



Godfatherism and Electoral Security in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: A Human Security Approach

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Abstract

This study delves into the intricate relationship between godfatherism and electoral politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, with a specific focus on the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State. Godfatherism has emerged as a prevalent phenomenon in Nigerian politics, where influential figures play significant roles in shaping political outcomes. Using a human security analytical approach, this study critically examines the link between godfatherism and electoral politics in Nigeria's fourth republic and its implication for human security, focusing on the micro-political analysis of the Osun state gubernatorial election in 2018. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this study draws on descriptive research methodology and the Elite theoretical framework to uncover the complexities of godfatherism and its implications for electoral politics. The findings indicate that godfatherism, despite its potential benefits for the democratic balance of power, has taken an unsettling turn in Nigeria's electoral environment, thus posing grave dangers to human security. It has evolved into a disruptive force, undermining the foundations of popular democratic governance and denying citizens the full dividends of democracy. The study highlights how godfatherism influences candidate selection, party loyalty, and electoral outcomes. Moreover, the study reveals that godfatherism perpetuates a system of political patronage, compromising the independence and accountability of elected officials. It also examines the consequences of godfatherism on the unity of political parties, electoral malpractices, and the quality of democratic representation in Osun State. In conclusion, this study underscores the need to reevaluate the role of godfatherism in Nigeria's electoral politics while advocating for reforms in the political system to promote transparency, accountability, and citizen participation.

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INTRODUCTION

The term "godfatherism" brings to mind the well-known movie "The Last Don," which was adapted from Mario's novel. The movie portrays a bold display of power within a highly competitive criminal world, serving as a representation of godfatherism in modern Nigerian politics. Recent actions of certain Nigerian godfathers bear similarities to mafia-style politics. Nevertheless, some argue that godfathers bring about a democratic balance of power. According to Ezenekwe (2001), this role of absolute authority requires a benevolent figure (a people's hero), acting as a godfather who distributes power as they deem fit and anoints rulers. However, in Nigeria's political context, godfatherism has taken on a troubling dimension, posing a threat to popular governance and depriving Nigerians of the benefits they deserve from democracy and human security. It is important to note that the concept of patron-client politics, like godfatherism, doesn't have a universal meaning in world politics, particularly in most Asian, African, and third-world countries, where it continues to resonate a relationship between a vote seeker (godson or goddaughter) and vote seller (godfather).

Since Nigeria's return to democratic governance in 1999, the nature of the democratic project has been a topic of heated debate, representing the fourth republic in the country's history and the third wave of democratization, according to Samuel (2010). In a true democracy, citizens not only have the right to vote but also to be candidates for political positions. However, political godfathers exploit their influence to prevent others from participating in Nigerian politics. They act as gatekeepers, determining who can engage in politics and under what conditions. This leads to a situation where the godfather's protege must prioritize fulfilling the godfather's wishes and arbitrary demands over other competing responsibilities.

This arrangement promotes mediocrity and financial corruption. The overwhelming influence of godfatherism results in a crisis of confidence in elected officials, eroding faith in the democratic government, thus threatening the human security provisioning of the people. Consequently, citizens become increasingly frustrated with the government and feel helpless as they believe their significance in the political process diminishes. In Nigerian politics, godfathers dictate who can run for elections, who wins, and who gets nominated and appointed to government positions. This undue influence also affects the outcomes of public elections, making the democratization process more challenging. As a consequence, Nigeria has experienced significant looting and mismanagement of its financial resources.

For Nigeria to achieve its Sustainable Development Goals, it is hypothesized that godfatherism must be practiced in a way that supports the consolidation of the political system in the Fourth Republic. As a result, this study critically examines the link between godfatherism and electoral politics in Nigeria's fourth republic and its implication for human security, focusing on the micro-political analysis of the Osun state gubernatorial election in 2018.

METHODS

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the correlation between godfatherism and electoral politics in Nigeria's fourth republic and its implication for human security, with a specific focus on the 2018 gubernatorial elections in Osun State as a micro-case study. First the study, the study foregrounds the elicited data and the research propositions within the Elite theoretical frame of analysis. This is complemented by a thematic analysis of the implication of godfatherism for electoral and human security.

