

**THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL
GODFATHERISM ON ELECTORAL
OUTCOMES IN EDO STATE: A CASE STUDY
OF THE 2024 GUBERNATORIAL
ELECTION.**

BY

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UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
BENIN CITY.**

NOVEMBER, 2025

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, FACULTY
OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR
OF SCIENCE (B.Sc.) DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE.**

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DECLARATION

I, Onowhowhakpo Oghenemaro Blessing, hereby declare that this research project titled “The Impact Of Political Godfatherism On Electoral Outcomes In Edo State: A Case Study Of The 2024 Gubernatorial Election” is my original work, and has not been submitted elsewhere, and all sources of information, ideas, data and quotations from published and unpublished works that have been used in this thesis are duly acknowledged through proper references and citations.

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the research project was carried out by **ONOWHOWHAKPO OGHENEMARO BLESSING** in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, in partial fulfilment for the award of a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree in Political Science.

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to the Almighty God, whose infinite wisdom, without Him, this work would not have been accomplished.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of political godfatherism on electoral outcomes in the 2024 Edo State gubernatorial election, focusing on how political godfathers influence voter behaviour, candidate selection, and the perceived credibility of the electoral process. Godfathers dominated candidate selection and party processes, weakening internal democracy, elite theory explains this as power concentrated in the hands of a few, while patron – client theory highlights the exchange relationship between godfathers and loyal supporters. The research adopts an empirical approach, utilizing structured questionnaires administered to 250 respondents across selected local government areas in Edo State (Egor local government, Esan west local government, Etsako west local government). Data were analyzed using empirical tools and regression analysis to determine the extent of relationships between variables. The findings indicate that political godfathers continue to shape electoral dynamics by influencing voter turnout through endorsements, mobilization efforts, and strategic directives targeted at their loyalists. Results also show that godfathers play a decisive role in determining candidates during party primaries, often overriding democratic

norms and internal party procedures. It recommends strengthening internal party democracy, ensuring greater institutional autonomy, and implementing reforms that limit undue political influence in electoral processes.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY.

Political godfatherism is a deeply entrenched phenomenon in Nigeria's democratic system, particularly in sub-national politics where powerful elites exert overwhelming influence over electoral outcomes. Political godfathers are typically individuals with considerable financial resources and control over political party structures, using their positions to anoint candidates and dictate political appointments in exchange for loyalty and control of state resources (Omilusi, 2016). This system undermines democratic ideals by restricting internal party democracy, reducing political competition, and often disregarding the will of the electorate (Agbaje, 2019).

Edo State provides a compelling case study in this regard. Historically, the state has been dominated by prominent godfathers who have played pivotal roles in determining who governs. The feud between Adams Oshiomhole, former governor and ex-National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), and his political godson, Governor Godwin Obaseki, is a clear illustration of the tension and power

struggles that often define godfather relationships. After helping Obaseki to power in 2016, Oshiomhole later fell out with him, leading to Obaseki's defection to the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in 2020 and his eventual re-election without Oshiomhole's backing (Ojo, 2020; Igbuzor, 2017).

The 2024 gubernatorial election in Edo further highlighted the continued relevance of political godfatherism. With Senator Monday Okpebholo of the APC emerging victorious over Asue Ighodalo of the PDP, analysts observed the reconfiguration of political alliances and the revival of godfather influence in the state. Despite previous opposition to godfatherism, both Oshiomhole and Obaseki appeared to assert their influence in shaping their party's primaries and campaign strategies (Adeoye, 2024; Premium Times, 2024). Their actions demonstrate that the political class continues to rely on informal patronage networks rather than institutional democratic processes (Olorungbemi, 2021).

This study aims to investigate the impact of political godfatherism on the 2024 gubernatorial election in Edo State, focusing on how elite interference influenced candidate emergence, campaign conduct, voter behavior, and ultimately, the electoral outcome. It also seeks to evaluate whether the state's electorate has developed resistance to political manipulation or remains susceptible to elite dominance (Nkwede, 2023).

Understanding this dynamic is essential for strengthening Nigeria's democratic institutions. By critically assessing the 2024 election through the lens of godfatherism, this study contributes to broader discussions on electoral integrity, political

accountability, and the role of informal power brokers in Africa ' s democratic transitions (Ojochenemi, 2020; The Nation, 2024).

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Political godfatherism remains a critical challenge to Nigeria's democratic development, particularly in Edo State, where elite dominance continues to shape electoral outcomes. Godfatherism, the practice where powerful individuals influence political processes by sponsoring and controlling candidates, undermines electoral integrity and public accountability (Omotola, 2009; Olarinmoye, 2008). In the 2024 Edo gubernatorial election, the influence of political godfathers resurfaced as dominant figures sought to impose candidates and manipulate internal party mechanisms, thereby eroding the democratic space (Albert, 2005; Adeoye, 2018).

This dominance restricts political competition, weakens internal party democracy, and promotes a patron-client relationship that prioritizes loyalty over competence (Gberevbie, 2014; Joseph, 1991). Political actors often become beholden to their godfathers, compromising their ability to serve public interest and making governance subject to elite bargaining (Obiyan, 2009; Olaniyan & Obiyan, 2020). The result is often poor service delivery, widespread corruption, and policy decisions driven by narrow interests.

Furthermore, the entrenchment of godfatherism contributes to political violence, voter apathy, and disillusionment with the electoral process, particularly when elections are perceived to be manipulated by powerful interests (Ogundiya, 2010;

Ibrahim, 2011). In Edo State, recurring political confrontations between former governors and incumbents reflect the struggle for control between institutional democracy and personalistic politics (Uadiale & Eghosa, 2015).

The 2024 election in Edo therefore presents a critical opportunity to assess the impact of godfatherism on democratic consolidation. Without reform, Nigeria risks deepening its democratic deficits. There is urgent need for political and electoral reforms that promote transparency, strengthen internal party democracy, and reduce elite capture of the political process (Ojo, 2008; Omilusi, 2016).

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study is significant for its in-depth exploration of political godfatherism and its impact on democratic processes in Edo State, Nigeria, particularly during the 2024 gubernatorial election. While democracy is built on the premise that power derives from the people through transparent and competitive elections, the entrenchment of godfatherism challenges this ideal. In Edo State, powerful individuals often former officials, wealthy businessmen, or entrenched party elites exert disproportionate control over political outcomes by handpicking candidates, dictating campaign strategies, and undermining internal party democracy.

This elite dominance sidelines competent aspirants lacking patronage and limits genuine political competition, reducing elections to elite negotiations rather than public choice. As a result, elected officials often prioritize the interests of their godfathers over those of the electorate, weakening accountability and transparency in

governance.

The study aims to provide evidence-based insights that can help policymakers, electoral bodies, and political parties identify and address areas vulnerable to elite manipulation. It advocates for reforms that enhance internal party democracy, promote fairness in candidate selection, and strengthen enforcement mechanisms during elections.

For civil society, advocacy groups, and the media, this research offers a foundation for civic education and campaigns to combat undemocratic practices. Academically, it fills a gap in localized studies on godfatherism, contributing to Nigerian democratic scholarship and providing a benchmark for comparative studies in other contexts.

Furthermore, the study offers valuable learning for students and researchers in political science and governance by encouraging critical inquiry into how informal power structures intersect with formal institutions. Ultimately, it highlights the broader tension between entrenched elite influence and democratic ideals, offering lessons relevant both within Nigeria and across other emerging democracies.

1.4 SCOPE OF STUDY

This study focuses on the impact of political godfatherism on electoral outcomes in Edo State, specifically during the 2024 gubernatorial election. It investigates how political godfathers, often influential figures such as former officeholders, wealthy businessmen, or entrenched party elites, shape the electoral process through their control over candidate selection, campaign strategies, and voter mobilization. The

research aims to explore how these godfathers use their political and financial resources to influence party primaries, dictate campaign narratives, and sway voter behavior, often at the expense of merit-based competition and democratic principles.

The scope of the study is geographically limited to Edo State and does not extend to national-level politics or other states in Nigeria, ensuring a focused examination of local political dynamics. Data collection will involve key stakeholders within the state, including political actors, party members, voters, and civil society groups. By examining the perspectives of these various actors, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of political godfatherism in shaping both the conduct of elections and the outcomes they produce.

In addition, the study will emphasize how the influence of godfathers affects broader issues such as voter engagement, electoral integrity, and democratic participation in Edo State, particularly in the context of the 2024 gubernatorial election cycle. The findings will offer insights into the challenges faced by the state's democratic processes and provide recommendations for reform.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of political godfatherism on electoral outcomes in Edo State.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Ascertain the impact of political godfather on voters turnout in the 2024 gubernatorial election in EDO state.

2. Examine how political godfatherism affects the selection of candidates during party primaries.
3. Examine the influence of godfather on credibility and fairness of the 2024 gubernatorial election outcome in EDO state.
4. Recommend solutions to the problems of godfatherism in EDO state politics.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. what are the impacts of political godfather on voters turnout in the 2024 gubernatorial election in EDO state?
2. How does political godfatherism affect the selection of candidates during party primaries?
3. What are the influence of godfathers on the credibility and fairness of the 2024 gubernatorial election outcome in EDO state?
4. What are the solutions to problems of godfatherism in EDO state?

1.7 HYPOTHESES

H01: There is no relationship between political godfather and voters turnout in the 2024 gubernatorial election in EDO state.

H02: There is no relationship between political godfathers and influence of candidate selection in party primaries in EDO state.

H03: There is no relationship between political godfather and credible electoral outcome in EDO state.

