

POLITICS OF GODFATHERISM AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: THE RIVERS STATE CASE

ABSTRACT

The study examined the politics of godfatherism and democratic governance in Nigeria with preference to Rivers state political crisis. The objectives of the study were to identify the environmental factors influencing the politics of godfatherism in Rivers State; to examine the impact the politics of godfatherism has on democratic governance in Rivers State; and to find out strategies to abate politics of godfatherism in Rivers state. The study adopted the elite theory, applied a descriptive survey research design, used both primary and secondary sources of data and a structured questionnaire as the instrument for data collection was employed. The population of the study is 5,198,716 residents in Rivers State (National Population Commission of Nigeria, 2006). The sample population is 400 (derived via the application of Taro Yamani sample size determination formula). The data collected via questionnaire were analyzed using table and percentages, while the hypotheses were tested using the chi-square. The findings of the study revealed that there are environmental factors inciting politics of godfatherism in Rivers State; that politics of godfatherism has adversely impacted on democratic governance in Rivers State; and that there are strategic measures to abate politics of godfatherism in Rivers state. Based on the findings, the study recommended the prevention of undue influence from political godfathers, enforcement of campaign finance regulations, promotion of a level playing field for all candidates before and during elections in Nigeria among others.

Keywords: Politics, Godfatherism, Godson, Democracy, Democratic Governance

1. INTRODUCTION

Politics of godfatherism has been the focal point of political gangalism in Africa and other developing countries around the globe, and has remained one of the greatest glitches facing the Nigerian political system since the country's return of democratic rule in 1999 to date. Although party machine politics is not an unfamiliar phenomenon in Nigerian political history, the country has seen an increase in it since returning to democratic rule, which continues to weaken government authority and rendering citizens' voting value meaningless. Its practice has not only retarded the process of democratic consolidation in Nigeria, but also undermines effective state governance and restricts rather than broadens democratic representation.

"Politics of godfatherism in Nigerian politics has eaten deep into the country's political space and economy. It has led to political slavery, puppetry leadership, dogmatic citizenship, and denies peaceful coexistence, law and order, and all the tenets of democratic process in the country" [1]. It has become a scary phenomenon in Nigerian politics and democratization process and has remained amongst the most dangerous challenges to democracy today. In other words, politics of godfatherism has had far reaching dire consequences for Nigeria's democratization process. It has a profound impact on society, leading to a lack of accountability, pervasive

corruption, and economic mismanagement. The wellbeing of the populace is subordinated to the private desires of political elites, who bear the brunt of these power battles.

Politics of godfatherism in Nigeria, as exemplified by the case of Rivers State, undermines the democratic process, fosters corruption, and disrupts governance. The present turmoil and instability in Rivers State disrupt the lives of ordinary citizens, affecting their access to basic services, their overall well-being and the essence of ideal democratic practice and principles.

There is no denying that the political system in Nigeria, particularly since the restoration of democracy in 1999, is not unfamiliar with the situation in Rivers State. In fact, some experts have described it as a display of political independence because it has become a recurrent element in the Nigerian political system. Numerous Nigerian states have experienced a fair share of "godfathers" forcing their way into state governance in an attempt to control the state's finances and government apparatus [2].

But the current crisis that is roiling the oil-rich state of Rivers has resembled a country going through a really bad political drama. Because it produces the crude oil that is the foundation of the nation's resources, Rivers State is regarded as the most resourceful state in the union. The current state governor of Rivers State, SimFubara, and the immediate prior governor, NyesomWike, have been masterminding the state's tight political crisis for almost six months. The abrupt deterioration of the relationship between Governor SiminalayiFubara and NyesomWike, the former governor of the state and current Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), is not surprising to those who follow Rivers State politics. As it has been since 1999, this trend continues to inflict collateral damage on the state economy [3].

"Godfatherism and ongoing conflicts between political godfathers and their godsons have caused constant instability in the political sphere since Dr. Peter Odili took office as governor of Rivers State in 1999. Unlike in other regions where politics typically transitions to governance post-election, in Rivers, the political landscape remains tumultuous until the subsequent electoral cycle, ostensibly due to intricate vested interests. While political observers within the state anticipated the short-lived nature of the political alliance between the former governor, now serving as the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), NyesomWike, and Governor SiminalayiFubara, the unexpectedly swift turn of events within a mere five months of the handover period was beyond contemplation. The ongoing crisis currently unsettling the oil-rich Rivers state has wrought havoc on the State's political dynamics, fostering disharmony, disunity, conflict, and discontent among diverse political and interest factions. Its inertia has compounded electoral apathy and anarchism, impeding the democratization process in Rivers state" [3].

In the light of the above, the study sought to identify the environmental factors influencing the politics of godfatherism in Rivers State; to examine the impact the politics of godfatherism has on democratic governance in Rivers State; and to find out strategies to abate the politics of godfatherism in Rivers state. Therefore, in line with the above objectives of the study, the research questions include - how are the environmental factors influencing the politics of godfatherism in Rivers State? How impactful is the politics of godfatherism on democratic governance in Rivers State? And how can godfatherism be abated in Rivers state? In the same vein, the raised null hypotheses of the research study predicts that there are environmental factors influencing the politics of godfatherism in Rivers State; that the politics of godfatherism has impacted on democratic governance in Rivers State adversely; and that there are strategic measures to abate godfatherism in Rivers state. Based on the findings of the study, plausible recommendations would be proposed.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Conceptual Clarifications

There are basic concepts like **political godfatherism** and **democracy** that their clarifications are germane in enhancing better understanding on the subject matter of the research study. Political Godfatherism is one of the concepts that open narrow doors when it comes to deciding who gets what in the political scene. However, for the purpose of this study, the literary meaning of godfather needs to be emphasized. In Nigeria, the people who are referred to as godfathers are those who have the authority to decide who (the candidate) is chosen to run for public office and who wins. According to Audu "Godfathers are people of questionable wealth and influences who rob political parties of their conventional and legitimate functions of presenting clear and coherent programmes on the basis of which the candidates presented by them are chosen by the voters". He notes that in an ideal world, the people who freely and fairly establish government would be held responsible for it, since they are the source of its moral power to rule [4].

