

GODFATHERISM AND 2018 DALA LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION IN KANO STATE OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

Godfatherism in Nigerian politics is a clog in the wheel of progress. The menace of godfatherism in Kano State, particularly Dala local government has incessantly frustrated the realization of noble goals, despite the effort of the electoral body to institutionalize democracy in all ramifications. It is against this backdrop that this study intends to examine implication of godfatherism during the 2018 Dala local government election. The study utilize both primary and secondary data. The elite theory was employed as the theoretical framwwork. The theory is based on the notion that every society holds a ruling minority, a group that controls and disputes the most important power sources. Not only do elites dispute power (reaching different levels of conflict and violence), but new elites also enter the game through different mechanisms of elite recruitment. Thus, the core of elite theory relies in explaining elite behaviour, elite interaction, elite transformation and, ultimately, the connection between those instances and state outcomes. The study found that Godfatherism is not only a phenomenon in Kano state, it has penetrated to local government level. The data gathered that corruption still remains the bane of godfatherism. Finally the study recommend that democratic institutions should be strengthened to eschew the system from godfatherism and politicization of government policies and programmes.

Keywords: Godfatherism, Democracy, Politics, Elite-theory, Government

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of godfatherism and political conflict have become a plague in Nigerian politics. There is an emerging trend in Nigeria which indicates that an intending contestant must have and depend on a godfather with the requisite wealth and power to get him into elective office. Contestants no longer rely on their popularity among the electorates but on their chosen godfathers to help them secure electoral victories. Godfatherism is not new in Nigerian politics. It has only assumed a new form in the Fourth republic, partly the Nigerian economy is still at the primitive stage of capital accumulation by the renters and commissioned agents with little or no productive capacities. Politics therefore is the only means of reaching out at state's resources.

This phenomenon had tremendous effects on the basic principle of democracy and has encouraged the failure of necessary structures and institutions to act decisively at correcting the anomalies. Godfatherism has therefore manifested itself in Nigerian polity and has resulted to societal and democratic decay. (Edigin, 2010).

Godfatherism has become a factor in Nigerian politics such that very few politicians can achieve success without the stalwart support of godfathers. In Nigeria, the desire of individuals to rule at all cost has sold political leadership to the highest bidders, as whopping sums of money are needed for electoral manipulation. Therefore, desperate politicians who wish to win elections usually seek after godfathers. The implication of this in Nigerian politics is that the country is yet to make appreciable progress in transparent governance because godfathers usually create setback, which hinders democratic growth and development in Nigeria (Edigin, 2010).

One of the prevailing fundamental and sensitive issues in Nigerian politics that cannot be ignored is godfatherism. The outcome of local government elections in Nigeria is a reflection of godfatherism, and has facilitate the pursuit or regime change whose major pre-occupation is to perpetuate their hegemonic political influence for personal interests and aggrandizements (Osuntokun, 2003). Godfatherism has undoubtedly threat the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria at large and in Kano state to be specific. For instance the phenomenon of godfatherism in Kano state had given some political godfathers unlimited powers to dominate the political scene, influence the victory of candidates (the godson/daughters) and dictate the direction of policies and programmes within the state more especially in the local government elections where the cases of godfatherism is prevalence, and has remained a major element of the political culture of Kano state. In the treatise on the civilian regime of Governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje in 2017

local government election in the State the governor vehemently made it clear that all the forty four local governments in the state are going to be won by APC, and this statement made a lot of the PDP members not to participate in the local government elections in that year. This phenomenon indirectly had crippled the democratic process in the state and had resulted to poor governance, corruption and even political apathy. It is against this backdrop that this study intends to examine implication of godfatherism in Dala local government in Kano State.

The following objectives were formulated to guide the study:

i) Identify the remote and immediate causes of godfatherism in Nigeria; ii) identify the remote and immediate causes of godfatherism in Dala Local Government; iii) Proffer solutions to the identified problems towards enhancing a just and an egalitarian society in Dala Local Government.

2. Literature Review

Concept of Godfatherism

The concept of godfatherism is synonymous to intermediary, mentoring, benevolence, and support and sponsoring. In a political setting, the concept is an ideology that is championed on the belief that certain individuals possess considerable means to unilaterally determine who get a party's ticket to run for an election and who wins in the electoral contest. To Adeoye (2009), it is a term used to describe the relationship between a godfather and godson. A godfather is a kingmaker, boss, mentor, and principal, while godson is the beneficiary and recipient of the legacy of a godfather. A godfather is someone who has built unimaginable respect and follower (voters) in the community, and possessed a well organised political platform, and general acceptance from electorate that could secure victory for candidates of his choice (Bala &

Tyoden, 1987). It comprises of coalition of strong socio-economic and political elites that share similar value system, and under an organized structure. In most cases, there are always godfathers who control the affairs of the mafia. Godfathers are powerful individuals who determine 'who' 'what' when and how' in the corridors of power.

