

# 1 Rethinking Prebendialism in Nigeria's Socio-Political Process: 2 The Implication for Democratisation of South-South Region

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## 6 **Abstract**

7 This study examines Godfathers' impacts in the Nigerian socio-political process and the  
8 implication on the nascent democracy in the South-South Region. The design was exploratory,  
9 and the study was descriptive, combining secondary data from books and the internet. The  
10 study uncovered that godfathers were patron-occupying state offices as "pre-bends." They  
11 became the "gate-keeper"; determines the development initiative to be followed, and employed  
12 benefactors of privileges. This study's findings also indicated that the state's character and  
13 the natures of politics in Nigeria had impacted negative values, which now threatens the very  
14 foundation of the country's blossoming democracy, leading to unhealthy rivalry and  
15 competition among godfathers to have control over state powers using their favoured political  
16 godsons and denies the electorates of their right to elect a generally acceptable candidate.  
17 This act renders no free and fair elections. Also, the struggle for control of state powers has  
18 resulted in electoral violence in Nigeria, either before, or during, or after elections.

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20 *Index terms*— politics, godfatherism, democracy, democratic governance.

## 21 **1 Introduction**

22 With the advent of the independent and democratisation process, Nigerian states were crippled and bedevilled  
23 by multiple problems such as leadership problems, low institutional quality or poor economic performance,  
24 unconstitutional change of government, political violence, etcetera. The state's low quality or performance is  
25 because of godfatherism, among others ??Kopecky, 2011). The marvel of godfatherism has become a plague in the  
26 body politics of Nigeria. With the attainment of political independence, Nigeria's democracy has remained grossly  
27 unstable since the country returned to democratic rule in 1999, politics becomes personalised, and patronage  
28 becomes essential to maintain power.

29 Godfatherism and regionalism politics has featured obviously in Nigeria's independent political history.  
30 Godfatherism has its poking glitches numerous, and it is one of the most significant glitches facing the Nigerian  
31 political system. The problem is that the godson is a stooge to the fatherism as the adage goes that he pays  
32 the piper dictates the tune ??Edigin, 2010:174). The godson's failure to meet the godfather's demands is meted  
33 with punitive measures to the extent of denial of re-election. Godfatherism's politics, which has affected the  
34 socio-economic country's socio-economic and political development heightened in 1999 politics.

35 In their study, Ohio & Ojo (2016:11) disclosed that democracy in Nigeria had not been fully established, as  
36 godfatherism has endangered the democratic process and the socio-economic lives of the citizenry. Godfathers is  
37 a condition in the Nigerian political process influencing against the democratic establishment, intending to satisfy  
38 their selfish interest. They manipulate the democratic system and its operational mode by overpowering public  
39 officeholders. A good example is power control exercised by the governor and council chairman, making their  
40 subordinates dance to their tone. These political fighters' activities have deprived the people of voting for their  
41 ideal applicants as their leaders. They have not led to a corresponding flourishing of fundamental liberal values  
42 that are critical to the survival of democracy; it has brought about the transmogrification of authoritarianism,  
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

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44 pushing democratic consolidation in Nigeria to the background as a result of godfatherism, which negates peaceful  
45 coexistence, law and order, and all tenets of the democratic process by obstructing candidate selection and even  
46 executive assortment as the government is installed; which has also directly affected the political arrangement  
47 and the national economy of the nation.

48 The politics of godfatherism is not a new phenomenon in the political movements of Nigeria. However, since  
49 the return to democratic rule, the country witnessed a heightened tempo in godfatherism's politics that reduced  
50 government legitimacy and voided the citizens' electoral value. According to Oke (2011:36), godfatherism has  
51 come to assume a dangerous dimension due to politics' monetisation. Godfatherism is one of the foremost  
52 dangers of modern democracy, and ironically, it only survives with government support bringing an unresponsive  
53 leadership". ??hiole, and Ojo (2016:11) averred that democracy in Nigeria is not fully established. The principle  
54 of godfatherism has endangered democratic process and the socioeconomic lives of the citizens".

