

Godfatherism, Power Dynamics and Economic Growth in Nigeria: An Empirical Analysis of Political Influence in the Owerri Education Zone

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of godfatherism on power dynamics and economic growth in Nigeria, addressing a research gap on the specific mechanisms through which political patronage affects governance and economic outcomes. Focusing on the Owerri Education Zone in Imo State, the study explored the depth of godfatherism's influence, its operational mechanisms, and potential strategies for mitigation. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from a sample of 400 participants, including political analysts, government officials, and members of the electorate, selected from a population of over 300,000 through stratified random sampling. A structured questionnaire, validated by experts, was administered to gather insights on the role of godfatherism in resource allocation and economic policy manipulation. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, with mean and standard deviation employed to summarize responses. The findings revealed that godfatherism significantly undermines economic growth by prioritizing powerful individuals' interests, often at the expense of broader societal needs. Specific mechanisms, including political patronage, electoral financing, and policy manipulation, emerged as key pathways through which resource inequality and corruption are sustained. Notably, 68% of respondents identified policy manipulation as a primary factor in resource misallocation. The study contributes to the literature by offering empirical evidence of godfatherism's economic effects and recommending reforms, including legal frameworks, enhanced electoral processes, civic education, and accountability mechanisms, to curb its influence. These insights are critical for policymakers aiming to foster transparent governance and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Power Dynamics, Economic Growth, Politics, Godfatherism, Mitigation.

Introduction

Power and economic growth are closely intertwined within the political economy, particularly in a complex and diverse country like Nigeria. Understanding how power operates within this context is essential, as it influences the development trajectory of the nation. One of the critical dynamics shaping power in Nigeria is godfatherism - a patron-client system in which influential figures, or "godfathers," use their vast resources and social leverage to dictate political decisions, often at the expense of democratic processes and

public interests. This phenomenon, deeply embedded in Nigeria's political framework, has profound consequences on long-term economic development and governance stability.

The roots of godfatherism in Nigeria trace back to the colonial era, where traditional rulers and influential individuals began leveraging power and influence to mediate between colonial administrators and the local population. Post-independence, godfatherism took on new forms, adapting to the evolving political climate. With the transition from military rule to civilian governance, this system became institutionalized within party politics, as godfathers emerged to support candidates financially and strategically, often in exchange for political allegiance and control over policy directions. As a result, godfatherism evolved into a mechanism by which powerful individuals controlled access to office, created informal power structures, and influenced governance.

This historical progression from general power dynamics to a structured godfather system had significant implications for Nigeria's political and economic landscape. The dependency on godfathers has not only distorted policymaking but also entrenched corruption, misallocation of funds, and limited investment in critical sectors. Politicians, indebted to their sponsors, frequently prioritize godfathers' interests over public welfare, leading to policies that serve private gains rather than broad-based economic growth.

The effects of godfatherism extend beyond economic performance to the broader socio-political fabric, contributing to the erosion of democratic institutions and deepening inequalities. By monopolizing political power, godfathers restrict access to political leadership for capable individuals who lack resources or connections, perpetuating a cycle of political patronage and stifling opportunities for genuine reform. This paper explores the mechanisms of godfatherism in Nigerian politics and its multi-faceted impact on economic growth, governance, and societal equity. It further proposes strategies to mitigate godfatherism's influence, advocating for reforms to strengthen democratic institutions and promote a more transparent and accountable political system. In examining these dynamics, this study aims to enhance understanding of how godfatherism shapes power structures and economic outcomes in Nigeria, providing insights that could support the pursuit of more equitable and sustainable development. Through this investigation, the paper seeks to contribute to ongoing discourse on reforming political institutions to foster inclusive growth and robust governance in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, godfatherism has become a significant force in the political sphere, with powerful individuals and groups exerting control over elected officials and political processes. This patron-client relationship, where politicians are often beholden to their financial and political backers, typically prioritizes personal gain over public welfare, leading to detrimental impacts on governance and economic progress. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2023, Nigeria ranks 145 out of 180 countries, scoring 25 out of 100 points. This is a slight improvement from its previous ranking in 2022, where it was positioned at 150 with a score of 24 which reflects the

pervasive influence of corruption in the political system and its adverse effects on institutional performance.

The economic implications of godfatherism are particularly concerning, as it results in policy manipulation, misallocation of resources, and entrenched corruption. Economic growth in Nigeria has been stunted, with the country's GDP growth averaging around 2% annually over the past five years - an insufficient rate to keep up with population growth, which hovers around 2.5% per year. This stagnation is exacerbated by godfatherism-driven policies that divert resources to projects serving private interests rather than national development. Furthermore, about 40% of Nigeria's population lives below the poverty line, a statistic that reflects the inefficient use of public funds and the lack of investment in sectors critical to broad-based growth, such as infrastructure, healthcare, and education.

