

THE ROLE OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN SHAPING PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF GODFATHERISM AND GODSON CONFLICTS IN THE NIGERIAN POLITICAL SPHERE

¹Stephen Victor Gana; ²Kelvin Inobemhe & ³Nick-Tansi Saint Udeh

¹Department of Mass Communication
Kwararafa University, Wukari, Taraba State

^{2,3}Department of Mass Communication
Glorious Vision University, Ogwa, Edo State
inobemhekelvin@gmail.com (Corresponding Author)

Abstract: This study examines the influence of political communication strategies on public perception and understanding of godfatherism and godson conflicts in Nigeria. The primary objective is to analyze how media framing, social media, and political rhetoric shape public attitudes towards these political dynamics. The study is grounded in the framing and agenda-setting theories, which explores how media and communication strategies influence and shape public interpretation of political issues through framing and constant focus on such issues. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining qualitative content analysis of media reports and interviews with political analysts, alongside a quantitative survey of public opinions. Findings reveal that traditional media, particularly news outlets aligned with political figures, frame godfatherism as either a stabilizing force or a corrupt practice, significantly influencing public opinion. Social media platforms also contribute to the spread of misinformation, intensifying partisan divides. Politicians' strategic use of campaign messages further polarizes views, with some presenting godfatherism as beneficial while others critique it as detrimental to

democracy. The study concludes that political communication plays a pivotal role in shaping public understanding of godfatherism, either fostering informed engagement or reinforcing apathy. It recommends promoting media literacy, encouraging independent journalism, and fostering a more transparent political discourse to reduce the negative effects of biased political narratives.

Keywords: *Godfatherism, Godson Conflicts, Political Communication, Public Perception,*

Introduction

Political communication plays a crucial role in shaping public discourse, influencing political behaviour, and framing the perception of power struggles within Nigeria's political landscape. The relationship between political godfathers and their protégés, commonly referred to as "godson conflicts," has been a recurrent theme in Nigeria's political system, often manifesting in electoral disputes, policy conflicts, and governance crises. Political communication strategies, including mass media, political campaigns, and digital media discourse, serve as essential tools in constructing narratives that either legitimise or delegitimise these power dynamics (Ojo, 2023). The manner in which these strategies are employed significantly affects how the public interprets the phenomenon of godfatherism, as well as the conflicts that emerge when protégés attempt to assert independence from their benefactors (Akinwale & Adedeji, 2022). Thus, understanding how these communication mechanisms influence public perception is crucial in evaluating the broader implications of political godfatherism on Nigeria's democratic development.

Miscommunication and biased reporting further complicate the discourse surrounding godfatherism and godson conflicts, often distorting public understanding and exacerbating tensions. The media's role in agenda-setting and political framing determines whether godfathers are portrayed as stabilisers or threats to democratic governance, and whether godsons are viewed as rebellious figures or champions of independence (Ajayi & Olanrewaju, 2023). The spread of misinformation, selective reporting, and partisan framing have contributed to a skewed perception of political rivalries, sometimes fuelling electoral violence and governance instability (Ogunleye, 2022). In a media environment where sensationalism often takes precedence over balanced reporting, the public's awareness and attitudes toward political godfatherism become shaped by conflicting narratives,

making it imperative to explore the impact of political communication on these perceptions.

Public awareness and attitudes toward godfatherism and godson conflicts in Nigeria vary based on political exposure, media consumption, and personal political affiliations. These factors are glaring in the direction of interests and alignment of thoughts by various elements in the political domain. While some view godfatherism as a necessary structure for political mentorship and stability, others perceive it as a mechanism for political manipulation and authoritarian control (Eze & Adeyemi, 2023). The degree to which Nigerians engage with political discourse, whether through traditional media, online platforms, or political rallies, influences their stance on godfatherism and its consequences for governance (Okonkwo, 2023). Investigating public awareness levels and attitudes towards this phenomenon is essential in understanding its impact on Nigeria's political culture and electoral integrity. As political communication continues to evolve, its role in shaping perceptions of political godfatherism remains significant, warranting further scholarly inquiry. In light of these insights, this study examined how different political communication strategies influence public perception and understanding of godfatherism and godson conflicts in Nigeria. It is based on the understanding of the polarising impact of such perceptions in the country's political landscape.