Akpan contends that Godfathers are those who actively fund political parties' operations as well as individual campaigns for office. Their contributions are documented through the awarding of cronies to prestigious public positions, the financing of frivolous and bloated government contracts, as well as prebendal returns by those who benefit [5]. In the same vein, Ibrahim contend that godfathers are people who can win an election and achieve the desired result. The point being made here is that political posts can only be attained by politicians who have the support of the so-called "Godfathers." In fact, godsons end up being nothing more than their godfathers' pawns and complete subservient [6].

Furthermore, according to Omotola, godfathers are people with the extensive local ties, vast financial influence, security connections, and other advantages that allow them to plan and decide whether a power aspirant will succeed or fail at any stage of the purportedly competitive political process. The complex processes of doing this from 'womb to tomb' is famously known as 'godfatherism' [7]. "In the final analysis, political godfatherism is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. It is historically connected to the first republic era of the nation and was an unsightly system that hampered Nigeria's democratic progress" [7]

In many ways, democracy as a concept is one of the most striking features of contemporary politics. To date, it is rare to find individuals or nations-states that do not follow democracy and declare themselves to be democratic. However, it should be recognized that democracy is a highly laden notion whose essence is unable to be fully captured by a single school of thought in an attempt to conceptualize the idea. Ojo points out that all forms of democracy; liberal, capitalist, socialist, and African share the essential goal of "how to govern the society in such a way that power actually belongs to all the people," despite variations in how it is conceptualized and implemented [8]. In a similar vein, Chafe argues that democracy entails the participation of the populace in the political, social, and cultural spheres of society. The fundamental tenet of democracy is probably that all people are created equal and, as such, should have a vote in who rules and how [9]. Therefore, the people are the source of legitimate political authority, and government is only permitted with the agreement of the governed. Democracy, according to Abiola and Olaopa, is a system of institutions that satisfies at least two fundamental needs. The first step is to accurately gather as many people's opinions as possible regarding the election of representatives and the best course of action for the nation's governance. This entails the establishment of political parties, a minimum level of universal suffrage, and the scheduling of new elections at reasonable intervals. Second, it ought to have a mechanism for making sure that individual selected by the general public follow the wishes of the electorate, or they can be removed if they deviate from this, even in between elections [10]. This essentially indicates that in a democracy, the political process is a conversation between those in power and those who are ruled.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted the elite's theory as described by Pareto in 1935. The theory was adopted to investigate the negative impact of godfatherism on democratic governance in Nigeria with reference to Rivers State. The theory proposes that power is shared among the elites at regular intervals and at the detriment of the electorate or the masses. As Pareto (1935:26) asserted, "political elites shield and disassociate themselves from society, attempting to reproduce themselves as much as possible from within the political system. They do everything necessary within their control to ensure that non-elites do not enter their membership" [20] The political elites keep a safe, functional distance from the rest of society. They replicate themselves on an individual and selective basis in a method, which Pareto explicitly referred to as the 'circulation of elites' [20]. "The standards for such elite recruitment are frequently parochial, and the procedure is typically carried out in a way that does not jeopardize the dominant elite class's conventional reputation. The ruling class, according to Pareto, also attempts to sabotage efforts at 'collective circulation of elites,' preferring instead to promote individual recruitment"[20]

Mosca, on the other hand, disagrees with Pareto that elite recruiting can only be done on a personal level. He argues that one social class should replace another and that non-elite members can enter the elite class through a process known as "collective social mobility" [21]. "This refers to the social, economic, and professional status that people achieve as a result of their efforts. Mosca also believes that a group of people known as the "sub-elite" already exists in many societies around the world. These individuals promote contact between the elite and the non-elite, making them potential vehicles for elite recruitment on a wide scale" [21]. "Because of this argument, both sub-elite and non-elite Nigerians can be recruited into the political elite class. Elites, according to the elite theory, are players who govern the state and national wealth and hold key roles in power systems"[21]. "As a result, elite class understanding is more closely linked to "Weberian understanding of power, recognized as the ability to carry out one's will, even against the will of the wider population." In Rivers State and Nigeria at large, godfatherism acts as a conduit for such limited elite

recruitment. Underdevelopment, abject poverty and hunger, extreme youth unemployment and underemployment, low health opportunities, and misinterpretation of what politics stand for are the consequences of the politics of godfatherism on the democratic governance in Rivers State and in the Nigeria polity”[20].