Theoretically, the study adopts the Elite Theory, originally proposed by Pareto (1916), as its theoretical framework. In the social sciences, research is typically conducted within a theoretical paradigm to establish connections between facts and develop a comprehensive theory that can explain the concepts and relationships being studied. Theoretical orientation guides the study's operations, drawing on relevant principles of human behavior to interpret findings effectively. The Elite theory, on which this research is based, posits that in every society, a minority group holds dominion over the rest, forming a political class or ruling elite (Mosca, 1884; Pareto, 1916). This elite comprises individuals occupying positions of political authority and those with direct influence over political decisions. The composition of this elite may evolve, with new members from lower social strata being integrated, new social groups being incorporated, or a complete replacement of the established elite with a counter-elite.

Vilfredo Pareto, a prominent advocate of the Elite Theory, highlights its strong correlation with the concept of godfatherism, particularly in the Nigerian context (Pareto, 1916). In this view, political elites can be likened to godfathers who control the political landscape within their domains and govern through proxies. Understanding godfatherism in light of the Elite Theory is of great significance for the current study, as it underscores the existence of class distinctions in society, where one group is considered superior to others based on their qualities and abilities. In this theoretical perspective, godfathers are seen as elites wielding the power to manipulate less privileged individuals within the political arena as they see fit. The core assumptions of the Elite Theory include the presence of a ruling minority in every society and the existence of a political class or governing elite consisting of individuals in authoritative positions and those capable of directly influencing political decisions (Mosca, 1896; Pareto, 1916). Within the Nigerian space, every stratum of the political space is dominated by political godfathers and gladiators. From the presidency to the councillorship level, some godfathers influence the political proceedings of the environment by ensuring that their interest is protected by their protégés once they get into political office. Theoretically speaking therefore, the practice and existence of godfatherism in Nigeria, as with other political societies, validates the eternal statement of the Elite thesis which espouses the stratifications of the political society into two: the elites (godfathers) and the masses.

In research design, the study follows a descriptive approach to ensure impartial data collection and equal participation by all respondents. The study targets active politicians representing various political parties and electorates in Osun State. A purposeful sampling method was employed to carefully select one hundred (100) participants for the research. The characteristics employed here were the respondents' lived experiences and connections with the praxis of godfatherism, hence, the electorates, political figures and gladiators, political party members, and political aspirants were purposively chosen.

To gather data, a questionnaire comprising two sections (A and B) was utilized. Section A consisted of questions related to godfatherism and its influence on electoral politics in Nigeria's fourth republic, while Section B aimed to capture respondents' demographic information. The questionnaire incorporated a four-point scale with options, namely SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), D (Disagree), and SD (Strongly Disagree) to facilitate responses. Following data collection, a thorough analysis was conducted, and the findings were presented using tables, simple percentages, and, where necessary, simple regression analysis. This approach was chosen to enhance the comprehensibility and clarity of the data and to effectively achieve the study's objectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the study presents the analysis and interpretation of the primary data collected from the field regarding the relationship between godfatherism and electoral politics in Nigeria's fourth republic. The primary data was obtained through a survey that involved distributing meticulously designed questionnaires to respondents in Osun State.