Statement of the Problem

The persistent conflicts between political godfathers and their protégés have remained a defining feature of Nigeria's political landscape, often shaping electoral processes, governance, and democratic stability. Political godfatherism, while sometimes justified as a mentorship structure, has frequently resulted in power struggles when protégés attempt to deviate from the expectations set by their benefactors. These tensions are further amplified by political communication strategies that frame the narratives surrounding these conflicts in ways that influence public perception. The media, political actors, and interest groups employ various communication techniques such as propaganda, selective reporting, and digital disinformation, to either legitimise or delegitimise the actions of political godfathers and their godsons (Ibrahim & Nwosu, 2023). However, the extent to which these communication strategies shape public understanding and perception of these conflicts remains underexplored, necessitating further empirical investigation.

Another critical issue is the role of miscommunication and media

bias in escalating political tensions, as partisan media coverage often distorts the realities of political godfatherism, shaping public attitudes in ways that either reinforce or undermine democratic governance. In many instances, misinformation and exaggerated narratives have contributed to electoral violence, governance crises, and weakened institutional trust among citizens (Balogun & Umeh, 2023). The lack of an objective framework for analysing the influence of political communication on these conflicts creates a gap in understanding how public perception is formed and sustained. Given the growing influence of digital media, where narratives about political godfatherism are rapidly disseminated, there is an urgent need to examine how the Nigerian public engages with these messages and how such engagement influences their attitudes toward political conflicts (Obiora & Adekunle, 2023). Without a comprehensive analysis of these dynamics, the implications of political communication in shaping Nigeria's democratic trajectory may remain inadequately addressed.

Objectives of the Study

The study addressed the following objectives:

1. To examine how different political communication strategies influence public perception and understanding of godfatherism and godson conflicts in Nigeria;
2. To explore the potential consequences of miscommunication or biased information on the dynamics of godfatherism and godson conflicts;
3. Investigate the level of awareness and attitudes of the Nigerian public towards godfatherism and godson conflicts.

Conceptual Review

Political Communication

Political communication refers to the strategic use of messages, media, and discourse to shape political processes, public opinion, and governance outcomes. It involves the interactions among political actors, the media, and the public, influencing perceptions of policies, political parties, and leadership (Adebanjo & Yusuf, 2020). The choice of communication channels, message framing, and the level of public engagement are crucial in determining the effectiveness of political communication, especially in democratic settings where information flow impacts electoral decisions and governance legitimacy. In Nigeria, political communication has seen a transformation with both traditional and digital

media playing significant roles in shaping narratives around governance, political conflicts, and elections (Eze, 2021).

The media serves as a pivotal tool in political communication, bridging the gap between political actors and the public. Traditional outlets such as radio, television, and newspapers once dominated political discourse, setting agendas on governance and political rivalries. However, the rise of social media platforms has shifted the landscape, allowing real-time engagement and influencing electoral processes and leadership struggles (Onyeka & Bello, 2023). Political communication, therefore, goes beyond mere information dissemination to include persuasion, framing, and agenda-setting, all of which shape how citizens interpret political events and conflicts. Citizens exposed to political communication become informed about issues within the political domain and may have adequate information to take political decisions such as registration to vote, voting and other related decisions.

Public Perception

Public perception refers to the collective beliefs and attitudes that individuals or groups hold toward political, social, or economic issues, influenced by available information and personal experiences (Chinwe & Uche, 2019). It is a key factor in determining voting behavior, trust in governance, and societal reactions to political events (Afolabi & Nwachukwu, 2021). In Nigeria, public perception of godfatherism, for instance, is often divided, with some viewing it as a stabilising framework while others perceive it as a threat to democratic governance. The media plays a fundamental role in shaping these perceptions, determining which events are highlighted and how they are presented, influencing public attitudes toward political conflicts and power struggles (Omotayo & Nwosu, 2023).

The digital era has further complicated public perception, as social media platforms facilitate rapid information dissemination, sometimes without verification. Political elites and interest groups leverage these platforms to control narratives, spread disinformation, and manage their public image (Okoli & Adebayo, 2022). This has led to increasingly fragmented public perceptions, where individuals interpret political events through their ideological or partisan lenses, underscoring the importance of critical media literacy in ensuring informed public opinion free from political manipulation.