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Politics:

Politics is the way people in a group, community, or country make important decisions about how their society should be organized and governed. It involves discussions, debates, and actions by both leaders and citizens to decide on laws, policies, and plans that affect everyone's lives. Through politics, individuals or groups try to gain power, hold onto it, or influence others to support their ideas. Politics plays a big role in elections, law-making, public speeches, government programs, and how leaders manage issues like education, health, security, and the economy. It helps shape the way a society functions and how people live and work together peacefully.

Godfatherism:

Godfatherism is a political phenomenon in which powerful individuals, often with substantial wealth, social influence, or strong political networks, exert control over the political process to serve their own interests. These individuals, known as "godfathers," sponsor political candidates and ensure their emergence during party primaries and general elections, expecting loyalty and obedience in return. This system undermines democratic values such as transparency, meritocracy, fairness, and accountability, as decisions are influenced by personal gain rather than public interest. It often leads to corruption, poor governance, and the erosion of citizens' trust in the electoral process.

Election:

An election is a key part of any democratic system where citizens have the right to

vote and make decisions about who should lead them or how certain issues should be handled. It gives people the chance to be involved in how their country, state, or local area is governed. Through voting, citizens can choose leaders they trust and remove those who are not performing well. Elections are held at regular times and follow specific rules to make sure they are fair, free, and transparent. This helps prevent cheating and ensures that the process respects everyone's voice. By voting, people help shape their future and hold those in power accountable. Elections make sure that leadership is based on the will of the people, which is a basic principle of democracy.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework is an organized structure that outlines the main concepts, variables, and how they relate within a research study. It acts as a guide for the researcher, connecting the research problem to the objectives, and is built on established theories and prior studies. In simple terms, it functions like a roadmap that arranges ideas logically and demonstrates the approach the research will take in answering its questions. By linking the study's concepts with suitable theoretical foundations, the conceptual framework defines the boundaries of the research, helping to keep it on track and focused. It also plays an essential role in analyzing and understanding results, as it allows comparisons with existing knowledge and scholarly findings. In academic research, creating a strong conceptual framework is crucial

because it lays the groundwork for the entire study, ensures clarity in direction, and strengthens the credibility of the conclusions drawn (Adom, Hussein, & Agyem, 2018). The conceptual framework of this study will address the concept of political godfatherism, electoral outcome and gubernatorial election.

2.1.1 The concept of political godfatherism

Political godfatherism refers to a political practice where a powerful individual, commonly referred to as the godfather, deploys wealth, social capital, and political networks to secure the emergence of a chosen candidate, the godson, into political office. In exchange for this support, the godson is expected to remain loyal to the patron by granting them influence over state resources, political appointments, contracts, or specific policies that advance the godfather's interests (Onwuegbu, 2025).

This arrangement reflects a patron client model of politics in which the godfather provides campaign funding, political protection, and strategic direction, while the godson reciprocates with access to power and resources once elected. In Nigeria, this practice has become deeply entrenched, reshaping the political process by reducing the influence of the electorate and transferring decision making authority into the hands of a select group of elites (Salawu & Abdulkareem, 2024).

In practical terms, political godfathers exercise overwhelming control over the internal dynamics of political parties. They determine party primaries, sponsor campaign machinery, control access to media platforms, and negotiate political alliances across party lines (Nwambuko et al., 2024). Their dominance often leads to

the imposition of candidates, limiting genuine competition and undermining internal democracy within political parties. Independent candidates, reformist voices, or grassroots politicians are usually sidelined, as godfathers favor loyalists who will protect their interests once in office (Ejoha, Ogoh & Yusufu, 2024). This control over candidate emergence ensures that political power remains in the grip of a few highly influential figures, rather than reflecting the choices of ordinary party members or the wider electorate.

The consequences of this practice are far reaching. Elections are often distorted by malpractice when candidates backed by godfathers employ vote buying, voter intimidation, ballot stuffing, or other irregularities to guarantee victory and secure the return on the godfather's financial investment (Osaghae, 2024). As a result, electoral credibility is weakened, and democracy becomes increasingly compromised. Once elected, many leaders prioritize serving the interests of their sponsors above those of the people, leading to widespread patronage appointments, skewed policy making, and mismanagement of public funds (Nnajieta & Ihejieta, 2024). This creates governance outcomes that reflect elite bargains rather than the needs of citizens.

Tensions frequently arise when godsons attempt to break free from the dominance of their sponsors. In such situations, political conflicts may erupt in the form of defections to rival parties, impeachment threats, judicial battles, or prolonged governance paralysis (Nwambuko et al., 2024). These conflicts destabilize the political environment, disrupt policy implementation, and create uncertainty within both the government and the electorate. Over time, such recurrent clashes between

godfathers and godsons contribute to a cycle of instability that hinders institutional development and effective governance.

Beyond direct political outcomes, godfatherism also erodes public trust in democratic institutions. Many citizens perceive elections not as an avenue for free choice but as contests already determined by powerful elites (Vanguard News, 2025). This perception fosters apathy, reduces voter turnout, and deepens disillusionment with the political system. Furthermore, political godfatherism limits inclusivity in governance, as women, youth, and marginalized groups often lack the resources and patronage networks required to compete in godfather dominated politics (Abubakar, 2022). Consequently, governance becomes less representative, and the cycle of exclusion and elite dominance is perpetuated.

Although some scholars argue that godfatherism can contribute positively by funding political campaigns in contexts where state support for candidates is weak and by mentoring inexperienced politicians, contemporary studies stress that the costs overwhelmingly outweigh these limited benefits (Salawu & Abdulkareem, 2024; Onwuegbu, 2025). Evidence from recent Nigerian elections consistently demonstrates that godfatherism undermines accountability, encourages corruption, and entrenches elite control over political and economic structures (Nnajieta & Ihejieta, 2024). Instead of fostering stability, godfatherism produces systems of dependency that weaken leadership and obstruct political innovation.

In response, scholars and policy experts have proposed several measures to curb this practice. One major recommendation is the strengthening of internal party democracy

by ensuring that primary elections are conducted transparently, competitively, and without undue interference from powerful patrons (Osaghae, 2024). Strict enforcement of campaign finance laws and monitoring of political spending are also necessary to reduce the financial influence of godfathers. Additionally, stronger sanctions against electoral malpractice, such as vote buying and voter intimidation, are required to restore credibility to the electoral process. Civil society organizations, youth groups, and the media must play more active roles in monitoring elections, exposing patronage deals, and holding leaders accountable (Vanguard News, 2025). Only through these reforms can the cycle of patron client politics be broken, thereby paving the way for more transparent, inclusive, and accountable democratic governance in Nigeria.

2.1.2 The concept of electoral outcome

Electoral outcome refers to the final result of an election, indicating who assumes political office and showing how citizens' choices are transformed into political authority (Agbo, 2023). Election results are not only about announcing winners but also about converting votes into real political power. It goes beyond simply naming winners and losers, encompassing factors such as voter turnout, vote percentages, regional representation, and how fair and credible the process is perceived to be (Udu & Agaba, 2021). This means electoral outcomes also reflect how many people participated, how votes were distributed, and whether the process is judged to be free and fair. In a democracy, electoral outcomes are a cornerstone of political legitimacy

because they are expected to reflect the collective will of the people (Okolie, 2020).

Democracy is sustained only when election results genuinely represent the voice of the majority.

Several factors work together to shape electoral outcomes. These include the popularity and trustworthiness of candidates, party strength, campaign planning, funding availability, and effective media engagement for mobilizing voters (Agbo, 2023). Strong political parties, effective campaigns, and financial resources therefore play crucial roles in determining winners. In Nigeria, elements such as ethnicity, religion, regional loyalty, and political godfatherism significantly influence voting behavior and election results (Omodia & Aliu, 2022). Voters often make choices based on identity and loyalty to powerful political figures rather than policies.

The reliability of electoral outcomes depends heavily on the transparency of the process. Elections tainted by practices like vote buying, intimidation, ballot box snatching, result manipulation, or voter suppression tend to generate disputes and weaken public confidence (Okolie, 2020). Unfair elections undermine trust and reduce people's faith in democracy. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is tasked with ensuring credible elections in Nigeria by maintaining accurate voter registration, organizing logistics, and fairly collating results (Udu & Agaba, 2021). This responsibility makes INEC central to ensuring that elections are free, transparent, and credible. However, poor logistics, security issues, and political meddling have sometimes undermined outcome credibility (Omodia & Aliu, 2022). Such weaknesses have often left results contested and less trusted by citizens.

Electoral outcomes also have long-term political effects. They shape governance priorities, strengthen or weaken political parties, influence alliances, and determine policy direction (Agbo, 2023). Winning candidates not only set government agendas but also affect the future strength of political parties. High voter participation and close contests typically signal vibrant political engagement, while low turnout or uncontested wins may indicate voter apathy, intimidation, or systemic problems (Udu & Agaba, 2021). Strong voter participation suggests a healthy democracy, while low engagement points to weakness in the system. Disputed outcomes can also lead to legal battles, unrest, or violence when elections are perceived as unfair (Okolie, 2020). Perceived injustice in electoral results therefore threatens peace and stability.

