POLITICAL GODFATHERISM AND DOMINANCE IN NIGERIAN POLITY: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The persistence of political godfatherism in Nigeria poses a stiff challenge to the democratic consolidation and the socio-economic development of the country. This study, therefore, examine the widespread phenomenon of political godfatherism and supremacy in the Nigerian polity in a holistic biblical perspective. Specifically, the paper defines and describes the phenomenon of political godfatherism and its hegemony in Nigeria, how political godfatherism works, and its effects. Besides, it examines a wider scope of applicable biblical doctrines as they pertain to leadership, application of power, seeking of justice, and the nature of community welfare with the aim of identifying fundamental principles that could be used in political governance. Drawing upon a qualitative research design, this paper employs a theological-ethical analysis to interpret both Old and New Testament biblical texts relevant to leadership, power, justice, and community. Secondary data includes academic literature on Nigerian politics and godfatherism. Findings reveal a sharp difference between the principles of operating political godfathers as favouritism, exploitation of the power of influence, and reckless possession of authority and the foundational biblical concepts of justice (mishpat), righteousness (tzedakah), servant leadership, and accountability. The paper sums up that the biblical doctrines can offer a solid moral and ethical stance that will help criticize and eventually change the processes of political godfatherism. The paper recommends application of biblically motivated leadership styles by politicians, prophetic involvement of religious organizations, and civic responsibility on the part of the citizens as a way of promoting fairer and just rule in Nigeria.

Introduction

Having a godfather in politics, a pervasive and usually invisible phenomenon in modern politics, occurs in the development of a system where powerful figures, usually involved in politics marginally, have a strong influence on political decisions and activities (Ademolekun, 2017). The given phenomenon is not specific to Nigeria alone since it has its most rooted and influential reflection in the domestic political arena. In the past, the origin of Nigerian political godfatherism is closely connected with the socio-political development of the country concerning its pre-colonial patronage patterns as well as the affairs of the colonial period and the following political power struggle in the post-colonial period (Ojo, 2008). These godfathers shower with wide webs of allegiance, favors, and, in many cases, threats, which determine who gets a chance to be a candidate, who determines the outcome of an election, and how the state coffers can be plundered in their own and clannish interests. Pervasive character of godfatherism has far-reaching and measurably adverse effects on the democratic processes in Nigeria since it systematically undermines the tenets of fair representation, accountability, and the rule of law. It suppresses any substantial democratic participation, promotes corruption, interferes with good governance, and ends up stifling the sustainable development of nations (Oluwaniyi, 2011). It should be on this background that this paper begins a rather unorthodox, but very necessary study, the study of this complex political phenomenon in the light of a timeless wisdom and moral system that is the story of the Bible. This is aimed at determining how ancient texts may help provide enlightenment, critiques, as well as advice on the means of managing a contemporary political malaise.

Importantly, this paper has many-sided implications in various fields. Academically speaking, it is a big contribution since it fills a glaring gap in academic writing, a pioneering biblical-theological angle to a very contemporary and shouting political issue in Nigeria. It transgresses traditional politics into providing a more in-depth critique from the perspective of ethics and morals. Regarding societal relevance, the research can give priceless information as far as civic engagement is concerned, and even a more ethical leadership approach is concerned, as well as the creation of the so-called good governance in Nigeria. It also offers an ethical guide to both citizens and leaders by pointing to biblical principles that tend to make people revert the existing norms in the political world. In a theological perspective, this study proves that ancient biblical values are both profound and practically applicable to contemporary political issues, which evidently show that the Bible remains relevant as a source of ethical guidelines concerning national life and governance (Longman & Dillard, 2006).

Statement of problem

Persistence of political godfatherism in Nigeria forms a serious barrier to state democratic consolidation and socio-economic development. Even though the harmful impact of the phenomenon on governance, the allocation of resources, and the integrity of the electoral processes is widely known, it is met with appalling resistance (Ibrahim, 2012). Recently, on the phenomenon of godfatherism and its adverse effects on democracy in Nigeria is the political crisis in Rivers State that led to the suspension of the incumbent governor, Siminalayi Fubara. This crisis which is not yet resolved is a typical manifestation of godfatherism in Nigerian politics. Godfatherism has a socio-political and economic level associated with the actual state of affairs, and the existing literature in the field of education reports on it in detail and reasons with solid empirical evidence and theoretical

