

Impact of Intra-Political Party Conflict on Electoral Process of 2023 Gubernatorial Election: A Case Study of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Adamawa State

Minnessi, Kibikiwa Glenn, PhD

Department of Political Science,
Adamawa State University, Mubi -Nigeria
Email: glenn788@adsu.edu.ng
GSM: +2347033278200

Micah, Bello

Department of Political Science,
Adamawa State University, Mubi -Nigeria
Email: micahbello66@gmail.com
GSM: +2348149644768

<https://doi.org/10.56201/jpslr.vol.12.no8.2026.pg122.136>

Abstract

The research was motivated by the increasing incidence of internal party crises in Nigeria and their implications for democratic consolidation and electoral credibility. This study examined intra-political party conflict and its effect on the electoral process, with particular reference to the All Progressives Congress (APC) during the 2023 gubernatorial election in Adamawa State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to identify the causes of intra-party conflict, assess the challenges encountered in managing such conflicts, examine their implications on the electoral process, and evaluate the mechanisms adopted by the APC to address internal disputes. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, while data were collected through structured questionnaire administered to selected APC stakeholders across three Local Government Areas in Adamawa State. A sample size of 396 respondents was determined using Taro Yamani (1964) formula, and a multi-stage sampling technique was employed to ensure adequate representation. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics (regression analysis) with the aid of SPSS version 26. The findings revealed that intra-party conflict within the APC was primarily driven by disagreements over candidate selection, lack of transparency in decision-making, leadership struggles, factionalism, and competition for political and economic resources, among others. The regression analysis confirmed a statistically significant relationship between intra-party conflict and the electoral process ($\beta = 0.369$, $t = 4.409$, $p < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The study concluded that intra-party conflict remains a major obstacle to party cohesion and electoral success in Nigeria. It recommended the institutionalization of transparent and democratic processes, the establishment of effective conflict-resolution mechanisms, strict enforcement of party rules, and greater inclusiveness in decision-making.

Keywords: Intra-Party Conflict; Political Parties; Electoral Process; 2023 Gubernatorial Election; All Progressives Congress (APC); Candidate Selection; Party Factionalism; Democratic Governance.

Introduction

Intra-political party conflict goes beyond being an internal problem among party members; it strikes at the very heart of Nigeria's democratic credibility. The 2023 gubernatorial election in Adamawa State provided a vivid example of internal disputes within the APC which disrupted unity, weakened voter trust, and distorted the entire electoral process (Ambali, Ibrahim & Olatunji, 2024). This situation raises concern about the fragility of the electoral process when political parties lack cohesion. The All Progressives Congress (APC), one of Nigeria's dominant parties, was embroiled in internal disputes fueled by factional rivalries, allegations of candidate imposition, and dissatisfaction with primary election outcomes (Omodia & Aliu, 2022). The crisis weakened the party's unity, as many aggrieved aspirants either defected to rival parties or worked against the APC from within. Judicial battles over candidate legitimacy further delayed campaign strategies, diverting attention from issue-based campaigns to intra-party wrangling (Nwankwo, 2023). According to Okeke (2023), when voters perceive that parties cannot organize free and fair primaries, they lose faith in the general election, leading to apathy and disillusionment. Second, the APC's lack of coordination disrupted campaign activities, giving opposition parties an opportunity to exploit its weaknesses. Adeniyi and Ibrahim (2023) observed that opposition parties often gain strategic advantage when ruling parties are divided, as internal disunity opens spaces for rivals to appeal to dissatisfied voters. Beyond the electoral setbacks, intra-party conflicts in Adamawa reflected a broader trend of declining party discipline and loyalty. Many APC members who felt marginalized during the primaries openly supported opposition candidates, effectively diluting the party's voter base (Ogundiya, 2022). Given these dynamics, it becomes imperative to investigate the relationship between intra-political party conflict and the electoral process in Adamawa's 2023 gubernatorial election. The state provides a clear case of how unresolved disputes can shape electoral outcomes, diminish public trust, and weaken democratic institutions. This study therefore seeks to examine the causes, implications, challenges, and mechanisms adopted in addressing intra-party disputes within the APC, with the aim of contributing to the broader discourse on how internal party cohesion strengthens electoral credibility and democratic governance in Nigeria (Adeyemi & Okon, 2019).

The 2023 gubernatorial election in Adamawa State highlights this problem in a striking way. The APC was thrown into crisis over allegations of candidate imposition and disregard for proper primary procedures. This led to multiple lawsuits filed by aggrieved aspirants, despite constitutional provisions that encourage members to resolve disputes internally before approaching the courts. By failing to follow these laid-down rules, the party created deep cracks that not only split members into rival camps but also delayed its preparations for the election (Eze & Bello, 2024). Many frustrated members defected to other parties, further weakening the APC's structure in Adamawa. As a result, the party struggled to mobilize effectively and present a united front at the polls. The rift also sent negative signals to voters, raising doubts about the party's stability and seriousness (Eze & Bello, 2024). In light of these challenges, the problem this study seeks to address is: the inability of the APC in Adamawa State to manage its internal conflicts within the boundaries of its constitution undermined not only its cohesion but also the credibility of the electoral process. The main objective of the study is to examine intra-political party conflict and its effect on the electoral process in Adamawa State 2023 general elections with specific reference APC Gubernatorial Election. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. examines the implications of intra-party conflict on the electoral process of APC during the 2023 governorship election in Adamawa State.
- ii. evaluate the mechanisms applied by the APC in tackling intra-party conflict during the 2023 governorship election in Adamawa State.
- iii. suggest possible policy measures for ameliorating APC intra-political party conflict in

Adamawa State.