Researchers emphasize that credible electoral outcomes are vital for sustaining democracy. Transparent and competitive elections build government legitimacy, encourage citizen involvement, and promote stability (Omodia & Aliu, 2022). Free and fair elections help citizens trust democratic institutions and remain engaged in governance. Conversely, flawed results undermine trust in democratic institutions, reduce participation, and deepen political divisions. Strengthening electoral bodies, enforcing campaign finance rules, promoting voter education, and tackling electoral malpractice are therefore essential to ensuring that outcomes truly represent the people's will (Udu & Agaba, 2021). Fair rules and effective institutions remain the backbone of democratic elections

2.1.3 The concept of gubernatorial election

A gubernatorial election is the official process in which residents of a state elect their governor, the chief executive authority at the state level (Agbaje, 2023). The word “gubernatorial” comes from the Latin term *gubernare*, meaning “to govern,” and is often used in political discourse to describe matters related to governors and their elections. In democratic systems, including Nigeria, these elections are usually held every four years as mandated by the constitution, although the specific timelines and procedures can differ from one state to another (Omodia & Aliu, 2022).

Gubernatorial elections are central to subnational governance because governors wield considerable influence over state policies, budget distribution, and overall administrative direction (Udu & Agaba, 2021). The process typically involves political parties selecting their candidates, conducting campaigns to win public support, and holding voting under the oversight of an electoral commission such as Nigeria’s Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The integrity of these elections depends on transparent party primaries, compliance with electoral laws, unbiased election management, and the prevention of irregularities like vote buying or voter intimidation (Okolie, 2020). Ultimately, they are essential for ensuring that state leadership reflects the will of the people and upholds democratic accountability.

2.2 Political godfatherism in Edo State

Political godfatherism has played a major role in Edo State politics since Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999, with wealthy and powerful individuals influencing

elections and government decisions. In Edo, just like in other parts of the country, godfathers act as kingmakers by using their money, influence, and party control to put their chosen candidates in power, expecting loyalty and access to state resources in return (Okorie & Ogbonnaya, 2022). This shows that political contests are often not about the people's free choice but about the strength of powerful patrons who control who wins and who governs.

In the early 2000s, Chief Tony Anenih stood out as the most powerful political godfather in Edo. Called the "godfather of Edo politics," he had a huge influence within the People's Democratic Party (PDP), deciding who got party tickets and political positions. His dominance was clear in the 1999 and 2003 governorship elections, where no candidate stood a real chance without his backing (Adeoye, 2024). This period revealed how his approval determined success, making elections less about popular support and more about Anenih's influence.

By 2008, political power shifted to Adams Oshiomhole. After becoming governor through a court ruling, he quickly grew into a powerful figure and later became a political godfather himself. When his two terms ended, he ensured that his ally, Godwin Obaseki, won the 2016 governorship election. However, the relationship between the two soon collapsed, reflecting the common pattern in Nigerian politics where godfathers and their protégés eventually fall out (Nkwede, 2023). This shows how unstable the godfather-godson relationship can be, as protégés often resist control once they get into office, leading to political conflicts.

The 2020 governorship election marked a turning point in Edo's politics. Oshiomhole

tried to remove Obaseki by supporting another candidate under the All Progressives Congress (APC), in an attempt to keep control of the state's politics. Obaseki switched to the PDP and won convincingly, which many people saw as Edo voters rejecting the influence of godfathers (Ibrahim, 2021). In essence people were ready to stand against political imposition and choose based on their own preferences, not the dictates of powerful patrons.

The 2024 governorship race further confirmed this shift. Even though political godfathers still tried to influence candidate selection, voters showed greater independence, focusing on leadership qualities and governance instead of accepting candidates imposed on them (Premium Times, 2024). This highlighted a growing change where Edo people were less willing to be directed by godfathers and more determined to have their voices reflected in the outcome.

Despite these signs of resistance, godfatherism still leaves behind serious effects in Edo politics. Many times, governance has been weakened by fights between patrons and their protégés, as seen in the clashes involving Anenih's allies and later between Oshiomhole and Obaseki. These struggles damage institutions, promote corruption, and reduce accountability (Onwuegbu, 2025). Instead of leaders focusing on development, their attention often shifts to survival battles with godfathers. Moreover, young people and women continue to be left out because party structures remain under the tight grip of elite political networks controlled by godfathers (Abubakar, 2022). This exclusion shows how godfatherism limits inclusiveness in politics by giving decision-making power to a small group of older, influential men.

Godfatherism has deeply shaped the story of Edo politics, with figures like Anenih and Oshiomhole dominating election after election. But the resistance seen in 2020 and 2024 shows that voters are gradually challenging this culture of political control. To strengthen this shift, reforms are needed to improve internal party democracy, control campaign financing, and give young people and women more opportunities, so that the influence of godfathers in Edo politics can be reduced

2.3 The impact of political godfatherism on the 2024 gubernatorial election in Edo State

Political godfatherism had a defining influence on the 2024 Edo State governorship election, shaping not only how candidates emerged but also how campaigns were financed, alliances negotiated, and results interpreted. From the outset, the election was widely viewed less as a competition between party ideologies and more as a struggle between powerful political patrons who sought to consolidate their dominance and extend control over the state's political machinery (Abati, 2024; Adekaiyaoja & Yohanna, 2024).

2.3.1 Candidate selection and primary elections

Political godfatherism has a strong impact on how candidates are chosen and how primary elections are conducted in Nigeria. In principle, political parties are expected to hold primaries that are open, transparent, and competitive, where members freely decide who should represent them in elections. But in practice, powerful individuals known as godfathers often take control of the process. These godfathers are usually

wealthy politicians, influential figures, or former office holders who have the resources and networks to influence decisions within the party. Instead of allowing members to freely choose, they use their power to determine who gets the party ticket. Candidates who enjoy their support are often given access to funds, control of party structures, and strong publicity, while those who refuse to align with them are pushed aside, disqualified, or forced to defect to other parties. This creates a system where loyalty to godfathers is often valued more than competence, popularity, or grassroots support.

The dominance of godfathers during primaries has several effects. First, it weakens internal party democracy because ordinary members often feel their votes and choices do not count. Instead of producing candidates through fair competition, the process is shaped by deals, endorsements, and behind-the-scenes decisions. Second, it creates conflict within the party. Aspirants who are sidelined or feel cheated often resist, leading to court cases, protests, or defections. Third, it reduces public confidence in the party system, as citizens see the process as being controlled by a few powerful actors rather than being open to all. Over time, this discourages credible and independent-minded individuals from participating in politics since they believe the system is already manipulated in favor of certain candidates.

This pattern was very clear in Edo State during the 2024 governorship primaries. In the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the nomination of Asue Ighodalo, backed by Governor Godwin Obaseki's camp, immediately exposed divisions within the party. His emergence sidelined Deputy Governor Philip Shaibu, who resisted the move. The

conflict deepened to the point where Shaibu was impeached, though the courts later overturned the decision. Frustrated and isolated, he eventually defected to the All Progressives Congress (APC). These developments showed how godfatherism reshapes party hierarchies by favoring candidates supported by patrons while silencing dissenting voices (Adekaiyaoja & Yohanna, 2024).

The same trend played out in the APC, Senator Monday Okpebholo emerged as the party's candidate after a tense and heavily contested primary. He ran alongside Dennis Idahosa in a ticket many observers described as a consolidation of former governor Adams Oshiomhole's influence. This highlighted how the choice of candidates was shaped more by the power of elite patrons than by transparent and inclusive party primaries (Adekaiyaoja & Yohanna, 2024). Instead of being a contest determined by ordinary party members, the process reflected the decisive role of godfathers who strategically positioned their loyalists.

what happened in Edo State shows how political godfatherism continues to weaken internal party democracy in Nigeria. It reduces fairness by putting the interests of powerful figures above the wishes of ordinary members. It also creates divisions, defections, and legal disputes that destabilize parties and spill over into the wider electoral process. Rather than candidates emerging through genuine competition, they often owe their positions to the dictates of influential patrons, which makes loyalty to godfathers the most reliable path to political power.

2.3.2 Framing the election as a proxy war

Throughout the campaign, the election narrative was largely constructed as a personal

showdown between Governor Obaseki and Oshiomhole. Commentators and media reports consistently portrayed the election as a proxy war between these two influential figures, reducing the visibility of issue based debates and instead reinforcing the perception that the contest was about loyalty to patrons rather than policy direction (The Nation, 2024; Premium Times, 2024). In this sense, godfatherism shaped both how voters interpreted the race and how candidates legitimized their campaigns.

2.3.3 Identity politics, zoning, and coalition building

Patron influence was further magnified by Edo's zoning and ethnic balancing traditions. Pressure to rotate the governorship to Edo Central, the home base of Okpebholo, played a key role in campaign strategy. At the same time, tensions between the sitting government and the revered Benin monarchy became a central talking point, influencing elite alignments and grassroots support. Political godfathers acted as brokers, ensuring that strategic coalitions were stitched together across the state's senatorial zones in order to boost turnout and consolidate endorsements (Adekaiyaoja & Yohanna, 2024).

2.3.4 Election day dynamics

The pre election atmosphere was marked by allegations of intimidation, manipulation, and federal interference, conditions often associated with godfather dominated contests. Such claims reinforced the sense that the stakes were high for the patrons involved, with control of the state viewed not merely as a matter of governance but as a means to protect investments and sustain political dominance (Premium Times,

2024).

2.3.5 The results and their interpretation

When INEC declared APC's Monday Okpebholo the winner on 22 September 2024, with 291,667 votes against PDP's 247,274, the outcome was widely framed as a triumph for Oshiomhole's political machine and a major setback for Obaseki's camp. Analysts observed that the language of victory and defeat revolved less around the winning candidate's personal appeal or programmatic agenda and more around which patron's network had succeeded in imposing its will on the electorate (Vanguard, 2024; Abati, 2024).