“The importance of the adoption cum application of the elite theory to this study is to theoretically explain or describe how the politics of godfatherism impactfully abate democratic governance in Rivers State via the fostering of extreme elitist democracy and a money-driven electioneering structure, putting the populace as 'onlookers,' and continues to deny Nigerians much-needed institutional, political and socioeconomic advancement. Central to elite theory is structures, especially authority structures. It is founded on the premise that elite behaviour has a causal impact on the state-society dynamic while insiders have more authority and power over the state than the people”. [21] Elite ideology, according to Mosca, refers to the accumulation of authority in the hands of a few people that "performs all government roles, monopolizes power, and retains the benefits of power"[21]. As a result, public policy can be perceived as a reflection of political elites' values and preferences. The Nigerian polity with reference to the Rivers State case exemplifies a nation-state in which the wellbeing of the people is blatantly sacrificed to the needs of a few politicians and their cronies (godsons).

3. METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey design was employed in the study. Descriptive survey design is one in which research aims to describe the characteristics of a phenomenon or group of people without influencing it in any way [11]. The study used two sources of data; primary (questionnaire) and secondary sources of data like Books, Newspapers and Journal articles. The population of study comprised of residents of Rivers State numbering five million, one hundred and ninety-eight thousand, seven hundred and sixteen (5,198,716) [12][13]. The population is divided into the three (3) Senatorial Districts in the State (Rivers East, Rivers South East and Rivers West) as presented on table 1 below:

Table 1 Population of Study

Senatorial Zone	No. of Local Govt. Area	Population
Rivers East	8	2,038,789
Rivers South East	7	1,333,327
Rivers West	8	1,826,600
Total	23	5,198,716

Source: National Population Commission of Nigeria (web), National Bureau of Statistics (web)

To get a representation of the entire population (sample size), the Taro Yamani statistical formula was employed. According to Taro Yamene (1964), the formula is stated as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} = \frac{5198716}{1 + 5198716 \times 0.0025} = \frac{5198716}{12997.79} = 399.9 \text{ or } 400$$

Table 2: Sample Size Distribution

Senatorial Zone	Population	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
Rivers East	2,038,789	$\frac{2,038,789 \times 400}{5198716} = 157$	39

Rivers South East	1,333,327	$\frac{1,333,327 \times 400}{5,198,716} = 103$	26
Rivers West	1,826,600	$\frac{1,826,600 \times 400}{5,198,716} = 140$	35
Total	5,198,716	400	100

Source: Research Report, 2023

The cluster sampling technique was applied due to the composite characteristics of a target population. The purposive sampling technique was later applied to enable the researcher make judgemental selection of members of the target population based on their expertise and experience of the subject matter under investigation. The questionnaire was the major instrument used for this study. The questionnaire was based on the objectives and research questions developed for the study. 400 questionnaires were distributed to the residents of Rivers State based on the sample size of the three Senatorial Zones.

2.1 Politics of Godfatherism and Crisis of Democratic Governance in Rivers State

“The political system in Nigeria is not unfamiliar with the situation in Rivers State, particularly after democracy was restored in 1999. Since 1999 when Dr Peter Odili became governor of Rivers State to date, in the words of Ann, Political godfatherism and the ongoing animosity amongst these figures' godsons have caused constant political instability in the State [3]. The perpetual fallout first started with Peter Odili and his political godfather, the late Marshal Harry. It will be recalled that Odili rose to power on the structures of the late Marshal Harry, who was his godfather, but when he became governor, Odili dismantled Harry's structures in an epic political battle, and this led to their parting ways. Odili later established his own structures” [14].

“The second fallout between political godfathers and their godsons was between Peter Odili and his political godson, Rotimi Amaechi. While Odili was preparing to exit office, had narrowed his search for a successor to Amaechi, who was then the Speaker of the State House of Assembly. But when Amaechi emerged as the flag-bearer, his rise did not go down well with some Abuja 'bigwigs' and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was sent after him, seizing all his travel documents. Following fruitless efforts to support Amaechi's ascending, Odili gave in to resistance to the ticket and chose Dr. Celestine Omehia, Amaechi's cousin. Trampled and pursued, Amaechi fled to Ghana for a while and filed a lawsuit to overturn his disqualification. He broke off communication with Odili and returned to exact revenge on his political mentor on October 25, 2007, when the court found in his favor. When Amaechi became governor on October 25, 2007, by the order of the Supreme Court, he dismantled Odili's political dynasty, probably due to the saga that bedeviled his emergence as the flag bearer of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in 2006” [3]. The situation resulted in animosity between Omehia and Odili supporters on the part of Amaechi's camp, which ultimately caused a crisis that shattered the father-son political bond between the Odili and Amaechi.

The third fallout between political godfathers and their godsons was between Amaechi and Nelson Wike. Wike, who held the position of Chief of Staff during Amaechi's first term from 2007 to 2011, was a staunch supporter of the governor. Their alliance, however, soured when Amaechi claimed to have noticed Wike's autocratic inclinations, named Mr. Tony Okocha as his successor during his second term, and moved Wike to the center, where he was named Minister of State for Education. Wike arrived in Abuja and began a scheme to destroy Amaechi's organization, proving to be the worst political nightmare for the then-governor, who had calculated that "shipping" Wike to Abuja would destroy his nascent political career. After the altercation between the then-governor and then-first lady, Patience Jonathan, he felt even more confident to challenge Amaechi. The political alliance between Wike and Amaechi ultimately broke down when Wike's allies took control of the state PDP executive structure from the Amaechi-supporting administration through dubious legal means. In the end, Wike had complete control over the PDP's structure when Amaechi and a few of his men including Magnus Abe defected to the All-Progressives Congress (APC). Amaechi, Wike, and Abe are the state's three political actors, and their ongoing animosity toward one another has made the political feud worse [3]. This is having a negative impact on state developments.