The paper raises the following questions in line with the objectives sought to be answered:

- i. What are the implications of intra-party conflict on the electoral process of APC during the 2023 governorship election in Adamawa State?
- iii. What mechanisms did the APC applied in tackling intra-party conflict during the 2023 governorship election Adamawa State?
- iii. What are the possible policy measures for ameliorating APC intra-party conflict in Adamawa State?

Research Hypotheses

H₀1: Intra-party conflict has no significant impact on the electoral process of APC during the 2023 governorship election in Adamawa State.

H₀2: The mechanisms applied by the APC have no significant impact on tackling intra-political party conflict during the 2023 governorship elections in Adamawa state.

Literature Review

Political Party

A political party is an organized group of individuals who share common political ideologies, goals, and interests, working together to gain and maintain political power through elections. Political parties serve as a bridge between the government and the populace, ensuring that diverse opinions and interests are represented in governance (Heywood, 2020). These organizations provide a platform for political participation, mobilize voters, and present candidates for elective positions. Huntington (2019), asserts that without political parties, political systems would be fragmented, leading to inefficiencies in governance and policy implementation. The structure and operations of political parties vary across political systems, with democratic and autocratic regimes influencing their level of openness and competitiveness. In multiparty democracies, political parties compete for power through periodic elections, fostering political pluralism and accountability (Lijphart, 2020). In one-party or dominant-party systems, political competition is either restricted or non-existent, leading to governance models that prioritize party loyalty over democratic principles. The effectiveness of political parties in fulfilling their roles depends on factors such as internal democracy, funding mechanisms, and public trust. Norris (2022) highlighted that “strong and accountable political parties enhance democratic consolidation, while weak or fragmented parties contribute to political instability”.

Intra-Political Party Conflict

Intra-political party conflict refers to disagreements, power struggles, and ideological differences within a political party, often arising from competition among party members for leadership positions, policy direction, or resource allocation. Such conflicts can weaken party cohesion, disrupt internal democracy, and affect the party’s electoral performance (Heywood, 2020). Internal disputes may occur due to factionalism, where different groups within the party push for dominance, often leading to parallel structures and leadership crises. According to Sartori (2019), intra-party conflicts are common in political organizations, particularly in multi-party democracies where internal competition is intense. Managing these conflicts effectively is crucial to maintaining party unity and ensuring the party remains a viable political force. Comparative perspectives show that intra-party conflicts are not unique to Nigeria but occur in many democracies, though their intensity and management vary. In mature democracies like the United States or the United Kingdom, conflicts are usually resolved through institutionalized mechanisms such as conventions, primaries, and caucuses (Norris, 2021). By

contrast, in many African democracies, weak institutions and patronage politics exacerbate conflicts, making them more disruptive (Gyimah-Boadi, 2019). Lessons from other contexts suggest that building strong party institutions, promoting inclusiveness, and enhancing transparency are effective strategies for mitigating intra-party disputes. Adopting best practices from more stable democracies could help Nigerian parties, including the APC, strengthen their structures and reduce conflicts that threaten their electoral fortunes.

Overview of Intra-Party Conflicts in the APC 2023 Adamawa Gubernatorial Election

The All Progressives Congress (APC) has played a significant role in shaping the political landscape of Adamawa State, located in Nigeria's North-East geopolitical zone. Established in 2013, the APC emerged as a major political force in Nigeria, challenging the dominance of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). In Adamawa State, the APC has experienced both successes and challenges, reflecting the dynamic nature of the state's politics (Basiru, 2019). In the 2015 general elections, the APC made substantial inroads in Adamawa State, capitalizing on the nationwide momentum that led to Muhammadu Buhari's presidential victory. The party's influence extended to the state level, where it secured key political positions (Basiru, 2019). However, internal party dynamics and shifting allegiances have since influenced the APC's standing in the state. The 2019 general elections marked a pivotal moment for the APC in Adamawa. Despite the party's efforts, the PDP's candidate, Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri, won the gubernatorial seat, signaling a shift in the state's political alignment. This outcome highlighted the competitive nature of Adamawa's politics and underscored the importance of internal cohesion and strategic campaigning for the APC (Basiru, 2019). Leading up to the 2023 elections, the APC faced internal challenges, particularly concerning its gubernatorial primary. Aishatu Dahiru Ahmed, popularly known as Binani, emerged as the party's gubernatorial candidate, making history as the first woman to secure such a nomination in Adamawa State. Her candidacy was initially annulled due to allegations of irregularities but was later reinstated after a Court of Appeal ruling (Bawa & Sule, 2023). This internal contention highlighted the complexities within the party and the broader challenges of navigating gender dynamics in Nigerian politics. In the 2023 general elections, the APC continued to demonstrate its influence in Adamawa State. For instance, in the House of Representatives elections, the APC's candidate, Aliyu Wakili Boya, secured a seat with 33,464 votes, surpassing the PDP's candidate, Saidu Muhammed Mustafa, who received 28,832 votes. This outcome reflects the party's resilience and its ongoing efforts to maintain a significant presence in the state's political arena (Bawa & Sule, 2023).