conclusions. But, in case of a complete Bible psychological approach to this particular political dynamic, there is a big difference. Other studies only hint at the issue of religion in Nigerian politics, yet fail to go through and conduct a systematic analysis of why the main tenets of the Bible can effectively remedy the corruption inherent in the power politics, manipulations, and godfatherism (Kukah, 1999). As a result, it can be stated that there is an obvious necessity to comprehend whether and how biblical principles, which define the moral and ethical worldviews of a vast number of members of the Nigerian population significantly, can help us develop a critical perspective and practical solutions to fighting this political system that is fundamentally flawed and hinders the realization of justice and fair government. This paper, therefore, fills this gap by trying to apply biblical wisdom to a modern-day political issue.

The first question entails the identification of the nature and the broad scope of political godfatherism and dominance as it is applied in the Nigerian polity to define the nature of its mechanisms and manifestations. Its second question probes the search for certain biblical values and stories revealing their pertinence to the questions of centralized consolidation of power, authoritarian control, political machinations, and clientelism. The third question takes a critical evaluation of how such identified biblical perspectives present a direct challenge or present viable alternatives to the existing practices of political godfatherism in Nigeria. Lastly, the fourth question is aimed at deriving practical recommendations applicable to provide solutions based on biblical tenets that can help overcome negative effects of godfatherism currently being experienced in governance and society in Nigeria.

The Concept of Political Godfatherism

In developing democracy, the phenomenon of political godfatherism has gained much attention in the literature of political science. It is usually thought of as an informal but highly influential mode of organizing in which powerful people, the “godfathers" dominate the political processes by manipulating elections, influencing appointments, and having a network of their people, the "godsons" or their clients, who are loyal to them (Joseph, 1987). Such relationships are frequently framed using definitions which operate upon an understanding of hierarchies; they are exploitative, and violence between them is the norm. Where there is not that same type of violence, there is a transactional logic where political power is exchanged with personal gain or protection. Some of the major features of godfatherism are ingrained patronage where resources and opportunities are allocated based on loyalty and not based on merit; clientelism that sort of makes an inter-dependent partnership between godfathers and people who are their beneficiaries; the combination of power in the hands of fewer people who are unelected; the interference with the electoral system by either buying, intimidating the voters, or even by queering the polls; and simply control of all the economic activities, and this may lead to the looting of the economy (Ake, 2000). Examples abound in the control of party structures, candidate selection processes, and the financing of political campaigns (Suberu, 2007). Godfatherism in Nigeria has taken different shapes in diverse regions and political parties since the second republic in Nigeria to the prolonged military rule to the present and current dispensation of democracy. The effects of godfatherism on the democracy of Nigeria have been overbearing on its society, resulting in deep-rooted corruption, weakening of institutions, altering priorities in development, and confirmation of bad leadership in favour of the individual, in disregard to the rule of law and the common good (Fatton, 1992).

Research Methodology

The qualitative strategy of research design used in this paper is basically modal in the sense that it is more interpretive and analytical in its tendency to encompass the complexity of the issue involved with the guidelines of the bible and the issue of political godfatherism within Nigeria. The selected design is especially applicable to the study of the meaning and ethical issues hidden in the scriptural texts as well as social and political realities (Creswell, 2013). This study uses a theological-ethical approach, which is a research methodology that involves the systematic use of the cautious interpretation of biblical scriptures to form the emergent ethical principles and then applies these ethical principles to a contemporary socio-political problem, in this case, political godfatherism. It is not just a descriptive approach but one that is extremely judgmental. The research is analytical as well as descriptive. It explains how godfatherism is deeply ingrained in Nigeria and gives the nature of godfatherism and its appearance in the country, and thereafter critically examines the aspects of godfatherism through the prism of biblical ideals that judge them in the light of divine justice, authority, and governance.

Data Collection

The information used in this research is based on two points of reference:

Primary data: The theoretical initial data is the biblical literature, that is, the Old and the New Testament. Certain books and passages were chosen due to the explicit or implicit mentioning of themes of power, authority, leadership, justice, oppression, clientelism, and governance. This is done in the form of a systematic reading and re-reading of the scriptures in order to pick pertinent principles and stories (Kaiser & Silva, 2007).

