



Original Research Article

Patron-Client Relationship and the Challenges of Democracy in Nigeria

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In every society, there are forms of association that exists among its people one of which, is the relationship between patrons and their clients. How it affects a society depends on the people and system of rule therein. The impediment of patron-client affinity in Nigeria's democracy today, cannot be over-stressed. This is because of the adverse negative impact on the nation's governing process and has diffused into all aspects of its system. This study explains the link that merges patrons and clients in a democratic situation. The elite perspective was adopted in describing this relationship in the case of Nigeria. Secondary data sources such as books, journals, periodic papers, and media papers were used in analyzing the work. This study suggested that there is a need to put a check on the growth of this form of relationship by the government if democracy is to be sustained.

Keywords: Client/Clientelism, Democratic Governance, Nigeria, Patron-Client Relationship, Patronage/Patrimonialism.

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INTRODUCTION

Numerous relationships exist between state and its citizens and has been studied by various scholars. One of such affinity is the patron-client relations that has been prevalent in every society whether developed, developing or underdeveloped. While its existence is encouraged to reduce the impact of bureaucratic tendencies in the modern world, it has been argued that it is one of the major reasons why many societies have remained underdeveloped.

Despite these views, Arriola (2009), Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002), opined that this union has defined the nature of governance in modern Africa. Most African societies possess patrons who are usually highly influential which explains most lengthy regimes in the various states in the continent. Some examples of such countries are Kenya, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe until recently. It is for this reason the scholars have made effort in understanding how this relationship shapes political orders. It is also not unique to any form of government. It has also been noticed in monarchical, authoritarian (military) and civilian governments (Ikpe, 2000). It is also present in the world's acclaimed ideal system of governance; democracy even though it has been argued to be more conspicuous in authoritarian regimes because the system facilitates its existence (Ikpe, 2000).

The difficulty for an individual getting what he or she merits has created such a mindset in Nigeria for this relationship to thrive. This has exacerbated because of the high and increasing rate of poverty in the nation. Nigerian leaders have continued to ride on this relationship to retain political power and when their constitutionally stipulated time expires, they ensure whosoever takes over from them, continues this tradition of protecting their interests as patrons at all cost. Overtime, this relationship has evolved to fit the current political process. Most democracies are guided by a constitution which clearly designates the time in office for every elected public officer and democratic institutions. For instance, the executive can only remain in office for four years or eight years if re-elected. The legislature on the other hand, can remain in office as long as

he/she continually wins the majority votes of the people during periodic elections.

This has given rise for clients to be known by to public officers or patron politicians to access a share of societal resources. The question to be asked is, are such relations entirely wrong in the public sphere? Is it also a crime to help people you know (family, friends, acquaintances etc.)? It is not a crime but considered improper in any bureaucratic administration where appointments and positions are to be given on merit and not ideal to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in workplace. Thus, the need to re-examine the impact of the patron-client relations in Nigerian's democratic governance cannot be overstressed. In the same vein, it is important to note that this relationship doesn't exist only between political leaders and a group of their selected 'loyalists' who enjoy benefits from their patrons. It is also present in other state organizations, educational institutions, health sector etc, and has defined the pattern of living. In a hospital for instance, where such relationship thrives, patients known by the Chief Medical Director are given preference over others. Schools are not left out. Children who come from wealthy homes and whose parents contribute to the financial development of the school are treated better than those who just pay the stipulates fees and dues. This is done to ensure that these 'favors' are continual. This relationship, in a subtle way has gained entrances to all sphere of live.

This work provides an understanding and analysis of this relationship in Nigeria's democracy. It starts with conceptualizing Patrimonialism, Clientelism and Democratic governance in Nigeria. Next, it examines theoretical issues by adopting dependency theory in understanding how patron-client relationship works and linking it with its interplay in the polity. The third section gives a brief history of the relationship in Nigeria and opinions of some existing literatures on the nature and influence of patrimonialism and clientelism. The fourth section of the work is a scrutiny of the dangers of the patron-client relations on Nigeria's democracy with reference to corruption, ethnic rivalry, poverty, and others. Finally, it will suggest ways which the state could place checks on the negative effects of the relationship in order to consolidate its democracy.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Patronage/Patrimonialism

There is no generally accepted definition of the concept 'patrimony'. Hence has been explained variously. Weber (1947), described patrimonialism as "situations where the administrative structure is appointed by and responsible to the top leader". For him, it is a system where the leader gives the best administrative positions to his choice-clients (proteges) with detailed instruction on how they are

expected to act. Weber likened 'patrons' to 'lords' in feudal system of the means of production but lords were more organized and respected which leads to stability unlike in the case of patrons. Ikpe (2000) opined patrimonialism as a situation where 'patrons' demand total obedience and reference from their clients. This he argues is prevalent in most African states irrespective of the system of governance. Animasawun (2016) argued that most definitions of patrimonialism are negatively inclined. He opines that it should not be so because the manifestations of patrimonialism are peculiar to specific cultural setting.

