye, 1982). Through party politics is ordinarily directed towards ensuring checks and balances in governance, strengthening the democratic institution and serve as a feedback mechanism. But its activities have been extremely abused through political rivalry, ethno-religious sentimental etc. making it undemocratic.

Theoretical Framework

The Elite theory is adopted as the theoretical umbrella to this study. Elite theory was propounded and made popular by Vil Fredo Pareto in 1935, Gestamo Moscano in 1939 and Robert Michaels in 1936. In this theory, elites are observed as few powerful people in society who wield a lot of influence in the political, economic and social realm. According to Okereke (2003) Mosca is quoted to have argued that "In all cases from societies that are meagerly developed and have barely attained the most advanced and powerful societies-two classes of people appear-a class that rules and a class that is ruled. The first class, the less numerous, performs all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys the advantages that power brings, whereas the second, the more numerous classes, is directed and controlled by the first in a manner that is now more or less legal, arbitrary and violent. This theory possesses several tenets. To Okereke (2008), the basic tenets of elite theory are: Society is divided into the few who have power using it to allocate values amongst their loyalists. Elites are drawn disproportionally from the masses. The movement of non-elites to elites' positions must be slow and continuous to avoid revolution. Elites share consensus on behalf of the values of the social system. Active elites are subject to relatively little direct influence from the apathetic masses. The theory elaborates on how the few governing elites in the society capriciously and maliciously divert state resources meant for the masses for their selfish interest. However, the values and preferences of elites include: godfatherism, materialism, pre-bendalism, ostentatious life, and winner takes all, money bags mafias amongst others. For the theory, powerful political elites stand at the top and wield power in their different domain in our context, the power flows from these godfathers and they determine the power structure below them in the form of patron-client, prebendalistic practices.

The relevance of elite theory to this study is that it provides the basic for governance and portrays the enormous dominant powers of the few elites (godfathers) over their godsons and the electorates. Also, elite determines the course and direction of national development especially in developing countries like Nigeria. It determines and provides guidelines for policy-making and justification for action taken. Furthermore, it gives indication of what the society is really like, its true nature and character both for elites and the masses. In the context of our discussion, as regards this study, the theory is quite relevant to understanding the dynamics of patron-client political relationships as manifested in the godfather phenomenon in Nigeria. The theory also gives a clear picture

of the dominant powers of the godfathers over their subjects and their roles in Nigeria using Orlu Senatorial zone of Imo State as a study.

Methodology

Research Design:

Descriptive survey design was used to get information on Godfatherism and Imo State politics. The researcher used descriptive survey design because the study examined the existing condition and how it affects the population of the study. It is also valuable in providing useful information and in making predictions.

Area of Study:

The area study is restricted to Orlu Senatorial Zone of Imo State. Orlu Senatorial Zone is one of the 3 zones in Imo State. The Zones were created to maintain political harmony and equity. Other Zones in Imo State are Okigwe Senatorial Zone, Owerri Senatorial Zone.

Orlu Senatorial Zone is made up of 12 local governments namely;

1. Orlu Local Government Area
2. Orsu Local Government Area
3. Oru East Local Government Area
4. Oru West Local Government Area.
5. Ideato North Local Government Area
6. Ideato South Local Government Area
7. Nwangele Local Government Area
8. Isu Local Government Area
9. Njaba Local Government Area
10. Nkwerre Local Government Area
11. Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area
12. Oguta Local Government Area

Population of the Study:

The target populations for this study are 10 number executives of the major 3 political parties in Imo State, All Progressive Congress (APC), People's Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressive and Grand Alliance (APGA).

Population Table:

Orlu	10	10	10	30
Orsu	10	10	10	30
Oru East	10	10	10	30
Oru West	10	10	10	30
Ideato North	10	10	10	30
Ideato South	10	10	10	30
Nwangele	10	10	10	30
Isu	10	10	10	30
Njaba	10	10	10	30
Nkwerre	10	10	10	30
Ohaji/Egbema	10	10	10	30
Oguta	10	10	10	30
Total	120	120	120	360

Sources of Data: Field Survey 2024

Data for this study was sourced through Primary and Secondary Source. Primary Source entails the use of questionnaires and interviews while Secondary Source entails use of text books, journals, newspapers, magazines, etc.

Sample and Sampling techniques:

The sample of this study is the 10 number executive chosen from the 3 major political parties in Imo State from 12 Local Governments Areas that made up Orlu Senatorial Zone. A total number of 10 executives from 3 parties in the 12 Local Government Areas are totaled 360. The 360 total numbers of executives of 3 Political Parties in Orlu Zone is used as the sample size. Sampling Techniques will be adopted for this study is Non-Probability Sampling technique. Judgmental/Purposive Sampling will be used to select the 10 member executives from the 3 major political parties in Orlu Zone namely APC, PDP and APGA for convenience of the study.