2.3.6 Democratic implications

The 2024 election underlined persistent challenges posed by godfatherism in Edo State. Internal party democracy was eroded by imposed candidacies, parallel primaries, and prolonged legal battles. Public discourse was dominated by elite rivalries, pushing substantive policy discussions to the background (The Nation, 2024). Allegations of malpractice weakened voter confidence, while visible dominance of patrons over aspirants fed perceptions that elections in Edo are determined more by elite bargaining than by citizen choice (The Republic, 2024).

2.3.7 Shifts in Edo's political map

Okpebholo's victory reconfigured Edo's power balance, reviving APC's influence in the state and bolstering Oshiomhole's relevance in both state and national politics. For the PDP, internal fractures underscored the costs of elite imposition and the urgent need to rebuild grassroots legitimacy ahead of future contests. Scholars argue that

unless parties embrace transparent primaries, strengthen campaign finance rules, and curb the discretionary authority of godfathers, Edo's politics will continue to revolve around the interests of powerful elites rather than reflecting the aspirations of the wider electorate (Adekaiyaoja & Yohanna, 2024; The Republic, 2024).

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The study of political godfatherism in Edo State can be situated within several interrelated theoretical perspectives that help to explain how the phenomenon shapes electoral processes, governance, and democratic outcomes.

2.4.1 Elite Theory

Elite theory is one of the most influential perspectives in political science for explaining how power works in society and why inequality in political influence continues even within democratic systems. The main idea of the theory is that political power is never equally shared by all citizens. Instead, it is concentrated in the hands of a small, organized minority who possess the greatest wealth, resources, and influence. These elites control decision-making processes and direct governance, while the larger population is left with little real input. The theory challenges the common assumption in democracy that power belongs to the people, showing instead that democratic systems often hide the reality of elite dominance. It also reveals why political parties, governments, and even civic groups are usually controlled by a handful of powerful actors who determine outcomes in ways that protect their own interests. This makes elite theory a useful lens for understanding practices such as

political godfatherism, where influential figures shape elections and governance by relying on financial strength, networks, and control over party structures to maintain political dominance.

The development of elite theory can be traced to early political thinkers like Gaetano Mosca, Vilfredo Pareto, and Robert Michels, and later scholars such as C. Wright Mills and Yamokoski. Each of these writers offered distinct ideas that explain why elite power persists in modern societies.

Gaetano Mosca's work on the ruling class is often described as an independent contribution that leaned more toward politics than sociology. In his book *The Ruling Class* (1939), he explained that in every society, whether in the past or present, there will always be two groups: a minority that rules and a majority that is ruled. For Mosca, the power of the ruling minority does not come from their numbers but from their stronger organization, discipline, and ability to coordinate resources better than the majority. He also stressed that elites secure their dominance by building institutions, legal systems, and ideologies that justify their authority and ensure obedience from the wider public. His argument shows that political control is systematic, carefully structured, and intentionally maintained by elites.

Vilfredo Pareto (1968) expanded on this view with his famous claim that "history is a graveyard of aristocracies." By this, he meant that although elites always rule, no elite remains in power forever. Over time, ruling elites lose strength through corruption, weakness, or lack of effectiveness, and are replaced by new elites who rise to power. However, this change does not mean the ordinary people gain real power. Instead,

control simply shifts from one elite group to another, while the masses remain excluded. Pareto also described elites in terms of their character: some are forceful and authoritative, whom he called “lions,” while others rely more on manipulation and strategy, whom he called “foxes.” Regardless of the type, both groups continue to dominate society.

Robert Michels (1962) reinforced these arguments with his “iron law of oligarchy.” He explained that even organizations built on democratic principles, such as political parties, labor unions, or social groups, inevitably concentrate power in the hands of a few leaders. With time, these leaders become entrenched, protect their own interests, and avoid accountability. Michels argued that because large organizations require hierarchy and structure, they naturally create conditions for elite dominance. In his view, democracy in practice becomes an illusion, because internal decision-making almost always shifts toward oligarchic control.

C. Wright Mills (1956), in his book *The Power Elite*, applied elite theory to the American context. He argued that political, economic, and military leaders form a closely connected group that controls the key decisions in society. According to Mills, elites hold power not only through wealth or social status but also through cooperation across different sectors, which helps them protect their influence. His work showed that elite control goes beyond politics and also dominates other areas such as the economy, media, and state institutions.

Yamokoski (2011) added a more modern perspective by focusing on the flexibility of elites in democratic settings. He observed that elites maintain their dominance by

adapting to social changes, including technological innovations, new voter expectations, or global economic shifts. Rather than losing influence, elites reorganize themselves and change their methods to keep power concentrated. His argument highlights that elites are not static but evolve in response to challenges, which makes their control more resilient even in democracies.

Together, these thinkers highlight that elite dominance is a constant feature of political life, regardless of whether a country is ruled by monarchies, dictatorships, or democracies. Their arguments explain why power consistently stays in the hands of a few and why practices such as political godfatherism continue to exist. Some of the tenets of the elite theory are as follow.

1. Power is concentrated in the hands of a few

Elite theory emphasizes that political power is never equally distributed among all members of society. Instead, it is concentrated in the hands of a small minority who control wealth, influence, and critical resources. These elites dominate decision-making and governance, ensuring that their interests shape policies, while ordinary citizens contribute very little beyond limited participation, such as voting in elections.

2. Elites circulate but the masses remain excluded

Pareto's idea of the "circulation of elites" highlights that ruling groups eventually decline and are replaced by new elites. However, this shift does not lead to empowerment of the masses. Ordinary people remain excluded, while power simply moves from one minority group to another. This demonstrates that political

participation remains unequal and that ordinary citizens are never the real beneficiaries of elite circulation.

3. Democratic institutions tend toward oligarchy

Michels' "iron law of oligarchy" explains that organizations, even those built on democracy, usually end up under the control of a few leaders. Over time, these leaders focus on preserving their authority, resisting challenges, and limiting accountability. As a result, democratic systems often mask the concentration of power, with elections and parties serving more as tools for elite dominance than vehicles for true popular choice.

4. Elites preserve dominance through resources and ideology

Elites maintain their control not only by holding financial and material resources but also by shaping cultural values, legal systems, and public opinion. They justify their leadership as necessary for order, progress, or stability, making it difficult for ordinary citizens to challenge them. This ideological influence, combined with resource control, ensures that elite power seems natural and continues across generations.

The politics of Edo State shows clearly how elite theory explains the persistence of godfatherism. Mosca's idea of a ruling minority dominating the majority can be seen in how figures such as Chief Tony Anenih, Adams Oshiomhole, and Godwin Obaseki have used their networks, resources, and organizational power to control party structures and electoral outcomes. This ensures that voters play only a limited role in shaping decisions, as elites dominate the process.

Pareto's circulation of elites also plays out in Edo politics. When Anenih lost

influence, Oshiomhole rose to dominance, and later Obaseki emerged as a powerful figure. These shifts did not signal empowerment of the electorate but only a replacement of one elite group with another. Power continues to circulate within elite networks, leaving ordinary citizens largely excluded from decision-making.

Michels' "iron law of oligarchy" is reflected in the way Edo's political parties function. Candidate selection is often determined by party leaders long before elections, with little space for true competition or grassroots choice. The dominance of a few political actors shows how parties serve as platforms for elite control, making internal democracy weak or nonexistent.

The fourth tenet, control through resources and ideology, is equally visible. Godfathers in Edo politics use money, traditional rulers, media, and patronage networks to legitimize their authority. They present their leadership as necessary for stability or development, which strengthens their hold on power and discourages independent candidates.

The 2024 governorship election illustrates this dynamic. Asue Ighodalo's selection as the PDP candidate was strongly associated with Obaseki's influence, while Monday Okpebholo's candidacy for the APC reflected Oshiomhole's backing (Adekaiyaoja & Yohanna, 2024). The electorate had little control over the real decision-making process, as elite struggles determined the candidates. In governance, the same pattern continues, with leaders often prioritizing the needs of their patrons through contracts, appointments, and policies rather than addressing the wider concerns of citizens (Salawu & Abdulkareem, 2024).

In this way, elite theory not only explains the nature of politics in Edo State but also shows why godfatherism continues to thrive, why power remains concentrated, and why genuine democracy remains out of reach for the people.

2.4.2 Clientelism and patron client theory

Clientelism is a fundamental concept in political science that explains how personal connections, material incentives, and loyalty shape political behavior. Essentially, it describes a system in which political support is exchanged for tangible benefits or favors. Within this framework, politicians or influential actors provide goods, services, or opportunities to individuals or groups in return for loyalty, votes, or political backing. Unlike formal policies or institutions that are designed to serve everyone equally, clientelism depends on personalized, hierarchical relationships where access to resources is mediated through a patron. This creates a system of dependency where clients often feel obligated to support their patron's political agenda, while patrons strengthen their political influence and consolidate power. Clientelism reinforces social hierarchies and enables elite actors to maintain control over political processes. Patron-client theory, which expands on clientelism, highlights the structured nature of these relationships. Patrons are individuals who have access to resources, authority, or influence, while clients are those who depend on them for economic, political, or social benefits. Although the relationship is reciprocal, it is fundamentally unequal: the patron wields control over the resources, and the clients offer loyalty, votes, or other forms of support in return. Scholars note that these networks are particularly persistent in societies where institutions are weak or ineffective in distributing

resources fairly. Patron-client networks influence political behavior at multiple levels, affecting elections, party loyalty, and the implementation of policies.

Prominent scholars such as Edward Banfield, Richard Katz, Joseph LaPalombara, and Yamokoski have provided key insights into clientelism and patron-client dynamics.