The Concept of Godfatherism

Various academics have offered diverse definitions of "godfatherism." Gambo (2012) characterizes it as an ideology wherein a select few individuals with substantial wealth hold the power to unilaterally decide which candidates receive party tickets and ultimately win elections. In essence, they possess the "power" and "influence" to determine nominees and election outcomes. Okafor (2021) describes godfatherism as a practice where political candidates align themselves with influential figures who can deliver favorable results in elections. This connection robs candidates of their independence, turning them into mere surrogates who must unquestionably obey their godfathers. Mbamara (2015) sees godfatherism as an intrusion into the political system to secure nominations for candidates with selfish motives, comparing it to a form of political slavery or sponsorship based on manipulation and dubious intentions. According to Joseph (2013), the godfather is akin to a political slave merchant, and the godson becomes a subservient political slave bought under an unwavering oath, with the goals of gaining appointments, engaging in theft and looting government funds, and manipulating decision-making processes and contract awards. Unfortunately, these godfathers, though influential, often lack the characteristics associated with godliness, and political parties find themselves unable to oppose their desires due to their reliance on their financial support during campaigns and their ability to sway elections. Consequently, godfatherism has become a detriment to Nigerian democracy, particularly in regions like Oyo, Anambra, and Kwara, where their influence overshadows the judiciary, leading to disregard for court orders. Different scholars also present various connotations for the term "godfather." Erhabe (2015) considers a godfather to be a person who provides sponsorship and support to individuals or projects, while Danoye (2004) sees a godfather as one who acts like a god to his beneficiaries, fulfilling their needs and assisting them in achieving their goals with the expectation of future gains. Bala (2014) highlights powerful blocs like the Kaduna Mafia, composed of influential socioeconomic and political elites who work together and share common values, overseen by godfathers. Adeoye (2011) defines godfathers as kingmakers, bosses, mentors, and principals, with godsons benefiting from their legacy and enjoying a higher chance of winning elections due to the godfather's influence, wealth, and political experience. In summary, godfatherism encompasses the practice of political candidates aligning with influential figures to secure desired outcomes in elections. It involves the nomination of candidates for personal gain, with godfathers playing roles as kingmakers and power brokers while godsons inherit their support and legacy. This phenomenon mirrors mafia-like tactics, involving aggressive politics and manipulative strategies to achieve their objectives.

The Intersection of Godfatherism and Electoral Politics

A significant observation made by Adeoye (2011) is that godfatherism has become a concerning phenomenon within Nigerian electoral politics and electoral security spaces. In the current administration, godfatherism is pervasive in the distributive

aspects of Nigerian democracy. This practice is deeply rooted in the historical and cultural values of Nigerian society, where it operates as a socio-economic arrangement that benefits all parties involved. However, the politicization of godfatherism has led to the criminalization of politics. In regions like Yoruba, the system is well organized and centralized, with respected figures like chiefs and Obas serving as godfathers (Omitola, Akinrinde, Omodunbi, Adegboye, & Adedire, 2021). While influential figures supporting electoral candidates is not uncommon, the issue arises when godfathers turn politics into a profit-driven enterprise, rigging elections to install pre-determined candidates into power. As highlighted by Abdullahi & Sakariyau (2013), these godfathers wield influence not only in the political realm but also extend their control to the academic, legal, and religious spheres. Instead of promoting true democracy and public participation in policy formulation, the focus shifts towards attaining political and socioeconomic power, which allows them to influence political officeholders, government institutions, and developmental projects within the state.

In the 2015 general elections, the influence of godfathers on Nigeria's political landscape was unprecedented, culminating in the defeat of incumbent President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan by an opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari. This phenomenon reflects the structure of the Nigerian democracy, where state power is perceived as a means to acquire and dispense resources for individual and supporter benefits rather than serving the office's official public purpose (Joseph, 2013). The current practice of political godfatherism in Nigeria at the moment is characterized by a purely financial relationship between the godfather and protégé. The godfather funds the election campaign and uses his or her political influence to the advantage of his or her protégé, and in return, the protégé is expected to repay with financial gains and government patronage (Obi, 2000). This destructive manifestation of godfatherism has infiltrated various societal structures, including political, legal, cultural, and social (George, 2012).

Since Nigeria's return to civil rule in 1999 under the Fourth Republic, godfatherism has taken on this troubling form. It has evolved in tandem with the early stages of the country's economy, heavily reliant on capital accumulation by rent-seeking individuals and commissioned agents without productive capacities (Olawoyin, Omodunbi, & Akinrinde, 2021). Consequently, politics has become the primary avenue to access government resources, perpetuating the grip of godfathers on the political landscape, thereby depriving the people of human security provisioning. This pervasive phenomenon of godfatherism in Nigeria erodes the fundamental principles of democracy and hampers the corrective actions of necessary structures and institutions. As a result, it acts as a symptom of societal decay, plaguing the practice of genuine democracy in Nigeria (Hassan, 2014). While the support of influential figures in politics is not inherently problematic, the way godfatherism is practiced in Nigeria diverges from the democratic norms observed in more developed countries, making it discouraging and anti-democratic. Thus, godfatherism has become a daunting aspect of Nigerian electoral politics, driven by socio-economic roots but now taking on a politicized and exploitative nature. While the support of influential individuals in politics is not uncommon, the Nigerian context has seen godfathers exert control over various aspects of society, leading to an undermining of true democracy and the distortion of political, electoral processes, and human security. Table 1 shows both the descriptive and inferential statistical findings derived from the data collected during the survey.

