

## A Normative Theoretical Discourse of Elite Self-Recruitment in Nigeria, 1960-2019

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**Abstract.** Since 1960, political succession, in Nigeria, has been grossly influenced by the manipulations and anti-democratic tendencies of the political elites. The elites, in their attempts to sustain their ruling hegemony, intentionally create room for their access to, and influence on, the allocation of the state's resources, thereby undermining the significance of the principle of periodic elections. The elites have often achieved this goal by fraudulently recruiting persons with whom they share consanguinity into positions of authority. Elite self-recruitment is one of the major impediments to the development of democracy in Nigeria, especially, given its supportive influence on rising incidents of corruption, mediocrity, stupendous wastage of scarce resources, bastardisation of the judiciary arm, leadership recycling, and political dominance of the oligarchic class. Consequently, the study seeks to explain the nature of the intrigues and strategies behind elite self-recruitment and its consequences for democratic consolidation and sustainable development in Nigeria. To achieve its objectives, the study interrogated relevant scholarly works and notable Nigerian newspaper publications. The finding shows that elite self-recruitment is, indeed, a strategy of corruption by the political elite in Nigeria to steal and loot the state's resources through the perpetual preservation of positions of state power and influence for themselves; that the practice has been a bane of the achievement of good governance and public good in the country. The study, therefore, concludes that there is need to demystify elite self-recruitment by addressing the challenges of representative democracy in a manner that the corrupt monopoly and domineering influence of the ruling political elite can be eradicated or reduced to the barest minimum, at least. This will, in turn, enhance an unhindered populist participation and positive chances of average citizens to ascend to leadership and political positions in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Democracy, Democratic Consolidation, Election, Elite Self-Recruitment, Leadership Recycling.

### 1. Introduction

The Nigerian society, just like most other polities in Africa, has witnessed two major and directly opposite systems of government namely the authoritarian military dictatorship and democracy. While the former has been widely condemned, by scholars, in favour of the latter as "...the most acceptable system of government in our contemporary world" (Oche, 2004: 141), representative democracy in Nigeria, with respect to the process of electing leadership, has hitherto been enmeshed in selfishness and corruption through the overbearing manipulation of the political elite (Inokoba and Kumoko, 2011). Succinctly put, Seteolu (2005: 118) notes that "...the political terrain is filled with coalitions of accumulated resources being sought after by the political elite in an attempt to retain or expand followership in the context of power politics". Furthermore, Ekundayo (2017: 5) contends that "...the struggle characterising leadership succession processes in the Nigerian political space are purposely to gain access to wealth and political power hence, leadership recruitment and power ascendancy process is a state of emergency and perpetually, a warfare."

The seemingly wide acceptance of democracy and prejudice against military rule would have ideally suggest that the ills of the former would not be found with the latter. Unfortunately, since the migration to democratic rule in Nigeria, in 1999, the legacy of elite leadership recycling has been actively sustained through elite self-recruitment. This practice of imposing the election of relatives of the ruling elites on the society, at the expense of qualified, competent, and people-oriented candidates, to occupy elective

positions, has been extremely critical to Nigeria's quest for democratic consolidation and development. In an attempt to resolve the teeming problems of governance and national development, many scholars and writers, including Ekundayo (2017), Herbert and Wilkinson (2007), and Ayoade (2006), have carried out series of investigations and have commented accordingly on the reasons for, as well as the processes, effects, and challenges of elite leadership recycling through self-recruitment in Nigeria. While many of the studies have examined electoral avenue as the central process of recruiting relatives of the political elite, there is dearth of literature on the use of intra-party screening mechanism, self-styled hegemony, and judiciary/political elite conspiracy process (the use of fictitious court litigations) in the recruitment of political godsons/daughters and relatives. This often neglected aspect is, therefore, the focus of this paper, with the objective to explain the nature of the intrigues and strategies behind elite leadership recycling achieved through self-recruitment and its consequences for democratic consolidation and sustainable development in Nigeria.