55 Godfathers in Nigeria are encouraged by their resolution to regulate public policies in favour of their concerns.  
56 For instance, the primary objective of political godfathers is nothing order than grasping control of the treasury  
57 of a state. The godfatherism in Nigerian politics is primarily concerned with appropriating government contracts,  
58 political/public appointments, and plundering the state's coffers. These godfathers are in an advantaged position  
59 to decide the political fate and confidence of candidates aspiring to hold political offices. As such, those that  
60 are not only seen but confirmed to be loyal are not given a ticket to be the flag bearer of the party. This action  
61 ensures that the godsons will be answerable to them when elected into power. Some contenders defect to other  
62 parties because of these conditions where they do not have such influential figures that exacerbate them from  
63 their political aspiration ??Okolie, 2006:171).

64 From the preceding expression, it is crystal clear that democracy is a kind of competition among the state's  
65 elites for state political control of power in Nigeria as a disaster of democracy which is traced to the political  
66 elite's failure as a class. Since 1954, there has been a fusion of the elite such that the political elite also constitutes  
67 both the economic and social elite. To be sure, the emergent political elite since 1954 has dominated the political  
68 territory to the exclusion of new candidates. The old elite has to control the political passage. Where they are  
69 not opposing political positions, they desire to constitute themselves as the power behind the curtain, thereby  
70 leading to the phenomenon of 'godfatherism' (Uadiale, 2012:94).

71 The phenomenon of godfatherism became a permanent feature in Nigerian politics and has assumed the quest  
72 by those that hold the pedals of power to have those they can manipulate to succeed them may have been  
73 responsible for the phenomenon. Nigerian politicians like to perpetuate themselves in office and, as a result,  
74 prefer to have their surrogates take over power. Most of these surrogates surrendered their bodies and souls  
75 and made themselves helpful tools to serve their godfathers' ambition. Since politics have become a sure path to  
76 quick, ill-gotten wealth, many falls for it. When the surrogates begin to assert their independence, the aftereffects  
77 of the power struggle become ant-productive to governance.

78 The worst of this is the impact of godfatherism on the willing young legions of youths ready to lay down  
79 their lives to sustain the place of godfathers in politics, business, and arcane environments such as Churches,  
80 mosques, Lodges, traditional institutions, and the likes, to have access to the pie. The godfather phenomenon  
81 is so profoundly seethed in the country that all sorts of schemes, spiritual and arcane enactments are required  
82 to keep acolytes, godsons, political associates, friends, and loafers in line. Today, there are cultural groups,  
83 interstate associations, and national bodies with massive budgets that fund the godfather enterprise, which  
84 burgeons, pillage, and lay the foundation for depleting state and nationwide resources, resulting in the country's  
85 slide into a failed state.

86 Perhaps, to situate the godfatherism phenomenon in the country, we must turn the hand of the clock to 2003-  
87 2007 during the Obasanjo administration. After serving two terms, he brought in a successor he thought he could  
88 influence. Hence, this perhaps introduced a bizarre and treacherous tradition that has been duplicated, replicated,  
89 and improved by acolytes to hold the country in a firm grip of terror, impoverishment, underdevelopment, which  
90 has destroyed the political system. That decision to choose someone that he could influence almost tore the  
91 country apart. Luckily, the doctrine of necessity was adopted, leading to Dr. Goodluck Jonathan's enthronement  
92 as President.

93 President Mohammadu Buhari himself is a product of many godfathers that pull him from all sides, leaving  
94 him confused in managing his economy and governance. It is disappointing that no lesson has been learned from  
95 Godfatherism's negative effect on the polity. Even after the man who sought to perpetuate himself in office saw  
96 his acolytes rebelled against him and went separate ways. Instead, the field of godfatherism has become widened  
97 and emboldened by power mongers to include kidnapping, thuggery, election malpractices, and indescribable  
98 vices in high places.

99 In the South-South, politics, like many other zones, has borne the brunt of godfatherism in politics in such  
100 a manner that the key players became a threat to the same people they were elected to govern. For instance,  
101 in Akwa Ibom state, the altercation between Governor Udom Emmanuel and his erstwhile godfather, Senator  
102 Godswill Akpabio, caused shocks in the state's politics almost plunged the state into violence 2019 polls. Matters  
103 came to a lull when Akpabio left for the All Progressives Congress (APC) for greener pasture.