Table 1. Does godfatherism involve the designation of a godson who is expected to achieve electoral success by utilizing the godfather's influence, financial resources, political connections, and experience?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	52	53.1	53.1
Agree	40	40.8	93.9
Disagree	4	4.0	97.9
Strongly Disagree	2	2.0	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

As per the data presented in Table 1, a significant majority of the respondents (53.1%) expressed strong agreement with the notion that godfatherism encompasses the act of anointing a godson who is expected to win an election by leveraging the godfather's influence, wealth, political network, and experience. Additionally, 40.8% of the respondents agreed with this statement, while only 4.0% disagreed, and a mere 2.0% strongly disagreed. The substantial level of agreement among respondents (53.1%) strongly supports the conclusion that godfatherism indeed involves the anointing of a godson who relies on the godfather's influence, financial resources, political connections, and experience to secure victory in electoral contests.

Table 2. Has godfatherism in Nigeria's political landscape assumed an unusual and unconventional form?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	19	19.3	19.3
Agree	40	40.8	60.1
Disagree	21	21.4	81.5
Strongly Disagree	18	18.3	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

From the data presented in Table 2, it is evident that 19.3% of the respondents expressed a strong agreement with the idea that godfatherism has adopted an unfamiliar shape in Nigeria's political sphere, while 40.8% agreed with this statement. Conversely, 21.4% disagreed, and 18.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed. The data analysis indicates that a significant portion of the respondents recognize that godfatherism has indeed assumed a peculiar form in Nigeria's political landscape.

Table 3. Do political godfathers leverage their influence to impede the engagement of other individuals in Nigerian politics?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	18	18.3	18.3
Agree	51	52.0	70.3
Disagree	23	23.4	93.7
Strongly Disagree	6	6.1	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

The data provided in Table 3 makes it apparent that 18.3% of the respondents expressed a strong agreement with the notion that political godfathers utilize their influence to impede the participation of others in Nigerian politics, while 52.0% agreed with this statement. In contrast, 23.4% disagreed, and 6.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed. The data analysis emphasizes that a substantial majority (52.0%) of the

respondents recognize that political godfathers do employ their influence to hinder the participation of others in Nigerian politics.

Table 4. Due to the pervasive influence wielded by political godfathers over political office seekers, the godsons become entirely subservient and obedient to their godfathers

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	24	24.4	24.4
Agree	54	55.1	97.5
Disagree	8	8.1	87.6
Strongly Disagree	12	12.2	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

Source: *Field Survey, 2022.*

The data presented in Table 4 indicates that 24.4% of the respondents strongly endorsed the idea that the dominant influence of political godfathers over political office-seekers leads to the complete subordination of godsons to their godfathers. Additionally, 55.1% of the respondents agreed with this statement. Conversely, 8.1% disagreed, and 12.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed. The data analysis strongly suggests that a significant majority (55.1%) of the respondents support the notion that the overwhelming influence of political godfathers indeed results in the total subservience of godsons to their godfathers.

Table 5. Does godfatherism stand out as a crucial factor contributing to electoral malpractices in Nigeria?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	25	25.5	25.5
Agree	50	51.0	76.5
Disagree	15	15.3	91.8
Strongly Disagree	8	8.2	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

According to the data presented in Table 5, it is apparent that 25.5% of the respondents expressed a strong agreement with the idea that godfatherism significantly contributes to electoral malpractices in Nigeria, while 51.0% agreed with this statement. On the other hand, 15.3% disagreed, and 8.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed. The data analysis strongly indicates that a substantial majority (51.0%) of the respondents firmly believe that godfatherism indeed plays a pivotal role in causing electoral malpractices in Nigeria.