Major Conflicts within APC during the 2023 Gubernatorial Primaries

The All Progressives Congress (APC) in Adamawa State encountered significant internal conflicts during the 2023 gubernatorial primaries, primarily stemming from disputes over the nomination process and subsequent legal battles. These conflicts not only exposed deep-seated factionalism within the party but also had implications for its cohesion and electoral prospects (Eze & Bello, 2024). The primary election, held in Yola, featured six candidates, with Aishatu Dahiru Ahmed, popularly known as Binani, emerging as the APC nominee after securing over 42% of the delegates' votes. Her nomination was historic, marking the first time a woman had been nominated by a major party for the Adamawa governorship and only the second instance for any state governorship in Nigeria (Adamu & Yusuf, 2025). The primary was marred by controversy when two of Binani's campaigners were arrested for allegedly bribing delegates, leading to accusations of vote-buying and overvoting. These allegations fueled internal debates and dissatisfaction among party members. In response to the alleged irregularities, Nuhu Ribadu, the first runner-up and former chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), filed a lawsuit seeking the nullification of Binani's nomination (Adamu

& Yusuf, 2025). The legal tussle culminated on October 14, when a Federal High Court invalidated Binani's nomination due to overvoting but did not declare Ribadu as the nominee or order a rerun primary, effectively leaving the APC without a gubernatorial candidate. Binani appealed the judgment, and on November 24, the Court of Appeal reinstated her as the nominee. Although Ribadu initially intended to escalate the case to the Supreme Court, he withdrew his lawsuit in early December, citing the larger good of the party. These internal conflicts had broader implications for the APC's electoral strategy in Adamawa State (Adamu & Yusuf, 2025). The internal strife highlighted the challenges political parties face in managing internal democracy and maintaining unity amidst competitive primaries. The APC's experience in Adamawa during the 2023 gubernatorial primaries underscores the importance of transparent and fair nomination processes. Ensuring internal democracy and addressing grievances promptly are crucial for maintaining party unity and enhancing electoral competitiveness. As political parties navigate the complexities of internal politics, lessons from such conflicts can inform strategies to mitigate future disputes and strengthen democratic processes within party structures (Adamu & Yusuf, 2025).

Intra-Party Conflicts and Electoral Processes

1. The Role of Political Parties in Electoral Success

Intra-party conflicts play a crucial role in shaping electoral processes, often determining the success or failure of political parties in competitive elections. Political parties serve as the primary vehicles for candidate selection, voter mobilization, and governance, but internal divisions can weaken their effectiveness. When unresolved, intra-party disputes lead to disunity, poor electoral performance, and reduced public confidence in party structures (Adeyanju & Yusuf, 2023; Okonkwo, 2024). Internal disagreements over party nominations often result in parallel primaries, court cases, and last-minute candidate substitutions. These disruptions not only delay campaign strategies but also alienate party supporters who feel disenfranchised. For example, in Nigeria, several governorship and legislative elections have been affected by party disputes, leading to electoral losses and legal battles (Olalekan & Bello, 2023). Disunity within political parties also affects voter perception and loyalty. When factions within a party publicly engage in conflicts, it signals instability and weakens public trust. Voters are less likely to support a party that appears divided, fearing it may struggle to govern effectively. In many instances, intra-party conflicts lead to defections, where key party members join opposition parties, further reducing electoral chances (Adebisi & Chukwu, 2024).

2. Effect of Party Cohesion on Electoral Performance

Party cohesion plays a critical role in determining electoral performance, as a united party structure enhances strategic planning, voter mobilization, and public trust. A cohesive party is better positioned to project a strong and unified message, attract broad-based support, and execute coordinated campaign strategies. When internal unity prevails, parties can efficiently allocate resources, avoid factional disputes, and present credible candidates with widespread backing (Adeyanju & Yusuf, 2023; Okonkwo, 2024). A party with strong internal unity ensures that its nomination process is transparent and widely accepted, reducing post-primary grievances. When aspirants and party members accept the outcome of primaries without internal resistance, it prevents defections and legal battles that could weaken electoral prospects. Conversely, parties with internal conflicts often experience parallel primaries, court disputes, and loss of key members to rival parties (Olalekan & Bello, 2023). Cohesion also strengthens voter confidence and support. A party that consistently experiences internal disputes projects an image of instability, discouraging voters who seek reliable leadership. On the other hand, when party members present a united front, it reassures the electorate of the party's ability to govern effectively. Research shows that parties with minimal internal crises tend to perform

better at the polls because voters are more likely to align with an organized and focused political movement (Adebisi & Chukwu, 2024).

3. Factionalism and Voter Perception and Support

Party factionalism significantly influences voter perception and support, often shaping electoral outcomes and public trust in political institutions. When a political party experiences deep division, voters perceive it as unstable and incapable of effective governance. This negative perception can lead to reduced support, voter apathy, and even electoral losses, as the public tends to favor parties that demonstrate unity and organizational strength (Adeyanju & Yusuf, 2023; Okonkwo, 2024). In many cases, internal disputes result in parallel primaries, conflicting court rulings, and multiple candidates claiming party affiliation. Such situations undermine voter confidence, as the electorate struggles to identify the party's official candidate. A divided party often loses credibility, making it difficult to convince voters of its readiness to govern effectively (Olalekan & Bello, 2023). Factionalism also leads to negative campaign narratives, further damaging voter support. When internal party conflicts become public, rival factions engage in blame games, accusations of corruption, and character assassinations. These internal conflicts provide opposition parties with opportunities to exploit the weaknesses of a divided party. Voters who witness internal disputes may feel disillusioned and disengaged, reducing their enthusiasm to participate in elections or support the party's candidates (Adebisi & Chukwu, 2024).

Effect of Intra-Party Conflicts on Electoral Performance

1. Legal Implications and Court Cases on Election Outcomes

Intra-party conflicts have significant effects on electoral performance, particularly when disputes escalate into legal battles that challenge the legitimacy of candidates and election outcomes. Court cases arising from internal party disagreements often lead to delays, candidate disqualifications, and in some cases, the nullification of election results. These legal implications weaken party structures, disrupt campaign activities, and diminish public confidence in the electoral process (Adeyanju & Yusuf, 2023; Okonkwo, 2024). One of the major legal implications of intra-party conflicts is the emergence of parallel primaries, where rival factions within a party conduct separate nomination processes. Such disputes often result in conflicting court rulings, forcing electoral bodies to determine which candidate is legally recognized. When courts disqualify a candidate due to irregular primaries, the party risks losing its chances in the election or facing difficulties in mobilizing voters behind a replacement candidate (Olalekan & Bello, 2023).