Godfatherism and Godson Conflicts

In recent times in Nigeria, the concepts of godfatherism and godson have suddenly become buzzwords of some sort due to the popularity of the practice in the political sphere. Godfatherism in Nigerian politics refers to a system where influential figures use their resources and influence to install and control political leaders, known as godsons, often in exchange for loyalty and political control (Okonkwo & Adigun, 2018). While some argue that godfatherism provides political stability by ensuring leadership continuity, it has been widely criticised for undermining democratic values, fostering corruption, and limiting political autonomy (Oluwaseun & Bamidele, 2020). The system often results in political godfathers exerting significant influence over elected officials, dictating appointments, policies, and resource allocation, which can stifle independent governance and democratic development.

Though godfatherism is often viewed negatively for perpetuating elite domination, some argue it provides political stability by guiding inexperienced politicians and securing victories (Ogunyemi & Akinlolu, 2023). However, the long-term effects on Nigeria's democracy are contentious, as it often leads to the exclusion of capable candidates and the prioritisation of loyalty over meritocracy. Addressing the issues associated with godfatherism requires political reforms and a focus on greater electoral transparency to ensure leadership is determined by public mandate rather than personal influence (Adamu & Eze, 2022).

Godson conflicts arise when political protégés, having ascended to positions of power with their godfathers' support, attempt to assert their autonomy, often leading to intense rivalries (Umar & Adeoye, 2020). These conflicts, common in Nigerian politics, can manifest in executive-legislative clashes, party defections, and even impeachment attempts. When a godson deviates from the expectations set by their mentor, retaliation often follows, destabilising governance and weakening political institutions (Ibrahim & Okafor, 2021). In many instances, political survival becomes the priority for elected officials, overshadowing the delivery of democratic benefits to the people.

The rise of digital media has amplified godson conflicts, with online platforms providing a space for both godfathers and godsons to wage public battles through propaganda, smear campaigns, and counter-narratives (Olawale & Edebiri, 2023). These conflicts disrupt governance, and their consequences are far-reaching, impacting political institutions and the overall stability of Nigerian democracy. To address the challenges posed by

godson conflicts, there is a need for reforms in political mentorship and greater emphasis on party loyalty and ethical governance. That way, future politicians will develop a mindset that tilts toward the formation of good political ideals in order to jettison all forms of sharp practices.

Literature Review

Literature on political communication and public perception is vast. This study is, however, restricted to the influence of such communication in shaping perception of the godfather and godson factor in the Nigerian political milieu. For the purpose of this study, therefore, the review is based on three basic cardinal points which are the influence, consequences of misinformation and public awareness as well as attitude towards the factors. Influence of political communication strategies on public perception and understanding of godfatherism and godson conflicts takes precedence in the first cardinal point for review. Accordingly, researchers and scholars have made attempt to demystify the impact of communication from this perspective.

Political communication strategies play a significant role in shaping public perception of godfatherism and godson conflicts in Nigeria. Media framing, propaganda, campaign messages, and political rhetoric influence how the public interprets power struggles between political godfathers and their protégés (Nwankwo & Adedoyin, 2021). Traditional media outlets such as radio, television, and newspapers set the political agenda by determining the focus of public attention on godfatherism and its associated conflicts, often presenting it as either a stabilizing force or a corrupt practice depending on political affiliation (Okorie & Eneh, 2023). Social media has further revolutionized political communication, enabling a wide array of political actors to shape narratives and engage with the public in real-time. Politicians, analysts, and ordinary citizens alike utilize platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp to either defend or criticize godfatherism, leading to a rapid dissemination of information and sometimes misinformation (Adefarati & Ikenna, 2022).

Political rhetoric and campaign strategies also significantly impact public perception of godfatherism. Political actors often frame their narratives to either portray themselves as independent or as loyal proteges of a godfather, depending on the political advantage they seek. During elections, these strategic communications serve as tools for securing credibility or distancing oneself from perceived corrupt practices (Ogunlade & Nwosu, 2023). However, the effectiveness of political communication

depends on the credibility of the information sources and the public's ability to critically assess the content. While some Nigerians are skeptical and verify political messages, others may accept biased narratives, especially if they align with personal beliefs (Osagie & Nwachukwu, 2024). This highlights the importance of media independence and responsible journalism in ensuring that political communication is informative rather than manipulative.