Table 6. Does godfathers persistently strive to retain control, even when there are established statutory heads with constitutional powers in place?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	21	21.4	21.4
Agree	49	50.0	71.4
Disagree	19	19.4	90.8
Strongly Disagree	9	9.2	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

Drawing from the data presented in Table 6, it can be deduced that 21.4% of the respondents strongly concurred with the idea that godfathers consistently pursue

control, despite the existence of recognized statutory heads with constitutional powers, while 50.0% agreed with this statement. Conversely, 19.4% disagreed, and 9.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed. The analysis strongly indicates that a significant majority (50.0%) of the respondents firmly believe that godfathers do indeed seek to maintain control, even in the presence of recognized statutory heads with constitutional powers.

Table 7. Has the impact of godfatherism in Nigerian politics played a role in shaping Nigerian electoral politics and democracy positively?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	4	4.1	4.1
Agree	6	6.1	10.2
Disagree	61	62.2	72.4
Strongly Disagree	27	27.6	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

The data presented in Table 7 demonstrates that a mere 4.1% of the respondents expressed a strong agreement with the idea that the influence of godfatherism in Nigerian politics has been beneficial for Nigerian democracy, while 6.1% agreed. However, a substantial majority of 62.2% disagreed, and 27.6% strongly disagreed. From the analysis, it can be inferred that the influence of godfatherism in Nigerian politics has not made a positive contribution to Nigerian democracy, as evidenced by the significant percentage (62.2%) of respondents who disagreed with this perspective.

Table 8. Presently in Nigeria, have numerous associations between godfathers and godsons been damaged and terminated?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	49	50.0	50.0
Agree	21	21.4	71.4
Disagree	19	19.4	90.8
Strongly Disagree	9	9.2	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

As depicted in Table 8, half (50.0%) of the respondents expressed a strong agreement with the notion that in contemporary Nigeria, a substantial number of relationships between godfathers and godsons have been tarnished and severed. Furthermore, 21.4% agreed, 19.4% disagreed, and 9.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed. The analysis indicates that a significant proportion (50.0%) of the respondents firmly believe that such relationships have experienced adverse effects in Nigeria.

Table 9. In Nigeria, do godfathers view their support to their godsons as a financial investment that must generate exceptional returns at all costs?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	48	48.9	48.9
Agree	23	23.5	72.4
Disagree	17	17.4	89.8
Strongly Disagree	10	10.2	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

According to the data presented in Table 9, 48.9% of the respondents expressed a strong agreement with the idea that godfathers in Nigeria view their support of their godsons as an economic investment that must yield exceptional returns at any cost. Additionally, 23.5% agreed, 17.4% disagreed, and 10.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed. The analysis makes it evident that godfathers in Nigeria perceive their support to their godsons as a financial investment that is expected to generate remarkable dividends through any means (Akinrinde & Ololade, 2021).

Table 10. Is it not entirely unusual for influential individuals in society to provide strong support to electoral candidates?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	14	14.3	14.3
Agree	35	35.7	50.0
Disagree	36	36.7	86.7
Strongly Disagree	13	13.3	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

According to the data presented in Table 10, it is evident that 35.7% of the respondents agreed that it is not entirely unusual to witness influential members of society providing substantial support to electoral candidates, whereas 36.7% expressed disagreement with this notion. Additionally, 14.3% of the respondents strongly supported the statement, while 13.3% strongly opposed it. The analysis reveals a distinct split in opinions regarding the acceptability of influential individuals endorsing electoral candidates.

Table 11. Is the influence of godfatherism in Nigeria aided by the electorates' inability to firmly stand their ground?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	49	50.0	50.0
Agree	21	21.4	71.4
Disagree	23	23.5	94.9
Strongly Disagree	5	5.1	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

Based on the findings in Table 11, it can be inferred that 50.0% of the respondents strongly supported the idea that the influence of godfatherism in Nigeria is reinforced by the electorates' lack of firm resolve. An additional 21.4% of the respondents agreed with this perspective, while 23.5% disagreed, and 5.1% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the notion.

Table 12. No indication that godfatherism was found during the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	21	21.4	21.4
Agree	15	15.3	36.3
Disagree	50	51.0	87.7
Strongly Disagree	12	12.2	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

The data presented in Table 12 reveals that 21.4% of the respondents strongly supported the idea that there was no evidence of godfatherism during the 2019 gubernatorial election in Osun State. Additionally, 15.3% of the respondents agreed with this statement, while 51.0% disagreed, and 12.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed. The analysis indicates that the majority (51.0%) of the respondents disagreed with the notion that there was no evidence of godfatherism during the 2019 gubernatorial election in Osun State, leading to the conclusion that there was indeed evidence of godfatherism during that election.