Client/Clientelism

Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002) defined clientelism as a complex chain that binds political or elite patrons to their various followers. This chain is made up of material resources such as money, jobs, high profile administrative positions etc to their loyalists or followers who in return have unwavering support and loyalty to these patrons. Klopp (2012) argued that clientelism is a situation where the state show favouritism on a selected few, providing them with special treatment in exchange for their votes for a particular politician to win elections or retain power. This indicates that the 'selected few' are usually individuals that have great influence on the larger society. This definition accuses the modern state of being partisan and sustaining patron-client relations. Martz (1997) also opines that clientelism is an enduring system of control which has existed since ancient times in traditional societal settings. Therefore, the idea of the 'privileged' having 'patriots' is not unfamiliar.

Patron-Client Relationship

Like most communities around the world, this form of affinity is typical to Africa. Jackson and Rosberg (1982) argue that in traditional Africa, this relationship was not only based on what could be gotten by the client or given by the patrons but also based on the recognition of inequality in the society. This predominated most agrarian societies (Aspinall and Sukmajati, 2016). Overtime, as societies have developed and become modern, this relationship has also evolved to suit these changes. Although, it is believed to have traditional attribute which will gradually fade away as a society becomes more modern. However, studies have shown that patron-client relationship has continued to thrive in most developed societies and in democratic governance systems (Osayi, 2015; Aspinall and Berenshot, 2018). Therefore, the need to study its existence and how it operates in the political system.

Democratic Governance

This implies the making of accountably transparent decisions in the production and distribution of resources. The term

'democratic governance' is a condition where political power which is held by elected government officials and contested in periodic elections, allows the electorates to hold their choice candidates accountable (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith, 2002). In addition, available government institutions and mechanisms ensure the effective management and quality service delivery to its citizens. According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), 'good democratic governance can be viewed certain scales such as transparency and accountability, effectiveness and efficiency, equitability and inclusiveness level, citizens' participation and the rule of law (UNESCAP, 2016). These, they argue to be crucial to any nation said to be practicing democracy. This is ensuring all citizens irrespective of age, sex, social class, religious affiliation etc have the freedom to participate in all spheres of the society.

THEORETICAL ISSUES

The kind of relationship that exists between patrons and clients can be better understood from the elites' point of view. Mosca, Pareto, Mill etc among others are the proponents of this school of thought. Mosca, in his argument believed that elites are a few persons who are intellectually and psychologically superior to other members of the society and naturally, should emerge as leaders. He went on to further explain how an individual can in the society fall from the top of the ladder of being an elite, to the bottom of becoming a 'non-elite'.

Pareto on the other hand, studied the sociological and character traits of elites. He sees them as the organized few of the society. While the masses are majorly unorganized. Other contemporary scholars of this school of thought such as Schattschneider, Burnham, Mills etc tow the same line with the earlier scholars. A common trait of them all is that they all consider the elites as the most capable in handling and solving societal problems and therefore should be responsible for decision making within the state.

This justifies the ground on which this paper will be explained. With reference mainly to the patron-client relationship which is similar to a master-slave one. The character of the patrons and their bid to maintain the existing class structure based on the argument that represents those of the larger society. The kind of alliance favors a system where a few (patrons) control most aspects of the society with the ideology that they could bring the needed change it requires as when compared to the masses who are most useful alone to vote these 'few' in power (Lindberg and Morrison, 2008).

From the foregoing, the significance of relevance of the elite theory in analyzing this work cannot be overemphasized because it gives a scholarly explanation to the affinity of the two main concepts been discussed, their place in the society

and how their relationship affects governing process.

METHODS

This study majorly adopts the use of existing literature in investigating the varying potency of patron-client association and its notable traits on governance. It also transverses the impact of patron-client relationship on Nigeria's Democratic Governance.