2. Voter Apathy and Disillusionment

Voter apathy and disillusionment are major challenges that weaken democratic participation and electoral legitimacy. When citizens lose faith in the electoral process, they disengage from voting, leading to low voter turnout and diminished public trust in political institutions. This phenomenon is often driven by dissatisfaction with governance, perceived electoral fraud, and repeated failures of elected officials to address societal concerns (Adeyanju & Yusuf, 2023; Okonkwo, 2024). In many democracies, voters feel disillusioned when political leaders fail to fulfill campaign promises or engage in corrupt practices. This sense of betrayal discourages citizens from participating in elections, believing that their votes will not influence governance outcomes. Studies show that prolonged political instability and poor leadership contribute to declining voter engagement (Olalekan & Bello, 2023). Electoral malpractice also fuels voter disillusionment, as rigging, vote buying, and manipulation of results create a belief that elections are predetermined.

3. Electoral Violence and Disruptions in Political Campaigns

Electoral violence and disruptions in political campaigns pose significant threats to democratic stability and electoral integrity. These incidents manifest in physical attacks, intimidation, destruction of campaign materials, and even targeted killings, all of which undermine free and fair elections. Electoral violence often stems from political rivalry, ethnic and religious tensions, and the manipulation of security forces to suppress opposition parties, leading to widespread voter intimidation and decreased political participation (Adeyanju & Yusuf, 2023; Okonkwo, 2024). When voters perceive elections as violent or insecure, they may avoid polling stations for fear of attacks. This disenfranchises citizens, particularly marginalized groups such as women and youth, who are more vulnerable to political violence. In many cases, violent disruptions during campaigns discourage political engagement, skewing electoral outcomes in favor of candidates who benefit from intimidation tactics (Olalekan & Bello, 2023). Political campaigns are particularly vulnerable to disruptions caused by violence. Opposing parties often employ thugs to attack campaign rallies, destroy billboards, and harass candidates and their supporters. Such actions prevent political parties from effectively reaching voters, reducing the competitiveness of elections.

4. Defections and Weakened Party Structures

Defections and weakened party structures pose significant challenges to political stability and electoral success. Party defections occur when politicians abandon their original political affiliations for rival parties, often due to disagreements over leadership, candidate selection, or ideological differences. These defections disrupt party cohesion, weaken internal structures, and erode voter confidence in the party's ability to govern effectively (Adeyanju & Yusuf, 2023; Okonkwo, 2024). When influential politicians defect, they often influence grassroots mobilization, leading to the disintegration of local party structures. This weakens the party's organizational strength and limits its ability to conduct effective campaigns, reducing its chances of electoral success (Olalekan & Bello, 2023). Defections also create uncertainty and instability within political parties, leading to internal power struggles. When key figures abandon their parties, remaining members engage in factional disputes over leadership positions and control of party resources. Such conflicts divert attention from policy-making and voter engagement, damaging the party's credibility in the eyes of the electorate. As a result, parties plagued by defections struggle to present a united front during elections (Adebisi & Chukwu, 2024).

Conflict Resolution Strategies in Political Parties

1. Internal Party Dispute Resolution Mechanisms

Conflict resolution strategies in political parties are essential for maintaining stability, cohesion, and electoral success. Internal party dispute resolution mechanisms help address disagreements arising from leadership struggles, candidate selection disputes, and ideological differences. Effective resolution strategies prevent internal conflicts from escalating into legal battles or mass defections, thereby strengthening party unity and public confidence in the party's ability to govern (Adeyanju & Yusuf, 2023; Okonkwo, 2024). Mediation allows conflicting factions to negotiate and find common ground without resorting to external legal actions that could further divide the party. This strategy fosters dialogue and consensus-building, ensuring that disputes are resolved amicably while preserving party unity (Olalekan & Bello, 2023). Transparent candidate selection processes, inclusive decision-making structures, and equitable distribution of party resources reduce the likelihood of factionalism and internal discontent. When party members believe that the leadership is fair and responsive to their concerns, they are less likely to engage in divisive conflicts that weaken the party's electoral prospects (Nwankwo & Akinyemi, 2023).

2. The Role of Party Leadership in Conflict Management

Party leadership plays a crucial role in conflict management by fostering unity, enforcing discipline, and ensuring the smooth operation of political structures. Effective leadership helps prevent disputes from escalating into major crises that could weaken party cohesion and electoral success. Leaders serve as mediators, negotiators, and enforcers of party rules, ensuring that internal disagreements are resolved through established mechanisms rather than public confrontations or legal battles (Adeyanju & Yusuf, 2023; Okonkwo, 2024). Leaders who engage all factions and stakeholders in party affairs reduce grievances and limit the chances of factional disputes. By ensuring that all members have a voice in policy formation, leadership selection, and candidate nominations, party leaders foster internal democracy and minimize the risk of defections or rebellion (Olalekan & Bello, 2023). Party leadership also enforces party discipline by ensuring adherence to rules and regulations. Effective leaders implement conflict resolution mechanisms such as arbitration panels, disciplinary committees, and conflict mediation processes to maintain order. When members know that grievances will be addressed fairly and promptly, they are less likely to resort to disruptive actions such as public protests or court cases that could damage the party's reputation (Nwankwo & Akinyemi, 2023).