Table 13. During the 2019 Osun State gubernatorial primary elections, the selection of candidates by certain political parties like APC, PDP, SDP, ADC, etc., was not influenced by godfatherism.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	16	16.3	16.3
Agree	4	4.1	20.4
Disagree	27	27.6	48.0
Strongly Disagree	51	52.0	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

The data presented in Table 13 indicates that 16.3% of the respondents strongly supported the idea that the process of picking candidates by political parties such as All Progressives Congress (APC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Social Democratic Party (SDP), African Democratic Congress (ADC), etc., during the 2019 Osun State gubernatorial primary elections did not involve the influence of godfatherism. Only 4.1% of the respondents agreed with this statement, while 27.6% disagreed, and the majority, 52.0% of the respondents, strongly disagreed. The analysis highlights that a significant majority (52.0%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the notion that the candidate selection process in the 2019 Osun State gubernatorial primary elections was free from the influence of godfatherism. This suggests that the process indeed involved the influence of godfatherism, as indicated by the strong disagreement among the majority of the respondents.

Table 14. The current governor of Osun State was not chosen or anointed by any political godfather

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	20	20.4	20.4
Agree	12	12.4	32.8
Disagree	53	54.1	86.9
Strongly Disagree	13	13.2	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

The data presented in Table 14 shows that 20.4% of the respondents strongly supported the idea that the current governor of Osun State was not anointed by any godfather, with 12.4% of the respondents in agreement. However, a significant majority of 54.1% disagreed with this statement, while 13.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed. The analysis indicates that the majority (54.1%) of the respondents believe that the present governor of Osun State was indeed anointed by a godfather. This suggests that there is a prevailing perception among the respondents that the governor's rise to power was influenced by the backing of a godfather, as indicated by the considerable disagreement with the idea that there was no such anointment.

Table 15. In the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State, godfathers employed all means at their disposal to ensure the victory of their preferred candidate.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	14	14.3	14.3
Agree	51	52.0	66.3
Disagree	23	23.5	89.8
Strongly Disagree	10	10.2	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

The data analysis from Table 15 suggests that a significant portion (52.0%) of the respondents agreed with the notion that godfathers extensively utilized their resources to secure the victory of their favored candidate during the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State. This indicates that a considerable number of respondents perceived the involvement of godfathers in the election process and their active role in supporting their preferred candidate with considerable resources.

Table 16. Can it be confirmed that the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State was conducted in a just and impartial manner?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	14	14.2	14.2
Agree	24	24.5	38.7
Disagree	49	50.0	88.7
Strongly Disagree	11	11.2	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

As per the data presented in Table 16, it is evident that 14.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State was conducted in a free and fair manner. On the other hand, 24.5% disagreed, and 11.2% strongly disagreed. Additionally, a substantial majority of 50.0% of the respondents expressed disagreement with the notion that the election was free and fair. The analysis indicates that the consensus among respondents is that the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State was not perceived as free and fair, with half of the respondents holding this view.

Table 17. Despite the primary elections, a significant number of political parties in Osun State managed to maintain their unity during the 2018 gubernatorial election, which can be attributed to the impact of godfatherism

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	18	18.4	18.4
Agree	20	20.4	38.8
Disagree	45	45.9	84.7
Strongly Disagree	15	15.3	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

According to the data presented in Table 17, it can be observed that during the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State, 18.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that many political parties remained united after the primary elections due to the influence of godfatherism, while 20.4% agreed. However, a significant majority of 45.9% disagreed, and 15.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed. The analysis indicates that 45.9% of the respondents did not believe that many political parties stayed united after the primary elections because of godfatherism. As a result, it suggests that during the

2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State, the influence of godfatherism might have led to disunity among many political parties after the primary elections.