"The recent fallout between political godfathers and their godsons is between Wike and his godson, SimFubara. Prior to this year's March 18, 2023 governorship election, about seven aspirants indicated interest in the race on the platform of PDP, including Felix Obuah, Isaac Kamalu and the current Secretary to the State Government, Tammy Danagogo, SimFubara, former accountant general of the state among others. However, Fubara who was handpicked by Wike, emerged as the party's candidate, and eventually won the governorship election, all thanks to Wike. However, it is not surprising that the relationship between the duo turned sour so quickly and the sad aftermath started manifesting on Sunday, October 29 and reached boiling point on Monday, October 30, when it became unbearable for the governor. Wike has been accused of controlling who gets what in the state, including when the governor ought to travel and whether or not, and of insisting that a quarter of all state funds be sent to him. Also, Wike was alleged to have kicked against some of the governor's programmes and policies, especially the revamping of Songhai Farm, which was initiated by Amaechi, renovation of the state secretariat, among others. Fubara was reported to have opposed several of Wike's actions because he could no longer put up with his godfather's purported dominance. Also, the dispute had unintended consequences for the state's economy" [3][15].

"According to Edokwe, the inability of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), a dominant political force in Rivers State, to resolve the conflict between Ex-governor Wike and Governor Fubara highlights the pervasive nature of political godfatherism and its destabilizing impact on political parties and the economy at large. Politics of godfatherism does not only portend great danger to Rivers state and Nigeria's democratic experiments, but also to the very essence and validity of our existence as a nation-state. He contends that politics of godfatherism also has a profound impact on society, leading to a lack of accountability, pervasive corruption, and economic mismanagement. The wellbeing of the populace is subordinated to the personal interests of political elites, who bear the brunt of these power battles. Ordinary people's lives are also disrupted by the unrest and instability in Rivers State, which has an impact on their general well-being and capacity to access essential services" [15].

"However, is imperative to add that there is nothing wrong if influential people in the society give strong backing to electoral candidates if the goal is to use it to get the best people into public offices" [16]. "What is wrong with the Rivers state case is that the godfathers have turned politics into a money-making business under which elections are rigged with a view to forcing pre-determined candidates into public offices. In turn, their mentors manipulate the office holders inappropriately in every manner. The godfathers in River's state cum Nigeria see their support to their godsons as an economic investment that must yield superlative dividends by all means. The violent argument between the two godfathers begins when they attempt to overstate the depth of their commitment to their godsons in every instance [16]. It is evident from the aforementioned incidents that each party raises its own private army to protect its interests. This led to several preventable deaths. The bulk of those killed were unemployed youth who volunteered their services to both sides". [16]

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section the result of data collected were presented and analyzed in accordance with the research questions and hypotheses posed for the study. The interpretation of the exercise was also made to arrive at the findings of the research work. The research questions were presented and analyzed using frequency and percentage and in a Likert scale point, while the hypotheses were tested with chi-square (χ^2) at significant level of 0.05.

However, it is important to note that a total of four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaires were distributed by the researcher to the local government areas of each of the Senatorial Zones in the State. Three hundred and thirteen (313) copies were returned representing 78% of the total distributed copies of the questionnaire; eighty-seven (87) were not returned representing 22% of the total distributed copies. Out of the returned copies seventy-nine (79) copies were condemned for improper completion by the respondents representing 18% of the total distributed and total returned copies. The remaining two hundred and thirty-four (234) copies were used for the analysis, representing 59% of the total distributed and total return copies respectively. Efforts made to recover the unreturned copies proved abortive.

Research Question One:Howare the environmental factors influencingthe politics of godfatherism in Rivers State?

The objective of this research question is to identify environmental factors influencing the politics of godfatherism in Rivers State.

Table 3 contains the summary of the responses on the question relating to environmental factors influencing the politics of godfatherism in Rivers State.

Responses	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Don't know		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<i>Existence of Profit-motivated Political Patron</i>	69	29	135	58	8	3	13	6	9	4	234	100
<i>Over Regulation of Party Officials</i>	23	10	84	36	46	20	31	13	50	21	234	100
<i>Army of Unemployed Youths</i>	36	15	102	44	18	8	14	6	64	27	234	100
<i>Malleable Criminal and Social Justice System</i>	52	22	106	45	31	13	27	12	18	8	234	100
<i>Docile Political Environment</i>	14	6	27	12	78	33	62	26	53	23	234	100
<i>Charging High Fees for Party Nomination Forms</i>	75	32	120	51	11	3	21	9	8	3	234	100
Total	269	19	574	41	192	14	168	12	202	14	1404	600

Source: Research Data, 2023

Table 3 above showed that 19% respondents strongly agreed to the environmental factors influencing the politics of godfatherism in Rivers State; 41% agreed; 14% disagreed; 12% strongly disagreed; and 14% do not know. From the responses of the respondents, the existence of profit-motivated political patron as an environmental factor suggests to have more influence.

Research Question Two: How impactful is the politics of godfatherism on democratic governance in Rivers State?

The objective of this research question is to examine the impact of the politics of godfatherism on democratic governance in Rivers State.

Table 4 contains the summary of the responses on the question relating to the impact of the politics of godfatherism on democratic governance in Rivers State.