3. Legal and Institutional Interventions in Party Conflicts

Legal and institutional interventions play a critical role in resolving party conflicts by providing structured mechanisms for dispute resolution and ensuring adherence to democratic principles. These interventions include the enforcement of electoral laws, judicial rulings on party disputes, and the role of independent electoral commissions in overseeing party activities. By establishing legal frameworks for conflict resolution, these interventions help maintain political stability and prevent intra-party disputes from escalating into crises that could undermine democracy (Adeyanju & Yusuf, 2023; Okonkwo, 2024). Courts serve as the final arbiters in conflicts that cannot be resolved through internal mechanisms, ensuring that party members abide by constitutional provisions and established procedures. Judicial decisions provide clarity on contentious issues, helping to restore order and reinforce the rule of law within political parties (Olalekan & Bello, 2023). Institutional interventions, particularly by electoral management bodies, are crucial in regulating party affairs and enforcing compliance with electoral laws. In many democracies, independent electoral commissions monitor internal party elections, ensure transparency in candidate selection processes, and mediate disputes where necessary.

Empirical Review

Adamu and Yusufu (2025), in their study titled *Intra Party Conflict and Electoral Performance: The Experience of the People's Democratic Party in the 2023 Nigeria's Presidential Election*, examined how internal crises shaped electoral performance in Nigeria. The study covered the 2023 presidential elections with a focus on the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Using a mixed research design, the researchers drew a purposive sample of 200 respondents. Structured questionnaires and key informant interviews were employed as instruments for data collection. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests. Findings revealed that weak internal democracy and poor conflict resolution mechanisms were major drivers of crises that undermined the PDP's electoral chances. The study concluded that unless the party strengthens its internal systems, its electoral setbacks may persist. The authors recommended institutionalizing internal dispute resolution and enhancing democratic practices. They also suggested that further studies should investigate how internal party conflicts compare across different election cycles in Nigeria.

Salihu and Musa (2024), in their study Electoral Setbacks and the Role of Party Disunity in Northern Nigeria, explored how intra-party conflict influenced electoral results in three Northern states. The research adopted a mixed-methods approach that combined survey questionnaires with focus group discussions. The study population included registered party members, with participants purposively selected to ensure representation from factions. The instruments included structured questionnaires and FGD guides, and the data sources comprised both primary and secondary evidence. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were employed for data analysis. Findings revealed that disunity resulting from factional leadership struggles significantly contributed to electoral losses in key Northern states. The researchers concluded that unresolved disputes weaken voter confidence and party organization. They recommended that political parties establish standing intra-party reconciliation committees to anticipate and resolve disputes. A suggestion for further studies was to compare how reconciliation mechanisms differ between ruling and opposition parties.

Theoretical Review

Elite Theory

Elite theory, as developed by scholars such as Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, and C. Wright Mills, argues that a small group of elites holds political power, while the majority remains relatively powerless. This theory is highly relevant to understanding intra-party power struggles, as conflicts within political parties often stem from competition among elites who seek to control party structures, resources, and decision-making processes. The dominance of elite groups within parties frequently results in factional disputes, leadership tussles, and exclusionary politics that shape party stability and electoral outcomes (Mills, 1956). One of the core arguments of elite theory is that political power is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals or groups, who control party leadership and strategic decision-making. In many political parties, a small group of influential politicians, often referred to as the “political class” or “party oligarchy,” dictates policies and determines candidates for elections. Elite theory which is considered the most suitable for this study discussed how political parties revolve largely around struggles for influence, imposition of candidates, and competition over political opportunities. In the context of APC, it helps explain why disputes over candidate imposition, lack of inclusiveness, and leadership struggles resulted in factionalization and defections. By applying this theory, the study can critically assess not only the causes of intra-party conflict but also the consequences, such as the erosion of party unity, credibility, and weakened electoral chances. This makes the framework highly suitable for analyzing how internal disputes shaped the party’s overall performance in the election.

Methodology

The paper adopts descriptive survey design. The population of this study is 904,263, which comprised of 27 EXCOs for 226 geopolitical wards across the state, 27 EXCOs at the local government level for each of the 21 local government areas and other registered members of the APC (2026 e-registration). The study adopted a multi-stage sampling technique to select respondents from the All Progressives Congress (APC) party structure in Adamawa State. The first stage involved the purposive selection of three (3) Local Government Areas (LGAs), namely Mubi North, Girei and Numan, representing the three geopolitical zones of Adamawa State. At the second stage, the APC ward and LGA Executive Committee Members; and at the third stage, APC registered members within the selected LGAs within the selected LGAs constituted the sampling frame. The combined population of APC EXCOs in the three selected LGAs was 35,926, which comprised of 13,206 of both EXCOs at the Ward and Local Government Level and other registered members in Mubi North, 10,005 in Girei, 12,715 in Numan Local Government Areas. Taro Yamane (1964) formula was employed to determine

the sample size 396 for the study. The study adopted a convenience sampling technique to ensure fair representation of the different categories of respondents within the study area. The questionnaire was developed using a close-ended on a 4-points Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree). Secondary data were sourced from reports, published research articles on intra-party conflict and electoral process, books, and other government reports, policy documents and regulatory frameworks guiding electoral process. The study relied on a self-structured questionnaire as its main tool for data collection. For reliability, Cronbach's Alpha test was used to measure the internal consistency of the responses. A reliability coefficient of 0.84 was obtained which was considered acceptable, indicating that the instrument produces stable and consistent results. The data collected in this study were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 for windows. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and key variables, while inferential statistical techniques such as regression tests was employed to test the research hypotheses and determine the relationship between the variables under study.

Results

H₀₁: Intra-party conflict has no significant impact on the electoral process of APC during the 2023 governorship election in Adamawa State.