Despite these profound implications, there is limited understanding of the specific ways in which godfatherism shapes economic policies and resource allocation. The mechanisms of influence such as political patronage, control over electoral financing, and manipulation of policy outcomes are under-explored, making it challenging to address the root causes of these issues. Godfathers frequently finance political campaigns in exchange for influence over policy decisions, leading to a lack of accountability and an environment where public officials prioritize loyalty to their sponsors over their constituents. This dynamic not only weakens democratic institutions but also perpetuates a cycle of inefficiency and corruption, further hindering Nigeria's development prospects.

Given these concerns, this study addresses the following questions: To what extent does godfatherism influence economic policies and growth in Nigeria? What mechanisms enable godfatherism to dictate resource allocation and policy decisions within Nigerian politics? What strategies can be implemented to curb the influence of godfatherism, promoting a more transparent and accountable governance framework? By investigating these issues, this study aims to provide empirical insights into the role of godfatherism in Nigeria's political economy and to identify pathways toward a more equitable and sustainable development model.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. To what extent does godfatherism influence the economic policies and growth in Nigeria?
- ii. What are the mechanisms through which godfatherism affects resource allocation in Nigerian politics?
- iii. What are the strategies for mitigating the influence of godfatherism in politics?

Theoretical Framework

Political economy theory and Elite theory respectively offer valuable perspectives on the influence of power dynamics in shaping governance and economic outcomes in Nigeria.

Political Economy Theory

Political economy theory provides a broad framework for understanding the relationship between political power, governance, and economic performance. The theory emphasizes how political institutions, actors, and processes influence economic policies and outcomes, often highlighting the role of power dynamics in shaping economic development. According to Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), political institutions determine the distribution of power within a society, and this distribution influences economic performance by affecting policy choices. When power is concentrated in the hands of a small elite group, as is often the case with godfatherism in Nigeria, the economic policies crafted by this group tend to favour their interests over the collective welfare of the populace.

In Nigeria, political economy theory helps explain how godfathers use their control over political resources to skew governance and economic policy decisions. Lawal and Tobi (2006) argue that godfathers often manipulate state resources to maintain their power, directing public funds towards personal or political projects rather than public goods. This results in poor governance, corruption, and inefficiencies that stifle economic growth. Similarly, Lewis (2011) emphasizes how political power concentrated in the hands of elites creates a "political economy of corruption," where economic outcomes are distorted to benefit a few rather than fostering broad-based economic development. These dynamics, grounded in political economy theory, demonstrate how power struggles within the political system directly influence Nigeria's economic performance.

Elite Theory

Elite theory complements political economy theory by focusing on the role of a small, powerful group referred to as elites who dominate political and economic decision-making. In Nigeria, godfathers represent these elites, wielding significant influence over political appointments, electoral outcomes, and governance structures. Elite theory, as developed by theorists such as Pareto and Mills, posits that a select group controls the levers of power in any society, often manipulating these positions to preserve their status and control. This theory provides a useful lens through which to understand how godfathers in Nigeria maintain their dominance over political structures and how this impacts economic governance.

Godfathers in Nigeria control political resources such as funding, media access, and patronage networks, which they use to ensure that their loyalists occupy key political offices. Albert (2005) explains that these godfathers are typically wealthy individuals or influential political figures who see politics as an extension of their economic control. Once in power, politicians who are beholden to their godfathers must implement policies that align with the godfather's interests, often at the expense of the public. This results in economic policies that are more focused on maintaining the godfather's power and wealth than on fostering national economic growth.

Ayoade (2006) expands on this, noting that godfathers use their influence to direct public resources towards themselves and their political clients, creating a rent-seeking environment. This elite control over resources and decision-making stifles competition and entrepreneurship, as contracts and economic opportunities are often allocated based on loyalty rather than merit. Consequently, this perpetuates inefficiencies in governance and limits economic growth. Omotola (2007) further illustrates how elite dominance, as seen in the phenomenon of godfatherism, leads to policies that fail to address critical development challenges, resulting in poor infrastructure, inadequate social services, and widespread poverty.

Literature Review

The literature review was packaged to reflect the following; The Concept of Godfatherism in Nigerian Politics, Brief Overview of Political Dynamics in Nigeria, Mechanisms of Godfatherism in Nigeria, Godfatherism and its impact on Economic Growth in Nigeria, Power Dynamics and its Socio-Political Consequences in Nigeria and Strategies for Mitigating the Influence of Godfatherism in Politics.

Concept of Godfatherism in Nigerian Politics

Godfatherism is a pervasive concept in Nigerian politics, reflecting a relationship between powerful individuals, or "godfathers," and their political protégés, or "godsons." This dynamic involves significant control by godfathers over their godsons, influencing candidate selection, policy-making, and governance. Emerging from Nigeria's colonial era, godfatherism became entrenched during the post-independence period and military regimes, where a few powerful figures acted as kingmakers. The return to civilian rule in 1999 reinforced godfathers' influence, as they became key players in financing candidates and manipulating electoral outcomes. This patron-client relationship shaped Nigeria's democratic process, with godfathers using their financial resources and connections to secure victories for their chosen candidates. Godfathers often manipulate the electoral process through vote-buying and rigging, undermining democracy and eroding public trust. Their control extends beyond elections, as they dictate policy decisions and appointments, often prioritizing loyalty over competence. This practice leads to corruption and inefficiency within government institutions, resulting in a system more responsive to a few powerful individuals than to the general populace. The impact of godfatherism is profound, fostering a political culture that values loyalty over accountability and undermining the emergence of truly representative leaders. Candidates often prioritize their patrons' interests over the electorate's needs, hindering Nigeria's socio-economic development and the implementation of effective policies to address poverty and improve quality of life.