Patron-Client Relations in Nigeria from Precolonial period to 1999

Patronage and Clientele association in Nigeria dates back to its pre-colonial days or in pre-Nigeria era. Traditional agrarian communities which occupied the present-day Nigeria had this form of relations among the rich and the poor. Although, not as sophisticated as that of modern societies. These traditional societies were made up of landlords (landowners), peasants and slaves. Slaves worked the land for their masters with little or no benefits. Peasants, on the other hand, who had no land property usually worked the lands with some form of agreement between them and the landowners. This means that the landlords rent out their lands to the peasants who work the land for their own sustenance in exchange for land produces or other means of payment. This sets the peasants apart from the slaves who were pawns in the hands of their masters (Beekers and Van Gool, 2012). This was the situation for most peasants who had little or nothing but had to survive. This was like the feudal system of the means of production (Weber, 1974).

The coming of the Europeans into Africa brought a change to the form of relationship between 'unequals' in the area and another leap in patron-client relationship. Here, the Europeans became the new 'patrons' and gradually infiltrated the traditional communities through their indigenous leaders especially those communities that had one major leader like in the pre-colonial Yoruba and pre-colonial Hausa/Fulani kingdoms. These traditional leaders, then in turn imposed the will of the Europeans and extend some of the 'goodwill' they received on their various local populace. In communities that didn't have a central traditional leader, like in traditional Ibo and its environs, force was applied by imposing indigenous leaders from persons who originated from these areas and were willing to "dance to the tunes" of the colonialists. In such places, stiffer measures were put in place to ensure compliance unlike in the other areas where the words of the traditional leaders were considered as law and binding on every member of the community. The colonial patron-client relationship continued and became a strong pillar on which the colonial government thrived. The Europeans provides these traditional leaders with "resource benefits" to ensure their continual loyalty and those of the people.

Post-Independence in Nigeria left the young sovereign state to its indigenes to take power. The struggle to retain

power by the different regions changed the dimension of patron-client relationship in the country. The three regions: The Northern, Western and Eastern region which were made up of the major ethnic divide in the country; Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and Ibo. Each of this group wanted an opportunity to hold the highest political office in the nation. As a result of this, interested candidates from these regions, tried to gain the support of the people of the same region and similar culture through gifts, valuable and scarce resources in addition to magnifying the weakness of their oppositions. (Osayi, 2015, Kungu, 2020). This led to increased civil unrest in the polity. Instead of leaders of these regions to be concerned with and channel their energies and those of their people towards integration and development after a long period of colonial rule and division by the Europeans, their priorities were misplaced.

This civil unrest opened the pathway for the Military who took over political power in 1966 barely six years after the nation gained her independence. This happened because the Military accused the pioneer Independent indigenous government led by Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa of favouring an ethnic group while neglecting others in its distribution of societal resources. The administration was accused of high level of corruption especially from its conduct of 1965 regional elections. This was because the central government was accused of distributing gifts to citizens across the region to convince them to vote for the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) political party led by the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) (Ogbeidi, 2012). This indicated several traits of patron-client relations. The late General Ironsi was the first military head of state that the nation witnessed. Although his time in office was short, he was also accused of possessing patronage traits by surrounding himself with people of same ethnic and cultural affiliation with him or persons whom he trusted and made sure they held the highest political offices across the nation (Ikpe, 2000). This sparked fear in the minds of the other regions and their military men especially Northern Nigeria and ushered in another coup that unseated General Ironsi and made a soldier from the northern region, General Yakubu Gowon (rtd), the head of state. Subsequent military regimes since 1966 had high level of traces of the patron-client relationships. Most military Heads of State in Nigeria hailed from the north who also ensured that majority of those that held high political offices were from the north and loyalists. This is the reason that Lemarchand (1972) and Lindberg and Morrison (2008), opined that in the African context of patron-client relations, it may be difficult to separate clientelism and ethnicity. Furthermore, during Gowon's military era, some officers were accused of one offence or the other and the head of state was reluctant to discipline those officers because of their association (Joseph, 1987). This military regime was responsible for the only civil war the nation has witnessed which created deep-rooted ethnic consciousness and continual watering of patronage in

the nation. Ethnicity is therefore easily linked with patrons being at the top of a pyramidal ladder and their loyalists or supporters at the bottom of the ladder which could be sustained by tribal group affiliation.