Banfield (1958) explored how informal networks operate in underdeveloped societies, highlighting that political loyalty often stems from personal reliance rather than ideological alignment. He showed that politicians mobilize support through clientelistic ties when formal institutions fail to provide equitable services. In these contexts, citizens support political figures not because of their party programs or policies but because they rely on them for resources, services, or opportunities.

Patrons become central figures who can provide jobs, financial aid, or other benefits. These relationships create networks of loyalty that limit independent decision-making among citizens. The bonds between patrons and clients are practical and personal, not institutionalized, and they exist as mechanisms to gather political support where formal systems are inadequate. This demonstrates why clientelism persists, fulfilling needs that formal institutions cannot meet.

Katz (1980) broadened this understanding to modern democratic contexts, demonstrating that clientelism is not confined to underdeveloped or traditional societies. He showed that in contemporary party systems, politicians often maintain local influence by exchanging favors or benefits for votes. Even in competitive elections, voters may be swayed by material or social advantages offered by patrons, such as jobs, monetary support, or other resources. Katz illustrates that clientelism is

adaptable, capable of existing alongside formal democratic structures. The exchange between patrons and clients is a universal phenomenon and does not rely solely on institutional weaknesses. It highlights how personal relationships remain central to politics, shaping voting patterns and consolidating elite influence across diverse contexts.

LaPalombara (1963) emphasized that patron-client networks are central to political stability, shaping both compliance and mobilization. According to LaPalombara, these relationships ensure that citizens participate in the political system and adhere to rules because they receive material or political rewards from patrons. Patrons can mobilize clients to achieve specific political goals, such as securing votes or implementing policies. Clientelism thus functions as a mechanism for both control and coordination within political systems. While these networks maintain order, they simultaneously restrict independent decision-making, as citizens' loyalty is often contingent upon their dependence on patrons.

Yamokoski (2011) highlighted the resilience and adaptability of patron-client networks in contemporary politics. He argued that patrons adjust their strategies to maintain influence amid social, technological, and political changes. Through the use of media, new communication platforms, or by responding to evolving voter expectations, patrons can ensure that their networks remain effective. This shows that clientelism is not static but evolves to meet the demands of changing political environments. Patrons' ability to adapt ensures that loyalty and political control persist even as societal conditions shift, explaining the endurance of clientelistic

systems. Some tenets of this theory are as follow.

1. Personalized exchange of resources for political support

The foundation of clientelism lies in the direct exchange between patrons and clients, where resources, services, or opportunities are offered in return for loyalty or political support. This exchange is personalized, often confidential, and distinct from policy-based or ideological support. Patrons use these exchanges to secure influence at local and national levels, while clients rely on them for economic security, political protection, or social advancement. This creates a political system where participation is shaped more by material incentives than by policy or ideology.

2. Hierarchical and unequal relationships

Patron-client networks are inherently unequal. Patrons possess the majority of power, controlling access to resources, while clients depend on them for political, social, or economic advantages. This imbalance fosters long-term loyalty and reduces the likelihood of challenges from clients. The hierarchical nature of the relationship ensures that patrons maintain dominance and consolidates power within elite networks, affecting the distribution of influence in both local and regional politics.

3. Persistence in weak institutional contexts

These networks thrive where formal institutions are weak or unable to deliver services equitably. Patrons fill gaps left by ineffective governance by providing resources, favors, or opportunities directly to clients. The provision of these benefits fosters dependence and loyalty, ensuring that patrons maintain influence over political outcomes. Weak institutions thus enable the longevity of clientelistic systems, making

them difficult to dismantle and allowing patrons to remain central actors in the political landscape.

4. Adaptability and strategic reinforcement

Patron-client networks are resilient because patrons strategically adapt to changing circumstances. Whether responding to shifts in technology, communication, political competition, or societal expectations, patrons modify their methods of influence to maintain loyalty and control. This flexibility allows patrons to survive political upheavals and ensures the continuity of their networks across generations. By strategically reinforcing their authority, patrons sustain clientelistic systems even in evolving political contexts.

In Edo State, clientelism and patron-client networks are evident in electoral politics and party structures. Patrons such as Chief Tony Anenih, Adams Oshiomhole, and Godwin Obaseki serve as major distributors of resources, including political appointments, contracts, financial support, and party access. Ordinary voters, party members, and aspirants often align with these patrons to secure benefits or protection, establishing a system where political loyalty is tied to material and social rewards.

The 2024 governorship election illustrates this pattern clearly. Asue Ighodalo's candidacy in the PDP was closely linked to Obaseki's support network, which included influential party officials and local actors who mobilized resources and votes on his behalf. Similarly, Monday Okpebholo's APC candidacy reflected the backing of Oshiomhole, whose patronage networks ensured control of party structures and campaign resources (Adekaiyaoja & Yohanna, 2024). In both cases, voters and party

members were influenced more by access to resources and benefits than by policies or ideology.

These clientelistic networks extend into governance. Officeholders frequently prioritize the interests of their patrons through appointments, contracts, and policy decisions, reinforcing the reciprocal nature of these relationships (Salawu & Abdulkareem, 2024). The hierarchical structure of these networks limits opportunities for independent actors, strengthens elite influence, and shapes political competition in ways that mirror the concentration of power described in elite theory.

By examining Edo politics through the lens of clientelism and patron-client theory, it is evident why a few powerful individuals continue to dominate. These networks reinforce loyalty, shape electoral results, and maintain dependency, keeping power concentrated and limiting the electorate's ability to exercise independent choice.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey study design as it offers a practical approach for gathering firsthand data from respondents about the impact of political godfatherism on electoral outcomes in Edo State at a specific point in time

(2024). The survey method is especially suitable for research involving large populations and quantitative analysis, as it facilitates the systematic collection of data from a representative sample. This, in turn, enables the researcher to analyze the information statistically and generalize the results to the broader population under study.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of a study means the whole group of people or things that a researcher is interested in learning about. It is the larger set from which the sample is chosen and to which the study results will apply. In this research, the population is made up of all the people in Edo State who actually voted in the 2024 governorship election. According to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC 2024), a total of 583,965 voters took part in the election. These voters form the population from which the sample for this study was selected.

3.3 Sample Size

This study utilized Taro Yamane's (1967) formula to determine the number of participants required for the research. The study population comprised the 583,965 registered voters who took part in the 2024 Edo State governorship election, as recorded by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC, 2024).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

n = Sample size

N = Population size

e = Level of precision (margin of error)

N = 583,965

e = 0.05

$$n = \frac{583,965}{1 + 583,965 (0.05)^2}$$

$$(0.05)^2 = 0.0025$$

$$583,965 \times 0.0025 = 1,459.9125$$

$$1 + 1,459.9125 = 1,460.9125$$

$$n = \frac{583,965}{1,460.9125}$$

$$n = 399.8$$

n = 400 respondents

Using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula with a 5% margin of error, the sample size for a population of 583,965 voters is approximately 400 respondents.

3.4 Sample Technique

The sampling technique describes the procedure used to select participants from the

overall population. In this study, a total of 400 respondents will be selected to reflect the opinions of voters in Edo State. The study will employ a stratified random sampling technique, which involves dividing the population into three senatorial districts which are Edo North, Edo Central, and Edo South to ensure that all geographical and political zones are properly represented.

From each stratum, respondents will then be randomly chosen to minimize bias and give every voter an equal opportunity of selection. This method enhances the accuracy, reliability, and generalizability of the research findings on the effect of political godfatherism on electoral outcomes in Edo State.

3.5 Source of Data

This research will draw information from both primary and secondary sources to provide a thorough analysis of the impact of political godfatherism on electoral outcomes in Edo State.

Primary data will be gathered directly from respondents through a structured questionnaire administered to voters across the three senatorial districts of Edo State (Edo North, Edo Central, and Edo South). The questionnaire will contain close-ended items designed to obtain respondent's views and experiences concerning the influence of political godfathers on electoral behavior and outcomes. This source is essential because it provides firsthand and up-to-date information that reflects the realities surrounding the 2024 governorship election in the state.

Secondary data will be obtained from existing literature and relevant documents such

as textbooks, scholarly journals, newspapers, official reports, online materials, publications from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC 2024), and previous research on political godfatherism and electoral processes in Nigeria. These materials will serve to complement and support the primary data by offering theoretical insights, background information, and empirical evidence for comparison.

3.6 Research instrument

The primary tool for data collection in this study is a structured questionnaire, which was developed based on the survey research method. This method was adopted because it enables the collection of data from a large number of respondents within a short period. The questionnaire is composed mainly of close-ended items, designed to generate clear, consistent, and objective responses from voters across the three senatorial districts of Edo State. It is aimed at capturing respondent's views on how political godfatherism influences electoral outcomes. The use of this instrument ensures that the data obtained are accurate, measurable, and suitable for both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaire will be analyzed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores will be applied to organize and summarize the respondent's demographic information and their answers to the research questions.

These results will be clearly presented using tables and charts for easy understanding.

For inferential analysis, the Chi-Square (χ^2) test will be used to assess the relationship between political godfatherism and electoral outcomes in Edo State. This test is suitable for categorical data and will help determine whether a significant link exists between the influence of political godfathers and voter behavior. Data analysis will be carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to ensure precision and dependability of the findings.

3.8 Reliability and Validity of Research Instrument

To ensure that the questionnaire yields consistent and accurate results, both reliability and validity will be established. Reliability, which measures the consistency of the instrument, will be tested through a pilot study conducted among respondents outside the main sample. The responses will be analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha, and a coefficient of 0.70 or higher will be considered acceptable for internal consistency.

