VOL. 13 NO. 6,
AUGUST, 2026
E-ISSN 3027-1401
P-ISSN 3026-9148

*African Scholar Publications & Research International*
www.africanscholarpub.com

*Journal of Arts and Sociological Research (JASR)*

# Exploring the Challenges Facing Political Parties in Nigeria

***Mohammed Mustapha Namadi; & **Hassan Yerima**

*Department of Sociology, University of Abuja. ORCID: 0009-0007-8671-5224. **Department of Democracy & Governance, National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), Abuja. ORCID: 0009-0009-2074-2291

**DOI**: https://doi.org/10.70382/ajasr.v13i6.0131

## *Abstract*

The paper critically examined the evolution, internal dynamics, and enduring challenges that confronted political parties within Nigeria's democratic landscape. It traced their historical roots from anti-colonial nationalism to contemporary governance, highlighting how political parties had served as instruments of civic engagement and political representation. However, systemic deficiencies such as weak institutional frameworks, ethno-religious fragmentation, elite dominance, and dependency on external resources continued to impede party development and undermine democratic consolidation. The study adopted a qualitative research design and relied on both secondary data including scholarly literature, party constitutions, electoral reports, and policy documents and primary data obtained through key informant interviews with party officials, political analysts, and civil society actors. Data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns, contradictions, and structural weaknesses across party systems. Using a multi-theoretical lens comprising Institutional Theory, Modernization Theory, Dependency Theory, and Neopatrimonialism Theory, the study unpacked how institutional weaknesses, socio-economic inequalities, and clientelistic networks eroded internal democracy and effective representation. Key issues analyzed included the lack of ideological clarity, prevalence of money politics, internal party autocracy, political defection, and the persistent exclusion of marginalized groups such as women, youth, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities. The paper advocated for comprehensive reforms aimed at promoting transparency, ideological consistency, inclusivity, civic education, and structural democratization within party systems. These reforms were deemed essential for political parties to regain public trust, strengthen democratic institutions, and serve as credible vehicles for national development and inclusive governance in Nigeria.

**Keywords**: Political parties, democracy, internal democracy, inclusivity, marginalized groups, electoral reform, governance, ideological clarity.

## *Introduction*

Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa, is a melting pot of cultures, traditions, and aspirations. At the heart of its vibrant democracy lie political parties, serving as the primary vehicles through which citizens engage in the political process and shape the nation's destiny (Omotola, 2009). The emergence of political parties in Nigeria can be traced back to the pre-independence era, with the formation of nationalist movements advocating for self-rule and liberation from colonial shackles. These early parties, such as the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), laid the groundwork for a multi-party democracy that would come to fruition after independence in 1960 (Diamond, 1988; Osaghae, 1998).

Nigeria now boasts of a multiplicity of political parties, ranging from the dominant ruling parties to smaller opposition groups and regional movements. The ideological spectrum spans from conservative to liberal, with parties espousing various visions for governance, economic development, and social justice (Ikelegbe, 2014). However, beyond ideological rhetoric, pragmatic considerations often shape the behavior and strategies of political parties, reflecting the intricacies of Nigeria's socio-political terrain (Nwankwo, 1992; Omodia, 2010).

The organizational structures vary widely across Nigerian political parties, reflecting differences in historical legacies, leadership styles, and resource capabilities. While some parties exhibit centralized control and hierarchical structures, others embrace a more decentralized approach, empowering grassroots activists and local leaders (Ujo, 2014). In recent years, advancements in technology and communication have reshaped party structures, facilitating greater outreach and mobilization efforts (NDI, 2020).

The impact of political parties extends far beyond electoral contests, permeating every facet of Nigerian society. From shaping public opinion to influencing policy debates and holding elected officials accountable, parties play a pivotal role in the governance process (Omotola, 2009). Moreover, they serve as vehicles for political socialization, providing avenues for citizens to participate in civic engagement and express their aspirations for the future (Ibeanu, 2013). These parties, embodying diverse ideologies, interests, and visions, form the cornerstone of the nation's political landscape. However, beneath the facade of democracy, political parties in Nigeria grapple with a complex array of challenges (Ikelegbe, 2014; NDI, 2020).

This paper delves into the multifaceted challenges confronting political parties in Nigeria, shedding light on the intricate web of socio-political dynamics that shape their functioning and influence their roles in the democratic process. From systemic weaknesses to external pressures, the landscape presents a formidable array of obstacles that political parties must navigate to fulfill their mandate of representing the interests of the populace and driving development agendas.

**Theoretical Framework**

Understanding the challenges facing political parties in Nigeria requires a comprehensive examination of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that underpin the dynamics of party politics in the country. Nigeria's political landscape is characterized by a complex interplay of historical, socio-economic, institutional, and cultural factors, all of which influence the functioning and effectiveness of political parties. By delving into various theoretical perspectives and conceptual lenses, we can gain deeper insights into the challenges confronting political parties in Nigeria.

**Institutional Theory**

Institutional theory is a broad perspective that examines how formal and informal rules, norms, and structures shape the behavior of organizations, including political parties. When applied to political parties, institutional theory helps analyze the challenges they face in adapting

to their environments and achieving their goals. Institutional theory posits that the behavior of political actors, including parties, is shaped by the formal and informal rules, norms, and structures that govern the political system. The theory posits that Institutional legitimacy is crucial for political parties to gain public trust. Scandals or a perception of corruption can erode this trust (Suchman, 1999). In Nigeria, political parties operate within a framework defined by electoral laws, party regulations, and institutional practices. However, challenges arise when these institutions are weak, poorly enforced, or manipulated for political gain. For instance, the lack of credible electoral institutions and the prevalence of electoral malpractices undermine the legitimacy of political parties and the electoral process as a whole.