Responses	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Don't know		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<i>Denial of Voters the right of appointing citizens of their choice to rule them</i>	64	27	102	44	18	8	36	15	14	6	234	100
<i>Lack of Accountability of Public Office Holders</i>	37	16	118	50	29	12	30	13	20	9	234	100

<i>Absence of Democratic Governance</i>	of	110	47	61	26	24	10	28	12	11	5	234	100
<i>Embezzlement of State Finances:</i>	of	43	13	109	49	21	9	42	18	19	8	234	100
<i>Disenfranchisement of Voters</i>		39	17	113	48	26	11	33	13	23	10	234	100
<i>Mediocrity and Financial Corruption:</i>	and	64	27	131	56	20	9	11	5	8	3	234	100
<i>Advancement of Interests of Aristocrats</i>	of of	121	52	39	17	32	13	28	12	14	6	234	100
Total		478	29	673	41	170	10	208	13	109	7	1638	700

Source: Research Data, 2023

Table 4 above showed that 29% respondents strongly agreed that the politics of godfatherism is impactful on democratic governance in Rivers State; 41% agreed; 10% disagreed; 13% strongly disagreed; and 7% do not know. Descriptive survey research design measures how impactful the politics of godfatherism on democratic governance in Rivers State in the sense that it is mostly applied to gain a greater understanding (or demonstrate high level of knowledge) about the responses of respondents (target population) relative to the impactful nature of the politics of godfatherism on democratic governance in Rivers State.

Research Question Three: How can godfatherism be abated in Rivers state?

The objective of this research question is to find out the strategies capable of abating godfatherism in Rivers state.

Table 5: Strategies capable of abating godfatherism in Rivers state.

Responses	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Don't know		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<i>Electoral and legal Reforms</i>	64	27	102	44	36	15	18	8	14	6	234	100
<i>Democratization of Political Parties</i>	152	65	59	25	12	5	4	2	7	3	234	100
<i>Existence of Active Civil Societies</i>	121	52	39	17	14	6	28	12	32	13	234	100
<i>Raising Public Awareness</i>	122	52	44	19	20	9	33	14	15	6	234	100
<i>Practice of True Democracy</i>	46	20	31	13	108	46	22	9	27	12	234	100
<i>Unattractive Elective Posts</i>	54	23	126	54	31	13	17	7	6	3	234	100
Total	559	39	401	29	221	16	122	9	101	7	1404	600

Source: Research Data, 2023

Table 5 above showed that 39% respondents strongly agreed on the strategies capable of abating politics of godfatherism in Rivers state; 29% agreed; 16% disagreed; 9% strongly disagreed; and 7% do not know. Among the above strategies, the democratization of political parties and the unattractive elective posts *are the* strategies perceived by respondents to be more effective as compared to others.

TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis One: There are environmental factors influencing the politics of godfatherism in Rivers State.

Decision Criteria

When the computed value of Chi-square (χ^2) is greater than (>) the table value of Chi-square (χ^2), the hypothesis one will be accepted.

Table 6.a: Observed Frequency for Hypothesis One

Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	Total
Total	21	30	39	61	83	234

Source: Research Data, 2023

Calculation of Degree of Freedom (DF)

$$DF = (R-1) (C-1)$$

Where R = Number of rows in the contingency table

C = Number of columns in the contingency table

$$DF = (2-1) (5-1) = 1 \times 4 = 4$$

At 0.05 significant level and 4 degree of freedom the table value of chi-square = 9.49

Computation of chi-square (χ^2)

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(o-e)^2}{e}$$

Where o=Observed frequency, e=Expected frequency

Expected frequency (e) is giving by $\frac{RT \times CT}{GT}$

GT

Where RT = Row total; CT = Colum total; and GT = Grand total

Table 6.b: Computation of Chi-Square for Hypothesis One

Observed frequency (o)	Expected frequency (e)	(o-e)	(o-e) ²	$\frac{(o-e)^2}{E}$
-	24.12	-24.12	581.7744	24.12

-	17.72	-17.72	313.9984	17.72
5	11.33	-6.33	40.0689	3.54
3	8.72	-5.72	32.7184	3.75
1	6.10	-5.1	26.01	4.26
17	58.88	-41.88	1753.9	29.8
22	43.27	-21.27	452.41	10.5
49	27.67	21.33	454.97	16.4
79	21.28	57.72	3331.6	156.6
58	14.90	43.1	1857.61	124.7
				$X^2 = \frac{\sum(o-e)^2}{E} = 391.39$

Source: Research Data, 2023

Decision

Since the computed value of chi-square (χ^2) of 391.39 is greater than (>) the table of chi-square (χ^2) of 9.49, hypothesis one is accepted. The study therefore established that there are environmental factors influencing the politics of godfatherism in Rivers State. The purpose of hypothesis testing is to test whether the null hypothesis can be rejected or accepted. If the null hypothesis is rejected, then the research hypothesis is rejected. In this instance, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis Two: Politics of godfatherism has impacted on democratic governance in Rivers State adversely.

Decision Criteria

When the computed value of Chi-square (χ^2) is greater than (>) the table value of Chi-square (χ^2), the hypothesis two will be accepted.