### 1.1 Research Methodology

The study adopted qualitative design, which made use of secondary data/information contained in relevant scholarly works and notable Nigerian newspaper publications. The mode of analysis involved a sort of analysis of the contents of these sources in order to explain their implications for this study.

### 1.2 Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts the Elite theory for explaining the nature of politics underpinning elite self-recruitment, its connection with leadership recycling, and its process of perpetuation in the Nigeria. According to Higley, 2010; Ogundiwin, 2015; Ekundayo, 2017, the etymology of elite theory is connected with the writings of scholars like Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941), Robert Michels (1876-1936), James Burnham (1905-1987), Max Weber (1864-1920), Floyd Hunter (1912-1992), and Wright Mills (1916-1962). The assumptions of the theory are that: It is inevitable that the political affairs of a polity are best handled by a small subset of its members; the small subset consists of a minority, which determines major decisions that affect the society; the decisions made usually reflect the interests of the elite more than those of the majority; the elite owes its power to its internal organization through which they form a united and cohesive

minority in the face of an unorganized and fragmented masses; since people are unequally endowed, the elite usually possess psychological and intellectual superiority which differentiate them from all other people; the composition of the elitist group undergoes changes with time, either through recruitment from lower strata or by a complete replacement by an evolving rival elite group through revolution; the society usually needs the elites to operate effectively (Maloy, 2018; Ekundayo, 2017; Higley, 2010).

Criticisms of elite theory include that: It is an anti-democracy theory which has the tendency to undermine development in the society; its anti-democratic stance makes the theory jettison the ideas of free and fair election, majority rule, accountability, and transformation; it majorly relies on self-appointment of political elite for perpetuation and maintenance of political power. Elite theory has also been accused of lending support to elite self-perpetuation and leadership re-cycling, which promote corruption and stealing of public wealth. It is believed that the theory supports selfish use of power and socio-political disequilibrium between the elite and the governed majority. This is very evident in Lagos State, Nigeria where only the Tinubu political dynasty has been in saddle since 1999. Lastly, elite theory has been criticised as more normative than empirical in content and intent; that it does not easily lend itself to empiricism and the science of politics (Priya, 2018; Ekundayo, 2017).

## 2. Conceptual Clarification

### 2.1 Democracy

Democracy is a familiar term in the social sciences, even though it suffers a universally accepted definition. It was coined from a Greek root word – *demokratia* – which literally means “rule of the people” (Noah, 2006). The popular view of democracy is the position of Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), the 16<sup>th</sup> president of the United States of America, which states that democracy is ‘government of the people, by the people, and for the people’. Thus, by this implication, democracy is, basically, the rule of the majority. Following these pioneering definitions, other scholars have defined democracy from more expansive and explicit, but related, perceptions incorporating some of the silent elements of the original views. For instance, Kolawole (1997: 8) defines democracy as “...a political system that allows the majority to choose their leaders and to decide when to change them”. In order words, democracy is a system of government in which the

majority of the citizens, through periodic elections, chooses representatives of the people, to govern the society. Harvey and Harvey (1989) further expanded the perception of democracy by stating that it is the process of running the affairs of the state in accordance with known rules of government, toleration of minority views, regular elections, freedom of speech, and the rule of law.

Contrary to popular perspective of the contemporary times, Kolawole (2004) believes that democracy can exist with both civilian and military rules. Kolawole argues that rather than being regime specific, democracy implies a situation where the ruling elites and institutions of state promote democratic values, norms and ethos in the process of their governance of the state. Thus, the effects of democracy must permeate all the strata of society and its governance. Furthermore, Franceschet (2009) defines democracy according to three basic experiences consisting of non-violence, political participation and control, and political equality. Diamond, Linz and Lipset (1990) preferred the phrase 'essential democracy', that is, a system of government that enhances popular participation and fundamental human rights. They suggested that democracy is a type of government that must involve meaningful and extensive competition between and among individual and groups like political parties, for positions of government power, at regular intervals, without the use of force or violence. Therefore, it must involve high level of inclusiveness in terms of selection of leaders and policy-making, and must involve regular and fair election. By default, it must also involve high levels of civil and political liberties and freedoms.