Patron-Client Relations in Nigeria from 1999 to Date

The historic 1999 brought about a remarkable change in Nigeria's political situation. It marked the second time since independence for a military government to successfully hand over political power to an elected president without any form of interference by the 'uniform men'. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo became the president by having most votes been cast in the general elections held that year. This democratic government was welcomed by all because the citizenry had become tired of the long rule and high-handedness of the military. However, it did not take long before the traces of patron-client affinity began to show its traces as its suites the 'new form of governance'. One notable example is Obasanjo re-election in 2003. In preparation for the general elections, He made efforts to doctor the electoral acts by distributing 'bags of money' in the National Assembly among lawmakers to ensure his bidding was done (Chimee, 2011). Any legislature who showed any signs of opposition against his aim, like the then seating Speaker of the House of Representatives, Alhaji Ghali Na'Abba, were voted out of power by the president's supporters who were in the House. The gain of these loyalists was the presidency ensuring that they were re-elected in their various constituencies by any means possible. This indicated impunity and lack of respect for the principle separation of powers which should be prevalent in a democratic setting. Obasanjo's second term in office 'opened the eyes' of the legislative arm of government to the knowledge of reviews the contents of the constitution could be revised in their favour especially when it concerns their income. Politics now became an avenue to amass wealth by converting public property to private own (Ekeh, 1975).

The expiration of his (Chief Obasanjo) regime in 2007 did not end the traits of patron-client in the polity. He ensured his successor was the brother of a late friend of his. Umaru Musa Yar'adua won the presidential election through massive rigging and other election malpractices. The Yar'adua's administration was unique. He became ill while in office and it required him seeking treatment in a more developed society which had better health services than the domestic situation in Nigeria, particularly, in Saudi Arabia. His absence created a political gap in the nation which became an avenue for his cabinet, trusted aids, and partners to abuse their office and loot the nation's scarce resources (Ani and Dada, 2017). These individuals who were already enjoying the late former president's patronage were determined to make certain that statuesque was maintained. These persons Omotola (2011), referred to as *Yar'adua's cabal*. Some ex-governors who were also believed to be part

of this 'cabal' had some allegations levelled against them and accusations were swept under the carpet because of their association with the 'centre'. His death in office, however brought a stop to this situation. This also gave a constitutional right to his vice, Dr Goodluck Ebele Johnathan to become the president for the remaining one year and some months in the office. Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan also won the elections of 2011 to the highest political seat in the country. Like his former boss and predecessor, he was also accused of a certain level of patrimonialism. For instance, strategic positions such as chief of army staff and national security advisor were occupied from areas where he had the highest level of supporters that is the south east and south-south regions. The then CAS (chief of army staff) was Azubuike Ihejinka and NSA (national security advisor) was general Andrew Azazi who hailed from south-south and from the president's home state (Kaplan 2012). These positions made the westerners feel left out in Jonathan's governance. His administration was accused of high level of corruption and resource waste which were a driving force for the current ruling party (the APC) to use during their campaigns in 2014 to 2015. They claimed the country needed to be rid of the Peoples' Democratic Party and embrace "Change" All Progressive Congress for the entire polity to be sanitized for the first time.

In 2015, after 16 long years of rule, the PDP lost the highest political office in the nation to the opposition (APC). This was a step towards growth in the nation's democracy by even the international community. The citizen (majority of them) also wanted a "change" from a governance system which they believed was 'corrupt' and the reason the nation was where it was then.

Nevertheless, it wasn't long before the citizens observed that the main difference in the pattern of governance was the change of nomenclature of the ruling party and nothing more. Buhari's administration used its first four years to blame the previous administration for the 'rot in the system' proffering little or no lasting solution to any problems. Furthermore, the issue of patronage which was what they accused the previous government for seems to be more prevalent in the current administration. This can be seen from the presidential cabinet members of the first regime down to the present. In the first four years, the former secretary general of the federation, Engineer Babachir Lawal was accused of corruption which had to do with awarding of contract for the removal of invasive plant species and simplified irrigation for the sum two hundred and fifty eight million, one hundred and thirty two thousand, seven hundred and thirty five naira, ninety nine kobo (₦258,132,735.99) only to a firm known as JOSMON Technological. However, the contract, though awarded to the above firm was executed by Rholavison Engineering Limited of which the former SGF was a director of said company. This occurred around August 2016. Sadly, the government was reluctant and slow in punishing the