Table 7.a: Observed Frequency for Hypothesis Two

Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	Total
Total	106	76	37	15	10	234

Source: Research Data, 2023

Calculation of Degree of Freedom (DF)

$$DF = (R-1) (C-1)$$

Where R = Number of row in the contingency table

C = Number of columns in the contingency table

$$DF = (2-1) (5-1) = 1 \times 4 = 4$$

At 0.05 significant level and 4 degree of freedom the table value of chi-square = **9.49**

Computation of chi-square (χ^2)

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(o-e)^2}{e}$$

Where o=Observed frequency, e=Expected frequency

Expected frequency (e) is giving by $\frac{RT \times CT}{GT}$

GT

Where RT = Row total; CT = Colum total; and GT = Grand total

Table 7.b: Computation of Chi-Square for Hypothesis Two

Observed frequency (o)	Expected frequency (e)	(o-e)	(o-e) ²	$\frac{(o-e)^2}{E}$
5	27.90	22.9	524.4	18.8
3	16.56	-13.6	185	11.2
1	10.46	-9.46	89.5	8.6
-	7.26	-7.26	52.7	7.26
-	5.81	-5.81	33.8	5.81
101	68.10	32.9	1082.4	15.9
73	40.44	32.56	1060.2	26.2
36	25.54	10.46	109.4	10.46
15	17.74	-2.74	7.5	0.4
10	14.19	-4.19	17.6	1.2
				$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(o-e)^2}{E} = 105.8$

Source: Research Data, 2023

Decision

Since the computed value of chi-square (χ^2) of 105.8 is greater than (>) the table value of chi-square(χ^2) of 9.49, hypothesis two is accepted. The study therefore established that politics of godfatherism has impacted on democratic governance in Rivers State adversely. The purpose of hypothesis testing is to test whether the null hypothesis can be rejected or accepted. If the null hypothesis is rejected, then the research hypothesis is rejected. In this instance, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis Three: There are strategic measures to curb politics of godfatherism in Rivers state.

Decision criteria

When the computed value of Chi-square (χ^2) is greater than ($>$) the table value of Chi-square (χ^2), the hypothesis three will be accepted.

Table 8.a: Observed Frequency for Hypothesis Three

Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	Total
Total	99	58	33	24	20	234

Source: Research Data, 2023

Calculation of Degree of Freedom (DF)

$$DF = (R-1) (C-1)$$

Where R = Number of row in the contingency table

C = Number of columns in the contingency table

$$DF = (2-1) (5-1) = 1 \times 4 = 4$$

At 0.05 significant level and 4 degree of freedom the table value of chi-square = 9.49

Computation of chi-square (χ^2)

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(o-e)^2}{e}$$

e

Where o=Observed frequency, e=Expected frequency

Expected frequency (e) is giving by $\frac{RT \times CT}{GT}$

GT

Where RT = Row total; CT = Colum total; and GT = Grand total

Table 8.b: Computation of Chi-Square for Hypothesis Three

Observed frequency (o)	Expected frequency (e)	(o-e)	(o-e) ²	$\frac{(o-e)^2}{E}$
6	28.77	-22.77	518.5	18
3	168.57	-165.57	27413.4	162.6
-	9.59	-9.59	92	9.6
-	6.97	-6.97	48.6	6.97
-	5.81	-5.81	33.8	5.81
85	70.23	14.8	219.04	3.1

71	39.73	31.3	979.69	24.7
36	23.41	12.6	158.5	6.8
23	17.03	5.97	35.6	2.1
10	14.19	-4.19	17.6	1.2
				$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum(o-e)^2}{E} = 240.88$

Source: Research Data, 2023

Decision

Since the computed value of chi-square (χ^2) of 240.88 is greater than (>) the table value of chi-square (χ^2) of 9.49, hypothesis three is accepted. Therefore, the study established that there are strategic measures to curb politics of godfatherism in Rivers state. The purpose of hypothesis testing is to test whether the null hypothesis can be rejected or accepted. If the null hypothesis is rejected, then the research hypothesis is rejected. In this instance, the null hypothesis is accepted.

3.1 Environmental Factors Influencing the Politics of Godfatherism in Rivers State

The environmental factors influencing the politics of godfatherism in Rivers State as indicated in table 3 above include:

- a) *Existence of Profit-motivated Political Patron:* This is a pliable political process that serves the interests of just a few in the society, a weak civil society and electoral system, some do-or-die office seekers, and a greedy mass media willing to serve the interest of the highest bidder as observed in Rivers State since 1999 to date.
- b) *Formation of New Political Party:* Every political transition programme in Nigeria is started with the formation of new parties. The goals, stances, objectives, and interests of the founders of several political parties are frequently concealed. Thus, those who eventually decide to join the parties must rely on the words and deeds of the party's "godfathers." [14]. Those who want to do well in the parties thus have to attend secret meetings in the houses of their godfathers. This provides them with access to 'privileged information' about party processes and how to navigate them. Rivers State is not exempted.
- c) *Over Regulation of Party Officials:* To enhance the positions of godfathers in the party, the godfathers ensure that party officials are over-regulated. The regulations in the system are themselves devices for making the political process become easier for manipulation of both state and party officials.
- d) *Army of Unemployed Youths:* For politics of godfatherism to survive under this kind of system, a godfather must be very daring and ready to supplant the general will of the people by his/her own selfish interests. This goal becomes easier to achieve in a society like Rivers State that contains an army of unemployed youths willing to be used to attain criminal objectives.
- e) *Docile Political Environment:* Politics of godfatherism continue to thrive in Rivers State because the political environment of the state consists of a docile 'anything-goes' civil society.
- f) *Malleable Criminal and Social Justice System:* Another factor for politics of godfatherism to flourish in Rivers State is the existence of a malleable criminal and social justice system in the state in favor of the political godfathers.
- g) *Undemocratic Nomination Hurdles:* The over-regulation of the political process in Nigeria is partly evident in the many hurdles that members of political parties are expected to cross before being nominated for elective office. Every government administration in Nigeria specifies who and who cannot vie for a political position. This also played out in Rivers state. The problem started with General Ibrahim Babangida when he

tried to ban the 'old breed' of politicians from participating in politics between the late 1980s and early 1990s. This was his own way of creating new political culture in Nigeria.