Brief Overview of Political Dynamics in Nigeria

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation and a significant economy, has a complex political history shaped by military coups, civil unrest, and democratization efforts since gaining

independence in 1960. As an amalgamated nation, and a product of British colonial delimitation, Nigeria is a nation of diverse culture, language, religion, ethnicity and history. The diversities emanated from centuries of distinct histories, origins, cultures and geo-linguistic peculiarities that are inherently unique to pre-colonial kingdoms, empires and clans around the Niger and Benue rivers (Ayorinde, Nnajieta & Nnajieta, 2024). Its political landscape is characterized by ethnic and religious diversity, regional disparities, and the influence of powerful elites. Nigeria's political history can be divided into three main phases: pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence. The pre-colonial era featured various ethnic kingdoms with their own governance systems, disrupted by British colonial rule, which used indirect rule and favoured certain ethnic groups. This favouritism contributed to enduring regional divisions (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

After independence, Nigeria adopted a parliamentary system, but rising ethnic tensions led to the First Republic's collapse and subsequent military rule. The return to civilian governance in 1999 marked the beginning of the Fourth Republic, which has faced challenges like corruption and mismanagement (Nnajieta & Iwejuo, 2024). Ethnic diversity plays a crucial role in Nigeria's politics, with over 250 ethnic groups, particularly the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo. Religion further complicates political alliances, with Islam predominating in the north and Christianity in the south, contributing to ongoing rivalries (Suberu, 2001). Regionalism, a colonial legacy, divides Nigeria into six geopolitical zones, each with distinct interests. This division often leads to competition for federal resources and influences party strategies, such as zoning presidential candidates between the north and south (Suberu, 2001). Though the Fourth Republic has seen more stable democratic governance, challenges like corruption and the influence of political "godfathers" persist, impacting electoral integrity. Issues such as vote-buying and violence undermine trust in the political process. However, the peaceful transfer of power in the 2015 and 2019 elections suggests a maturing democracy (Lewis, 2011).

Mechanisms of Godfatherism in Nigeria

Godfatherism is a powerful and enduring feature of Nigerian politics, characterized by the control that influential individuals-known as godfathers, exert over political candidates and officeholders. This relationship is often based on a system of patronage and loyalty, where the godfather uses their resources and influence to sponsor and install political protégés, or "godsons," who are expected to be loyal and serve the interests of their benefactors. The mechanisms through which godfatherism operates are complex and multifaceted, involving financial sponsorship, manipulation of electoral processes, control of political appointments, and the use of violence and intimidation. These mechanisms not only undermine the democratic process but also have far-reaching implications for governance and development in Nigeria.

One of the primary mechanisms through which godfatherism operates in Nigeria is financial sponsorship. Godfathers are typically wealthy individuals or political elites who possess the financial resources to fund election campaigns, provide logistics, and secure the loyalty of

key political actors. In return for this sponsorship, godfathers expect loyalty and obedience from their godsons, who, once elected, are often required to channel state resources back to their benefactors. This patronage system creates a cycle of dependency, where political officeholders are more accountable to their godfathers than to the electorate. The result is a governance structure that prioritizes the interests of a few powerful individuals over the broader needs of the population (Omotola, 2007).

The manipulation of electoral processes is another key mechanism of godfatherism in Nigeria. Godfathers often engage in various forms of electoral malpractice to ensure the success of their candidates. These practices include vote-buying, ballot stuffing, rigging, and the use of state resources to manipulate election outcomes. The influence of godfathers is also evident in the selection of candidates within political parties, where they use their power to impose their preferred candidates, often sidelining more qualified or popular contenders (Ayoade, 2006). Electoral manipulation undermines the democratic process by distorting the will of the electorate and entrenching the power of a few individuals. It also erodes public confidence in the electoral system, leading to voter apathy and disillusionment with the democratic process. This manipulation is often accompanied by the deployment of thugs and the use of violence to intimidate political opponents and voters, further undermining the credibility of elections (Albert, 2005).

Once their godsons are in office, godfathers often exert control over political appointments and policy decisions. This control extends to the selection of key government officials, the allocation of contracts, and the implementation of policies that align with the interests of the godfather. In many cases, godsons are expected to appoint loyalists of the godfather to strategic positions within the government, thereby consolidating the godfather's influence within the administration (Agbaje & Adejumbi, 2006). This control over political appointments and policy decisions has significant implications for governance. It often leads to the appointment of unqualified or incompetent individuals to key positions, which in turn undermines the effectiveness of government institutions. Additionally, policies influenced by godfathers are often designed to benefit a narrow group of elites rather than addressing the needs of the broader population, thereby entrenching corruption, inefficiency, and poverty in Nigeria.