104 In the Bayelsa state, godfatherism's influence, and attendant negative effect is inestimable. An emerging  
105 political culture was in the offering in the early days of the State, but Godfatherism influence from within and  
106 outside, in collaboration with godsons circumvented the political growth. Protest votes against Senator Douyi

107 Diri, the candidate Governor Henry Dickson allegedly imposed on the People's Democratic Party (PDP), resulted  
108 in Chief David Lyon's victory, Timipre Sylva's surrogate in the polls only for the Supreme Court to overturn it in  
109 favour of the PDP. In Edo state, the fight against godfatherism's strong hands has Volume XXI Issue IV Version  
110 I 38 ( ) been the albatross pushing the state's development backward. For a time, the People's Democratic Party  
111 (PDP), having godfatherism as a culture in the state, was taught how not to force an unpopular candidate on  
112 the people in an election lost to APC. Nevertheless, the APC did not learn that lesson either, as recent political  
113 development in the state indicates. The APC government of Mr. Godwin Obiasike decamped to the PDP due  
114 to a godfather who became wild in a desperate effort to replace a godson that fell out of favour.

115 Rivers state is the playground of godfathers, head or tail. The hegemonic battles of godfathers in the state are  
116 akin to medieval Europe, wherein Kings and Queens fought among themselves for spoils and Lords and Princes  
117 fought for sports. Their wars have left the state divided in its ethnic composition, fragmented politically, socially,  
118 and economically; because the godfathers and their godsons are engaged in a battle of self-annihilation. Nothing  
119 can assuage them, and nothing can reconcile them. The trend is unarguably the same in Cross River and Delta  
120 states.

121 The implication is that the South-South zone is perpetually subjected to unnecessary political battles rubbing  
122 negatively on good governance. The political infighting within the states in the precinct has destabilized, any  
123 organised political structures in place. The South-South communities are loose and fragile with Republican  
124 tradition, devoid of a solid historical and centralised authority. Therefore, the region is open to all sorts of  
125 influences, the good, the bad, and the ugly, are capable of being deployed to other uses.

126 The Nigerian Nationalist leaders and some Nigerian federalism builders, Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe,  
127 and Ahmadu Bello, who become godfathers after independence, were lionised, respected, worshipped, and idolised  
128 (Fawole, 2001). While people tried to exaggerate their impacts, and their persons looks more ordinary. Chukwuma  
129 (2008) remarked that the godfather settles to dictate 'who gets what, when, and how in distributing scarce  
130 resources after the elections have been contested and won. Therefore, godfathers' role goes beyond the votes;  
131 and gets pretty robust and more evident. A political godfather has the abilities and capabilities to manipulate  
132 the electoral process favouring his chosen godson.

133 Applying this concept in Nigeria has resulted in democratic failures and disasters, being a denial of electing  
134 credible candidates and the imposition of mediocre into political and appointed positions. The most important  
135 experience received was pains, poverty, misery, poor service delivery, squalor, poor service performance, and  
136 delivery among all godsons. The whole scenario focuses on as been the promotion of political follow-follow  
137 mentality and the empowerment of disempowerment.

138 The competition between members of the political class accounts for most of the election-related violence in  
139 Nigeria. Furthermore, the competition for power becomes intensified as politics is a "do-or-die" affair by the  
140 political class. Also, the godfathers' domineering role in the country's politics underwrites the weakness and  
141 susceptibility of the political assemblies and establishments in Nigeria.

142 These weak and vulnerable political structures and institutions lack the willpower to enhance and encourage  
143 democracy in Nigeria. These weaknesses and vulnerabilities are responsible for fragile and weak democracy  
144 and the absence of socio-political development in the South-South region. Therefore, the study's main thrust  
145 is to examine the phenomenon of "godfatherism" and its impacts on Nigerian body politics, particularly the  
146 socio-political process in the South-South democratisation Zone.

## 147 2 II.

### 148 3 Review of Related Literature

149 Godfatherism in Nigeria is a growing concern for scholarly literature on the concept. The literature on  
150 godfatherism portrays varied views and opinions. Nevertheless, a general socio-political perspective attempts  
151 an incisive definition of the term (Williams, 2004). He stated that godfatherism is seen as a practice that entails  
152 the sustenance of political and social relationships in which the subordinate looks onto the superior for the  
153 propagation and fulfilment of positive roles, desires, and interactions which binds both together or in which both  
154 have an equal stake but with the boss determining what the subordinate gets in the process.