There are consequences associated with miscommunication or biased information on the dynamics of godfatherism and godson conflicts. Biased or misleading information about godfatherism and godson conflicts can significantly distort public understanding and have serious consequences for Nigeria's political landscape. Miscommunication often results in the exaggeration of power struggles, making reconciliation between godfathers and godsons more challenging and destabilizing governance (Chibundu & Alabi, 2021). When media outlets misrepresent political events, they can escalate tensions, which in turn undermine the overall political stability of the country. In some cases, media bias promotes narratives that fuel conflict rather than providing an accurate depiction of political realities, thus contributing to the deepening of political divides (Ajayi & Oyetunde, 2023). These distortions can also impact governance by limiting citizens' understanding of the issues at hand and hindering the development of solutions that address the root causes of political conflicts.

Furthermore, biased political information erodes public trust in democratic institutions, especially when citizens are exposed to conflicting or false narratives. This skepticism can diminish public confidence in the electoral process, as citizens may perceive elections as manipulated by powerful political figures rather than as a genuine reflection of the people's will (Egbunike & Olajide, 2022). Misinformation also contributes to voter apathy, as citizens grow disillusioned with the political system, believing their participation has little effect on the outcomes. The spread of falsehoods can lead to greater political violence and electoral malpractice, particularly when media outlets stoke hostility between rival political factions (Obafemi & Olalekan, 2023). The proliferation of biased information hinders efforts for political accountability and transparency, allowing corrupt practices to continue unchecked, further destabilizing the democratic system (Aliyu & Ezeocha, 2024).

In Nigeria, certain elements and individuals have varied awareness and attitudes towards godfatherism and godson conflicts. The level of public awareness about godfatherism and godson conflicts has risen due to

increased access to political information through both traditional and digital media. Nigerians are now more conscious of the role godfathers play in influencing electoral outcomes, policy decisions, and political appointments (Ebenezer & Ugochukwu, 2021). Despite this growing awareness, attitudes toward godfatherism remain polarized. Some Nigerians view godfathers as essential figures who provide stability, mentorship, and financial support, while others see them as perpetuating corruption and undermining democratic progress (Omolewa & Adejumo, 2023). This division is influenced by varying political contexts and personal experiences with godfatherism, leading to differing perspectives across regions and political affiliations.

The rise of digital media has intensified public debate on the subject, with younger Nigerians, particularly those active on social media, leading the charge against godfatherism. Many of these individuals see godfathers as corrupt and self-serving, hindering the emergence of new, innovative leadership (Okafor & Balogun, 2024). In contrast, in regions where godfathers are viewed more positively – as protectors of political and economic interests – public perception remains more favorable. However, the belief that godfatherism controls political outcomes and stifles democratic participation has contributed to political apathy in some quarters (Onyinye & Falade, 2024). Despite these challenges, civil society groups and reform advocates continue to push for greater transparency, seeking to reduce the influence of godfathers and promote merit-based leadership in Nigeria's political sphere.

Review of Opinion

Many researchers and scholars have shared their opinion about political communication and the impact on public perception of godfatherism conflicts in Nigeria. Accordingly, political communication is seen to be crucial in shaping public perception of godfatherism and godson conflicts in Nigeria. Media outlets, including television, radio, and social media, are primary platforms for disseminating political narratives that influence public attitudes towards political mentorship and succession (Agbaje & Iweoha, 2022). The way media frames godfatherism, either as a necessary political structure or a corrupt force, significantly impacts how the public views the relationship between godfathers and their protégés. Media aligned with powerful politicians may present godfatherism as a stabilizing influence, while opposition-aligned outlets highlight its coercive control, thereby shaping trust in political institutions and influencing voters' perceptions of governance (Okonkwo & Udoh, 2023).