Table 18. The ruling party did not engage in a "win at all costs" approach during the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	11	11.2	11.2
Agree	21	21.4	32.6
Disagree	51	52.0	84.6
Strongly Disagree	15	15.3	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

The analysis from Table 18 indicates that a significant majority (52.0%) of the respondents disagreed with the notion that the ruling party was not involved in a "win at all costs" approach during the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State. Only 11.2% of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement, and 21.4% agreed. On the other hand, 15.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the idea that the ruling party did not employ all means at its disposal to secure victory in the election. Based on these findings, it becomes evident that the ruling party indeed adopted a "win at all costs" strategy during the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State, as the majority of the respondents disagreed with the contrary view.

Table 19. The inconclusive outcome of the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State was not supported by godfatherism

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	17	17.0	17.0
Agree	18	18.4	35.4
Disagree	50	51.0	86.4
Strongly Disagree	13	13.3	100.0
Total	98	100.0	100.0

The analysis from Table 18 indicates that a significant majority (52.0%) of the respondents disagreed with the notion that the ruling party was not involved in a "win at all costs" approach during the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State. Only 11.2% of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement, and 21.4% agreed. On the other hand, 15.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the idea that the ruling party did not employ all means at its disposal to secure victory in the election. Based on these findings, it becomes evident that the ruling party indeed adopted a "win at all costs" strategy during the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State, as the majority of the respondents disagreed with the contrary view.

Table 20. For future elections in Osun State to be characterized by freedom, fairness, and democracy, the influence of godfatherism must be eliminated

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	57	58.2	52.2
Agree	20	20.4	78.6
Disagree	11	11.2	83.8
Strongly Disagree	10	10.2	100.0
Total	98	100.0	

The data presented in Table 20 indicates that a significant majority (58.2%) of the respondents strongly believe that to ensure future elections in Osun State are free, fair, and democratic, the influence of godfatherism must be eliminated. Additionally, 20.4% of the respondents agreed with this statement, 11.2% disagreed, and 10.2% strongly disagreed. From the analysis, it can be deduced that the key to achieving free, fair, and democratic elections in Osun State lies in rejecting the involvement of godfatherism, as indicated by the overwhelming agreement of 58.2% of the respondents.

Discussion of Findings

The research has delved into various inquiries concerning godfatherism and its repercussions on Nigeria's political environment, with a particular emphasis on the 2018 gubernatorial election in Osun State. The phenomenon of political godfatherism, characterized by the patronage and support of a godson by a powerful figure, has gained significant traction in Nigerian politics. Thus, through the lens of data analysis and the survey conducted, it is clear the widespread recognition of godfatherism, with over 53.1% of respondents agreeing with the concept is a testament to the objective reality of godfatherism in Nigerian politics. However, a disturbing trend emerges, as the data suggests that godfatherism has taken an alarming turn in the country's political landscape. This is coupled with the fact that rather than leveraging the good ideals of godfatherism for democratic consolidation and the good of the people, godfatherism has become a deadly weapon in the hands of many political gladiators in winning elections at the expense of the people's free to elect their representatives. This does not only pose a grievous threat to the electoral space only, it continues to endanger the human security of the people by usurping their right to political choice and leadership. As buttressed by Okorode (2000) and Obi (2000), political and electoral violence arising from the negative employment of the agency of godfatherism constitutes one of the biggest threats to the people's security.

Similarly, another prominent concern, arising from findings, is the extent to which political godfathers hinder the participation of other individuals in the political arena, a perspective supported by 52.0% of respondents. The overwhelming influence of godfathers over their godsons is evident, as 55.1% of respondents acknowledge the complete subservience of the latter. Such dominance raises concern about the erosion of personal agency and poses a threat to human security. Equally alarming, as revealed by the findings, is the perceived link between godfatherism and electoral malpractices, with nearly 51.0% of respondents concurring. This connection underscores the role of godfathers in shaping the integrity of Nigeria's electoral processes. Thus, with this reality, it is sacrosanct that in an atmosphere where electoral malpractices become the order of the day, human security becomes highly endangered whilst the people live in constant fear of violence and uncertainties.