### 155 4 a) Conceptual Framework

156 Like any other terminology employed by social scientists, this concept of godfatherism is a jargon that is not easily  
157 defined. Some related concepts of godfather and godson need some explanation. The godfather is a kingmaker,  
158 mentor, boss, and principal. He is someone who has built unimaginable respect and followers (voters) in the  
159 community and possessed a well-organised political platform and general acceptance from the electorate that  
160 could secure victory for candidates of his choice" (4:269).

161 Godfatherism is an association formed between a superior and a subordinate, where the person in charge has  
162 some level of influence on the subordinate due to the boss status. In another dimension, godfatherism implies a  
163 mutual relationship between individuals to determine which one is superior and the other being a subordinate  
164 who relies wholly on his principal partner for favours to attain his life goals. In politics, godfatherism portrays  
165 a power-based relationship. For instance, Ukhun (2004) emphasises that the implicit feature of godfatherism is

## 4 A) CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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166 power. He stated that "power is the determinant or fundamental feature of godfatherism and the power could  
167 be economic, political, and spiritual, voodoo etcetera" (Ukhun, 2004).

168 Dickson (2006) also noted that the philosophy of godfather is grounded in the sociology of traditional Igbo  
169 society. He further showed evidence of a prevalent relationship between the superior called 'Nnam-ukwu' (my  
170 master) and the subordinate called 'Odibo' (the servant) in the Igbo tradition. It is also a situation in which  
171 the younger person is taken care of by a more mature and experienced person for economic, social, and moral  
172 maturity. Therefore, the role played by the man in this kind of relationship is akin to that of a godfather. Thus,  
173 the triple cases showcase above show those persons of lesser social status attach themselves to another person of  
174 higher social integrity, usually for economic benefits. However, this practice is not alien to Nigeria but is strange  
175 in replicating this practice into our political system.

176 The politics of godfathers was to 'anoint' a godson to win an election through the godfather's influence, using  
177 his wealth, political structure, and political experience of the godfather. Olawawa observed that the politics  
178 of godfather has far-reaching adverse effects on the democratisation process in Nigeria than elsewhere. This  
179 argument is still probable today. Godfathers in this context are said to be influential individuals in the society  
180 who determines 'who, what, when, and how power is exercised. Many godfathers in present-day Nigeria operate  
181 like mafia by displaying violent scheming and aggressive 'politicking,' coupled with manipulating devices to have  
182 their way by any means. Their philosophy relies on Machiavelli's slogan, 'the ends justify the means. Their reign  
183 crisscrossed all spheres of the society: academics, legal, political and religious environment. On the other hand,  
184 Godson referred to the beneficiary and recipient of the legacy of a godfather.

185 Several academic scholars have defined the term godfatherism according to their perception and understanding  
186 of the idea. Abioye (2007), cited in Eke and Osaghae, stated that godfatherism is "a term used in describing the  
187 relationship that exists between a godfather and a chosen godson; being a kind of politics whereby an influential  
188 person in a ruling party will assist someone, usually a godson, to emerge as the party's candidate at all cost,  
189 whether by hook or crook. The godfather will assist his godson in emerging victorious in the election whether he  
190 is a popular candidate or not. Scott (1972) stated that godfatherism is a special case of dyadic (two persons) who  
191 are largely instrumental friendship so that an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron or godfather)  
192 uses his influence, position, and resources to provide security, protection, and benefits for a person of lower  
193 status (client or godson) to win, and who for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance,  
194 including personal services to the patron or godfather". Olawale (2005) noted that present-day godfatherism is  
195 a primordial tradition taken to a criminal extent. However, Ajayi observed that godfatherism thrives across the  
196 globe. There is hardly any state devoid of godfathers' existence and influence, but the level of such impact differs  
197 from place to place. In America, the political candidates wiggle around, seeks group and individual endorsements  
198 for their candidacy. In some other advanced societies, group influence and confirmation could be more valuable  
199 than a powerful individual could. The fact remains that a prominent member of society still influences the  
200 social order in their voting pattern; notwithstanding, the features of patron-client politics remain constant; with  
201 a disparity in power-sharing, existing in the context of face-to-face personal relationship, incorporating a wide  
202 range of socio-political and economic forms of exchange, displaying kickbacks, and considering cost-benefit theory  
203 availability of votegiver and vote-accepter. The godfather and godson relationship is not free-floating but rather  
204 contractual, written and, spiritually sealed with an oath in a 'shrine' in Nigeria or elsewhere. Onubi (2002) noted  
205 that democracy means "rule by the people" thus, it is a government of the people and the people. Therefore, it  
206 is the majority government. Agbaje (1999) stated that democracy is an idea, process (series of events leading to  
207 change or course of action) of the government system.