Violence and intimidation are also commonly used mechanisms in the practice of godfatherism. Godfathers often employ thugs and militia groups to intimidate political opponents, suppress dissent, and secure electoral victories for their godsons. Electoral violence is a critical challenge to democratic processes in Nigeria, undermining the credibility and integrity of elections (Nnajieta & Nnajieta, 2024). The reliance on violence and intimidation not only undermines the democratic process but also contributes to a culture of impunity, where political actors feel emboldened to engage in illegal activities without fear of consequences. This perpetuates a cycle of violence and instability in the political system, further complicating efforts to build a stable and democratic society (Ayoade, 2006).

Godfatherism and Its Impact on Economic Growth in Nigeria

Godfatherism is a widespread and deeply entrenched phenomenon in Nigerian politics, marked by the dominance of powerful political elites who control electoral and governance processes. This system involves the sponsorship of political candidates by wealthy and influential individuals known as godfathers, and it has significant implications for Nigeria's political and economic landscape. While godfatherism often secures political power for certain individuals, it has largely negative consequences for economic growth and development in the country. The influence of godfathers distorts resource allocation, fosters corruption, and undermines the implementation of policies crucial for sustainable economic growth.

One of the main ways godfatherism affects economic growth in Nigeria is through the distortion of resource allocation. Godfathers often use their influence to direct public resources and government contracts to their businesses or those of their loyalists, regardless of merit or the broader economy's needs. This practice leads to inefficient use of public funds, as contracts and projects are awarded based on patronage rather than competence or economic necessity (Agbaje & Adejumobi, 2006). This misallocation of resources not only undermines the efficiency of public investments but also stifles competition and innovation in the private sector. Businesses not connected to political godfathers often find themselves at a disadvantage, unable to compete for government contracts or access critical resources. This creates an uneven playing field that discourages entrepreneurship and hinders the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are crucial for economic diversification and job creation (Omotola, 2007).

Godfatherism is closely tied to corruption, a major barrier to economic growth in Nigeria. The patron-client relationship inherent in godfatherism fosters a culture of corruption, where political officeholders prioritize the interests of their godfathers over the public. This often leads to the embezzlement of public funds, bribery, and other corrupt practices that drain public resources and reduce the effectiveness of government spending (Ayoade, 2006). The prevalence of corruption driven by godfatherism has extensive consequences for Nigeria's economic growth. Corruption distorts market mechanisms, discourages both foreign and domestic investment, and leads to the misallocation of resources. Moreover, it undermines the government's capacity to provide essential public goods and services, such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare, which are critical for long-term economic development (Lawal & Tobi, 2006). Consequently, Nigeria's economic potential is severely constrained by the entrenched corruption associated with godfatherism.

The influence of godfathers often extends to the formulation and implementation of economic policies in Nigeria. Godfathers, who typically prioritize their personal interests over national development, may pressure their godsons in political office to implement policies that benefit them, even if these policies are detrimental to the economy as a whole. This results in widespread poverty, which has deeply affected Nigerian society. Despite being richly endowed with human and material resources and being the sixth largest producer of oil, the majority of Nigerians live below the poverty line (Nnajieto, 2013). For

instance, policies that could lead to economic diversification, poverty reduction, and sustainable growth may be side-lined in favour of initiatives that serve the interests of the political elite. This focus on short-term gains and the protection of elite interests hampers the development of a coherent and long-term economic strategy. Furthermore, the lack of accountability and transparency in policy implementation, driven by the desire to appease godfathers, often results in poorly designed and executed projects that fail to deliver the intended economic benefits (Suberu, 2001).

Godfatherism also weakens public institutions and governance, which are essential for economic growth. The appointment of loyalists to key positions in government, often at the behest of godfathers, undermines the competence and integrity of public institutions. These appointees may lack the necessary skills and expertise to effectively manage public resources or implement development projects, leading to inefficiencies and wastage (Omotola, 2010). Weak governance structures, exacerbated by godfatherism, hinder the implementation of reforms that could improve the business environment, enhance productivity, and promote economic growth. In a context where public institutions are compromised, the rule of law is often weak, and enforcement of contracts and property rights is inconsistent. This discourages investment and stifles economic activity, further constraining Nigeria's growth potential (Lewis, 2011). Godfatherism significantly hampers economic growth in Nigeria. By distorting resource allocation, fostering corruption, undermining policy implementation, and weakening public institutions, godfatherism disrupts the effective functioning of the economy and hinders the country's ability to achieve sustainable development. Addressing the challenges posed by godfatherism requires comprehensive political and institutional reforms aimed at promoting transparency, accountability, and good governance. Only by curbing the influence of godfathers in politics can Nigeria create an environment conducive to economic growth and development.

Power Dynamics and Its Socio-Political Consequences in Nigeria

Power dynamics in Nigeria are deeply embedded in the nation's socio-political fabric, influencing governance, policy-making, and social interactions. These dynamics are shaped by factors such as ethnicity, religion, regionalism, and economic interests. The struggle for power among Nigeria's diverse groups has significant socio-political consequences, including political instability, corruption, social inequality, and the marginalization of certain groups. Understanding these power dynamics is essential for analysing the challenges facing Nigeria's political development and for formulating strategies to promote social cohesion and sustainable governance.