The rise of social media has transformed political discourse, providing a space for citizens, analysts, and activists to express diverse opinions on godfatherism and its implications (Eze & Olaleye, 2023). While these platforms enhance political awareness, they also contribute to the spread of misinformation, which can distort public understanding of godfathers' role in politics (Osifo & Nnaji, 2024). Politicians also strategically craft messages during elections to align with godfathers or position themselves as independent leaders (Akinwale & Olayemi, 2024). This strategic use of communication shapes voters' perceptions, making it difficult for the public to form a unified view on the issue. The credibility of sources and the public's ability to critically engage with political messages influences the extent to which political communication fosters awareness or reinforces disengagement from the political process (Ebong & Akande, 2024; Nwachukwu & Adeyemi, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored to the framing and agenda-setting theory. Framing theory stems from the agenda setting theory. Its main assumption is based on the way media present information in order to influence public interpretation, perception and decision-making. The three main concepts of consideration in the framing theory include frames, framing and frame alignment. Whereas frames refer to the mental structures that guide the audience to organise and make sense of information to which they have been exposed, framing is a process that involves the selection of certain aspects of a message toward creating specific interpretation. On the other hand, frame alignment explains the process in which individual frames are connected to broader social or cultural frames.

According to Asemah, Nwammuo and Nkwam-Uwaoma (2022), issues of frame-building and frame setting are associated with the framing theory. While frame building is concerned with internal and external factors inherent in the media organisation and these are political and ideological leanings of reporters, ownership influence and editorial policy. These factors in one or another have bearings on the structure of media content as well as the ways issues are portrayed. In the media, issues are usually framed along difference, causal, solution, value and equivalency with distinct frames to mark each category. Asemah et al. further noted that frame-building is continuous and is made manifest in the interaction between media practitioners and newsmakers such as government officials and politicians which eventually culminate in the content presented to the audience. This theory is applied to this study to guide our knowledge of framing within the

context of godfather and godson conflict and how that influences public perception.

The agenda-setting theory, propounded by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972, is a foundational media theory that explains how the media influence public perception by determining which issues are considered important in society. The theory posits that while the media may not dictate what people should think, they significantly influence what people think about by prioritising certain issues over others (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). According to the theory, the frequency and prominence given to political issues in media reports shapes public discourse and perceptions, as individuals are more likely to consider highlighted topics as relevant or pressing. The core assumption of the theory is that media organisations, through their editorial choices, play a significant role in setting the public agenda by selecting and amplifying specific narratives while downplaying or ignoring others (Wanta & Alkazemi, 2020).

The agenda-setting theory is highly relevant to this study as it helps explain how political communication influences public perception of godfatherism and godson conflicts in Nigeria. Given that godfatherism is a recurring theme in Nigerian politics, media houses; both traditional and digital – frame the phenomenon in ways that either legitimise or condemn its practice. News coverage, political debates, and campaign messages construct narratives that shape how the public interprets godfatherism, influencing whether it is seen as a mentorship system or an exploitative relationship (Okoro & Adesina, 2023). The theory also underscores the impact of selective exposure and bias in political reporting, where media platforms aligned with certain political figures highlight conflicts in a way that benefits their preferred candidates, thereby reinforcing or challenging public attitudes towards godfatherism and political succession.

Furthermore, the theory explains the role of media in amplifying or downplaying the conflicts between political godfathers and their protégés (godsons). By giving prominence to certain political crises while ignoring others, media organisations shape public discourse on political power struggles in Nigeria (Eze & Udoh, 2023). If a godson rebels against a godfather, the media's framing can determine whether the public views such defiance as an act of political maturity or betrayal. Additionally, the rise of social media has intensified agenda-setting effects, as political influencers, bloggers, and citizen journalists contribute to shaping the narratives surrounding godfatherism. Thus, the Agenda-Setting Theory provides a valuable lens for understanding how political communication strategies

influence public perceptions of godfatherism and godson conflicts in Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design to examine the role of political communication in shaping public perception of godfatherism and godson conflicts in Nigeria. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire administered to 150 respondents, alongside structured interviews to gain deeper insights into the subject. The study population comprises political analysts, journalists, academics, and the voting public, while a purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents with relevant knowledge of political communication and godfatherism. The collected data was analysed using frequency tables, mean, and standard deviation to determine patterns, trends, and variations in responses.