For validity, the instrument will be reviewed by two experts in the department of political science, the head of department of political science and the project supervisor. They are regarded as experts due to their extensive academic qualifications, teaching experience, and research competence in political science and research methodology. Their professional assessment will focus on the clarity, relevance, and alignment of each questionnaire item with the study's objectives and theoretical framework. The feedback obtained from them will be used to improve the quality and accuracy of the instrument, ensuring that it measures precisely what it is intended to measure.

3.9 Ethical consideration

This study will observe standard ethical principles throughout the research process. Respondents will be fully informed about the purpose of the study and their participation will be voluntary. Anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed to protect their identities and opinions. The data collected will be used strictly for academic purposes and handled with honesty and integrity.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data collected, analyzed, and interpreted for the study titled “The Impact of Political Godfatherism on Electoral Outcomes in Edo State.” The data were obtained through the administration of structured questionnaires to respondents across three local government areas representing the three senatorial zones of Edo State.

A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed among the selected local governments as follows: Egor Local Government Area (representing Edo South Senatorial Zone) received 134 questionnaires, Esan West Local Government Area (representing Edo Central Senatorial Zone) received 133 questionnaires, and Etsako West Local Government Area (representing Edo North Senatorial Zone) received 133 questionnaires. Out of the 400 questionnaires administered, 250 were properly filled and retrieved, representing a 62.5% response rate.

The data gathered from the field were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive analysis, such as frequency and percentage distribution, was used to summarize the responses, while inferential analysis was employed to test the hypotheses formulated in Chapter Three.

This chapter begins with a presentation of the demographic characteristics of the respondents, followed by a detailed analysis and interpretation of responses based on each research question and objective. The findings are discussed in relation to the study's goal of determining how political godfatherism influences electoral outcomes in Edo State.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section presents the demographic information of the respondents who participated in the study. The purpose is to provide a background understanding of the respondents' profiles, which helps to interpret their opinions on political godfatherism and electoral outcomes more accurately. The demographic variables considered

include gender, age, educational qualification, occupation, and local government of residence.

Table 4.2.1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	146	58.4%
Female	104	41.6%
Total	250	100%

Source: Field Survey, October 2025

Table 4.2.1 shows the gender distribution of respondents. The results indicate that 146 respondents (58.4%) were male, while 104 respondents (41.6%) were female. This implies that the majority of respondents in the study were male. The gender balance, however, suggests that both male and female perspectives were adequately represented in assessing the impact of political godfatherism on electoral outcomes in Edo State.

Table 4.2.2: Distribution of Respondents by Age.

Age	Frequency	Percentage %
18 - 25	101	40.4%
26 - 35	86	34.4%
36 - 45	45	18.0%
46 and above	18	7.2%

Total	250	100%
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Source: Field Survey, October 2025

Table 4.2.2 presents the age distribution of respondents. The data show that the largest group of respondents falls within the 18–25 years age bracket, representing 40.4% of the total sample. This is followed by those aged 26–35 years with 34.4%, while 18.0% of respondents were between 36–45 years, and only 7.2% were aged 46 years and above

This distribution indicates that a majority of the respondents are young and active voters, who are more likely to have firsthand experience with the political and electoral processes in Edo State. The presence of older respondents, however, ensures a balanced representation of opinions across different age categories.

Table 4.2.3: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage %
SSCE	73	29.2%
OND/NCE	68	27.2%
HND/B.Sc	76	30.4%
Post Graduate	33	13.2%
Total	250	100%

Source: Field Survey, October 2025

Table 4.2.3 shows the educational qualifications of respondents. The result reveals that 76 respondents (30.4%) possessed HND/B.Sc qualifications, which forms the highest proportion of the sample. This is followed by 73 respondents (29.2%) with

SSCE, and 68 respondents (27.2%) with OND/NCE. Only 33 respondents (13.2%) had postgraduate qualifications.

This indicates that the majority of the respondents were educated to at least the secondary or tertiary level, implying that they are likely well-informed about political activities and capable of giving informed opinions on the issue of political godfatherism and its influence on electoral outcomes in Edo State.

Table 4.2.4: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage %
Student	90	36.0%
Civil Servant	38	15.2%
Self Employed	55	22.0%
Unemployed	30	12.0%
Others	37	14.8%
Total	250	100%

Source: Field Survey, October 2025

Table 4.2.4 presents the occupational distribution of respondents. The table shows that 90 respondents (36.0%) were students, forming the largest group in the study. This is followed by 55 respondents (22.0%) who were self-employed, and 38 respondents (15.2%) who were civil servants. Meanwhile, 30 respondents (12.0%) were unemployed, while 37 respondents (14.8%) fell under the category of others, which may include artisans, traders, or private sector workers.

This distribution suggests that a significant proportion of the respondents are students and young individuals who are politically aware and active. The inclusion of civil servants, self-employed individuals, and others provides a balanced mix of perspectives across different occupational groups, enriching the quality of responses regarding political godfatherism and its effect on electoral outcomes in Edo State.

Table 4.2.5: Distribution of Respondents by Local Government Area.

Local Government Area	Frequency	Percentage %
Egor local government	109	43.6%
Esan west local government	70	28.0%
Etsako west local government	71	28.4%
Total	250	100%

Source: Field Survey, October 2025

Table 4.2.5 shows the distribution of respondents based on their local government areas. The results indicate that the majority of respondents, 109 (43.6%), were from Egor Local Government Area representing the Edo South Senatorial Zone. This is followed by Esan West Local Government Area with 70 respondents (28.0%), representing the Edo Central Senatorial Zone, and Etsako West Local Government Area with 71 respondents (28.4%), representing the Edo North Senatorial Zone.

This distribution aligns with the study's design to ensure fair representation from all three senatorial zones of Edo State. It also provides a balanced perspective on how political godfatherism influences electoral outcomes across different regions within the state.

4.3 Presentation and analysis of research questions

Table 4.3.1: Impact of Political Godfathers on Voter Turnout

S/N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	SD (%)	D (%)	Mean	Remark
1	The presence of political godfathers influences voter's decisions during elections	130 (52%)	80 (32%)	0 (0%)	10 (4%)	4.32	High
2	Godfathers mobilize and sponsor voters to support their preferred candidates	100 (40%)	80 (32%)	8 (3%)	3 (1%)	4.05	High
3	Many voters lose interest in elections due to the dominance of godfathers	138 (55%)	90 (36%)	10 (4%)	3 (1%)	4.39	High
4	Godfatherism increases political apathy among the electorate	130 (52%)	65 (26%)	0 (0%)	5 (2%)	4.26	High
5	Political godfathers help increase voter turnout through incentives or inducements	100 (40%)	110 (44%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4.24	High
	Cluster Mean	48%	34%	1%	2%	4.25	High

Source: Fieldwork Survey, 2025

Table 4.3.1 presents respondents' views on the impact of political godfathers on voter turnout during elections. The data indicate that a substantial proportion of respondents believe political godfathers significantly influence electoral behavior. Specifically, 52 percent of respondents strongly agreed and 32 percent agreed that the presence of political godfathers affects voters' decisions during elections, totaling 84 percent who acknowledged such influence. Similarly, 72 percent (40 percent strongly agreed and 32 percent agreed) confirmed that political godfathers mobilize and sponsor voters to support their preferred candidates.

Furthermore, an overwhelming 91 percent of respondents (55 percent strongly agreed and 36 percent agreed) stated that many voters lose interest in elections due to the dominance of godfathers, indicating that godfatherism discourages active political participation. In addition, 78 percent of respondents agreed that political godfatherism increases political apathy among the electorate. However, 84 percent also admitted that political godfathers could help increase voter turnout through incentives or inducements, showing that godfather influence can both demotivate and mobilize voters depending on the context.

Overall, the cluster mean score of 4.25 on a 4-point Likert scale reflects a high level of agreement across all measured statements. This suggests that political godfathers play a dominant and multifaceted role in shaping voter turnout and electoral participation in Nigeria, both positively and negatively.

Table 4.3.2: Effect of Political Godfatherism on Party Primaries and Candidate Selection

S/N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	SD (%)	D (%)	Mean	Remark
1	Political godfathers determine who becomes the party's candidate during primaries	150 (60%)	80 (32%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4.52	High
2	Merit is often ignored in selecting candidates due to godfather influence	90 (36%)	100 (40%)	0 (0%)	20 (8%)	4.04	High
3	Aspirants without godfathers find it difficult to win party primaries	160 (64%)	60 (24%)	0 (0%)	10 (4%)	4.48	High
4	Godfathers provide financial and political support to secure their candidates' victory	140 (56%)	100 (40%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4.52	High
5	Internal democracy in parties is weakened by godfather interference	160 (64%)	50 (20%)	0 (0%)	10 (4%)	4.44	High
	Cluster Mean	56%	31%	0%	3%	4.40	High

Source: Fieldwork Survey, 2025

Table 4.3.2 presents the views of respondents on the effect of political godfatherism on party primaries and candidate selection. The findings reveal that political godfathers play a decisive role in determining who emerges as a party candidate during primaries. Specifically, 60 percent of respondents strongly agreed and 32 percent agreed that political godfathers decide the selection of party candidates, indicating that a total of 92 percent recognized their significant influence in the nomination process.

Similarly, 76 percent of respondents (comprising 36 percent who strongly agreed and 40 percent who agreed) believed that merit is often ignored in candidate selection due to the influence of godfathers. This suggests that loyalty and financial backing may outweigh competence in internal party decisions. In addition, 88 percent of respondents agreed that aspirants without godfathers find it difficult to win party primaries, confirming the entrenched dominance of political patrons in determining electoral prospects.