h) *Lack of Confidence of Godson*: Lacking confidence in themselves and ability to successfully navigate the money-dominated Nigerian politics, many of the new breed of politicians in Rivers's state had to 'enroll' as private candidates of the old breeds who dominated the informal political arena.

i) *Creation of Uncertainties in Political Parties*: In addition to unnecessary official intervention in the political process, political godfathers create all forms of uncertainties in their political parties with a view to making the other members appreciate their worth. They are usually the brains behind the fractionalization of all major political parties in Nigeria. They woo members into their own faction of the party with money and other favors and in the process make pawns out of them as it is currently observed in Rivers state.

j) *Secrecy in Political Party Affairs*: "Leaders of the political parties run their affairs secretly. Dates for party convention, criteria for party nomination, what makes a person to be qualified for a party position, and the like are constantly changed. All these uncertainties make party members lose confidence in their ability to do well in the parties on their own. They rely on personal loyalties, clientelism, all of which makes the entire political process open to corrupt practices". [16]

k) *Charging High Fees to Purchase Party Nomination Forms*: "This practice weakens public acceptance of the democratic process. Most of the big parties (APC and PDP) in Rivers state charge ridiculously high fees for collecting nomination forms. What the candidates are asked to pay for collecting the forms are usually not realistic given the state of Nigeria's economy. The fees are sometimes as high as what an average Nigerian earns in six months. Some candidates thus have to go and sell some of their property or take loans from friends to raise the money. The most popular alternative is to approach a godfather for support. That a candidate successfully raises the funds for buying the nomination form does not suggest that he would be given the mandate of the party at the party's convention. He needed somebody to help facilitate this process". [16]

l) *Competitive Party conventions*: "Party conventions in Nigeria are usually a forum for enthroning new godfathers and dethroning old ones. The competition starts when the regulations for the conventions are being drawn up. Every godfather builds into the process creating some problems that would later give him an edge over others. Disagreements resulting between godfathers over this explain why party members in Nigeria sometimes go to court to stop the holding of the convention of their parties; it explains why convention dates are endlessly fixed and cancelled, and it explains why Nigerian political parties become more divided after party conventions". [16]

m) *Misplaced Loyalty of Public Officers*: "At the party conventions, money, and not necessarily meaningful political issues or questions of integrity, plays an important role in deciding who carries the day. Candidates who want to get the nod of their parties for whatever office, even those vying to the office of the president, must have identified with one prominent godfather or the other. The godfather puts in place 'all it takes' (money, violence, rigging of elections, etc.), for his candidate to win. After getting nominated at the party's convention, the godfather goes from there to ensure that his candidate wins the election 'by all means'. After election, Nigerian public officers are only loyal to the godfather that put them in office rather than to the party they belong to or the Nigerian state they pretend to serve" [16].

3.2. Impact of the Politics of Godfatherism on Democratic Governance in Rivers State

The surgent of the politics of godfatherism in Rivers state poses a serious negative impact on the political dividends, socio-economic growth, good governance and stability in Rivers state in the following ways as showcased in table 4 above:

a. *Denial of Voters the right of electing citizens of their choice to lead them*: "One of the most alarming and destructive consequences of politics of godfatherism in Rivers state is the campaigning for a genuinely democratic and transparent political mechanism in which voters are expected to openly nominate someone who will govern in the interest of the electorates. Considering the circumstances in which godfathers-imposed candidates of their choosing on the general populace, the right of electing citizens of their choice to lead them is denied. This is, to say the least, diametrically opposed to the political principles of democratic governance" [17].