The notion of godfatherism as a positive force in Nigerian democracy faces significant skepticism, with 62.2% of respondents disagreeing. This majority opinion underscores the prevailing belief that godfatherism is more detrimental than beneficial to the democratic process. The data also reflects the detrimental impact of godfatherism on relationships between godfathers and godsons, often resulting in damage and breakdowns. Notably, godfathers view their support as an economic investment, anticipating substantial returns. The study delves into the involvement of influential figures in backing electoral candidates, revealing divided opinions among respondents. The contested acceptability of such practices speaks to the complexity of the issue.

Additionally, the survey references the 2018 and 2019 gubernatorial elections in Osun State. While a significant portion refutes evidence of godfatherism in the 2019 election, the majority perceives the influence of godfatherism in candidate selection, particularly during the 2018 primary elections. The study concludes that the impact of godfatherism extends beyond electoral outcomes, affecting the unity of political parties and even the perceived fairness of elections. An essential takeaway from the analysis is the urgent need to curtail the influence of godfatherism for the sake of free, fair, and democratic future elections in Nigeria, as advocated by 58.2% of respondents. This underscores the significance of reform efforts to preserve the integrity of Nigeria's political landscape.

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

This comprehensive study delved into the profound impact of godfatherism on Nigeria's politics during the Fourth Republic. The prevalence of godfatherism in the country's political landscape is intricate and far-reaching, posing a continuous threat to genuine political participation and human security, especially in the area of political security and the rights of the people to freely choose their representatives without undue influences from perceived godfathers. Notably, some godsons, who have faced challenges with their political benefactors, are now stepping forward to disclose the intricacies of their rise to power and the ensuing struggles. Such transparency is pivotal for advancing democratic governance in Nigeria. As citizens become more aware of the manipulative tactics employed by the political elite, they can better prepare themselves for future encounters.

In summary, the study concludes that while certain positive aspects may be associated with godfatherism, it is not entirely uncommon for influential figures to endorse electoral candidates. However, the problem arises when godfathers transform politics into a profitable enterprise, manipulating elections to impose their chosen candidates on the public. Consequently, elected officials become susceptible to unscrupulous manipulations by their mentors. In the Nigerian context, supporting godsons is perceived as a financial investment that must yield significant dividends by any means necessary. Addressing this issue is crucial to safeguarding the integrity of Nigeria's political system and fostering a more transparent and equitable democratic process. Hence, to achieve human security which includes political security and stability, the praxis of godfatherism must be for the greater good of the people, not for the selfish aggrandizement of the political godfathers.

While the survey provides insights into the consequences of godfatherism, certain nuances remain unexplored. The data does not explicitly detail the level of control exerted by godfathers in the presence of recognized statutory heads with constitutional powers. Hence, further and future studies may be undertaken in this direction.

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are put forth:

1. The government should introduce and enforce legislation to regulate the conduct of godfathers in Nigerian politics. Additionally, the constitution should incorporate more stringent sanctions to dissuade individuals from engaging in godfatherism as a profession.
2. Consideration should be given to the implementation of independent candidacy, which would help mitigate the overwhelming influence of financial magnates on candidates who can easily buy their way into political party platforms.
3. Restructuring the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is of paramount importance to ensure the success of democracy in Nigeria. Addressing

electoral process abuses by self-proclaimed godfathers necessitates a well-structured and efficient INEC.

4. Civil society organizations have a vital role to play in combatting godfatherism. They must maintain independence in their decision-making and oversight, while also educating citizens about their rights and the need to resist manipulative practices.
5. Encouraging disciplined voting by electorates is crucial in preventing godfathers from influencing the electoral process through vote-buying. Citizens should cast their votes based on candidates who genuinely represent their interests.
6. A reduction in the exorbitant salaries and allowances granted to political officeholders can help diminish the influence of godfatherism in Nigerian politics. When potential godfathers perceive that officeholders' financial gains are less lucrative, they will be less inclined to sponsor candidates solely for economic gains.
7. Reforms in electoral laws should be introduced to limit the funding of political parties and candidates by individuals and corporations. Such measures would curtail the phenomenon of godfatherism and foster a more transparent and robust democratic system.
8. Implementing e-voting for all elections in Nigeria through the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) would be instrumental in curbing electoral fraud. This move will significantly reduce election rigging and encourage aspiring candidates to contest positions without feeling compelled to pledge allegiance to godfathers for guaranteed victory.

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