Table 4.10: Model Summary of the Impact of Intra-Party Conflict on the Electoral Process of APC during the 2023 Governorship Election in Adamawa State

Variables	Coefficient	Std. Error	T-Values	P-Values	Hypotheses
Constant	1.157	2.735	0.423	0.673	
Intra-Party Conflict (IPC)	0.958	0.118	8.119	0.000	Rejected
R	0.792				
R ²	0.627				
Adjusted R ²	0.622				
F-Statistics	65.918				

a. Dependent Variable: Electoral Process of APC during 2023 Governorship Election (EP)

Source: Computed Using SPSS 21, 2026.

Table 4.10 presents the regression results on the impact of intra-party conflict on the electoral process of APC during the 2023 governorship election in Adamawa State. The result shows a strong positive relationship between intra-party conflict and the electoral process of APC, as indicated by the correlation coefficient ($R = 0.792$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.627$) indicates that 62.7% of the variation in the electoral process of APC is associated with intra-party conflict, while the remaining 37.3% is attributable to other factors not captured by the model. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.958$) indicates a strong positive impact of intra-party conflict on the electoral process. The t-value of 8.119 and p-value of 0.000 indicate that the relationship is statistically significant at the 5% level. The F-statistic of 65.918 further confirms that the regression model is statistically significant. Since the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis, H₀₃, which states that intra-party conflict has no significant impact on the electoral process of APC during the 2023 governorship election in Adamawa State, is rejected. Therefore, the study concludes that intra-party conflict has a significant impact on the electoral process of APC during the 2023 governorship election in Adamawa State.

H₀2: The mechanisms applied by the APC have no significant impact on tackling intra-political party conflict during the 2023 governorship elections in Adamawa state.

Table 4.11: Model Summary of the Impact of Mechanisms Applied by APC on Tackling Intra-Political Party Conflict during the 2023 Governorship Elections in Adamawa State

Variables	Coefficient	Std. Error	T-Values	P-Values	Hypotheses
Constant	1.248	2.812	0.444	0.658	
Mechanisms Applied by APC (MAAPC)	0.821	0.129	6.364	0.000	Rejected
R	0.721				
R ²	0.520				
Adjusted R ²	0.514				
F-Statistics	40.501				

a. Dependent Variable: Tackling Intra-Political Party Conflict (TIPC)
Source: Computed Using SPSS 21, 2026.

Table 4.11 presents the regression results on the impact of mechanisms applied by APC on tackling intra-political party conflict during the 2023 governorship elections in Adamawa State. The result shows a strong positive relationship between the mechanisms applied by APC and efforts to tackle intra-political party conflict, as indicated by the correlation coefficient ($R = 0.721$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.520$) indicates that 52.0% of the variation in tackling intra-political party conflict is associated with the mechanisms applied by APC, while the remaining 48.0% is attributable to other factors not captured by the model. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.821$) indicates a positive and substantial impact of the mechanisms applied by APC on tackling intra-political party conflict. The t-value of 6.364 and p-value of 0.000 indicate that the relationship is statistically significant at the 5% level. The F-statistic of 40.501 further indicates that the regression model is statistically significant. Since the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis, H₀4, which states that the mechanisms applied by APC have no significant impact on tackling intra-political party conflict during the 2023 governorship elections in Adamawa State, is rejected. Therefore, the study concludes that the mechanisms applied by APC had a significant impact on tackling intra-political party conflict during the 2023 governorship elections in Adamawa State.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that conflicts significantly weakened campaign coordination, reduced public confidence, discouraged party members' participation, and diminished electoral competitiveness. This supports the assertion by Mainwaring (1999) that party cohesion is critical for electoral success, and that internal fragmentation often leads to poor electoral outcomes. Similarly, Omodia (2019) found that intra-party conflicts in Nigeria have historically resulted in voter apathy and weakened party structures. However, this finding is at variance with Boucek (2009), who argued that certain forms of intra-party conflict, particularly moderate factionalism, can enhance internal democracy and strengthen party systems. In contrast, the evidence from this study indicates that the conflicts within the APC were largely destructive rather than constructive. For mechanisms applied to address intra-party conflict, the study revealed that although dialogue, mediation, negotiation, and involvement of party elders were utilized, these measures were largely ineffective. Respondents strongly disagreed that reconciliation committees, peace meetings, and inclusive decision-making were adequately implemented. This finding supports Albert (2005), who emphasized that traditional conflict

resolution mechanisms, such as mediation by respected elders, can only be effective when supported by genuine commitment from stakeholders. Similarly, Best (2014) noted that conflict management strategies often fail when political actors prioritize personal interests over collective goals. Finally, the hypothesis testing revealed that intra-party conflict has a statistically significant effect on the electoral process of the APC during the 2023 governorship election in Adamawa State. This finding is consistent with Lindberg (2007), who posited that political party instability directly affects electoral integrity and outcomes. Likewise, Bratton (2008) found that internal party disputes in African democracies often translate into electoral inefficiencies and reduced legitimacy. However, this result contradicts Chandra (2004), who argued that in some contexts, strong party loyalty can mitigate the negative effects of internal conflict on electoral outcomes. In the case of the APC in Adamawa State, the evidence suggests that intra-party conflict had a clearly detrimental effect on the electoral process, thereby leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Intra-party conflicts within the APC were largely rooted in structural and leadership-related issues, particularly disagreements over candidate selection, lack of transparency in decision-making, factional struggles, and competition for political and economic influence. These internal weaknesses not only created divisions within the party but also undermined trust and unity among members. The study established that the mechanisms adopted to manage these conflicts were largely ineffective. Although efforts such as dialogue, mediation, and involvement of party elders were employed, they were not adequately implemented or sustained, thereby limiting their impact. The absence of strong institutional frameworks for conflict resolution and poor enforcement of party rules further aggravated the situation. Importantly, the study found that intra-party conflict had a significant negative impact on the electoral process. It weakened campaign coordination, reduced public confidence, discouraged active participation of party members, and contributed to poor electoral outcomes. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered to address the identified issues;