- b. *Lack of Accountability of Public Office Holders*: “When those holding public offices in Rivers state are not accountable to voters, who in any case did not vote in their election to public office, the allegiance of such public office is inevitably designated to their godfathers, negating one of the most important characteristics of governance and democracy, which is responsible and open government” [17]. This situation is therefore harmful to good government and political order, which are based on the rule of law, due process, responsibility, and openness of public matters in the state.
- c. *Advancement of Interests of Aristocrats*: “Only by assuring their godsons of electoral victory will the godfathers increase their social, political, and economic power. As a result, elections have become a vehicle for advancing the interests of the aristocracy rather than that of the electorate in Rivers state” [1].
- d. *Absence of Democratic Governance*: “The rise of politics of godfatherism in Rivers state has also deprived people of the right to reap the benefits of democratic governance in the state in the sense that the government has been hesitant to initiate and enforce reforms that will benefit the general public. The intellectual foundations and basic ethos of democracy are being brushed aside, causing voters in the state to lose confidence in the democratic process and the administration. This is due to the fact that in Rivers state, godfatherism is essentially coercive in practice” [17].
- e. *Embezzlement of State Finances*: “In Rivers state, the main motivation of godfathers to desire to exact immense influence and control over his/her godson is the desire to obtain wealth from government treasury, which the godson controls. As a result, the state's financial resource from the federation account, which is intended to raise citizens' living conditions, is of utmost importance to politicians. He could explode if godsons fail to reconcile their godfathers as agreed” [1].
- f. *Ideal Democracy*: “According to Igbini and Okolie, “statistical analysis, from the 2003, 2007, 2019 and 2023 general elections were the worst in Nigeria's fourth republic. That is because polls were marked by widespread rigging, monetization, dishonest electoral officers and security forces, judicial injustice, democratic assassination, political thuggery, deliberate disenfranchisement of the electorate, and flagrant disrespect for the rule of law, incitement, religious opinion mobilization, youth unrest, electoral propaganda, simultaneous voting, under-age voting” [1]. “Furthermore, in Rivers state, there were also cases of irregular ballot with already thumb-printed ballot papers, the chasing of electors away from districts where their candidates are expected to receive few votes, falsification of election results and forgery of figures at polling units and data centers, including pressuring certain party agents to sign forged election results under duress. This means that democracy's prestige as the ideal system of government has been eroded” [18].
- g. *Disenfranchisement of Voters*: The ruled in a democracy not only have the freedom to vote, but they also have the right to be voted for. Democratic godfathers in Rivers state use their power to exclude anyone from participating in the state politics; they are political gatekeepers, dictating who can and cannot engage in politics.
- h. *Mediocrity and Financial Corruption*: Since the incumbent godson is at pains to fulfil the whims and caprices of the godfather among other conflicting demands on the scarce resources, this type of condition encourages mediocrity and financial corruption in Rivers state. The interest of the greater majority is savagely exploited by the political godfather syphoning the state government's finances.
- i. *Impediment of State Democracy and Political progress*: Ugwu, Izueke&Obasi espoused that “politics of godfatherism in Rivers state has made socio-economic growth inaccessible to the majority of the population in the state”. “As a result, politics of godfatherism is one of the main forces orchestrating socio-economic and political crises in the Rivers state. Godfatherism politics has had a devastating impact on state democracy and political progress in Nigeria today” [18].
- j. *Citizenry Participation*: In the present-day Rivers state, the citizenry is not involved in the decision-making process of issues that affect them, this has eroded the gains and tents of democracy. This is due to heavy militarized and monetized polity largely dominated by godfathers, their thugs and private militia and has negated economic activities, especially schooling, health, security (political wrangling), agriculture, housing, and infrastructural growth, are brought to a halt as a result of these (godfatherism) in the state polity.

3.3 Strategies to Abate Politics of Godfatherism in Rivers State

There are suggestive strategies fronted by scholars on how best to abate politics of godfatherism Nigeria. However, with reference to Rivers state, this study adopts the following plausible strategies as proposed in table 5 above:

1. *Electoral Reforms*: Well comprehensive electoral reforms can promote free, fair and credible elections in Rives state. The reforms if optimally implemented by INEC will reduce the influence of money in politics, and enhance transparency of the electoral process.
2. *Democratization of Political Parties*: Political parties must prioritize practice of internal democracy; drastically abate the power of a select few political merchants, and ensure that decisions are made based on merit rather than political patronage.
3. *Active Civil Society*: Civil society organizations like PANDEF- Pan Niger Delta Forum, Movement of the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, Nigeria Labor Congress, Red Cross Society, Boys Scout, Girls Guild, ASUU- Academic Staff Union of University, AWACIO- Aids for Women, Adolescents and Children A more prominent and active role can be played by international organizations, among others, in raising public awareness of issues, keeping an eye on and promoting transparent governance, holding elected officials responsible, and teaching the public about their rights and obligations.
4. *Enactment of Legal Reforms*: Enacting and enforcing laws that regulate campaign financing, lobbying, and the activities of political godfathers is essential.
5. *Raising Public Awareness*: Public awareness campaigns can educate citizens on the negative impacts of political godfatherism and the importance of choosing leaders based on merit.
6. *Practice of True Democracy*: Democracy designed to bring about the true practice of rule of law, free and fair elections, independence of judiciary, political equality and respect of fundamental human rights is essential to counter the advent of chronic 'Godfatherism' in the political scene in Rivers state.
7. *Open Confessions of Godsons*: Godsons who are at odds with their accepting fathers ought to be honest and offer relevant information about how their fathers got to be in positions of authority and the kinds of issues that have followed. This development is beneficial to the nation's democratic government system's expansion. Nigerians will undoubtedly be more equipped for the future now that they are more aware of how the country's elite manipulates elections.
8. *Unattractive Elective Posts*: Elective posts in Nigeria should be made unattractive. The idea of paying jumbo salaries and allowances to elected public servants should be abated

"Therefore, politics of godfatherism in Nigeria, as exemplified by the case of Rivers State, undermines the democratic process, fosters corruption, and disrupts governance" [19]. "To prepare for the 2027 general elections, it is imperative that Nigerian government tackles this issue head-on by implementing the aforementioned strategies". [19]

5. CONCLUSION

Political godfatherism in Nigeria, as exemplified by the case of Rivers State, Nigeria undermines the democratic governance, fosters corruption, and disrupts peace, unity and political and socio-economic progress. To prepare for the 2027 general elections and upcoming state elections, it is imperative that Nigeria tackles this issue head-on by implementing the proposed plausible strategies recommended in this study in order to abate the environmental factors fueling the politics of godfatherism and the impact of it on democratic governance in Rivers State and Nigeria. In addition, INEC should play a crucial role in enforcing electoral laws and ensuring a fair and transparent electoral process. Addressing political godfatherism is essential for the growth and stability of Nigeria's democratic governance. This includes preventing undue influence from political godfathers, enforcing campaign finance regulations, and promoting a level playing field for all candidates before and during elections in Nigeria. In addition, random plebiscite should be introduced by INEC in the respective constituencies to ascertain the popularity or acceptance of candidates chosen by political parties through primaries. Finally, electronic voting should be adopted for all elections in the country in order to minimize electoral fraud.

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