208 Democracy is a way of life of a people making free choices of what one does, where to live, and how he uses  
209 his earnings; the operation of the institutions, be it the home, the church, local, state, and federal government;  
210 leveraging on the right of justified property ownership; having equality of opportunity social justice and fairness;  
211 absence of social and class barriers, and the solution of mutual glitches through the exercise of the permitted will  
212 of the people.

213 Democracy, just like godfatherism, is a concept that is not amenable to definitional unanimity, more so  
214 as there exist several versions of it. Common among the types are the Athenian classical democracy, Marxists-  
215 Leninist democracy, Liberal democracy, and lately, Radical democratic conception, to mention a few. Democratic  
216 discussion is in controversies, ideally is true democracy, given scholars' divergence of views on the concept and  
217 practice of democracy. For the sake of this study, however, we are concerned with liberal democracy, otherwise  
218 known as representative democracy and how the politics of godfatherism in Nigeria impede it.

219 Democracy is discussed in a liberal perspective as a form of government of a popular representation; or a form  
220 of government wherein supreme power is with the people, who indirectly exercised authority through a system of  
221 representation and delegated authority periodically, being a representative constitutional Volume XXI Issue IV  
222 Version I 40 ( ) government". Therefore, democracy is a government of the people, exercised by the people and for  
223 the people. This kind is a liberal democracy with some universal values of a free press, openness, transparency of  
224 government, accountability, equity, respect for the rule of law and constitutionalism, inclusiveness, participatory,  
225 consensus-orientation, efficient service delivery, and effectiveness. Thus, the concept of democracy in Nigeria has  
226 been misconstrued with the mere civil rule because the practice has not witnessed freedom of choice, constituted  
227 authority, respect for the rule of law, sagacity, and service delivery.

228 El-Rufai (2003), cited in Eke and Osaghae, noted that Liberal democracy's general concern is to provide the

229 framework for the aggregation of the longterm interest of the majority in channelling public resources in the  
230 pursuit of that interest.

231 However, where the custodians of Liberal democracy are corrupt in their aggregate interests, which exists  
232 and persists, then the chances of development targets are missed, and the 'Hobessian' society would eventually  
233 emerge. Therefore, societies that have adhered to minimum liberal democratic principles have raised their living  
234 standards to a guaranteed level by observing and complying with simple rules, including private sector-led growth,  
235 investment promotion, macro-economic stability, and fiscal discipline deregulation of financial markets, and anti-  
236 corruption measures. Eventually, these become a stable and predictable judicial system and internal security.

237 Democracy aims to promote a sound and egalitarian society using an integrated effort by the masses towards  
238 a better society ??Ademolokun, 2000). Admittedly, the principle of democracy is the only mechanism through  
239 which the interest, well-being, rights, and lives of the citizenry are unquestionably protected and guaranteed  
240 (Attah Amana et al., 2009). Democracy as a form of government started in ancient Greece (Athens) (Mbachu,  
241 1990). Although the constitution guarantees freedom to form and hold an opinion, the Nigerian situation is  
242 such that the competitors for power have taken control of an issue beyond their competence. They are making  
243 personal profits out of it at the expense of corporate existence, economic revival, and nation-state integration.  
244 In this vein, other factors such as political and economic equality, fraternal feelings are key issues for a successful  
245 working of the democratic system. In other words, a democratic government should not only be responsible  
246 or acceptable to the "demos"-people or the masses-but indeed, political power itself and its expression should  
247 emanate from the popular will.