## 2.2 Democratic Consolidation

'Democratic consolidation' was originally coined to describe the process of making new democracies secure by extending their duration; the process of making new democracies immune to the threat of authoritarian regression. As in the case of democracy, scholars have expanded the implication of this coinage, with time, to include other sub-concepts/coinages as popular legitimation, diffusion of democratic values, neutralization of anti-system actors, civilian supremacy over the military, elimination of authoritarian enclaves, party building, organization of functional interests, stabilization of electoral rules, routinization of politics, decentralization of state power, introduction of mechanisms of direct democracy, judicial reform, poverty alleviation, and economic stabilization

(Schedler, 1998). The following examples confirm the foregoing claim.

According to Iboi (2017), democratic consolidation begins to exist when all the leaders and the citizens of a country consider democracy to be the best system of government. Therefore, it is the deliberate political process of broadly legitimizing a polity with popular rule rather than any other realistic alternative like military rule, which could bring about breakdown of collective rule; it is the process of total reduction in the possibility of breakdown to the point that democracy will persist in a polity. Democratic consolidation is a component of transition from authoritarian rule to civil rule, which incorporates democratic systems for establishing and sustaining a stable, institutional, and enduring democracy (Iboi, 2017; Diamond, 1999). From the foregoing, then, the process of consolidating democracy requires nurturing of democratic values and ethos, as well as the related institutions, which can help prevent a reversal to authoritarian regime.

## 2.3 Election

Election is a popular term used to describe the process of choosing representatives of the people who are to serve in government for specific term in office. It is a basic requirement for the success of any democracy. It is also instrumental to the occurrence of the expected change in the administration of a polity.

## 2.4 The Concepts of Elite and Elitism

According to Meriam Webster Dictionary, the term 'elite' refers to 'the best of a class', 'the socially superior', 'a group of persons who by virtue of position or education exercise much power or influence'. Since, dictionary meanings are not usually adequate for such discourses as this, the following other definitions have been brought to bear. The International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences describes 'elite' as 'a group of persons possessing certain fundamental features of life'. Therefore, its related words were 'choice' in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and 'best of the best' in the 15<sup>th</sup> century usages. Therefore, it was used make reference to standard of excellence and social superiority. Mahajan (2005) submits that the word 'elite' was derived from the Latin word *eligere*, which means to choose or pick. Its earliest use was in military administration, where the term implied a set of choice persons, whose selection is based on some special considerations and achievements, especially as regards career-related success. The usage of the

diction gradually shifted from specific reference to Plato's and Aristotle's nobles of the Ancient world to the superior groups of the Medieval era, to people who possess uncommon qualities or have made distinctive achievements, beginning from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Accordingly, Pareto (1935) conceives 'elite' in two ways: Individuals who are superior in any aspect of human endeavour (including intellectual, martial, musical, and political endeavours) and the minority who often occupy the top positions in the hierarchy of wealth and power as a result of their outstanding qualities. According to Lopez (2013), such elites have always ruled in all societies of the world, including modern democracies.

Elitism is a derivative of elite. According to Deresiewicz (2008), it is the belief or attitude that the elite, that is, a choice group of people who possess intrinsic quality, high intellect, wealth, special skills, or experience, are more likely to be constructive to society and should, therefore, exercise greater authority than other people in the society. The concept also implies a situation in which power is concentrated in the hands of a choice minority.