Secondary data: This secondary data is very important when considering the political situation of godfatherism in Nigeria. This involves a thorough use of scholarly journals, books, and publications that have been written by academicians and researchers on the topic of Nigerian politics, governance, democracy, and the special attribute of godfatherism. Credible news, policy materials, and reports by government agencies, non-governmental agencies, and international organizations that offer empirical sources and reviews of the political forces at work in Nigeria are also important sources of information. This multi-dated source will guarantee a sound knowledge of theological structure.

Data analysis

The data analysis process used in this paper is a multi-pronged approach that tends to perfectly merge the biblical and the political aspects. On the one hand, the biblical texts are analyzed by content analysis. This entails the identification of the recurrent themes, general principles, exemplary stories, and direct commands about the exercise of power, nature of leadership, requirement of justice, attack of oppression, vices of patronage, and menace of dominance. These elements of the bible can be categorized and coded to make their subsequent implementation easy (Grane, 2011). Secondly, thematic analysis is employed for the secondary data. It is done by thoroughly reading scholarly sources and reports on Nigerian politics to determine and define the main characteristics, structural effects, and surface forms of political godfatherism in the Nigerian environment. Themes of the processes of control, patrons of fundraising, partisan involvement in the election process, and the socio-economic impacts thereof are also derived and summarized.

Moreover, a comparative and integrative analysis substantially lies at the centre of this research. This is a highly important step when

one is to compare the discovered features of political godfatherism based on the secondary data to the identified biblical principles and accounts. The key issues that organise this comparative study are the following: How does the Bible deal with analogous power relations and manifestations of political subordination? What are the intrinsic biblical criticisms of such practices which are similar to patronage, manipulation, and clientelism? What do the biblical story alternatives to the current godfather systems and demeanors offer with regard to moral governance and leadership? This general study is supported by a particular hermeneutical methodology, which emphasizes putting the biblical texts into their historical-cultural context, trying to determine the literature genre, the general theological message and, after that, transferring the timeless truths to current situations and relate them to it with taking into account the difference in the circumstances (Osborne, 2006). This makes it an accountable and applicable interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

In conducting this study, several ethical considerations guide the research process to ensure academic integrity and responsible scholarship. A commitment to objectivity in biblical interpretation is paramount, ensuring that the researcher's personal biases do not unduly influence the derivation of biblical principles. This involves rigorous adherence to established hermeneutical methods and a willingness to engage with diverse interpretations respectfully. Also, the work highly respects various political and religious opinions, because of the supposed pluralist character of Nigerian society. The study does not belittle or discredit other perspectives, even though it remains critical in expressing the critique under a particular theological position. Lastly, academic integrity is maintained with the help of careful reference to the sources as well as the determination not to engage in plagiarism. The sources of all the data and ideas that were not produced by the researchers maintain their intellectual integrity and responsibility in research communication.

Power and Political Dominance Theories

The need to understand as much as we can about political godfatherism requires, briefly, a consideration of power and political dominance as addressed by sociological and political theorists. The influence of the godfather can be understood on a fundamental level, as Max Weber pronounced that power can be understood as the possibility to reach the will and even against its opposites (Weber, 1978). Whereas Weber differentiates power and authority (legitimate power), as far as godfathers are concerned, they exist in the sphere of power and often without any official power. Another perspective (Michel Foucault) occurs in seeing power not only as an object to possess but as something diffuse and productive, which acts through different social discourses and institutions (Foucault, 1978). This contributes to understanding how godfathering conflicts are covered by hidden networks, ideological indoctrination, as well as normalization of clientelism actions. Lukes' "three dimensions of power"—decision-making, agenda-setting, and preference-shaping—are particularly relevant (Lukes, 2005). Not only do godfathers shape apparent decisions (first dimension), but they also decide which problems are legitimate on the agenda discussed in politics (second dimension) and even shape desires and interests of those in politics and the general populace (third dimension), and thus, the godfathers maintain their domination. Such theories enlighten the godfathers in determining and ensuring such control not only by coercion means, which are beyond coercion, but also through influencing and manipulating subtle means, which are very

crucial in the understanding of how godfathers have become entrenched in Nigerian polity.

Biblical/Theological views of power, authority, and leadership in the Bible

In both the Old and New Testaments, the Bible presents an insightful and coherent discussion of power, authority, and leadership, hence a critical discourse of political systems.