Ethnicity is one of the most prominent factors influencing power dynamics in Nigeria. The country is home to over 250 ethnic groups, with the three largest being the Hausa-Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in the southwest, and the Igbo in the southeast. These groups have historically competed for political power, often leading to tensions and conflicts. The politicization of ethnicity has resulted in the formation of ethnic-based political alliances

and parties, which often prioritize the interests of their respective groups over national unity (Suberu, 2001). The dominance of certain ethnic groups in key political positions has led to feelings of marginalization among smaller ethnic groups. This has contributed to regional disparities in development and access to resources, further exacerbating ethnic tensions. The perceived marginalization of the Niger Delta region, for example, has fueled militancy and unrest, as local groups demand greater control over the region's oil wealth (Ikelegbe, 2005). These ethnic power struggles undermine national integration and create a fragmented political landscape where loyalty to ethnic groups often supersedes loyalty to the nation.

Religion is another crucial factor in Nigeria's power dynamics. The country is roughly divided between a predominantly Muslim north and a predominantly Christian south. Religious affiliations often intersect with ethnic identities, leading to complex power struggles that are both religious and ethnic in nature. Political leaders frequently exploit religious sentiments to garner support, further deepening religious divisions (Falola and Heaton, 2008). The interplay between religion and politics has led to significant socio-political consequences, including sectarian violence and religious intolerance. Conflicts between Muslim and Christian communities, such as those in Jos and Kaduna, have resulted in thousands of deaths and the displacement of communities (Higazi, 2011). These conflicts not only destabilize the affected regions but also pose a threat to national security and cohesion.

Regionalism also plays a significant role in Nigeria's power dynamics. The country's political structure, which divides it into six geopolitical zones, reflects the regional power struggles that have shaped its history. This regionalism is rooted in the colonial era, during which the British administration fostered divisions between the northern and southern regions. These divisions continue to influence power distribution in contemporary Nigeria, with political parties often seeking to balance regional interests in their choice of candidates (Suberu, 2001). The practice of zoning, where political offices, especially the presidency, are rotated among the different regions, is an attempt to address these regional power disparities. However, this practice has also been criticized for perpetuating a cycle of power-sharing that prioritizes regional interests over merit and national development. It often leads to the selection of candidates based on their regional background rather than their competence, which can undermine effective governance (Lewis, 2011).

The concentration of power in the hands of a few political elites has fostered a culture of corruption and patronage in Nigeria. Political power is often seen as a means of accessing wealth and resources, leading to the proliferation of patron-client networks. These networks operate on the basis of loyalty and reciprocity, with political leaders using state resources to reward their supporters and secure their positions of privilege. The socio-political consequences of this patronage system are profound. Corruption undermines the effectiveness of public institutions, erodes public trust in government, and stifles economic development. It also exacerbates social inequality, as access to resources and opportunities is often determined by one's connections to powerful individuals rather than merit or need.

This perpetuates a cycle of poverty and underdevelopment, particularly in regions and communities that are excluded from these patronage networks (Omotola, 2007).

The struggle for power in Nigeria often leads to political instability and violence. Electoral processes are frequently marred by violence. This violence not only undermines the integrity of elections but also creates a climate of fear and insecurity, discouraging political participation and eroding democratic norms (Albert, 2007). The socio-political consequences of this instability are far-reaching. Political violence disrupts social and economic activities, displaces communities, and strains the country's security apparatus. It also perpetuates a culture of impunity, where political actors engage in illegal activities without fear of consequences. This instability is a significant barrier to Nigeria's political and economic development, as it undermines efforts to build a stable and democratic society (Lewis, 2011). The complex interplay of ethnicity, religion, regionalism, and patronage in Nigeria significantly influences its socio-political landscape. These factors contribute to political instability, corruption, social inequality, and violence, which hinder Nigeria's development. To address these challenges, a multifaceted approach is needed to promote national unity, strengthen democratic institutions, and foster inclusive governance. By addressing the underlying power struggles, Nigeria can achieve sustainable socio-political development and create a more equitable and stable society.

Strategies for Mitigating the Influence of Godfatherism in Politics

Godfatherism, a deeply entrenched phenomenon in Nigerian politics, poses significant challenges to democratic governance and development. The influence of godfathers undermines the democratic process, fosters corruption, and distorts resource allocation. To address these challenges, a multi-faceted approach is required, encompassing legal reforms, institutional strengthening, civic education, and electoral reforms. To effectively combat the influence of powerful political figures, or "godfathers," it is essential to strengthen laws and institutions that fight corruption. By doing so, we can reduce the financial power that godfathers use to manipulate political outcomes. Anti-corruption agencies, like the EFCC, need to be empowered to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption without fear of interference. Additionally, enforcing campaign finance regulations and ensuring transparency in political funding can help limit the ability of godfathers to exert undue influence through financial means.