SGF(Babachir Lawal) for this gross corrupt practise. For a long time, the case seemed to have been ignored due to the offender's loyalty to the president, until last year when the case was taken up after senate investigation by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) (Punch News Paper, July 5, 2019). Another involves the Acting Chairman of the EFCC, Ibrahim Magu who was appointed in acting capacity on the 9th of November 2017 by the president. The 8th senate rejected his appointment twice, the latest which was in 2017. But the vice president, Prof Yemi Osinbajo as well as the chairman of the present advisory committee on Anti-corruption stated categorically that such appointments made by the president did not need senatorial approval despite the senate giving some reasons they regarded as tangible enough for Magu not to be given such a position. One of this includes petitions written against him by the Department of State Services (DSS) which made the senate reject his confirmation. This has been the reason why he remains in the acting capacity and has not been confirmed. The current senate 9th assembly were requested to revisit the case. Although, some senior law practitioners are of the view that the issue of Magu has become complex because he seems to have been acting forever. He has remained in office in this acting capacity till date despite all. This is high level of patron-client relationship which seems to be very noticeable in Nigeria's democracy. This is an aspect which scholars have left out. As democracy is 'consolidated', so also these relations develop a new way or evolve in such a way to accommodate the changes in the polity. (Guardian Newspaper, 01 December 2019).

Impacts of Patron-Client Relation on Nigeria's Democracy

Although the consequence of this type of relationship to Nigeria and its people is not novel, it seems to have increased and evolved in this democratic dispensation. It has divided the nation, increased the level of ethnic consciousness and fractionalization amongst citizens. The spirit of oneness no longer exists; hence the impacts can be viewed as follows:

Corruption: When a patron exists and has loyalists or clients to carry out his bidding, it is likely that a lot of actions will be done contrary to what is written in the "books". There has been high handedness, misuse of political power and abuse of administrative office by government officials because of this relationship. One vivid example of this was witnessed from 2007 to 2009 by the Yar'adua led administration. His cabinet, instead of ensuring growth and development in his absence used their offices to perpetrate corrupt practices and mismanaged funds to carry out major projects just to acquire personal wealth (Ani and Dada, 2017). This form of relationship as argued by Weber (1974) does not

automatically result in corruption wherever it exists. However, in multi-heterogenous societies like Nigeria with scarce resources and the struggle to control these resources, this patron-client relationship when not effectively managed will result to nepotism, favouritism, bribery, extortion, and embezzlement which are all branches of corruption.

Rent Seeking: This problem may be regarded as a necessary evil in politics. This is a situation where individuals or group alter or try to alter government policies and procedures in ways to gain more profit for themselves. Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002) argued that it is endemic to politics in any society and more prevalent in a democratic setting where patron-client relations thrive. Government officials in Nigeria, at every level are inflicted with this “disease” which has become institutionalized. In the arms of government, the executive and their cabinet members are expected to be loyal to the person or persons who put them in office. This they achieve by twisting government policies for themselves and their patrons before thinking of the citizens they are expected to serve in those offices. The legislators are not left out in this. Different scenarios have shown itself where Nigerian lawmakers promote and hasten the passing the bills that will enhance their personal account. Such bills include, reviewing their allowances upwards, debating on the immunity of the legislative members amongst others. While bills that will ensure the growth and development of the Nigerian citizens who voted them into power are either delayed, denied or thrown out of the house of assembly. In the economic aspect, few individuals who gain tremendously from the nation’s scarce resources through government decisions will continue to give reasons to government to make such decisions for their personal gain. This has been argued by some critics like Kurer (1996), who said government do things that are not good for the citizens through making such decisions that affect only a selected few. This then degenerates into conflicts among various patron-client networks who seek to influence government policies as is the case among Nigerian interest groups.

Incomplete implementation of government policies: Over the years, Nigeria has generated funds through various means such as bilateral relations to foreign countries, grants and loans from World Bank and other sources to carry out major projects in the country. However, the administrative capacity, skills, and technical know-how to carry out the implementation of such policies has been lacking. This patron-client relation is a major causal effect why the implementation of government policies is hardly achieved in Nigeria.

Contracts are awarded to relatives and friends without carrying out a proper background check on their ability to implement such contracts successfully. Contractors, because of the basis on which they were chosen, give these contracts second or third priority and channel all their efforts to pleasing those who gave them the contracts (Patrons). Therefore, resources meant to carry out developmental project are diverted by both parties (Patrons and Clients) to satisfy each other needs. This has undermined the ability of government at federal, state, and local government levels to provide effective service delivery to its citizens.