- i. The APC should institutionalize transparent and democratic procedures in candidate selection and decision-making processes. This includes conducting credible primaries, ensuring fairness, and allowing equal participation of all-party members.
- ii. The party should develop and operationalize formal, well-structured conflict-resolution frameworks. These mechanisms should be proactive rather than reactive, incorporating mediation committees, arbitration panels, and clearly defined procedures for addressing disputes promptly and fairly.
- iii. There is a need for strict enforcement of party constitutions, rules, and disciplinary measures. Party leadership should ensure that members who violate established guidelines or escalate conflicts are sanctioned appropriately, regardless of their status, to deter indiscipline and maintain organizational order.
- iv. The APC leadership should adopt a more inclusive approach by involving key stakeholders, including grassroots members, party elders, and aspirants, in decision-making processes. Regular consultations, open communication channels, and engagement forums will help build trust, reduce tensions, and enhance collective commitment to party goals.

References

- Adamu, M., & Yusufu, A. (2025). Intra-party conflict and electoral performance: The experience of the Peoples Democratic Party in the 2023 Nigeria's presidential election. *Journal of African Politics and Governance*, 12(1), 44–59.
- Adebayo, A. (2020). Internal party democracy and political stability in Nigeria. *Journal of African Political Studies*, 12(2), 45–60.
- Adebayo, K., & Onuoha, J. (2023). Party finance, power tussles, and internal democracy in Nigeria. *Journal of African Political Studies*, 18(2), 145–162.
- Adebayo, K., & Yusuf, H. (2023). Ideological conflicts and policy implementation in Nigerian political parties. *African Journal of Governance and Policy*, 15(3), 201–220.
- Adebisi, F., & Chukwu, V. (2024). Intra-party arbitration, disciplinary committees, and political stability in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Political Science*, 19(1), 101–119.
- Adejumobi, S. (2021). *Party politics and leadership struggles in Africa*. London: Routledge.
- Adeniyi, K., & Ibrahim, S. (2023). Intra-party conflicts and electoral outcomes in Nigeria: Lessons from the 2023 general elections. *African Journal of Political Studies*, 18(1), 112–130.
- Adeyanju, T., & Ojo, A. (2023). Candidate selection processes and intra-party democracy in Nigeria. *Journal of African Elections*, 22(1), 34–51.
- Adeyemi, T., & Okon, E. (2019). Political parties and democratic consolidation in Nigeria: An appraisal of party cohesion and electoral process. *Journal of African Politics and Governance*, 14(2), 45–60.
- Ajayi, T., & Mohammed, I. (2024). Political godfathers and candidate imposition in Nigeria's democracy. *Journal of Contemporary African Politics*, 9(1), 61–79.
- Albert, I. O. (2005). Explaining 'godfatherism' in Nigerian politics. *African Sociological Review*, 9(2), 79–105.
- All Progressives Congress (APC). (2014). *Constitution of the All Progressives Congress (as amended)*. Abuja: APC National Secretariat.
- Ambali, T., Ibrahim, K., & Olatunji, R. (2024). The impact of intra-party conflict on candidates' defection in Southwestern Nigeria electoral outcome. *Nigerian Journal of Political Studies*, 18(3), 77–92.
- Basiru, A. (2019). Pervasive intra-party conflicts in a democratising Nigeria: Terrains, implications, drivers and options for resolution. *African Journal of Democracy and Development*, 5(2), 88–104.
- Bawa, A., & Sule, M. (2023). Factions and the fragmentation of political parties in Nigeria. *African Review of Democracy and Development*, 7(1), 65–82.
- Best, S. G. (2014). *Conflict and peace building in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Boucek, F. (2009). Rethinking factionalism: Typologies, intra-party dynamics and three faces of factionalism. *Party Politics*, 15(4), 455–485.
- Bratton, M. (2008). Vote buying and violence in Nigerian election campaigns. *Electoral Studies*, 27(4), 621–632.
- Chandra, K. (2004). *Why ethnic parties succeed: Patronage and ethnic head counts in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eze, C., & Bello, A. (2024). Policy disagreements and governance crises in Nigerian political parties. *African Review of Political Economy*, 51(4), 325–340.
- Eze, C., & Chukwu, V. (2023). Monetization of politics and internal party conflicts in Nigeria. *Journal of Politics and Development*, 16(3), 101–118.
- Ezeani, E. O. (2021). Electoral laws and intra-party conflict resolution in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Politics and Governance*, 15(1), 99–118.
- Ezeani, O. (2022). Candidate imposition and party crisis in Nigeria's electoral politics. *Journal of Political Development*, 15(2), 29–46.

- Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2019). Democratic backsliding and electoral integrity in Africa. *Journal of Democracy*, 30(4), 85–99.
- Heywood, A. (2020). *Politics* (5th Ed.). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Horowitz, D. L. (1985). *Ethnic groups in conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Huntington, S. P. (2020). *Political order in changing societies*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. (Original work published 1968)
- Ibrahim, J., & Umar, M. (2022). Electoral laws, party constitutions, and pre-election litigations in Nigeria. *Journal of African Elections*, 21(2), 133–152.
- Ibrahim, Y., & Yakubu, H. (2023). Party cohesion and electoral defeat: Evidence from Nigeria's 2023 elections. *Journal of Contemporary African Politics*, 11(2), 93–110.
- Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). (2022). *Official report on the use of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) in Nigerian elections*. Abuja: INEC Press.
- Lijphart, A. (2019). *Patterns of democracy: Government forms and performance in thirty-six countries* (2nd ed.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Lijphart, A. (2020). *Democracies: Patterns of majoritarian and consensus government in twenty-one countries*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Lindberg, S. I. (2007). Institutionalization of party systems? Stability and fluidity among legislative parties in Africa's democracies. *Government and Opposition*, 42(2), 215–241.
- Mainwaring, S. (1999). *Rethinking party systems in the third wave of democratization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Mills, C. W. (1956). *The power elite*. Oxford University Press.
- Mosca, G. (1939). *The ruling class and the governing class* (H. D. Kahn, Trans.). McGraw-Hill.
- Ndeche, C., Okolo, J., & Iroye, P. (2023). Managing intra-party conflicts in Nigeria through mediative-conciliation approaches. *Journal of Conflict Resolution in Africa*, 8(1), 70–86.
- Norris, P. (2021). *Strengthening electoral integrity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P. (2022). Do parties still matter? Political parties and democratic consolidation in the digital age. *Comparative Political Studies*, 55(8), 1321–1347.
- Norris, P., & Grömping, M. (2019). *Electoral integrity worldwide: The PEI 7.0 dataset*. Electoral Integrity Project, Harvard University.
- Nwankwo, C. (2023). Factionalism, defections, and party instability in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 41(3), 250–268.
- Nwankwo, C. (2024). *Primary election disputes and electoral outcomes in Nigeria*. Enugu: University of Nigeria Press.
- Nwankwo, C., & Ajayi, T. (2023). Manifestos, policy contradictions, and party cohesion in Nigeria. *Journal of Democracy in Africa*, 12(2), 209–227.
- Nwankwo, C., & Akinyemi, B. (2023). Factionalism, internal democracy, and dispute resolution in Nigerian political parties. *Journal of Political Development Studies*, 14(2), 155–173.
- Nwankwo, C., & Usman, A. (2023). Leadership succession and intra-party conflict in Nigeria. *Journal of African Political Development*, 11(1), 55–74.
- Ogundiya, I. S. (2022). Democracy and bad governance in Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Science*, 15(1), 55–70.
- Ogundiya, I., & Babawale, T. (2022). *Generational politics and leadership struggles in Nigeria*. Lagos: Concept Publications.
- Ojo, A. (2021). Judicial interventions in intra-party conflicts and their implications for Nigeria's democracy. *The Nigerian Journal of Law and Politics*, 15(2), 201–220.

- Ojo, E. (2023). Internal party democracy and the future of political stability in Nigeria. *African Governance Review*, 17(2), 55–72.
- Ojo, E. O. (2020). Election petitions and the judiciary in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *Nigerian Journal of Politics and Administration*, 17(1), 101–119.
- Ojo, E., & Olaniyan, R. (2022). Internal party democracy and leadership struggles in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *Journal of Political Inquiry*, 17(1), 25–42.
- Okeke, P. (2023). Party primaries, internal democracy, and the credibility of elections in Nigeria. *Electoral Studies Review*, 39(2), 77–95.
- Okonkwo, J. (2024). *Electoral performance and internal party conflicts in Nigeria's Fourth Republic*. Enugu: University of Nigeria Press.
- Okonkwo, J., & Akinyemi, B. (2024). Party reform, ideology, and youth engagement in Nigerian politics. *Governance and Development Studies*, 10(2), 88–107.
- Okonkwo, J., & Bello, A. (2023). Ambitions, rivalries, and internal conflicts in Nigerian parties. *African Journal of Party Politics*, 19(1), 93–112.
- Okonkwo, J., & Eze, C. (2023). Candidate imposition and its electoral consequences in Nigeria. *Journal of African Democracy*, 15(2), 65–83.
- Olalekan, S. (2024). *Ideological rifts and generational divides in Nigerian political parties*. Ibadan: University Press.
- Olalekan, S., & Bello, A. (2023). Legal disputes, voter apathy, and party politics in Nigeria. *African Review of Political Economy*, 50(3), 267–284.
- Olalekan, S., & Yusuf, H. (2024). Parallel primaries and judicial interventions in Nigeria's elections. *African Electoral Studies*, 13(1), 119–138.
- Omodia, S. M. (2019). Political parties and electoral violence in Nigeria. *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration*, 7(1), 1–12.
- Omodia, S. M., & Aliu, M. M. (2022). Intra-party conflicts and electoral process in Nigeria: The case of the APC. *Journal of African Political Studies*, 17(3), 201–217.
- Omotola, J. S. (2017). Political parties and the quest for internal democracy in Nigeria. *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, 13(1), 125–147.
- Omotola, J. S. (2019). *Political parties and democratic consolidation in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Pareto, V. (1968). *The rise and fall of elites* (Abridged ed.; A. M. Henderson, Trans.). Bedminster Press.
- Salihu, M., & Musa, I. (2024). Electoral setbacks and the role of party disunity in Northern Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Behaviour*, 16(3), 117–134.
- Sartori, G. (2019). *Parties and party systems: A framework for analysis*. Colchester: ECPR Press. (Original work published 1976)
- Sule, B., Azizuddin, M., & Mat, B. (2018). Internal party conflicts and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 8(6), 78–89.
- Usman, A., & Abdulrahman, L. (2023). Intra-party democracy and electoral defeats in emerging democracies: The Nigerian experience. *Journal of African Democratic Transitions*, 10(2), 121–138.
- Yusuf, H., & Bello, A. (2024). Ethnic balancing, representation, and party conflicts in Nigeria. *Journal of Ethnic and Regional Politics*, 12(4), 311–328.