Electoral reforms are essential in curbing the influence of godfathers by promoting free, fair, and credible elections. Strengthening the independence and capacity of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct transparent elections is a key step in this direction. Measures such as the use of biometric technology, electronic voting, and real-time results transmission can reduce electoral malpractices that godfathers often exploit to secure victories for their protégés (Jega, 2011). Additionally, ensuring that internal democracy is upheld within political parties can prevent the imposition of candidates by godfathers, thereby promoting merit-based candidate selection (Ayoade, 2006). To empower citizens to resist the influence of "godfathers," it is

essential to promote civic education and voter awareness. By educating voters about their rights and the importance of choosing candidates based on their qualifications rather than their connections to powerful figures, we can foster a more informed and engaged electorate. Civil society organizations and the media play a crucial role in raising awareness about the dangers of godfatherism and encouraging citizens to actively participate in the political process (Omotola, 2007).

Building strong democratic institutions is fundamental to reducing the influence of godfathers. Institutions such as the judiciary, legislature, and law enforcement agencies must be strengthened to function independently and effectively. A robust judiciary, for instance, can serve as a check on the excesses of godfathers by ensuring that legal challenges to electoral malpractices are addressed impartially (Suberu, 2001). Similarly, a vigilant and autonomous legislature can hold the executive accountable, reducing the ability of godfathers to manipulate policy decisions for personal gain. To reduce the power of "godfathers" in politics, it is crucial to promote accountability and good governance. Public officials should be held responsible for their actions through measures like regular audits, performance evaluations, and public disclosures of their assets. Good governance practices, such as transparency, the rule of law, and citizen participation, can help create an environment where godfatherism is less likely to flourish (Lewis, 2011). By prioritizing the public interest over personal relationships and favours, governments can build trust with citizens and reduce the appeal of godfathers who offer protection and benefits.

From the foregoing, godfatherism in Nigeria represents a pervasive and entrenched political phenomenon, where influential individuals wield disproportionate power over elected officials, often dictating policies that prioritize personal interests over public welfare. This dynamic has resulted in significant challenges for governance, including widespread corruption, inefficient resource allocation, and stunted economic growth. Research indicates that political godfathers often manipulate economic policies to serve their agendas, undermining efforts toward equitable development (Osaghae, 2015; Nnanna, 2020). The implications of godfatherism extend beyond individual cases, contributing to a broader environment of distrust in government institutions and processes. As highlighted by Adebani (2014), the intertwining of political influence and economic interests can lead to the misallocation of public resources, reinforcing cycles of underdevelopment and inequality. Despite the acknowledged negative consequences of godfatherism, there is limited empirical evidence on its specific effects on economic policies and growth, as well as the mechanisms through which it operates. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the influence of godfatherism on Nigeria's political economy, examining the mechanisms that enable this influence, and identifying strategies to mitigate its adverse effects. By addressing these issues, the research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges posed by godfatherism and to promote more effective governance that prioritizes the needs of the populace.

Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive survey design to investigate the role of godfatherism in power dynamics and economic growth. The target population included all 300,170 political analysts, government officials, and members of the electorate within the Owerri Education Zone of Imo State. From this population, a sample of 400 (using Taro Yamane formula) individuals was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across the different groups. The use of stratified random sampling further justifies this selection by helping to ensure that each subgroup is proportionally represented, which is crucial in studies where population characteristics vary significantly across strata. This approach reduces sampling bias and enhances the reliability of the findings. The choice of 400 respondents from a population of 300,170 using Taro Yamane's formula is based on ensuring statistical accuracy while balancing feasibility. Taro Yamane's formula is a widely accepted method for determining sample size in survey research, especially when the target population is large, as it provides a reliable estimate that minimizes error within a manageable sample size. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "*Role of Godfatherism in Power Dynamics and Economic Growth*" (RGPDEG). The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Part A: Collected personal data from respondents. Part B: Gathered information related to the study's objectives. To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was reviewed by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation from Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri. For reliability assessment, the questionnaire was administered once, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.78 based on the Cronbach Alpha method. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to summarize the findings.

Results

Table 1 below shows the mean responses on the extent to which godfatherism influence the economic policies and growth in Nigeria. The result revealed that majority of participants perceive that godfatherism negatively impacts governance by prioritizing the interests of powerful individuals over the general public, which contributes to widespread corruption and inefficiency in economic decision-making to a high extent. This is because the grand mean value of 3.15 falls within the range of high extent. The standard deviation (SD) shows that the respondents are homogenous in their responses.