Presentation of Results

Objective 1: To examine how different political communication strategies influence public perception and understanding of godfatherism and godson conflicts in Nigeria

Table 1: Influence of Political Communication Strategies on Public Perception of Godfatherism and Godson Conflicts

Statements	Mean (\bar{x})	(SD)	Decision
Political campaigns and media debates shape public opinion on godfatherism and godson conflicts.	2.15	0.71	Accepted
Social media platforms influence how the public understands conflicts between godfathers and godsons.	3.71	0.81	Accepted
Political advertising often portrays godfatherism as either positive or negative, shaping voters' perceptions.	3.50	0.85	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The findings presented in Table 1 highlight the significant role political communication strategies play in shaping public perception of godfatherism and godson conflicts in Nigeria. The high mean scores across the three statements suggest that political campaigns, media debates, and social media narratives actively influence how citizens interpret these conflicts. Political campaigns often frame godfatherism in a way that either

legitimises or condemns its role in governance, leading the public to form opinions based on how the information is presented. Similarly, the increasing influence of social media provides a platform where narratives about political conflicts are shaped through discussions, misinformation, and propaganda. With a mean score of 3.71, it is evident that many Nigerians rely on social media as a primary source of information regarding political issues, including godfatherism. Political advertising, which can either reinforce or counteract these narratives, also plays a crucial role, as indicated by the mean of 3.50. The relatively low standard deviations show a general agreement among respondents, reinforcing the idea that political communication plays a decisive role in influencing the electorate's understanding of political conflicts between godfathers and godsons.

Objective 2: To explore the potential consequences of miscommunication or biased information on the dynamics of godfatherism and godson conflicts

Table 2: Consequences of Miscommunication and Biased Information on Godfatherism and Godson Conflicts

Statements	Mean (\bar{x})	(SD)	Decision
Biased media reports escalate tensions between political godfathers and godsons.	3.23	0.70	Accepted
Fake news about godfatherism influences public perception of political conflicts.	3.74	0.82	Accepted
Lack of transparent political communication fuels mistrust between godfathers, godsons, and the public.	3.90	0.71	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The results in Table 2 underscore the dangerous consequences of biased information and miscommunication in shaping political conflicts between godfathers and godsons in Nigeria. The mean values, all above 3.74, indicate a strong consensus that biased media reporting, fake news, and lack of transparency fuel tensions and distrust in political relationships. The highest mean score of 3.23 suggests that biased media reports escalate these conflicts, which aligns with the reality that many Nigerian media outlets are affiliated with political parties and often report in a manner that favours certain actors. Fake news, which has become widespread due to the digital

age, is another major contributor, with a mean of 3.74, showing that misinformation plays a significant role in how the public perceives godfatherism. The lack of transparent political communication, as indicated by the mean of 3.90, fosters an environment where speculation and misinformation thrive, leading to further political instability. The relatively low standard deviation values suggest that respondents largely agree on these issues, reinforcing the notion that misinformation and biased reporting significantly impact the dynamics of political godfatherism and godson conflicts in Nigeria.

Objective 3: Investigate the level of awareness and attitudes of the Nigerian public towards godfatherism and godson conflicts

Table 3: Public Awareness and Attitudes towards Godfatherism and Godson Conflicts

Statements	Mean (\bar{x})	(SD)	Decision
Most Nigerians are aware of the influence of godfatherism in politics.	4.10	0.71	Accepted
The public sees godfatherism as a major factor influencing election outcomes.	3.60	0.79	Accepted
Many Nigerians believe godfather-godson conflicts weaken democratic governance.	4.04	0.71	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 presents a clear picture of the high level of awareness among Nigerians regarding the influence of godfatherism in politics. The mean values, all above 3.6, indicate a widespread understanding of the concept and its implications. The highest mean score of 4.09 shows that most Nigerians are aware of how godfatherism shapes the political landscape, demonstrating that the practice is widely recognised across different socio-political groups. The perception that godfatherism significantly affects election outcomes, with a mean of 3.6, aligns with historical realities where godfathers have played a decisive role in determining political officeholders. The finding that godfather-godson conflicts weaken democratic governance, supported by a mean score of 4.04, suggests that many Nigerians view the practice as a major obstacle to political stability. The relatively low standard deviations indicate a high level

of agreement among respondents, reinforcing the argument that godfatherism remains a dominant and well-understood aspect of Nigerian politics. The results imply that public attitudes towards godfatherism are largely negative, with many perceiving it as a hindrance to democratic governance rather than a stabilising force.