248 Fundamentally, democracy is a set of institutions that fulfil two essential requirements: (a) Elicit the accurate  
249 judgment of countless people as to who should represent them, and how the country has to be governed. This  
250 type of democracy means minimum universal suffrage, political parties, and the organisation of new voting in  
251 fair elections at relatively frequent intervals; and (b) To ensure that those selected by the community do what  
252 the voters want them to do or else be replaced if they do otherwise; which means that the process of governance  
253 in a democratic rule is fundamentally a dialogue between the leaders and the led.

254 However, Sergent (1975) saw democracy as:

255 (a) Citizens involvement in political decision making;  
256 (b) There exists some degree of equality among citizens; (c) Citizens retention of some degree of liberty, and  
257 freedom; (d) A system of representation; and (e) An electoral system of majority rule.

258 Therefore, democracy entrenches and expands, or seeks to entrench and expand, the citizens' rights, ability,  
259 and capacity in a given society. It is always the best form of government whereby people elect their leaders in  
260 society. That is, the people exercise their governing power either directly or through representatives periodically  
261 elected by them. It, therefore, means that democracy provides institutions for the expression and the supremacy  
262 of the people or popular will on key issues bordering on social and policymaking. Democracy is concerned with  
263 freedom, but it is not freedom to be irresponsible.

264 Ademolokun ??2000) aims to enhance a sound and egalitarian society through the masses' integrated effort  
265 towards a better society. Despite the differences in conceptualisation and of democracy and its practices,  
266 Ojo (2006) noted that all versions of democracy (liberal or capitalist, socialist and African brand) share the  
267 fundamental objectives of "how to govern the society and that power is in the hands of the people.

268 In a similar dimension, Chafe (1994) argues that democracy means that the people are involved in running  
269 their political, socio-economic, and cultural affairs. Perhaps the most basic idea in a democracy is that people  
270 are equal and have an equal right to lend a voice to say who rules and how. Therefore, real political authority  
271 comes from the people, and administration is legal only when the ruled consent.

272 The citizens' well-being largely depends on the extent to which the democratic institution is sustained and  
273 strengthened. Bonnie and Khinde (2007) said, because of good governance, selfless leaders and mutual trust  
274 between the leaders and led could be guaranteed if the citizens solely engineer choice of who should govern the  
275 society at any given time on one hand and a steady and sustained democratic machinery on the other hand.  
276 Though, every nation has embraced the principle of democracy because it is the only

## 277 5 b) Theoretical Framework

278 It is a universal spectacle in management and social sciences to investigate facts within a theory and not in a  
279 secluded method. Theoretical orientation exists basically in bridging all the proofs to investigation (Goode and  
280 Hatt, 1952). In an empirical or hypothetical study, it is necessary to develop a sound theory explaining the wise  
281 concepts and relationships of variables in a study. The most essentiality of theoretical insight in a study is also  
282 pigeon-hold in the fact that social science research is theory-based, and its operations are guided by relevant  
283 principles of human behaviour (Goode and Hatt, 1952).

284 This study adopts the elite theory in examining the overbearing influence of godfatherism on Nigerian nascent  
285 democratic experiences. Vilfredo Pareto developed the concept in 1935. The theory supposes that power rotates  
286 among the elites at the masses' expense. Pareto (1935) argued that the political elites always insulate and isolate  
287 themselves from their social order and, by so doing, can reproduce themselves from within the same order. They  
288 do not allow non-elites to join their membership. They, therefore, maintain a safe, functional distance from the  
289 rest of the people. They reproduce themselves on either an individual and selective basis in the same process,  
290 referred to as the "circulation of elites." Their yardstick for elite recruitment is often parochial, and the process

291 is a manner that does not interfere with the traditional order of the dominant elite class. ??areto (2006) went  
292 further to argue that the predominant group often frustrates all efforts at a collective circulation of elites and  
293 would relatively support individual recruitment.