Instrument for Data Collection:

Questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. The questionnaire took the structure of restricted or close ended questions which enabled the researcher to ask mindful questions that helped him to get vital information thereby restricting the respondents from giving irrelevant information that will bias the study. The questionnaire was designed using Four Point Rating Scale of (a) Strongly Agree (SA), (b) Agree (A), (c) Strongly Disagree (SD), (d) Disagree (D). The following are the various value assigned to the options.

Option	Value.
Strongly Agree (SA)	4
Agree (A)	3
Strongly Disagree (SD)	2
Disagree (D)	1

Method of Data Collection:

The questionnaire was self-administered by the researcher. The researcher paid private visits to the 12 LGAs to administer the questionnaire first hand. For convenient sake, the researcher met with the chairmen of the 3 political parties and pleaded with them to summon other executives of the party on a particular date where the researcher shared the questionnaires first hand to the respondents. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents in order for them to know why it is important for them to participate. The respondents were given some time to respond after which the researcher collected the questionnaires on the spot.

Method of Data Analysis:

The researcher used descriptive statistical tool of data analysis. Mean score was used to analyze data collected with the questionnaire. A mean score of a certain set of data is equal to the sum of all the values in the data set divided by the total number of values. Determination of cut-off point for each questionnaire item was done by finding the mean of the values assigned to the option using the formula;

$\overline{X} = \Sigma \frac{10}{n} \quad \frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.5$

Where $\overline{X}$ = Mean
Σ = Summation
X = Normal Value of the option
n = Number of the items.

Decision Rule:
The decision rule will be any item mean that attains 2.5 or above will be accepted while any item mean below 2.5 will be rejected.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question 1

To what extent has Godfatherism affected Imo State Politics?

S/N	ITEMS	FREQUENCIES				$\overline{X}$	Decision
		SA	A	SD	D		
1	The involvement of godfathers in Imo politics is responsible for vote buying during election?	250	50	20	30	3.4%	Accepted
2	The desperate attitudes of godfathers in Imo breeds political thuggery?	150	130	30	50	3.0%	Accepted
3	Electoral officers are lured with money by godfathers to manipulate election results in favour of their candidates during election in Imo State?	230	100	10	20	3.5%	Accepted
4	The continuous chaos and corrupt practices witnessed in Imo during election are caused by godfathers?	200	120	20	20	3.4%	Accepted

Source: Field work, 2024

From the table above, the responses of the respondents to the item mean of questions are above 2.5 and were accepted. Therefore, the respondents affirmed that Godfatherism has negative effect on Imo State politics.

Research Question 2

What are the problems associated with godfatherism in party politics in Imo State?

S/N	ITEMS	FREQUENCIES				$\overline{X}$	Decision
		SA	A	SD	D		
1	The imposition of candidates by godfatherism during party primaries in Imo disrupts the opportunity of electing preferable candidates by delegates?	190	110	40	20	3.3%	Accepted
2	The use of bribery and corrupt means by godfathers manipulate the process of primary elections in Imo party politics making it impossible for better candidates to be selected?	110	180	30	40	3.0%	Accepted
3	The nefarious activities of godfathers cause electoral breaches and political instability in Imo State?	210	120	20	10	3.5%	Accepted
4	The sponsoring of violence by godfathers pave way for their preferred candidates during elections in Imo State?	240	100	10	10	3.8%	Accepted

Source: Field work, 2024

From the table above, the responses of the respondents to the items mean questions are all above 2.5% and were accepted. Therefore, the respondents affirmed that godfatherism pose serious challenges in party politics in Imo State.

Research Question 3

What are the strategies to curtail godfatherism in Imo politics?

S/N	ITEMS	FREQUENCIES				$\overline{X}$	Decision
		SA	A	SD	D		
1	The presence of more security during elections will checkmate godfathers in Imo State?	200	120	20	20	3.4%	Accepted
2	Stringent measures like arresting, prosecuting and jailing culpable individuals perpetrating electoral malpractice will deter godfathers from involving in Imo politics?	210	100	30	20	3.4%	Accepted
3	The scrapping of delegate elections and adoption of Option A4 during primaries will stop the powers of godfathers in Imo politics?	180	115	45	20	3.3%	Accepted
4	The introduction of electronic voting will eradicate manipulation of results and unusual influence of godfathers during Imo elections?	170	140	10	40	3.2%	Accepted

Source: Field work, 2024.

From the table, the mean items questions, the responses of the respondents were above 2.5% and were all accepted. This clearly showed that the variables if put in place will help to curtail godfatherism in Imo politics.

Discussion of Findings

From the responses of the respondents, the following observations were made;

We found out that the involvement of godfathers in Imo politics is responsible for vote buying during election. Some of the respondents that were interviewed clearly stated that godfathers dole out irresistible huge sum of money which literarily mortgages the conscience of voters. At the end, they vote in the wrong candidates.

The study observed that politicians in their desperate mood to win elections, sponsors thugs who go about killing, maiming and intimidating their political opponents. This desperate moves by the godfathers instill fears in the people especially their political rivals who most times abandon the race and run away for fear of being killed. A respondent said that this is one of the reasons electorates could not produce their choice candidates. It was also found out that godfathers lure the electoral officers with money and buy them over to their side. This has made the electoral officers to manipulate election results in favour of their candidates during election in Imo State. This situation is very worrisome in the sense that the choice candidates of the electorate will be dropped and the wrong one put in place by the godfathers.