## **2.5 Elite Self-recruitment and Leadership Recycling**

Elite self-recruitment is a system of actions through which individuals or groups gain political power. It is the metamorphosis of ordinary individuals and groups into politically influential entities. This process of self-transformation is termed as political elite recruitment. It becomes self-recruitment when the transformation is achieved through self-help. This process is well rooted in human history as well as in the history of all hitherto existing societies. It is found in all societies of the world (Oche, 2004). On the other hand, leadership recycling means the condition in which particular elite (persons or group) resume direct or indirect control of a polity, within certain spheres of influence in the society's governance, after its tenure had elapsed. Once achieved, elite self-recruitment can aid leadership recycling through the same self-help strategy that transformed the individual elite or groups. Accordingly, Mosca (1939) cited in Adefisoye and Oluwaleye (2018:23) asserts that elite leadership recycling is achieved through "...material, intellectual, or even moral superiority", which they possess. The elite out-organize and outwit the large majority of the society through these sometimes natural and mostly acquired endowments. These factors engender the perpetuation and preservation of elite self-recruitment and leadership recycling in the political space of every polity.

## **2.6 Political Elite Formation, Self-recruitment, and Leadership Recycling in Nigeria**

Since Nigeria's political independence in 1960, the country has experienced many regime alternations, which were mostly authoritarian military rules until 1999, when Nigeria's Fourth Republic commenced. The domination of rule of law by rule of power within the Nigerian polity only came to a virtually foreseeable end in 1999. But, although democracy has been fairly successful in the country, it is obvious that the seven, consecutive, national elections that have taken place since 1999 have been fraught with fraudulent practices, thereby largely discrediting them.

The foregoing occurrence was deliberately perpetrated by the elites to maintain their political leadership recycling. It is interesting to note that from 1960 till date, it has been virtually the same ruling circles that have been in control of Nigeria at every regime that the country has experienced, as exemplified on Tables 1 and 2. Similarly, Kifordu (2011) had observed that despite the adoption of Weberian legal-rational approach to political elite change in Nigeria, the symptomatic practices such as ethnic manipulation, rent-seeking, patronage and corruption have continued to strengthen the politics of elitism in Nigeria. This has been in such a way that despite the many structural changes in the polity, individual members and groups of the elite have often been drawn from similar and exclusive backgrounds. For instance, Ogunjimi (2020: 9) rightly asserted that:

The leader of South South, Nigeria, Edwin Clark has been in saddle since the first republic between 1960 to 1966. One of his children...is the current Chairman of Burutu Local Government Area of Delta State. His wife...was a former Commissioner for Health in Ogun State. [Also]...Richard Akinjide...served as Nigeria's Ministers of Justice in Nigeria's first and second republics. Akinjide's Daughter, Oloye Jumoke has also served as Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and she is one of the top power brokers in Oyo State at the moment. The Olusola Saraki dynasty has been in control of Kwara State...since 1979. When Olusola Saraki retired, Bukola, the first son of Olusola took over. Bukola served as Governor for eight years, senator for four years and Senate President of Nigeria for four years. Another Saraki, Gbemisola served as a member of the House of Representatives for four years, Senator for eight years, and she is currently a Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The list is endless (emphasis is ours).