Old Testament: The leaders of Israel in the Old Testament, be it Moses, the Judges, or even the Kings, were expected to govern based on the law of God, with an assurance that there will be justice and righteousness within their communities (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). The histories of kings such as David, who mainly aimed at honouring God in his covenant, were quite different from those of kings such as Ahab or Manasseh, whereby their reigns were characterized by idolatry, injustice, and abuse of power. Prophetic criticism is one of the strongest testimonies ever against wrongful authority, tyranny, and malfeasance (Brueggemann, 1982). Okunoye (2018) stipulates that prophets like Amos strongly spoke about the poor and the perversion of justice to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor (Amos 5:24). Moreover, many biblical injunctions condemn outright favouritism, bribery and exploitation, and insist on being impartial in decisions and offering protection to needy (Exodus 23:8, Proverbs 17:23, Deuteronomy 16:19).

New Testament: Teachings of Jesus essentially transformed the definition of leadership by transforming the leadership model of domination to a leadership model of service (Okunoye and Jemiriye, 2025; Greenleaf, 1977). The hierarchical systems of humans serving human nature of the world are directly opposed to his declaration of servant leadership. "He who wants to be great must be a servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your servant" (Matthew 20:25-28). The apostolic teachings also discuss more about the role of the civil authority, attesting to its divine institution as a means of upholding order and justice (Romans 13:1-7). This is, however, qualified by the fact that the very same authority should be wielded just so that it serves the people in the best way possible through justice and deterrence of evil (1 Peter 2:13-14). Criticism of worldly power and forms of oppression is also present in the New Testament, in particular with the symbolic account of Babylon in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 18). This symbolism is a denunciation of empires and systems of greed, injustice, and manipulation of human beings in the same way as the prophets of the Old Testament did. In both the testaments, there are common biblical doctrines on justice (mishpat), righteousness (tzedakah), equity, and communal well-being as a whole (shalom), which are a divine criterion against which all varieties of power and governance of human beings are tested (Wolterstorff, 2008).

Intersection of Religion and Politics in Nigeria

Religion and politics in Nigeria are a complicated phenomenon with many layers and are deeply embedded in the social life of the country. Religions and religious leaders have been serving important purposes in Nigerian politics over the ages, with a mostly positive influence. Where Religious leaders act as moral guides, moral authority, social justice campaigners, or at other times political agents to arouse social-political mobilization (Okunoye, 2019; Kukah, 1999). The role of Christianity and Islam in determining political behaviour, election, and the political systems within a country such as Nigeria has provided materials to existing literature that has examined the ways in which religious identity can either form political alliances, discourse, and even incite conflict (Falola & Heaton, 2008). On the one hand, there are several

studies giving attention to the religious participation in politics in the large-scale sense; on the other hand, one can discern a gap in the literature in relation to a direct, extensive biblical-theological critique of the evil machinations of political godfatherism in a Nigerian context. Most religion-related readings in Nigerian politics have either been inclined towards the overall influence of religion or more on the role of religious leaders instead of a strategic systemic employment of biblical teachings on particular manifestations of ills in politics, such as godfatherism. The proposed study will fill this gap by offering a selective, strong detail of biblical theological criticism.

Results and Discussion of Findings

Characteristics of political godfatherism in Nigeria and their biblical counterparts

Table 1: Comparison of biblical leadership principles vs. features of political godfatherism

Biblical Principle	Scriptural Reference	Godfatherism Characteristic
Justice (*Mishpat*)	Deut. 16:20; Amos 5:24	Patronage, unfair distribution
Righteousness (*Tzedakah*)	Proverbs 14:34; Isaiah 1:23	Corruption, lack of integrity
Servant Leadership	Matthew 20:25-28	Domination, control over subordinates
Accountability	2 Samuel 12:7–10; Romans 13	Lack of transparency and scrutiny
Equity and Shalom	Isaiah 32:17; Micah 6:8	Selective empowerment, social division

Source: Compiled from scriptural references and theological analyses in Brueggemann (1982) and Greenleaf (1977).

The analysis of political godfatherism in Nigeria reveals the exceptional characteristics that can relate to as well as contrast with the teaching and narrative in the Bible. Clientelism and patronage, which are central to godfatherism and systems of exchanging favours and resources in exchange for loyal services, completely conflict biblical advocacy against favouritism, discrimination, and miscarriage of justice in pursuit of personal ends (Deuteronomy 1:17, Proverbs 28:21, James 2:1-4). The old texts always judge prejudiced judges and rulers, who are unable to issue justice colored by the factors of personal dependence or status positions of people as justice.