Ethnic conflict: Although democracy is popularly known as ‘the rule of the majority’. Nonetheless, in Nigeria, democracy fuels and energizes ethnic consciousness. It also promotes patron-client relationship and encourages struggle among different groups in the society who are clamouring for recognition. In fact, most elite patrons use their ethnic affiliations to gain supporters and build a network of strong clientele. These supporters resolve in using whatever means possible including violence in ensuring that their patrons secure whatever position he or she seeks for. An example is the just concluded 2019 general elections in Kogi, Nigeria where supporters of a presidential candidate went all out in ensuring the election results were in favour of their patron (The Vanguard, May 6th, 2019). It is worth mentioning here that, there are various levels of clientelism. This is because most patrons are also clients at a point. For instance, in Nigeria, a patron at the state level may be a client to another patron at the federal level. This level of networking is unhealthy for a growing democracy like that of Nigeria because it breeds conflict and competition in the society.

Poverty: Another dire consequence of the patron-client relationship in Nigeria is that it creates inequity in the society. Although, this relationship which is between the rich (patron) and the poor (clients) is believed to reduce poverty level to a certain level because it involves the rich dishing out benefits to the poor. However, it is just a selected few among the poor that have patrons to cater for their needs. The rest of the poor people who are majority of Nigeria’s population do not have patrons to aid them. Secondly, the patrons on the other hand do not want their supporters to become richer than them so they continually enslave them to maintain their loyalty as well as their positions. Clientelism in Nigeria has also rendered its masses a bit lazy and highly dependent on their patrons which they always believe will provide for their needs (Nooyo, 2000). Comparatively, patron-client relations differ from country to country and so also how it affects poverty rate in these countries. In Asian countries

for instance, this relationship has provided positive impact in the society through improved services in education and health sectors (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith, 2002). However, in Africa this relationship has further widened the gap between the rich and the poor and increased poverty rates significantly in its democratic countries.

Eroded credibility of elections in democracy: The quality of elections that has been conducted in Nigeria has been on the decline since 1999. This is because of the continuous presence of election malpractices such as rigging, vote buying and election violence that is encouraged by patron-client relations. Voters turn-out during elections has also been on the decline in recent times. This is because electorates no longer have the liberty to vote in persons they see that possess the attributes of 'servant-leader' but are compelled to vote in candidates after been given monetary gifts by them. Another reason for the low voters turn-out is based on the deceit and unfulfilled promises made by politicians over the years that election has just become a 'formality' because it is a constitutional requirement for any democratic setting (Wenibowei, 2011). For example, in the 2019 general elections, many voters attested to the fact that they were offered money by various political parties to vote the parties' 'flag-bearers' (Kungu, 2020). Sadly, most of them consented because of these 'gifts of money' received and they had to give their loyalty. Therefore, this form of relationship undermines elections process in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The impacts of patron-client relations and its growing networks cannot be overstated in Nigeria's democratic governance. They are increasing and becoming more detrimental to democracy and good governance. With the daily growing ethnic identity and consciousness, inconclusive elections etc., the country is experiencing what scholars term 'a failed state' this bias distribution of resources between patrons and clients (prospective leadership positions, state governors, political appointment, contracts, monetary gifts, undeserving awards for current and future political support etc) violates an ideal democracy which is to ensure the equal and fair distribution of societal goods and services. This paper has brought to bear the negative consequences of patron-client relationship in Nigeria, its people, and its governance processes. It has the potential of mismanaging and misappropriating state resources, abuse political power, and make citizenry question the actual meaning of 'democracy'. This is because the way it is practiced in Nigeria seems poles apart from what is obtainable in other countries in the globe.

Recommendations

There is a need for a total re-orientation, political socialization, and enlightenment of the Nigerian citizens from the idea that 'one must know someone or have a person up there' in order to succeed. Instead, what should be important are skills, credible qualifications and efficiency based on merit. This will go a long way in checking corruption which patron-client relations encourage.

There is an urgent need for the government to investigate the reasons why its policies are delayed, slow or not implemented at all. They need to train people who are diligent and credible from across the country to supervise the execution of its projects and programmes. This will make those responsible for the implementation to be on their toes and accountable.

The war against poverty needs to be taken more seriously by the federal government of Nigeria. One major way that this can be reduced significantly is to ensure that there is adequate power supply. This will resurrect small scale businesses and self-employment will be on the increase too. Citizen will no longer depend wholly on the state to provide jobs for them. In addition, domestic manufacturing will grow which will in turn, advance the GDP of the nation and reduce the nation's expenditure on importation of goods which could be made in the nation's local industries.

With the growth of technology in the globe, there is the need for the Nigerian government to adopt the e-voting technology when conducting elections. This will reduce to the minimum the influence that prospective leaders (patrons) will have on the people (prospective clients).

Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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