**Table 1: Some Examples of Elite Self-Recruitment in Nigeria**

Elite Recruiter	Relations	Post Held	Analysis	Source
Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	Dr. Iyabo Obasanjo	Commissioner for Health, Ogun State (2003-2007). Senator, Ogun Central (2007 – 2011)	Olusegun Obasanjo was a former Head of State and President of Nigeria. When he held on to power, he ensured that his first daughter, Iyabo, a trained Medical Doctor was appointed Commissioner and his elected Senator in Ogun State where he hails from	The Punch Newspaper
Late Oloye Olusola Saraki.	Bukola Saraki	Governor, Kwara-State (2003-2011 and Senator, Kwara Central 2011-2019).	Olusola Saraki was the late strong man of Kwara State Politics. He was the leader of Senate between 1979-1983. After having a running battle with his protégé, Mohammed Lawal whom he supported to be governor of Kwara- State in 1999, by 2003, he enthroned his first son, Bukola on the platform of PDP to succeed Lawal who was seeking for second term on the platform of ANPP.	The Punch, Nigerian Tribune, Vanguard.
Oloye Olusola Saraki	Gbemisola Saraki	Member, Ilorin West, East and Central, Federal House of Reps (1999-2003). Senator, Kwara Central (2003-2011).	After enthroning his son as Governor, Saraki enthroned his daughter, Gbemisola first as Member of National Assembly. She held on to power for 12 years.	The Nation , the Punch, Nigerian Tribune, This Day.
Oloye Olusola Saraki.	Olaloluwa Saraki	Special Adviser, Budget and Planning to the President (2003 -2007).	The Saraki snr also nominated his Son, Olaoluwa, a fresh graduate as Special Adviser to the President of Nigeria to fill the slot meant for kwara State.	The Punch, Nigerian Tribune.
Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu	Oluremi Tinubu.	Senator, Lagos Central (2011-date).	Bola Ahmed Tinubu was governor of Lagos State between 1999-2007. He has continued to run the affairs of the state ever since through his godsons and associates. In 2011, Olorunibe Mamora, the Senator representing the state in national assembly was denied ticket to run for third term. He was replaced by Oluremi, the wife of Tinubu who was First Lady of Lagos state for eight years to replace the Mamora.	Nigerian tribune, Vanguard Newspaper, The Nations Newspaper, allafrika.com
Senator Abiola Ajimobi	Bisola Ajimobi	Personal Assistant (2011-2019).	Senator Abiola Ajimobi was Governor of Oyo State from 2011-2019. His daughter, Bisola served as his personal assistant for eight year he ruled the state. for those eight years, decisions taken by Bisola, according to media reports, are the alfa and omega.	Sahara Reporters, Premium Times, The Punch, Leadership.
Atiku Abubakar	Adamu Abubakar	Commissioner for Works and Energy Development (August 2019-date) Adamawa State.	Atiku Abubakar is the former Vice-President of Nigeria. He ran unsuccessfully o be President of Nigeria in 2007 and 2019. He is the current strong man of Adamawa State Politics. His son, Adamu is the current Commissioner for Works and Energy Development in the PDPadministration of Adamu Fintiri.	Daily Post, This Day, The Nation, Premium Times.
Alhaji Atiku Abubakar	Fatima-Atiku Abubakar	Commissioner for Health, Adamawa-State (2015-2019).	Atiku's Daughter, a trained Medical Doctor served the administration of Jubrilla Bindow as health Commissioner from 2015 to 2019. Even when Atiku defected to PDP to run for President, Fatima retained her position in Bindow government.	Premium Times, Sahara Reporters
Senator Ifeanyi Okowa	Marilyn Okowa	Special Assistant, Girl Child (July 2019 till date).	The Governor of Delta State, Ifeanyi Okowa appointed his daughter, Marilyn as Special Assistant on Girl Child to co-ordinate the policy of compulsory primary education in the oil rich state.	The Punch, Information Nigeria, The Nation.

*Source: Adapted from Nigerian national newspapers (2019)*

**Table 1: Some Examples of Elite Self-Recruitment in Nigeria cont'd.**

Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila	Fatima Ganduje	Special Assistant, NGO and Civil Society, office of the Speaker, House of Representatives.	Fatimah, the daughter of Kano State Governor, Abdulahi Umar Ganduje is among the list of aides sworn in August 2019 by the Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila.	The Cable
Dr. Kayode Fayemi	Mrs Monisola Oloro (Nee Fayemi).	Member, Federal Airport Authority (FAAN).	Monisola Oloro is the Elder Sister of Kayode Fayemi, the governor of Ekiti State. Oloro was among those appointed by the Buhari in year 2017 into federal boards	Daily Post
President Muhamad Buhari	Abdukarim Dauda, Sabiu Tunde Yusuf, Dauda Zeze Habu and Musa Haro.	Abdukarim Dauda, Personal Chief Security Officer (PCSO), Aso Villa; Sabiu Tunde Yusuf, Private Secretary, Aso Villa; Dauda Zeze Habiu, Senior Personal Assistant to Chief of Staff, Aso Villa; Musa Haro, Personal Assistant, Domestic Affairs to	Dauda is the Nephew of president Buhari, he co-ordinate the security of the President in Aso Villa; Yusuf is the son of Buhari's biological sister, Hajia Halima; Habu is Buhari's Nephew while Haro is the son of Buhari's younger sister, Hajia Kwalla.	Sahara Reporters.