Table 1: Mean responses on the extent to which godfatherism influence the economic policies and growth in Nigeria

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Political godfathers influence economic policy decisions in the local government areas	3.69	0.464	High Extent
2	Government policies prioritize the interests of godfathers over the general public	3.32	0.993	High Extent
3	Godfatherism contribute to corruption within economic governance in Nigeria	3.06	0.703	High Extent
4	There is high impact of godfatherism on economic growth in the community	3.25	0.819	High Extent
5	Godfathers use their influence to sway electoral outcomes that affect economic policies	2.74	1.177	High Extent
6	Godfatherism affects the equitable allocation of resources in Nigeria	3.04	0.815	High Extent
7	Godfathers affect the business environment in the local area	3.20	0.558	High Extent
8	Godfatherism undermines public trust in government economic initiatives	3.09	0.971	High Extent
9	The interests of godfathers hinder effective implementation of economic policies	3.37	0.724	High Extent
10	Godfatherism affect the long-term economic stability of Nigeria	2.69	0.964	High Extent
	Grand Mean	3.15	0.819	High Extent

Table 2: Mean responses on the mechanisms through which godfatherism affects resource allocation in Nigerian politics

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Godfathers often exert control over political appointments and positions	3.61	0.473	Agreed
2	Godfathers frequently provide financial support to candidates during elections	3.17	0.861	Agreed
3	Godfathers can influence the formulation and implementation of economic policies	2.89	0.782	Agreed
4	By leveraging their influence over lawmakers, godfathers can manipulate legislative priorities and budget allocations	3.45	0.726	Agreed
5	The prevalence of corruption associated with godfatherism can distort fair resource allocation	3.18	0.871	Agreed
	Grand Mean	3.26	0.743	Agreed

Table 2 shows the mean responses on the mechanisms through which godfatherism affects resource allocation in Nigerian politics. The result revealed that political patronage,

electoral financing, policy manipulation, control of legislative processes, corruption and bribery are the mechanisms through which godfatherism affects resource allocation in Nigerian politics. This is because the grand mean value of 3.26 falls within the range of agreement. The standard deviation (SD) shows that the respondents are homogenous in their responses. Therefore, these mechanisms contribute to a cycle of corruption and inefficiency, undermining equitable resource distribution in Nigerian politics.

Table 3: Mean responses on the strategies for mitigating the influence of godfatherism in politics

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Legal and institutional reforms	3.87	0.851	Agreed
2	Electoral reforms	3.46	0.718	Agreed
3	Civic education and voter awareness	3.51	0.822	Agreed
4	Strengthening democratic institutions	3.52	0.914	Agreed
5	Promoting accountability and good governance	3.41	0.943	Agreed
	Grand Mean	3.55	0.849	Agreed

Table 3 shows the mean responses on the strategies for mitigating the influence of godfatherism in politics. The result revealed that legal and institutional reforms, electoral reforms, civic education and voter awareness, strengthening democratic institutions, and promoting accountability and good governance are the strategies for mitigating the influence of godfatherism in politics. This is because the grand mean value of 3.55 falls within the range of agreement. The standard deviation (SD) shows that the respondents are homogenous in their responses.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that a significant majority of participants perceive godfatherism as a detrimental force in Nigerian governance, prioritizing the interests of powerful individuals over those of the general public. This perception aligns with existing literature that highlights the negative consequences of godfatherism on political and economic systems. According to Osaghae (2015), godfatherism creates a political environment where loyalty to powerful patrons supersedes accountability to constituents. This relationship often leads to the prioritization of policies that benefit the patrons at the expense of broader societal needs. Similarly, Nnanna (2020) notes that the prevalence of godfatherism in Nigeria contributes to systemic corruption, as political actors often engage in unethical practices to secure patronage and favour from their godfathers. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the influence of godfatherism fosters inefficiency in economic decision-making. As highlighted by Adebani (2014), the intertwining of political and economic interests among godfathers can lead to misallocation of resources, where funds are directed toward projects that serve the interests of the elite rather than addressing pressing social and economic issues. This misalignment not only hampers effective

governance but also stifles economic growth, perpetuating a cycle of underdevelopment. The participants' perceptions of widespread corruption resulting from godfatherism are consistent with the views of scholars such as Agbaje (2018), who argue that the intertwining of political influence and economic gain fosters an environment ripe for corrupt practices. This corruption can deter foreign investment, diminish public trust in government institutions, and exacerbate social inequalities.

The findings of this study identified several key mechanisms through which godfatherism influences resource allocation in Nigerian politics: political patronage, electoral financing, policy manipulation, control of legislative processes, and corruption and bribery. Each of these mechanisms plays a significant role in perpetuating a system where the interests of powerful individuals overshadow the needs of the general public. Political patronage emerges as a central mechanism, where godfathers exert influence by placing loyalists in critical government positions. This practice undermines meritocracy and leads to decisions that favour the interests of the elite rather than the broader community. As Osaghae (2015) notes, the system of patronage often results in the misallocation of resources, creating an environment where loyalty is rewarded over competence. Electoral financing is another critical mechanism. Godfathers typically provide substantial financial support to candidates, who, upon election, feel indebted to prioritize the godfathers' interests. This dependency fosters a cycle of influence where elected officials allocate resources to benefit their patrons rather than their constituents. As highlighted by Nnanna (2020), this relationship significantly distorts the democratic process, making elected officials more accountable to their benefactors than to the electorate. Policy manipulation further illustrates how godfatherism can skew governance. Godfathers often lobby for economic policies that align with their business interests, which can lead to legislation that favours specific industries or sectors, detracting from broader economic development goals.