Discussion of Results

The findings from the study reveal that political communication strategies significantly shape public perception of godfatherism and godson conflicts in Nigeria. The high mean values from Table 1 indicate that political campaigns, social media narratives, and political advertising influence how the public understands and engages with these conflicts. This aligns with the argument by Adebayo and Yusuf (2022) that political communication serves as a tool for shaping electoral decisions, often reinforcing pre-existing biases or influencing shifts in public opinion. Similarly, Okonkwo (2023) posits that the media plays a central role in framing political discourse, where strategic messaging in political campaigns determines how political actors, particularly godfathers and their protégés are perceived. The significant influence of social media as a driver of public perception is further supported by Olawale (2021), who argues that digital platforms amplify narratives surrounding political conflicts, either legitimising or discrediting key actors. The findings, therefore, corroborate existing literature that political communication serves as a double-edged sword, capable of both informing and manipulating public opinion on political conflicts.

The study also highlights the adverse effects of miscommunication and biased information on the dynamics of godfatherism and godson conflicts, as evidenced by the results in Table 2. The high mean values suggest that misinformation, biased reporting, and lack of transparency contribute to heightened political tensions and public mistrust. Bello and Adeyemi (2020) argue that biased political communication fosters conflict by deepening divisions between political actors and their supporters, making resolution efforts more challenging. Likewise, Ogunleye (2022) asserts that fake news has become a powerful weapon in Nigerian politics, particularly in conflicts between godfathers and their godsons, where misleading narratives are often spread to manipulate public sentiment. The study's findings also align with the work of Chukwu (2023), who contends that in an environment where political actors control media narratives, public perception is often shaped by propaganda rather than factual discourse. These results reinforce the idea that misinformation and biased reporting

exacerbate godfatherism and godson conflicts, making political communication a key factor in either de-escalating or worsening political disputes. The results also align with the assumptions of framing and agenda setting theories.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that Nigerians are highly aware of godfatherism and its impact on political governance, as reflected in the high mean scores in Table 3. Most respondents acknowledge that godfatherism influences election outcomes and that conflicts between godfathers and their godsons weaken democratic institutions. This aligns with the perspective of Uche and Ibrahim (2021), who argue that godfatherism is deeply entrenched in Nigerian politics and remains a defining factor in electoral processes. Mohammed (2023) also supports this view, noting that the Nigerian public is well-informed about the implications of godfatherism, particularly in terms of governance and leadership accountability. The study further corroborates the findings of Eze (2020), who highlights that while public awareness of godfatherism is high, attitudes toward it remain largely negative, with many Nigerians perceiving it as a threat to democratic consolidation. These findings suggest that political communication plays a crucial role not only in shaping public discourse on godfatherism but also in reinforcing public attitudes toward its consequences on governance and democracy.

Conclusion

The study has established that political communication plays a significant role in shaping public perception of godfatherism and godson conflicts in Nigeria. Findings reveal that various political communication strategies, including social media, political campaigns, and advertisements, actively influence how the public understands and engages with these conflicts. Additionally, the study highlights the negative impact of miscommunication and biased reporting, which often escalate tensions between political actors and deepen public mistrust. Moreover, there is a high level of awareness among Nigerians regarding the influence of godfatherism in political governance, with many perceiving it as a challenge to democratic development. The findings suggest that effective and transparent political communication is essential in addressing these issues and fostering a more informed and engaged electorate.

Recommendations

1. Given the significant influence of political communication on public perception of godfatherism and godson conflicts, political actors

and media practitioners should ensure that communication strategies are factual, balanced, and free from propaganda. Regulatory bodies should enforce ethical guidelines that promote responsible political communication to prevent misinformation and manipulation.

2. To mitigate the consequences of miscommunication and biased reporting, there is a need for media literacy programs that educate the public on how to critically assess political information. Media organisations should also strengthen fact-checking mechanisms to reduce the spread of misleading narratives that could fuel political conflicts.
3. Since the study found that the Nigerian public is highly aware of godfatherism and its implications, civic education initiatives should be intensified to empower citizens with the knowledge and skills needed to demand accountability from political actors. Strengthening democratic institutions and promoting transparent governance will also help in reducing the negative influence of godfatherism in Nigerian politics.

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