Many godfathers in the present-day Nigeria operates like the mafia by displaying similar violent scheming and aggressive "politicking", coupled with manipulating devices of having their way by any means. They rely on Machiavelli's slogan, "the ends justify the means". In the views of Bassey and Enetak (2008), godfatherism connote the power and influence of people who are politically relevant in deciding who gets nominated to contest elections and win. Those that play godfatherism are known as godfathers while those who benefit from their benevolence are known as godson. Kolawole (2004), sees godfatherism as an institution of political kingmaking through which certain political office holders of tenuous political clout come into power. Hence, it is a relationship based on political surrogacy involving financial and moral assistance where the godfather is the major donor and the godson the primary receiver. However, as the relationship progresses, the godfather stands to reap his investment. It can therefore be described as a relationship based on "give and take." Be that as it may, it is important to note that this relationship is not fixed or determinate. As a matter of fact, it breaks over time as a result of the contradictions inherent in godfatherism.

Concept of Democracy

Democracy as a form of government started from ancient Greece. Onubi (2002) noted that Democracy simply means "rule by the people" thus; it is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. It is referred to as government of the majority. Democracy is also

described as an idea, process (series of events leading to change or course of action) of system of government (Agbaje 1999). Therefore, democracy entrenches and expands, or seeks to entrench and expand, rights, ability and capacity of the citizens in a given society.

Ademola (2009) has noted that the first problem of the democracy is its divergent approach in attempt to give it a meaning. There is consensus on the original attributes of democracy which encompasses: people, freedom and authority. More so, in Nigeria, democracy is misconstrued with mere civil rule because the practice has not witness freedom of choice, constituted authority, rule of law, and service delivery to the citizenry (Azeez, 2004).

Notwithstanding, democracy as a concept is one of the most striking features of contemporary politics. There are few people or nation-states nowadays that do not practice democracy and claimed being democratic.

However, in an attempt to theorize the concept, it should be appreciated that democracy is a very loaded concept which entire essence cannot captured by a single school of thought (Abiola & Olaopa, 2006). To them, democracy is a set of institutions that fulfils at least two essential requirements. First, it must elicit as accurately as possible the opinion of many people as possible on who shall be their representatives and on how the country ought to be governed. This means a minimum universal suffrage, political parties, and organization of fresh voting in acceptable elections at relatively frequent intervals.

Concept of Political Godfatherism

Political godfatherism is one of the concepts that open narrow doors when it comes to deciding who gets what in the politics. However, for the purpose of this study, the literary meaning and attributes of godfather needs to be emphasized. Literarily, godfathers are seen in Nigeria to be

men who have the power to determine both who gets nominated to contest elections and who wins an election. According to Audu (2006:8), godfathers are people of questionable wealth and influences who robbed political parties of their conventional and legitimate functions of presenting clear and coherent programmes on the basis of which the candidates presented by them are chosen by the voters. He observes that ideally, government that is freely and fairly instituted by the people must be accountable to them as the source of its moral authority to rule. However, this is not possible with people of questionable wealth whose major concern is to recover the money spent for installing their candidates in power and thereafter share certain percentage of what comes to the government purse as their share of the economy.

As Akpan (2004) argues, godfathers are people that finance political parties activities and individual electoral campaigns as actively throughout investment outlet to be recorded through frivolous and bloated government contracts, appointment of cronies into choice public offices and other prebendal returns by the beneficiaries. Corroborating, Ibrahim (2006) qualifies godfathers as individuals who have the ability to deliver the desired outcome in an electoral contest. The emphasis here is that politicians can only achieve political offices with the backing of the so called "Godfathers". Indeed, godsons become mere surrogates and remain totally subservient to their godfathers. Omotola (2007) is of the view that godfathers are those who have the security connections, extended local links, enormous financial weight, and so on, to plot and determine the success or otherwise of a power seeker at any level of a supposedly competitive politics. This in itself is what is called 'godfatherism' (Omotola, 2007:35). Thus, political godfatherism is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria, but has affected delivery of democratic dividends and bad governance.