Another thing associated with the field of politics in Nigeria is the consolidation of power and control by godfathers, who, in most cases, are the strongmen who are not elected. This defies the biblical critique of tyrannical rule and abuse of power. Testimonies of tyrannical monarchs of Israel and Judah like Rehoboam or Ahab are an appalling caution against his rulers who used their office not to serve the people, but to enrich themselves (1 Kings 12:12-15, 1 Kings 21:1-16). The prophecies in the scripture by Jeremiah, especially in his book, cautioned the people against wrongful rulers who built their establishments by immoral means and exploited their constituencies (Jeremiah 22:13-17).

Manipulation of elections through vote-buying, intimidation, and rigging, which are common tactics used by godfathers to have their protégés publicly elected are directly contravene biblical aspects of fairness, truthfulness, and integrity in the affairs of the state. The bible admonishes us to always be honest and upright in all our observations (Proverbs 11:3, Ephesians 4:25), and the current practices that turn elections into a

subversion of fair and free elections are contrary to what the bible teaches on a righteous government.

Moreover, the economic manipulation and corruption, so commonly connected with the concept of godfatherism, through misappropriation of funds or control of resources with self-interest in mind, also have solid comparisons with biblical reproaches of extortion, usury, and anti-oppression of the poor. Prophets such as Amos and Micah strongly condemned the destruction of the poor and the way others were increasing their wealth through unfair practices (Amos 2:6-7; Micah 3:1-3). New Testament doctrine concerning wealth is not that much different and teaches against greed and the amassing of wealth at the cost of others, instead focusing on righteous stewardship (Luke 12:15-21; 1 Timothy 6:9-10).

While not always explicit, instances of dynastic succession or hereditary power emerging from godfatherism, where political offices become family patrimony, can be viewed through biblical perspectives on leadership selection and meritocracy versus lineage. Although in the Bible some leaders inherited their roles, there was a propensity to focus more on character, divine anointing, and compliance with the law of God as opposed to birthright, especially when it resulted in corruption or incompetence.

Critique of Godfatherism in Politics in Light of Biblical Teachings

The timeless values contained in the Bible present major criticism to the practice of political godfatherism unambiguously and radically, giving an ethical ordering which is a stark contrast to the realities in which politics are run. The focal point of this criticism is the biblical focus on justice (mishpat) and righteousness (tzedakah) (Placher, 2010). These ideas are prolific both in the Old and the New Testaments, and they require the imparting of equal treatment to everyone, safeguarding of the weak, and equal application of the law (Deuteronomy 16:20; Isaiah 59:14-15). These biblical mandates in the core of godfatherism of favouritism, corruption, and corruption of due process to selfish ends come directly contrary to the mandates. True justice, from a biblical perspective, extends beyond mere legalism to encompass social equity and the well-being of the entire community, which godfatherism demonstrably undermines.

Another critical point of divergence lies in the contrast between servant leadership and domination. Jesus' revolutionary teaching on leadership, exemplified by his own life and ministry, explicitly rejects worldly models of power where rulers "lord it over" their subjects (Matthew 20:25-28). Instead, he champions a model where true greatness is found in humble service to others. Political godfatherism itself is a form of domination since the individuals place themselves in a position of godfather control and compel obedience in their favour as opposed to the servant leadership style of Jesus Christ, whereby their concerns are about promoting the common good among the population, first and foremost (Okunoye and Jemiriye, 2025).

The individualistic and self-aggrandizement approach of political godfatherism fatally contravenes the communal and common good image of community and life of health, peace, and wellbeing for every person pictured in the biblical vision of community and the common good characterized by the articulation of shalom (wholeness, peace, and welfare to all) (Myers, 2005). Shalom connotes an all-encompassing state of health, social vibrancy, and prosperity that outcome of authoritarian relationships both to God and our neighbours. Godfatherism and its associations with the networks of exclusivity, patronage opportunities, and further development of

personal/clannish interests disintegrate the community and encourage divisions. It corrupts the distribution of resources coming out of the hands of the common collective into the hands of individuals.

In addition to that, the accountability to God and people that biblical teaching enjoins badly counters the unaccountability and the perceived secrecy of godfathers. In scripture, leaders ranging from kings to prophets are held accountable before the community and God (2 Samuel 12:7-10; Jeremiah 22:1-5). Political godfathers often operate outside formal accountability structures, making them impervious to democratic checks and balances. The biblical demand for integrity, transparency, and responsibility in leadership directly challenges this lack of accountability inherent in godfatherism.