294 However, Mosca (1939) disagrees with Pareto that elite recruitment is only possible individually. Pareto  
295 believed in the possibility of one social class replacing another and posited that a non-elite member could join  
296 the elite class through 'collective social mobility; which refers to the status that people attain because of their  
297 social, economic, and professional efforts. Mosca (1939) also believes that there are already many societies are  
298 'sub-elite. These people facilitate communication between the elite and the non-elite and are potential tools  
299 for relatively large-scale elite recruitment. This argument makes it possible for both sub-elite and non-elite to  
300 become recruited into Nigeria's elite political class. The elite theory sees elites as players governing the state and  
301 national resources and occupying key positions related to power networks (28). Thus, the elite class's perception  
302 is more carefully connected to "the Weberian knowledge of power, understood as the competence of executing  
303 one's will, even against the will of the general populous" (29:696).

304 Godfatherism serves as a medium for such selective elite recruitment in Nigeria. The resultant effects of the  
305 above in Nigeria polity are under-development, abject poverty, acute youth unemployment, poor health prospects,  
306 and misinterpretation of politics.

307 The elite theory's relevance to this study is its ability to justify how godfatherism's politics facilitate  
308 people's transition into the elite political class. Liberalism in Nigeria promotes radical elitist democracy and  
309 a money-inspired electioneering system, leaving the masses as 'onlookers' and denying Nigerians the much-  
310 needed institutional, socio-economic, and political advancement (4). The elite theory is very much concerned  
311 with structures, especially authority structures. It is the assumption that elite class action has a causal effect  
312 on the relationship between the state and society since the elites have greater influence/control than the masses.  
313 According to Mosca (1939), the elite theory points to the concentration of power in the hands of a minority  
314 group that 'perform all political functions, monopolise power, and enjoy the advantages that power brings.'  
315 Thus, public policy is the value and preferences of governing elites. The Nigerian polity represents a situation  
316 where the welfare of the citizenry is wholly mortgaged for the interests of a few politicians with their mentors  
317 (godfathers). Therefore, the voters are penurious, and the crooked rich-godfathers are enriching themselves the  
318 more.

### 319 III. Effect of Godfatherism on nigeria's Democratic Consolidation

320 The emergence of godfatherism in Nigeria posed a serious threat to democratic dividends and good governance's  
321 socio-economic development and stability. One of the most disturbing and damaging influences in the Nigerian  
322 fourth republic godfatherism was the campaigning for a really free, fair, and credible electoral process. The  
323 electorates as its right elects who governs them and represent their interests freely.

324 Chukwuemeka (2012) stated that the privilege associated with electing people of their choice to govern them  
325 are denied when godfathers foisted candidates of their preference and imposed such on the generality of the  
326 people, which is unwholesome to the tenets of democratic rule.

327 When public officers are unaccountable to the people, who voted them into public office, invariably, the loyalty  
328 of such public officer tilted towards their godfathers; which action negates one of the critical characteristics of  
329 governance and democracy. This scenario is inimical to good administration and political stability, due process,  
330 transparency, accountability, and predicated the rule of law, in public affairs management. Godfatherism has  
331 robbed the citizens of the honour of enjoying the dividends of democracy because the government has become  
332 reluctant to initiate and Volume XXI Issue IV Version I 42 ( ) implement policies that would advance the well-  
333 being of the citizens' generality, and this was as a result of the fact that godfatherism in Nigeria was predatory.  
334 The primary motive of volunteering into politics was to acquire wealth (money) from the resources of government  
335 to which their godsons held sway (Chukwumeka, 2012).

336 Consequently, the financial resource accrueable to the state from the federation account, was for the betterment  
337 of the citizens' living standards, and was of paramount interest.

338 In case godsons refuses to settle their godfathers as agreed, hell will let loose. We draw instances from the  
339 case of Alhaji The endpoint and consequences of these (godfatherism) in our polity are that of deterioration in  
340 economic activities of the Education sector, the Agricultural and health sectors, housing and security challenges  
341 leading to political wrangling, and blockade of infrastructural development etcetera.

## 342 6 IV. Impacts of Godfatherism on Nigerian Politics

343 The role of the political godfather in Nigerian politics has also worsened the socio-economic conditions of  
344 Nigerians. The phenomenon has bred political corruption, widens the gap between the rich and poor, and  
345 increased Nigeria's unemployment. Again, a wide range of political literature asserts that socio-economic  
346 conditions such as poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion, inequality in income and wealth, and erratic  
347 economic growth are a potential threat to democracy. Godfatherism has also resulted in our national importance  
348 turning to favour their interest, making the National Assembly less archetypal and less receptive to the citizens'  
349 groanings.