Effect and causes of Godfatherism in Nigerian Politics

Since 1999 when Nigeria returned to civil rule, there were cases of political violence from north and south poles of the country. Below are some of the major effects of godfatherism in Nigeria:

i). Massive destruction of lives and properties: In the beginning and post elections of April, 2011 in Nigeria, there were many cases of massive destruction of lives and properties as a result of the instructions given by the godfathers to their supporters in various state of the federation. In Kano State, for instance some unspecified number of people died, non-indigenes fled Kano state as the violence spread. Despite the curfew imposed on the state to douse tension, non-natives still live in fear of attacks. Thousands of non-natives were seeking refuge in military and police barracks, sleeping in the open places, without essential facilities (Sakariyau, 2013)

ii). Turning citizens to Hooligans cum Thugery: The 2011 April polls, cases of suspected thugs were reported in the country. For instance in Kwara state, the state police arrested 23 persons suspected to be political thugs during the 16th April, 2011 election. In his remarks, the police commissioner, Mr. Mamman Tsafe stated that a political party imported thugs from Lagos state to disrupt the election. Also, an Ilorin Magistrate Court in Kwara state remanded 14 supporters of ACN in prison custody for alleged public disturbance. The accused were arraigned on a four-count charge of criminal conspiracy inciting disturbances, mischief and causing injury contrary to Sections 97, 114, 327, and 246 of the penal code. Otunba Bode Oyedepo was attacked at Iludun-Oro with his fellow PDP members by thugs allegedly sent by ACN senatorial candidate for Kwara south. The thugs allegedly came in vehicles and attacked them with bottles and guns (Sakariyau, 2013).

iii). Factional Clash: Factional clash in the Oyo State branch of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) claimed many lives and left several others injured and some properties reportedly damaged in Ibadan, Oyo State. The slain victim, identified as Dele Ayegbo was said to be a member of the faction loyal to the reinstated chairman, Lateef Akinsola Oloruntoki (Tokyo). The conflict was sparked off by a struggle by the Tokyo faction to take over some motor-parks hitherto controlled by the other faction who had taken over reign since the relationship between him and the former Governor, Adebayo Alao-Akala got strained.

iv). Disfranchisement of citizens to exercise their political rights: Two weeks to the 2011 general elections, there are doubts over plans for a credible exercise in Oyo state. Reason: voters' registers in 27 local government areas have been tampered with by members of PDP in collusion with INEC officials, four suspects were arrested, while allegedly tampering with registration materials in old Bodija including six laptops and voters' registers in some local governments (Sakariyau, 2013).

v). Promotes high level of poverty: Most of the political godfathers engage high level poverty. In Kano state for instance, the then political godfathers, like Dr. Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso and Mallam Ibrahim Shekara and the current Governor of Kano state, Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje have distributed raw food, cooked food, clothes and money for votes buying during election.

Theoretical framework

Elite theory

Elite theory is deep-rooted in classical sociology, especially that of Weber (1922) cited in (2005), Pareto(1935), Mosca (1939) and Michels (1915) cited in 2009).These scholars are usually labeled as ‘classical elitists’. Beyond its strong roots in classical sociology, elite theory developed into a vibrant theoretical field, intersecting other theories, such as rational choice theory and political culture theory. The concept of ‘elites’ is based on the notion that every society holds a ruling minority, a group that controls and disputes the most important power sources. Not only do elites dispute power (reaching different levels of conflict and violence), but new elites also enter the game through different mechanisms of elite recruitment. Thus, the core of elite theory relies in explaining elite behavior, elite interaction, elite transformation and, ultimately, the connection between those instances and state outcomes.

The link between elite behavior and regime change led a number of authors to almost naturalize elite theory as ‘regime theory’ (e.g., Dogan & Higley, 1998; Higley & Burton, 2006). Yet elite theory is not restricted to the study of regime change and regime support. Although studies do tend to focus on the political realm, elite researchers often explore power relations inside the market and civil society as well. An important focus within elite research is the emergence of welfare states, a political phenomenon directly related with market regulation and the state’s capacity to penetrate society (e.g., de Swaan, 1988; Reis & Moore, 2005; Verba & Orren, 1985; Verba et al.,1987). Elite theory also question social development and modernization in both Western and non-Western contexts (e.g. Cardoso, 1964; de Swaan *et al.*, 2000; Lipset & Solari, 1967;López, 2013; Reis & Moore, 2005).

Both Classical and current elite theorists share the ambition of explaining state outcomes through elite behavior. If political sociology is concerned with the relationship between state and society

(see Sociopedia.isa article on political sociology by Botelho, 2011); elite theory is based on the assumption that elite action has a causal effect on such a relationship. Thus, regime types, regime change, liberalization, stateness, secularization and many other political phenomena fit within the scope of elite theory such as godfatherism among others.

To justify this theory, one can say virtually in all local government election in Nigeria the governors have establish themselves so well to the extent that they select who will contest for the chairmanship seat in all local government in Nigeria. This scenario reflect the 2018 local government election during the Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau administration, Eng. Rabiun Musa Kwankwaso administration and also Governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje administration. The elite therefore are those aforementioned administrations while the masses don't decide the local government election. Similarly the godson are those who remain the loyalist to their godfathers who brought them into power.