Last, the biblical concepts of integrity and telling the truth in public dealings is a sharp contrast to the lying and cheating, promises, and machinations, often linked with godfatherism in politics. The Bible is repeatedly supportive of honesty, faithfulness, and moral uprightness as key to the existence of stable and fair societies (Proverbs 12:22; Zechariah 8:16). Godfatherism- the act of using deceit, coercion, and fraudulent measures to gain or retain political power- is categorically condemned by the biblical standards.

The biblical case studies/examples and their implications for the Nigerian polity

In order to explain how certain biblical stories or teachings might help people criticize the cases of godfatherism in Nigeria, we can use some examples without pointing out any particular individuals. As an illustration, one can take the biblical story of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21:1-16) of the Old Testament. King Ahab, who was influenced by his wife Jezebel, needed the vineyard belonging to Naboth, and so he went ahead to arrange the false accusation and the murder of Naboth to gain the vineyard. This story has strong similarities with the activities of the godfathers in Nigeria, who, using their huge strength, either by the distortion of new laws or by straight-up bullying, take control of land or other objects of common interest and make the normal people the victims of such power plays. The prophetic message of Elijah to King Ahab, which presents the oppressive act of power, shows the injustice and evilness of economic dimensions in godfatherism.

Likewise, in Amos 5:10-12, where it is condemned that "they trample on the poor and exact their grain from him; They take the taxes of grain: the new wine and oil to make them drunken," as well as, "they withhold justice and grasp the spoil; that they commit robbery; a man and his house to make him a prey," the sentiments regarding godfatherism in Nigeria can very much be found to be equivalent to the sentiments of this condemnation. Godfathers tend to allocate little favours to people besides draining in excess state resources, which is an oppression in itself, as the great majority never gets real justice since most of the state resources are allocated by people who have no problems at all in serving themselves. The insistence on justice of the prophets to roll on like a river and righteousness as an ever-flowing stream (Amos 5:24) is one of the direct protests against distortion of justice that is the hallmark of godfatherism.

Based on the New Testament, the teachings of Jesus of servant leadership (Mark 10:42-45), in which he tells his worshipers explicitly that gentile rulers get to minister themselves over the earth, but with his followers, he tells them that whoever wants to become great among them must become their servant, introduces a deeper alternative. This is neatly opposite to the self-servicing, bossing, and self-enhancing attitude of most godfathers who treat political authority as a source of wealth and influence

instead of a chance to serve the community selflessly. These allegorical examples reflect the wide moral and ethical gap between biblical ideologies and the fact of political godfatherism in Nigeria.

Implications for Nigerian Polity

The consequences of the adoption of biblical ideals to the Nigerian polity are emancipatory, thus inferring that there is a way of leading with greater ethics and a strong democratic culture. An active movement towards biblical justice would require the breaking up of the economy of favouritism and the culture of impunity that is inherent in godfatherism, promoting a governance system in which politics and governance decisions are made and delivered based on equity and rule of law as opposed to those of personal allegiances and financial rewards. Biblically informed leaders would be less concerned about partisan and one-sided prosperity but would focus on the common good (shalom) by investing in the well-being of the community and sustainable growth (as opposed to profit-making) (Volf & Bass, 2010). This would transform the interactions between the state and its inhabitants, in essence modifying them to be service-based and not predatory as they are now.

Moreover, this focus on servant leadership as derived from biblical perspective would make the political figures regard their positions not as the opportunity to control the people, but as the chance to serve them humbly. This cognitive reorientation may bring more responsibility and integrity since the leaders are aware of their stewardship position both in the eyes of the people, and in the eyes of God. The role of the church and other religious communities becomes crucial here. By consistently articulating and embodying these biblical standards, religious institutions can serve as powerful moral consciences, speaking prophetically against the injustices of godfatherism and advocating for ethical governance (Kukah, 1999). This includes educating congregants on their civic responsibilities and the biblical imperative for righteous leadership. Ultimately, the potential for societal transformation through the application of biblical values is immense, fostering a political culture rooted in integrity, equity, and collective well-being, thereby creating an environment where godfatherism struggles to thrive.