		President, Aso Villa.		
Barr. Rotimi Akeredolu, SAN.	Dr. Teniola Akeredolu	Member, Ondo State Action for Control of Aids.	Teniola is a biological daughter of Rotimi Akeredolu, the governor of Ondo State.	Nigerian Tribune
Bola Ahmed Tinubu	Oyetunde Ojo	Member, House of Representatives, (2011-2015).	Oyetunde Ojo is married to Folashade, the first daughter of strong man of Lagos politics, Bola Tinubu. He was elected into House of Representatives in to represent Ekiti Central Federal Constituency 2 in 2011 on the platform of the defunct of ACN. Tinubu, his inlaw is the National leader of ACN.	Sahara Reporters
Otunba Adeniyi Adebayo	Oluwasola Adebayo, Angela Adebayo and Morrison Adebayo	Commissioner for Works, Ekiti State, Board Member, Oodua Group of Investemnt Representing Ekiti State and Special Adviser, Wealth Creations; Ekiti State.	Otunba Adeniyi Adebayo was the governor of Ekiti State from 1999 to 2003. He is the currently Minister representing Ekiti State in Federal Executive Council. He is the Leader of the ruling APC in Ekiti State. His direct brither, Sola is the current Commissioner for Works in Ekiti State; his wife, Angela is the representative of Ekiti State in Oodua Board of Investment, a company owned by South West Governors while his 27 year old Son, Morrison is a cabinet member in Ekiti State.	The Nation, premium Times and Nigerian Tribune.

Source: Adapted from Nigerian national newspapers (2019)

**Table 2: Corruption in Elite Self-recruitment**

Elite	Relation	Element of corruption	Source
Oloye Olusola Saraki	Bukola Saraki	Bukola Saraki spent eight years as Governor and eight years in National Assembly. He became Senate President in 2015. Eight of his properties including his personal residence in Kwara State have been forfeited to Federal Government by the orders of the court for being proceeds of fraud	The Nation, Premium Times, The Punch.
Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	Dr. Iyabo Obasanjo	In 2009, while serving as Chairman of Senate Committee on Health, Dr. Iyabo Obasanjo, against the provisions of the Law allegedly received a bribe of #53million from the Minister of Health, Prof. Adenike Grange. The bribe, according to Obasanjo, was used to sponsor members of the senate committee on health to a workshop in Republic without appropriations.	The Nation, Sahara Reporters, The Punch.

Source: Adapted from Nigerian national newspapers (2019)

The occurrence of this experience in Nigeria under a period of liberal democracy is unfortunate, but not surprising. This is because of the nature of liberal democracy, which makes it gives power to the minority (i.e. the elite) to rule the majority without providing much room for popular participation, especially by its nature of eliminating direct participation of the majority in decision making unlike in ancient Greece (Adefisoye and Oluwaleye, 2018; Larok, 2011). It, therefore, supports elite hegemony, being merely a means to power without being an end for service to the people (Ake, 1996). This explains the basis for the comfortable dominance and perennial control of the political elites, who have continued to manipulate the Nigeria political process for their selfish gains and benefits, not minding the consequences.