The study discovered that godfathers deliberately cause chaos and all manner of corrupt practices during election in Imo just to win election. This was clearly shown by the responses of the respondents who affirmed that godfathers in Imo State use every devilish tool within their reach to win election in Imo State. It was found that the presence of more security during elections will checkmate godfathers in Imo State. This assertion if strictly monitored and implemented would have given succor to the issue at hand but some of the respondents who were interviewed said that the same security personnel will end up collecting money from the godfathers to do their biddings. A respondent said that the godfathers in Imo State have become so powerful and stronger than the State. This is the reason why they cannot be arrested, prosecuted or jailed. Even when you catch the perpetrators of electoral fraud and malpractices, the godfathers will use money to bail them out.

This work also observed that scrapping of the delegate elections and replacing it with Option A4 during primaries will help stop the powers of godfathers in Imo politics. From the testimonies of the respondents, they all affirmed that this is achievable but some of them still

have variant opinions that the godfather still calls the shots in the internal party politics. Some of the respondents said that the godfathers go as far as imposing their loyalists and foot soldiers on the party delegates without recourse to individual capacity and intellectual sagacity of the candidate.

We found out that the introduction of electronic voting will eradicate manipulation of results and unusual influence of godfathers during Imo elections. The respondents attested that this process is the best for the State in the sense that people will stay at the comfort of their homes to cast their votes. But looking at it critically, some respondents said that godfathers will still go out of their ways to bribe the officials and/or the companies that procure and deployed the machines for use. A respondent called our attention to what happened in the last elections where the machines were said to have malfunctioned as a result of technical glitches.

Summary

This study carried out in-depth research to examine the effect of godfatherism on Imo Sate politics. Orlu Senatorial Zone of Imo State was used as a case study.

The methodology adopted in conducting this research was descriptive survey design. As such, both primary and secondary sources of data collection were used. Three research questions were raised and questionnaire was developed based on the research questions using Four Point Rating Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), and Disagree (D). The population of study 10 executives selected from 3 major political parties in Imo in the 12 Local Government Areas that make up Orlu Senatorial Zone which totaled 360.

The analysis of the research questions revealed that godfatherism negatively affects Imo State politics, godfatherism pose serious problems in party politics in Imo State and there are some strategies which can be used to curtail godfathrism in Imo politics.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were made base on the findings of this study.

It was established that the involvement of godfathers in Imo politics is responsible for vote buying during election, the desperate attitudes of godfathers in Imo breeds political thuggery. This was discovered because the godfathers lure electoral officers with money to manipulate election results in favour of their candidates. The godfathers also pay their thugs to cause chaos and perpetrate all manner of electoral malpractice during elections in Imo State. This has caused untimely deaths of some electorates.

Again, it was established the major problems associated with godfatherism in party politics in Imo State is the imposition of candidates by godfathers during primaries in Imo State politics. The opinion of the respondents affirmed that this has terribly truncated the opportunity of electing choice candidates by the delegates. The respondents went further to affirm that another major problem is the use of bribery and corrupt means by godfathers to manipulate the primary election process in Imo State party politics which makes it impossible for better candidates to be elected. This nefarious activity of godfathers has breached the electoral process and cause serious political instability in Imo State. Some of the respondents concluded by saying that if the activities of godfathers are allowed to travail in Imo, in the near future, Imo will be the most backward State in Nigeria.

Finally, it was established that there are strategies to curtail godfathers in Imo politics such as mounting heavy security personnel during elections to checkmate godfathers in Imo State, arresting, prosecuting and jailing culpable individuals perpetrating electoral malpractice to deter godfathers from involving in Imo Politics, the scrapping of delegate elections and replace it with Option A4 during party primaries and the introduction of electronic voting. The respondents affirmed that if the process should be followed meticulously, it will eradicate manipulation of results and unusual influence of godfathers during Imo elections.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Government should detail heavy security personnel fully armed during elections in Imo State. This will help to reduce political thuggery and checkmate the powers of godfathers in Imo State.
2. Stringent laws should be made by the Government to arrest, prosecute and jail anybody found disrupting elections in Imo State no matter how highly placed the individual is. This will help to deter godfathers from involving in Imo politics.
3. Government should scrap delegate elections and replace it with Option A4 where delegates will be free to elect candidate of their choice without monetary inducement from the godfathers. Sector.
4. Government should introduce electronic voting to enable electorates to vote for their choice candidates from the comfort of their homes. This will help reduce contact with the godfathers during elections in Imo State.
5. Government should ensure that selfless individuals with impeccable records are appointed to handle election and electoral processes in Imo State. They should be well paid to avoid godfathers luring them with gifts and money.
6. Government should register and sponsor political parties in Imo State. This will reduce the possibilities of individuals hijacking the political parties to become their personal properties.

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