350 Nigeria today has the worst unemployment problem, deplorable roads, transportation problems, miserable  
351 infrastructures, medical services, educational system and standards, epileptic power outage, and the average

352 Nigerian living standard does not reflect the oil wealth of the nation. All these results from godfathers' activities  
353 collaborating with their godsons to siphoned resources met the country's overall infrastructural development.

## 354 **7 V. Conclusion and Recommendations a) Conclusions**

355 A preponderance of political literature asserts a correlation between godfatherism and the survival of  
356 democracy (Aurrel, 2005). Aurel (2005), for example, observed that godfather is the greatest threat to democracy  
357 in developing countries. The high-profile assassinations, arsons, and clashes between and within a political party,  
358 kidnappings, violence in rallies, campaign grounds, thuggery, and rigging of elections are signs of the pitiable and  
359 friable condition of Nigeria's democracy. These activities often perpetrated by thugs of godfathers to create a  
360 sense of insecurity among the electorates and limit the political space. The apparent withdrawal of honest,  
361 sincere, and credible individuals from the political scene. Perhaps, this explains why we now have mediocre  
362 political leaders.

363 This paper has revealed that the politics of godfatherism impedes Nigeria's nascent democracy. It has gained  
364 prominence and assumed a dominant feature of electoral politics and governance in the country. Consequently,  
365 it encourages corruption, breeds acute unemployment, electoral malpractices, abject poverty, and political  
366 instability. The patron-client relationship modelled a prodigious threat to good governance and the socio-  
367 economic and political development and stability of democratic domination.

368 One of the most disturbing and damaging influences of godfatherism in Nigeria was in the sphere of creating  
369 none sincerely free, fair, and credible electoral process in which the electorates has the right to electing  
370 representative candidates of their choice into public offices.

371 At present, both the godfather and the godson see politics from this perspective, which informed why the  
372 godfather is willing to invest his capital and influence. It was necessary to adopt uncivilised methods to get his  
373 godson to control state resources that enable him to accumulate wealth even to the detriment of society. In this  
374 same vein, the godson also accepts his stooge status as he sees his position as a means for self-aggrandisement<sup>239</sup>.  
375 This perception of politics is detrimental to the growth and development of democracy and society at large.

376 Closely linked to the above is the power of the state. The state in the third world wields too much economic  
377 and political power, which explains the intense struggle by members of the political class with the sole purpose  
378 of controlling the state for personal benefits.

## 379 **8 b) Recommendations**

380 From this point of consensus, there is a need for steps to address the problem. Given this, the paper recommends  
381 as follows:

382 i. There should be rules governing Nigerian politics, and politicians should obey them. Nigerians have the right  
383 to enjoy the dividends of democracy, and the federal government has a positive role to play in the realisation of set  
384 goals. ii. Laws banning godfatherism in Nigeria's politics be enacted. iii. This study posits that there is a need  
385 for the redefinition of our value system. There is the need for everyone to change one's perception of politics as a  
386 shortcut to personal wealth. iv. Nigeria needs a purposeful leadership that has a vision of how to place its citizens  
387 at the centre of the political project without recourse to the patron-client relationship and sees the attainment  
388 of political power not just for acquiring sake but as a means to serve the interest of its people irrespective of  
389 their ethnic origin. v. The politics of godfatherism should be discouraged, and our democratic institution should  
390 evade the politics of godfatherism of central government policies and programmes. vi. There should be rules  
391 governing Nigerian politics, and politicians should obey them. Nigerians have the right to enjoy the dividends of  
392 democracy, and the federal government has constructive roles to play in safeguarding the realisation of this goal.  
393 vii. The Federal Government should create sustainable jobs. Thus, the only panacea for democracy in Nigeria is  
massive economic and infrastructure development, justice, equity, and fair play in line with federalism's tenets. <sup>1</sup>

Figure 1:

<sup>1</sup>Rethinking Prebendialism in Nigeria's Socio-Political Process: The Implication for Democratisation of South-South Region

## **8 B) RECOMMENDATIONS**

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