3. Research Method

The survey method was adopted for conducting the research. This primary source of data involved the use of interview questionnaire administered to staff members in Dala local government of Kano State. The questionnaire was designed to collect information on aspects of the research problem. The record schedule method of questionnaire was used on respondents who were illiterate. That is, questions were asked verbally and answers entered in the space on the questionnaire by the researcher. The sample size of the study was a total number of one hundred (100) respondents. The secondary data source was also accessed to collect necessary information needed for the research.

Data presentation and interpretation

The interview session witnessed 100% response rate. The Bio data revealed the following: Seventy (70) percent of respondents were males and 30 percent females (Table 1). Twenty (20) percent of the respondents fall within the ages of 15-25 years, 30 percent ages 26-35; Twenty-five (25) percent of the respondents fall within ages 36-45 and lastly 25 percent within the ages 46-above. This indicates that those within 26 and above years (55%) (Table 2) would have better knowledge of the godfatherism concept.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	70	70
Female	30	30
Total	100	100

Source: field Survey 2019

Table 2: The Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
15-25	20	20
26-35	30	30
36-45	25	25
46-above	25	25
Total	100	100

Source: field Survey 2019.

Table 3 showed that majority of the respondents are single (60%), 30% were married, and 10% divorced. This indicates that there is a substantial difference in the distribution of respondents by marital status. With 30% as graduate and 14% undergraduate (Table 4), it is expected that there will be no knowledge gap.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondent by Marital Status:

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	60	60
Married	30	30
Divorce	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: field Survey 2019

Table 4: Distribution of the Respondents by Level of Education:

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
FSLC	20	20
SSCE/NECO	36	36
Undergraduate	14	14
Graduate	30	30
Others	0	0
Total	100	100

Source: field Survey 2019

Critical questions on the issue under research had the following responses:

Table 5: Response on causes of godfatherism in Dala local government

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poverty	15	15
Corruption	40	40
Lack of voters education	15	15
Military influence	30	30
Total	100	100

Source: field Survey2019

Most of the respondents said corruption is the cause of godfatherism in Dala Local government of Kano state Nigeria.

Table 6: Response on effect of godfatherism on democracy in Dala local government area of Kano state

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Insecurity	10	10
Bad governance	20	20
Policy reversal	30	30

Lack of essential services	40	40
Total	100	100

Source: field Survey2019

Table 6 disclosed the effects of godfatherism on democracy in Dala local government of Kano state Nigeria, to include policy reversal and the lack of essential services representing 70% of the sampled respondents.

Table 7: Response on the function of government in Dala Local government in the democratic process

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Successful	34	34
Not successful	56	56
Neutral	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: field Survey2019

Table 7, revealed that 56% said not successful functions of government in the democratic process in Dala Local government.

Table 8: Response on the solution to godfatherism in Dala Local government

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strengthening democratic process	45	45
Adequate funding of INEC	22	22
Voters education	35	35
Foreign support	08	08
Total	100	100

Source: field Survey2019

Table 8 showed that strengthen of Nigeria Democratic process and voters education (80%), would help curb godfatherism.

4. Discussion Of Findings

The study clearly showed that Godfatherism is not only a phenomenon in Kano state but it has penetrated down to local government level especially Dala Local Government. It became a plain fact with the data gathered that corruptions remain the bane of godfatherism because thegodfathers in this area continue to perpetuate themselves in order to continue enjoying the state resources for their selfishness.

Furthermore, it was deduced that effect of godfatherism in Dala Local Government does not only brought about insecurity and bad governance but also result to lack of essential services needed by the people. Similarly, it was deduce that electoral body needs to be funded well so as to conduct a free and fair election.

Another important thing that showcase that godfatherism has eaten up the function of government is the response from table 4.09 which showcase that government score card is very poor in terms of delivery in some of their basic function to ensure democratic process at Dala Local Government area in Kano State.

Finally it was deduce that from the findings, there are some lasting solutions to the problems of godfatherism in Dala Local Government. The solution according to the respondents is the strengthening of democratic institutions and improve also enhance voters education among others.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The research has established that democracy in Nigeria has not been fully institutionalized and phenomenon of godfatherism and party politics are visible in the conduct of government and politics. This has threatened democratic process vis-à-vis the socio-economic lives of the citizenry.

The findings from this paper recommends that democratic institution should be strengthened to eschew the system from godfatherism and politicization of government policies and programmes. More so, there is dare need to sensitize the citizens on the importance of participating in elections and the citizens consciousness should be arouse on demanding proper

accountability and stewardship from political leaders. Finally, all key players in Nigeria electoral process such as the government, Judiciary, electoral body, civil society, and religious institutions should vigorously be committed to strengthening the democratic system.

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