### 3. Involvement of Political Parties in Elite Formation, Self-recruitment, and Leadership Recycling

According to Olasunkanmi (2010), the ills of elite formation, self-recruitment, and leadership recycling in Nigeria occur because of negligence of intra-party competition, overarching influence of godfatherism, and assorted elite manipulations. Whereas election is supposed to be the anchor of democracy, political parties have hardly encouraged the occurrence of free

and fair elections in the country. The elites, in attempts to ensure self-recruitment and constant recycling of themselves in power, rather promote corruption, manipulations and mediocrity in place of fairness, meritocracy, and transparency (Hassan and Musa, 2014). Rather than allow candidates with credible credential and capacity to emerge from party congresses or primaries, the political elites resort to ploys such as monetization, violence and threats; such that it is only their imposed and preferred candidates, most of whom are their bloodlines, that would emerge from their political parties. Osumah (2010) notes that this intra-party occurrence, which often involves monetized and imposed political recruitment, takes place in virtually all the various states in Nigeria, even though it has been more prevalent in some states like Adamawa, Anambra, Benue, Borno, Edo, Enugu, Lagos, Kaduna, Kwara, Osun, Oyo and Rivers States. Thus, scholars like Ekundayo (2017) and Osumah (2010) have blamed the prevalence of violence, thuggery and election rigging on failed leadership recruitment pattern of the political parties in Nigeria. The elites often lure the political party administrations, with their evident capabilities, to continuously patronize them and subscribe to their biddings in the parties' recruitment process, which hardly allow for the selection of the best candidates for the parties. This is a major reason the political parties have often had to resort to

struggling through dubious and fraudulent means of winning elections.

#### **4. Implications of Elite Self-Recruitment and Leadership Recycling for Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria**

While the political elite resort to all manner of fraudulent acts including political assassination of opponents, ballot box snatching and vote-buying during elections, and declaration of false elections results in the post-election period, in order to ensure that their imposed candidates emerge as the winners in elections (Inokoba & Kumokor, 2011), a major consequence of their manoeuvres is the creation of unpopular and anti-masses democracy, which only further empowers the ruling elites. Moreover, this practice discourages competitive political competition between the governing minority and the governed majority. In all, these paradoxes and contradictions have often constituted significant impediments to the effective operationalization and maximization of the gains and advantages of liberal democracy in Nigeria. The recycling of corrupt and undemocratic class of leaders, through elite self-recruitment, has not allowed the country to experience full democratic development and consolidation in Nigeria (Ogunjimi, 2020). Obviously, elite manipulations for self-recruitment and recycling of their leadership have been majorly responsible for the institutionalisation of corruption in Nigeria, especially in the Fourth Republic. In fact, corrupt practices like the continuous use of public funds for the settlement of political godfathers, party leaders and officials have often limited the achievement of development projects in the country (Ekundayo, 2017; Osumah, 2010).

#### **5. Findings**

Following from the above analysis, this study reveals that the Nigerian democracy is inescapably entrapped in the throes of elitism and that it cannot be separated or protected from the corrupt and selfish tendencies of Nigeria's political elite. Secondly, the classic leadership recruitment strategy adopted by the political elite in Nigeria, where non-related godsons are recruited and imposed on political parties and the masses to eventually perpetuate the influences of the godfathers in politics, for wealth accumulation purposes, is fast losing its traction. This is evident in the cases of most godfather-godson conflicts, where godsons have revolted against the demands and overbearing influence of their godfathers. This is exemplified in the crises that rocked the relationships of Chief Chris Uba and Governor Chris Ngige of

Anambra State (2004-2005), Lamidi Adedibu and Governor Rashidi Adewolu Ladoja of Oyo State (2005), Chief Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Governor Akinwumi Ambode of Lagos State (2019), Comrade Adams Oshiomole and Governor Godwin Obaseki of Edo State (2019-2020).