Furthermore, 96 percent of respondents (56 percent strongly agreed and 40 percent agreed) asserted that godfathers provide financial and political support to secure their preferred candidates' victory, highlighting the resource-driven nature of internal party politics. Likewise, 84 percent of respondents agreed that internal democracy within political parties is weakened by godfather interference, emphasizing how such influence undermines transparency and fair competition.

Overall, the cluster mean score of 4.40 on a 4-point Likert scale reflects a high level of agreement across all measured statements. This demonstrates that political godfatherism exerts a strong and pervasive influence on party primaries and candidate selection, often at the expense of merit, internal democracy, and equitable political participation.

Table 4.3.3: Influence of Godfatherism on Credibility and Fairness of Elections

S/N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	SD (%)	D (%)	Mean	Remark
1	Political godfathers use financial power to influence election outcomes	130 (52%)	90 (36%)	0 (0%)	20 (8%)	4.16	High
2	Electoral malpractices are often linked to the activities of godfathers	110 (44%)	100 (40%)	10 (4%)	10 (4%)	4.08	High
3	The influence of godfathers undermines the credibility of elections in Edo State	120 (48%)	100 (40%)	0 (0%)	10 (4%)	4.20	High
4	INEC and security agencies are sometimes influenced by political	130 (52%)	90 (36%)	10 (4%)	10 (4%)	4.16	High

S/N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	SD (%)	D (%)	Mean	Remark
	godfathers						
5	Godfatherism contributes to post-election disputes and instability	130 (52%)	90 (36%)	10 (4%)	10 (4%)	4.16	High
	Cluster Mean	49.6%	37.6%	2.4%	4.8%	4.15	High

Source: Fieldwork Survey, 2025

Table 4.3.3 examines the influence of political godfatherism on the credibility and fairness of elections in Edo State. The data show that a large proportion of respondents believe political godfathers play a decisive role in shaping electoral outcomes. Specifically, 52 percent of respondents strongly agreed, and 36 percent agreed, that godfathers use their financial power to influence election results, meaning that 88 percent of the respondents acknowledged this form of manipulation as a major factor affecting electoral integrity.

Similarly, 84 percent of respondents (comprising 44 percent who strongly agreed and 40 percent who agreed) indicated that electoral malpractices are often linked to the activities of godfathers. This suggests that the interference of these political patrons is a major driver of irregularities during elections. Furthermore, 88 percent of respondents agreed that the influence of political godfathers undermines the

credibility of elections in Edo State, demonstrating the extent to which godfatherism erodes trust in the electoral process.

In addition, 88 percent of respondents believed that institutions such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and security agencies are sometimes influenced by political godfathers, reflecting a perceived compromise of neutrality among electoral stakeholders. Likewise, 88 percent of respondents (52 percent strongly agreed and 36 percent agreed) affirmed that godfatherism contributes to post-election disputes and political instability, underscoring the long-term consequences of undue political influence.

Overall, the cluster mean score of 4.15 on a 4-point Likert scale signifies a high level of agreement among respondents. This clearly indicates that political godfatherism exerts a profound negative impact on the credibility and fairness of elections in Edo State, fostering manipulation, institutional interference, and post-election crises that undermine democratic governance.

Table 4.3.4: Possible Solutions to the Problems of Godfatherism in Edo State Politics

S/N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	SD (%)	D (%)	Mean	Remark
1	Strengthening internal democracy in political parties	132 (53%)	68 (27%)	20 (8%)	10 (4%)	3.84	Moderate

S/N	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	SD (%)	D (%)	Mean	Remark
	will reduce godfatherism						
2	Political education and awareness among citizens can help curb godfatherism	130 (52%)	85 (34%)	5 (2%)	20 (8%)	4.08	High
3	Strict enforcement of campaign finance laws will check godfather influence	118 (47%)	92 (37%)	10 (4%)	10 (4%)	4.00	High
4	Elected leaders should be made accountable to the people, not godfathers	120 (48%)	100 (40%)	0 (0%)	10 (4%)	4.12	High
5	The independence of INEC should be protected from political interference	130 (52%)	90 (36%)	10 (4%)	10 (4%)	4.00	High
	Cluster Mean	50.4%	34.8%	3.6%	4.8%	3.81	Moderate

Source: Fieldwork Survey, 2025

Table 4.3.4 highlights respondents' views on the possible solutions to the persistent problem of godfatherism in Edo State politics. The findings reveal that a majority of respondents believe that strengthening internal democracy within political parties would play a crucial role in reducing the influence of godfathers. Specifically, 53

percent strongly agreed and 27 percent agreed with this statement, making a total of 80 percent who see party reform as a necessary step toward curbing political interference by godfathers.

Similarly, 86 percent of respondents (52 percent strongly agreed and 34 percent agreed) indicated that political education and civic awareness among citizens can help reduce the dominance of godfathers. This suggests that an informed electorate is better positioned to resist manipulation and patronage politics. Furthermore, 84 percent of respondents believed that strict enforcement of campaign finance laws would effectively check godfather influence by limiting the use of excessive money in the electoral process.

In addition, 88 percent of respondents (48 percent strongly agreed and 40 percent agreed) affirmed that elected leaders should be made accountable to the people rather than to their political sponsors. This underscores the need for institutional mechanisms that ensure transparency and responsiveness in governance. Likewise, 88 percent of respondents supported the view that the independence of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should be protected from political interference, reflecting a strong public demand for credible and impartial elections.

Overall, the cluster mean score of 3.81 on a 4-point Likert scale indicates a moderate to high level of agreement among respondents. This suggests that while several measures could help mitigate godfatherism, strengthening internal party democracy, enforcing campaign finance laws, enhancing political education, and ensuring

institutional independence are seen as the most effective strategies to promote transparency and fairness in Edo State’s political system.

4.4 Regression Analysis

Table 4.4.1 Model Summary^b

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.817	.668	.661	.32415	1.892

a. Predictors: (Constant), Voter_Turnout, Candidate_Selection, Credible_Electoral_Outcome

b. Dependent Variable: Political_Godfather_Influence

The model summary presents the results of a regression analysis conducted to examine the relationship between several predictors—voter turnout, candidate selection, and credible electoral outcome—and the dependent variable, political godfather influence in Edo State.

The coefficient of determination (R Square) is 0.668, indicating that approximately 66.8% of the variance in political godfather influence can be explained by the independent variables included in the model. This suggests a strong relationship between political godfatherism and electoral processes in Edo State.

The Adjusted R Square value of 0.661 shows that, after adjusting for the number of predictors, the model still explains a substantial proportion of the variance in the dependent variable, suggesting that the predictors are reliable.

The Standard Error of the Estimate (0.32415) indicates the average deviation of the observed values from the predicted values. A lower value suggests that the model's predictions are relatively precise.

The Durbin-Watson statistic (1.892) falls within the acceptable range of 1.5 to 2.5, indicating that there is no significant autocorrelation in the residuals.

In conclusion, the model demonstrates a strong explanatory power for how aspects of political godfatherism relate to voter turnout, candidate selection, and credible electoral outcomes in Edo State.

Table 4.4.2 Coefficients^a

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
	1					
	(Constant)	0.742	0.088	-	8.432	.000
	Voter_Turnout	0.321	0.058	0.318	5.535	.000
	Candidate_Selection	0.392	0.062	0.374	6.321	.001

Credible_Electoral_Outcome	0.348	0.053	0.341	6.566	.000
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Dependent Variable: Political_Godfather_Influence

To test the hypotheses of the study, the significance of the standardized coefficients (Beta) and their corresponding p-values (Sig.) was examined. According to the decision rule, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected if the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Based on the results presented in the coefficients table, all independent variables—voter turnout, candidate selection, and credible electoral outcome—were found to have significant relationships with political godfatherism in Edo State.

4.5 Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One (H_{01}):

There is no significant relationship between political godfathers and voter turnout in the 2024 gubernatorial election in Edo State. The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.318) with a p-value = 0.000 indicates a statistically significant relationship. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Conclusion: There is a significant relationship between political godfathers and voter turnout in Edo State.

Hypothesis Two (H₀₂):

There is no significant relationship between political godfathers and the influence on candidate selection during party primaries in Edo State. The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.374) with a p-value = 0.000 shows statistical significance. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Conclusion: Political godfathers significantly influence the selection of candidates during party primaries in Edo State.

Hypothesis Three (H₀₃):

There is no significant relationship between political godfathers and credible electoral outcomes in Edo State. The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.341) with a p-value = 0.000 indicates significance. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Conclusion: Political godfathers significantly affect the credibility of electoral outcomes in Edo State.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that political godfatherism significantly shapes electoral processes in Edo State, as confirmed by both descriptive and regression analyses. The results revealed that political godfatherism affects voter turnout, candidate selection during party primaries, and the overall credibility of electoral outcomes. These findings align with existing literature and validate the study objectives, which sought to examine the multifaceted influence of godfatherism on electoral behaviour and democratic outcomes in the state.

The analysis established that political godfatherism has a strong impact on voter turnout during the 2024 gubernatorial election. A large proportion of respondents affirmed that political godfathers influence voter decisions and participation levels, a result further strengthened by the statistical tests that confirmed a significant relationship between godfatherism and voter turnout. This indicates that the involvement of godfathers can either discourage or mobilize voters depending on how they manipulate political structures. Many citizens perceive elections influenced by godfathers as predetermined, which reduces trust and contributes to voter apathy. However, in certain contexts, these powerful actors succeed in mobilizing voters based on personal, ethnic, or financial incentives—temporarily boosting turnout but not necessarily strengthening democracy. This finding is consistent with Oni (2020), who noted that political interference by elites weakens public confidence in electoral processes. This confirms the study's first objective, as the data shows that political godfatherism indeed plays a decisive role in shaping voter turnout in Edo State.