Summary of Findings

Table 2: Summary of biblical correctives to political godfatherism

Godfatherism Issue	Biblical Corrective	Reference
Electoral Manipulation	Integrity and Truth	Proverbs 11:3; Ephesians 4:25
Patronage & Partiality	Justice without Favoritism	Deut. 1:17; James 2:1–4
Authoritarianism	Servant Leadership	Matthew 20:25-28
Lack of Accountability	Prophetic Confrontation & Stewardship	2 Samuel 12; Luke 12:48
Wealth Extraction	Condemnation of Exploitation	Amos 5:11–12; Micah 3:1–3

Source: Compiled from core biblical texts and theological interpretations in Wolterstorff (2008) and Placher (2010).

This paper has carefully considered the all-pervading nature of political godfatherism in the Nigerian polity, and it has come out clearly on the characteristics of a system of entrenched patronage, concentrated power, electoral manipulation, and economic exploitation. By means of an extensive analysis of the Bible-theological pattern, the research was able to identify a devastating and irreproachable criticism of these activities. Main biblical principles, such as divine insistence on strict justice (mishpat) and righteousness (tzedakah), the radical principle of being a servant leader instead of a dominator, the vision of the whole-sum well-being of the community (shalom), the need of accountability of all people in authority, and the principle of integrity and telling the truth are strong contrasts to the egoistic, exploitative, and frequently, disguised modes of political godfatherism. The above findings highlight the fact that godfatherism is not only political inefficiency but also moral and ethical sin when considered in terms of the bible.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper unhesitatingly acknowledged and confirmed the fact that a sound-biblical orientation constitutes an effective moral and ethical outlook in examining, critically analyzing, and eventually projecting viable avenues of restructuring the extensively ingrained patterns of political godfatherism in the Nigerian polity. Enduring wisdom of the Old and New Testaments provided precise criteria for good governance, fair governing, and a society that was based on equality and the common good. Such eternal doctrine is not antique, but on the contrary, it leaves deep and practical wisdom on how to deal with modern problems in politics. Through the mirror of biblical truth held against the face of the political godfatherism political leadership peculiar to Nigeria, this paper sheds light on the deep ethical abyss that exists, and how there is a need to radically reorient its priorities by approaching governance through a biblically-shaped prism. The importance of the ancient wisdom of biblical teaching, thus, continues to be ever so relevant when developing a more just and equitable political environment, in contemporary Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to mitigate the negative impacts of political godfatherism in Nigeria:

i. To political actors and leaders: There is a need to be purposeful and take cognizance of the principles of servant leadership, especially in the welfare of the citizenry rather than self-interest or influence of godfathers (Matthew 20:25-28). They are forced to develop integrity and accountability in the administration as they are regarded as custodians of the life and power of the people, as divinely entrusted to them. Rulers have to focus on the common good (shalom) of the entire Nigerian nation, putting money in equitable growth and fostering the sense of national solidarity, not serving their interests. Moreover, they should be proactive in ensuring transparency, fair play in any given elections, avert any temptations to influence elections favorably where they could easily do so, and be sensitive to the purity of the ballot.

ii. On Religious Institutions (Churches, Mosques): Biblical (or similar) religious concepts of leadership, justice, and civic responsibility present a great responsibility on the part of the religious institutions to actively teach to their congregants. They should also be the moral conscience of the nation, prophecy, and muster courage to speak against political injustice, corruption and the system of godfatherism, regardless of

people involved (Amos 5:24). Moreover, inter-faith dialogue and cooperation among the religious leaders may establish a unified platform of ethical governance and promotion of moral resistance against political manipulation.

iii. To the Civil Society Organizations: The civil society organizations should step up campaigns to ensure electoral reforms that address, specifically, undue influence and to ensure that fair play prevails in the political arena. They play a very vital position in instilling civic education to the population and creating awareness on the perils of godfatherism that can be destructive and making people aware and demanding their rights and limitations to participate actively through enlightenment (Pateman, 1970). These organizations must also find a way of empowering the citizenry to hold their elected representatives accountable by providing systems of checks and balances.

iv. For Citizens**:** The ordinary Nigerian citizen holds a powerful key to change. Citizens must exercise their voting rights responsibly, prioritizing candidates based on merit, integrity, and demonstrated commitment to the public good, rather than succumbing to patronage or short-term inducements. They must actively demand accountability from elected officials, holding them to their promises and challenging corruption. Crucially, citizens must resist the allure of short-term gains offered by godfathers, recognizing that such benefits often come at the expense of long-term societal progress and justice.

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