Consequently, Nigeria's political elite have now resorted to recruiting their biological relatives such as sons, daughters, wives and members of nuclear and extended families into influential and political positions to perpetuate their power and influence as found in the case of Atiku Abubakar and his daughter, who was a Commissioner in Adamawa State from 2015 to 2019; his son, Adamu, who became the Commissioner for Works and Energy Development in Adamawa State (2019 till date); Chief Bola Ahmed Tinubu and his wife, Senator Remi Tinubu, who became a Senator in Lagos State (2011 till date); Sola Saraki and his son, Senator Bukola Saraki, who became Senate President in 2015; President Olusegun Obasanjo and his daughter, Senator Iyabo Obasanjo, in Ogun State, who became the Commissioner of Health (2003-2007); and Governor Ifeanyi Okowa who appointed his daughter as the Special Assistant to the Governor on Girl Child issues in Delta State (2019 till date). Ironically, this manipulative and corrupt attempt to covet political positions through imposition of biologically related surrogates has seriously impacted negatively on the nation's political culture, leadership system and democratic consolidation process.

The political parties have been the main channels through which the political elites have often brought their anti-democratic strategies of self-recruitment and leadership recycling to bear on the Nigerian society. It is through the administration of the parties that the political elites also initiate their fictitious court litigation, which eventually become successfully executed by corrupt and greedy judges. The political parties also serve to promote the adoption of divisive/double standard primary election type, which aids the godfathers to collude with the National Working Committee of the parties, to favor their prospective relations and friends. This is exemplified in Lagos State, where Tinubu ousted Ambode through the adoption of direct primary election to enthrone his godson, Babajide Sanwo-Olu. Similarly, Oshiomole conspired with the NWC to adopt direct primary election to give his godson, Pastor Ize Iyamu, the APC governorship ticket.

Finally, elite self-recruitment is, indeed, a strategy of corruption by the political elite in Nigeria to steal and loot the state's resources through the perpetual

preservation of positions of state power and influence for themselves. The practice has been a bane of the achievement of good governance and public good in the country. Corruption became such a viable tool for achieving dubious self-recruitment and leadership recycling of the elites because of some other factors as poverty, hunger, unemployment, and prevalence of ethical misdemeanours. These intervening variables made it possible for the masses to easily yield to the temptations of being available for being bought or sold for stipends, which many of them think could help reduce the adversities they face daily. This has severely hampered consolidation of democracy and endangered sustainable development, which are the hallmarks of democratic governance.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Leadership recycling, through dubious self-recruitment of the political elites, needs to be urgently addressed as a major bane to democratic development and consolidation in Nigeria. Demystifying elite self-recruitment and leadership recycling will address many, if not most, of the challenges of representative democracy in Nigeria, especially by reducing electoral and other related forms of corruption in the country. When this is achieved, there will be an experience of less unhindered populist participation and positive chances of average citizens to ascend to leadership and political positions in Nigeria's political life. Thus, it is hoped that the implementation of the following recommendations will guarantee a Nigerian society that is free from the chains and negative consequences of elite self-recruitment, which has accounted for the tragedies of development and exploitative monopoly of power in the hands of biologically related elites in Nigeria.

First, to successfully limit leadership recycling of the political elites, which they perpetrate through self-recruitment, and to curb its limitations to democratic development and consolidation, the national constitution should be reviewed to abolish bi-political elite recruitment. This can be achieved by inserting a clause that forbids elected public officials from appointing their relations, friends, and allies into political positions. Secondly, Nigeria's Electoral Act should also be amended to incorporate new electoral laws that place premium on competitive democracy, which excludes the direct influence of the elite in the selection of candidate for election within and outside the political parties. This can address the rate at which the elite use the intra-party mechanism to edge out perceived threat to their firm grip on national political power of the Nigerian

society. Third, the national government should compel the political parties, as a matter of urgency, to initiate reforms that could strengthen intra-party democracy within them in order to reduce corruption fostered by the elites. Fourth, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) should live up to its responsibility by setting up task force teams for mass re-orientation of the electorate against elite self-recruitment in Nigeria. This could be done by letting the masses know their rights, the resources available to their leaders and why they should hold their political elites accountable, rather than yield to their schemes. Finally, the civil society organizations should also intensify efforts in organizing workshops, conferences, and seminars aimed at sensitizing the electorate on the imperative of voters' rights, powers, ascendancy, and participation for democratic consolidation and growth in Nigeria.

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