The study also found that political godfathers significantly determine candidate selection during party primaries, meeting the second objective of the research. Both respondents' views and regression results showed a strong positive relationship between godfather influence and candidate emergence. This demonstrates that aspirants often rely on the support of powerful patrons rather than competence, ideology, or popular support. Political parties therefore struggle with internal democracy, as selection processes are manipulated to favour loyalists of influential godfathers. This outcome aligns with Agbaje and Adejumobi (2006), who argued that

Nigerian political parties frequently operate under elite control, with godfathers imposing candidates to serve personal or group interests. These practices erode merit-based selection, weaken democratic institutions from within, and discourage credible individuals from engaging in political competition.

Furthermore, the findings confirmed that political godfatherism undermines credible electoral outcomes, fulfilling the third objective of the study. Responses from participants, supported by statistical evidence, revealed that godfathers influence electoral institutions, security agencies, and voting patterns to ensure their preferred candidates win elections. Such interference includes vote buying, intimidation, manipulation of results, and compromising electoral officials. These findings align with Omodia (2019), who emphasized that political godfathers often exert undue influence on bodies like INEC, thereby disrupting transparency and fairness. Ikelegbe (2017) similarly argued that godfatherism distorts the will of the electorate and fuels post-election disputes due to the erosion of institutional autonomy. The results thus reaffirm that political godfatherism remains a major threat to credible elections and democratic consolidation in Edo State.

In light of these findings, the study highlights several solutions necessary for addressing the influence of godfatherism. Respondents and literature emphasize the need to strengthen internal party democracy, promote transparent candidate selection processes, and enforce campaign finance regulations to limit the undue control of political patrons. Strengthening the independence of electoral institutions through

adequate funding, legal protection, and accountability systems is also seen as crucial. Furthermore, civic education and political awareness are necessary to empower citizens to resist manipulative practices. These recommendations echo Omotola (2010), who argued that breaking the cycle of elite dominance requires building strong institutions and encouraging active political participation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that political godfatherism significantly affects voter turnout, candidate emergence, and electoral credibility in Edo State. The results align with existing empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives confirming that Nigeria's electoral landscape continues to be shaped more by elite networks than by genuine democratic processes. Unless deliberate and sustained reforms are implemented to insulate elections from undue influence, democratic consolidation in Edo State and Nigeria at large will remain fragile and incomplete.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The study examined how political godfatherism shaped the 2024 Edo State gubernatorial election, focusing on its influence on voter behaviour, candidate emergence within political parties, and public perceptions of electoral integrity. Findings from respondents revealed that political godfathers continue to exert strong

informal authority over electoral processes, often determining who participates, who emerges as a candidate, and how the public interprets the fairness of the election. The points below summarize the major insights in a generalized and simplified form.

- Political godfatherism strongly influences voter behaviour: Many voters based their decision to participate in the election on the guidance, persuasion, or endorsement of influential political godfathers. This means that beyond campaign messages and party manifestos, the personal influence of powerful individuals continues to shape how people vote and whether they turn out at all.
- Godfathers dominate candidate selection in party primaries: The emergence of candidates was largely seen as dependent on the support of political godfathers. Aspirants without strong backing from influential figures were perceived as having little or no chance of winning party tickets. This shows that internal party democracy is weakened, as candidates are chosen based on alliances rather than merit.
- Internal party democracy is compromised by elite influence: Political godfatherism concentrates power among a few elite individuals, limiting fair competition and reducing opportunities for competent or popular aspirants. Instead of transparent and competitive primaries, party decisions are often shaped behind the scenes, leaving less room for genuine democratic processes.
- Public trust in the electoral process is negatively affected: The activities of godfathers raised concerns among citizens about the fairness and transparency of the 2024 election. Many believed that behind-the-scenes negotiations, financial

sponsorship, and strategic mobilization efforts could manipulate outcomes, which reduces confidence in the credibility of the electoral system.

- Political godfatherism remains a major obstacle to democratic consolidation: Overall, the influence of godfathers continues to shape voter turnout, candidate emergence, and public perceptions of election integrity. This sustained dominance highlights the need for stronger democratic institutions, improved civic education, and reforms to curb elite interference in electoral processes.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is evident that political godfatherism significantly impacts the electoral process in Edo State, particularly during the 2024 gubernatorial election. The study shows that voter turnout can be heavily shaped by the endorsements and actions of political godfathers, limiting the independence of citizens' electoral choices. Similarly, their influence over party primaries constrains internal democracy and reduces opportunities for fair competition among aspirants. The findings also suggest that godfatherism affects the credibility of elections, as their involvement can lead to perceptions of bias and reduce public confidence in the electoral system. In sum, political godfatherism continues to pose a serious challenge to democratic consolidation in Edo State by reinforcing elite dominance and restricting genuine political participation.

5.3 Recommendations

To reduce the negative influence of political godfatherism and strengthen democratic practices in Edo State, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Enhance Internal Party Democracy:** Political parties should adopt transparent, merit-based procedures for selecting candidates, including open primaries and equal opportunities for all aspirants. Prioritizing competence and grassroots support over personal alliances can reduce godfather influence and strengthen public confidence in the party's choices.
2. **Strengthen Electoral Institutions:** Independent bodies like INEC should be fully autonomous, well-resourced, and insulated from political pressure. Strong institutions can enforce rules impartially, deliver credible elections, and limit manipulation by political elites.
3. **Promote Civic Education:** Continuous civic education can empower citizens to understand their rights, make independent voting decisions, and resist undue influence from political godfathers. An informed electorate is more likely to vote based on policies and competence rather than endorsements or incentives.
4. **Enforce Legal Frameworks:** Laws regulating electoral conduct and party primaries should be strictly enforced. Monitoring campaign financing and prosecuting malpractice discourages manipulation and ensures elections align with democratic principles.
5. **Encourage Inclusive Political Participation:** Greater involvement of youth, women, and marginalized groups can reduce elite dominance. Providing leadership opportunities and addressing barriers to participation fosters diversity,

transparency, and a stronger democratic environment.

The adoption of these measures will help strengthen electoral integrity, ensure fair competition, and promote citizen participation, ultimately mitigating the adverse effects of political godfatherism in Edo State and improving the quality of democracy.

5.4 Contribution To Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the impact of political godfatherism on electoral outcomes in Edo State, particularly during the 2024 gubernatorial election. It highlights how godfathers influence voter behaviour, candidate selection, and the credibility of the electoral process, bridging the gap between theoretical understanding and practical observation. By applying Elite Theory and Patron - Client Theory, the research deepens insight into the mechanisms through which political elites maintain control and foster clientelistic relationships. The findings offer valuable guidance for policymakers, political parties, and electoral bodies seeking to strengthen internal party democracy, reduce undue elite influence, and enhance the integrity of Nigeria's democratic processes.

5.5 References

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APPENDICES
QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Political Science,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Benin,
Edo State.
October, 2025.

Dear Respondent,

I am a final year student of the University Of Benin conducting a research study titled “The impact of political godfatherism on electoral outcomes in Edo State“. This questionnaire is designed to gather information relevant to the study. Please, kindly respond to the questions as honestly as possible. Your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used strictly for academic purposes.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender: Male Female
2. Age: 18–25 26–35 36–45 46 and above
3. Educational Qualification: SSCE OND/NCE HND/B.Sc Postgraduate
4. Occupation: Student Civil Servant Self-Employed Unemployed Other (specify)

5. Local Government Area (LGA): _____

Kindly note:

SA: Strongly Agree

A: Agree
SD: Strongly Disagree
D: Disagree

Section B: Impact of Political Godfathers on Voter Turnout

S/N	QUESTIONS	SA	A	SD	D
6	The presence of political godfathers influences voter's decisions during elections				
7	Godfathers mobilize and sponsor voters to support their preferred candidates.				
8	Many voters lose interest in elections due to the dominance of godfathers				
9	Godfatherism increases political apathy among the electorate				
10	Political godfathers help increase voter turnout through incentives or inducements				

Section C: Effect of Political Godfatherism on Party Primaries and Candidate Selection

S/N	QUESTIONS	SA	A	SD	D
11	Political godfathers				

- determine who becomes the party's candidate during primaries
- 12 Merit is often ignored in selecting candidates due to godfather influence
- 13 Aspirants without godfathers find it difficult to win party primaries
- 14 Godfathers provide financial and political support to secure their candidates' victory
- 15 Internal democracy in parties is weakened by godfather interference

Section D: Influence of Godfatherism on Credibility and Fairness of Elections

S/N	QUESTIONS	SA	A	SD	D
16	Political godfathers use financial power to influence election outcomes				
17	Electoral malpractices are often linked to the activities of godfathers				

- 18 The influence of godfathers undermines the credibility of elections in Edo State
- 19 INEC and security agencies are sometimes influenced by political godfathers
- 20 Godfatherism contributes to post-election disputes and instability

Section E: Possible Solutions to the Problems of Godfatherism in Edo State Politics

S/N	QUESTIONS	SA	A	SD	D
21	Strengthening internal democracy in political parties will reduce godfatherism				
22	Political education and awareness among citizens can help curb godfatherism				
23	Strict enforcement of campaign finance laws will check godfather influence				
24	Elected leaders should be made accountable to the people, not godfathers				

The independence
of INEC should
be protected from
political
interference