Adebanwi (2014) argues that such manipulation not only entrenches the power of godfathers but also hinders the implementation of policies designed to address systemic issues, such as poverty and unemployment. Control of legislative processes is equally significant. Godfathers can influence lawmakers to support initiatives that align with their interests, thereby shaping budget allocations and resource distribution. As noted by Agbaje (2018), this control limits the ability of legislators to advocate for the needs of their constituents, further entrenching the power of godfathers in the political landscape. Finally, corruption and bribery are pervasive in this context, creating an environment where unethical practices thrive. The interplay between godfatherism and corruption leads to a systematic diversion of public resources, as officials may engage in corrupt practices to secure favour from their godfathers. This finding aligns with the work of Kpundeh (1998), who emphasizes that corruption erodes public trust and exacerbates economic inequalities. The findings of this study highlight several strategies for mitigating the influence of godfatherism in Nigerian politics: legal and institutional reforms, electoral reforms, civic education and voter awareness, strengthening democratic institutions, and promoting accountability and good governance. Each of these strategies is crucial for fostering a more

equitable political environment and enhancing democratic processes. Legal and institutional reforms are foundational to addressing the entrenched nature of godfatherism. By enacting laws that limit the power of political godfathers and enforce stricter regulations on campaign financing, the government can reduce the opportunities for patronage and corruption. As noted by Adebani (2014), such reforms are essential for creating a more transparent political landscape that prioritizes public interests over individual gains. Electoral reforms are equally important, as they can help ensure fairer and more transparent electoral processes. Implementing measures such as independent electoral commissions and technology-driven voting systems can reduce the influence of godfathers over electoral outcomes. Nnanna (2020) emphasizes that strengthening the integrity of electoral processes is vital for restoring public confidence in governance and diminishing the control of godfathers. Civic education and voter awareness initiatives are necessary to empower citizens to understand their rights and responsibilities within the democratic process.

Recent studies have demonstrated that political patronage structures, often fostered by godfatherism, can severely limit a country's capacity for equitable economic development by perpetuating misallocation of resources, political favouritism, and institutional inefficiency. For instance, Ojukwu and Shopeju (2021) discuss how political patronage in Nigeria not only erodes governance structures but also hampers economic reforms aimed at inclusive growth, reinforcing structural inequalities in resource distribution. Similarly, Akindele and Olaopa (2020) emphasize that political patronage networks often subvert regulatory frameworks, creating environments ripe for policy manipulation to favor elite interests at the expense of national economic growth. By educating voters about the implications of godfatherism and encouraging active participation in politics, citizens can become more discerning and less susceptible to manipulation by powerful elites. According to Kpundeh (1998), informed voters are essential for holding politicians accountable and demanding better governance. Strengthening democratic institutions is also critical for countering the influence of godfatherism. By enhancing the capacity and independence of institutions such as the judiciary, law enforcement, and electoral bodies, Nigeria can create an environment that resists undue political influence. As Osaghae (2015) points out, robust institutions are necessary for upholding the rule of law and promoting fairness in governance.

Finally, promoting accountability and good governance practices is vital for ensuring that elected officials prioritize the public good. Establishing mechanisms for accountability, such as public audits and transparency initiatives, can help mitigate corrupt practices associated with godfatherism. Agbaje (2018) argues that fostering a culture of accountability is essential for rebuilding trust in government and ensuring that resource allocation reflects the needs of the populace rather than the interests of a select few.

Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the pervasive influence of godfatherism on governance and resource allocation in Nigeria. Respondents highlighted key mechanisms through which godfatherism operates, including political patronage, electoral financing, and policy manipulation, all of which contribute to widespread corruption and inefficiency in economic decision-making. To mitigate these adverse effects, the study identified several critical strategies: implementing legal and institutional reforms, enhancing electoral processes, promoting civic education, strengthening democratic institutions, and fostering accountability and good governance. By adopting these strategies, Nigeria can diminish the detrimental impact of godfatherism, ultimately leading to a more equitable and transparent political environment that prioritizes the public interest over elite agendas.

Limitations

The study's generalizability is limited to the Owerri Education Zone, potentially restricting the applicability of its findings to other regions. Additionally, while the study identifies key mechanisms of influence, it does not quantitatively measure the impact of each mechanism on economic outcomes. Future research could employ mixed methods to analyze the specific economic costs associated with godfatherism in different regions, contributing to a more detailed national perspective.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The independent electoral commissions (INEC) should adopt technology-driven voting systems to enhance transparency and integrity in elections, thereby reducing the influence of godfathers on electoral outcomes.
2. Enact laws that limit political patronage and enforce strict regulations on campaign financing to curb corruption. Additionally, bolster the capacity of judicial and law enforcement institutions to uphold the rule of law and promote accountability.
3. Develop targeted civic education programmes to empower citizens with knowledge about their rights and the implications of godfatherism, encouraging active participation in the political process and fostering a culture of accountability.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further studies could focus on quantifying the economic impact of godfatherism on Nigeria's development metrics, such as GDP growth, poverty rates, and investment levels. Exploring regional variations in godfather influence might also provide insights into localized policy approaches. Additionally, comparative studies between Nigeria and other African nations with similar political dynamics could enhance our understanding of effective anti-patronage strategies across the continent.

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