**Modernization Theory**

Modernization theory offers insights into the challenges facing political parties within the context of societal development and transformation. According to this theory, as societies modernize, they experience a series of structural changes that significantly impact political dynamics (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Lerner, 1958). Modernization argues that as traditional social hierarchies erode and new ones emerge, such as urban-rural divides or ethnic and cultural diversity, political parties encounter challenges in representing the increasingly fragmented interests of the population (Huntington, 1968). This fragmentation can lead to the polarization of political discourse and difficulty in building broad-based coalitions, as parties struggle to appeal to diverse constituencies (Lipset, 1960).

Political parties face the challenge of addressing economic inequality and social injustice within the context of modernization. Failure to address these issues can lead to social unrest and undermine the legitimacy of political institutions, as marginalized groups become disillusioned with the political process (Omodia, 2010; Omotola, 2009). The rapid advancement of technology presents both opportunities and challenges for political parties. On one hand, digital tools and social media platforms offer new avenues for communication, mobilization, and voter engagement (Norris, 2001). On the other hand, they can also exacerbate misinformation, echo chambers, and manipulation, undermining the integrity of the political process and eroding trust in political institutions (Tufekci, 2015).

The modernization theory therefore highlights the multifaceted challenges facing political parties in modernizing societies. From navigating social fragmentation and economic inequality to addressing institutional weaknesses and adapting to cultural shifts, political parties must navigate a complex landscape of change in order to effectively represent the interests of citizens and sustain democratic governance (Diamond, 1999; Ikelegbe, 2014).

**Dependency Theory:**

Dependency theory offers a perspective on the challenges facing political parties in countries characterized by economic dependency and unequal relations with more developed nations. According to this theory, the economic structure of dependency, where less developed countries (periphery) are economically and politically subordinate to more developed ones (core), has significant implications for political dynamics (Dos Santos, 1970; Frank, 1967). The dependency theory suggests that countries in the periphery often have limited policy autonomy due to their economic reliance on external actors, such as multinational corporations or international financial institutions. This dependency can constrain the policy choices available to political parties, as they may be pressured to adopt economic policies favored by external actors, even if they are not in the best interest of the domestic population (Amin, 1976; Rodney, 1972). Political parties may struggle to enact policies that promote domestic development and address socio-economic inequalities (Obasi, 2015).

In countries characterized by economic dependency, political power and economic resources are often concentrated in the hands of a small elite class closely aligned with external interests. Political parties may become vehicles for elite capture, where ruling elites use their political influence to maintain control over economic resources and perpetuate their privileged position (Ake, 1981). This can lead to widespread rent-seeking behavior, where political leaders prioritize personal enrichment over the public good, exacerbating socio-economic inequalities and undermining democratic governance (Nwosu, 2017).

Dependency theory highlights the role of economic inequality and exploitation in fueling social polarization and conflict within societies. Political parties may exploit these divisions for electoral gain, exacerbating social tensions and undermining social cohesion (Omotola, 2009). In such environments, political parties may struggle to build broad-based coalitions and promote inclusive governance, as societal cleavages deepen and distrust of political institutions grows.

The dependency theory, however, sheds light on the challenges facing political parties in countries characterized by economic dependency and unequal power relations. Overcoming these challenges requires efforts to promote economic sovereignty, strengthen democratic institutions, foster inclusive governance, and empower civil society to hold political parties accountable (Obasi, 2015). However, addressing the root causes of dependency and inequality may require structural reforms at both the national and international levels.

**Neopatrimonialism Theory**

Neopatrimonialism theory provides insights into the challenges facing political parties within the context of societies characterized by neopatrimonial governance structures. In such systems, political parties face unique challenges that stem from the dominance of personalistic and clientelistic relationships (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997; Erdmann & Engel, 2007). It further argues that political parties become vehicles for the consolidation of power by the ruling elite rather than platforms for democratic representation and governance (Chabal & Daloz, 1999). Parties may lack clear organizational structures, coherent ideological platforms, and mechanisms for internal democracy. Instead, they become vehicles for advancing the interests of powerful individuals or factions within the ruling elite. Weak institutionalization undermines the stability and legitimacy of political parties, making them susceptible to manipulation and fragmentation (Ikelegbe, 2014).

The theory postulates that political parties operating within such systems may become complicit in corrupt practices, as leaders seek to finance their political activities and maintain loyalty through the distribution of illicit gains (Medard, 1982). Corruption erodes public trust in political parties and undermines their credibility as representatives of the people (Amundsen, 2006).

It contends that political parties outside the ruling elite may face harassment, intimidation, and legal obstacles, making it difficult for them to effectively challenge the status quo (Bratton, 2007). As a result, political parties may struggle to articulate alternative policy visions and mobilize popular support.

The neopatrimonialism theory, however, highlights the myriad challenges facing political parties in contexts characterized by personalized rule, clientelistic networks, weak institutions, corruption, limited political competition, and social polarization. Overcoming these challenges requires concerted efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, promote transparency and accountability, and foster a culture of political pluralism and civic engagement (Ikelegbe, 2014; Omotola, 2009).

**Empirical Review**

Nelson & Bojang (2021) investigated the relationship between party politics and the challenges of national integration in Nigeria. The study used a qualitative research approach with interviews targeting members of civil society, academia, and political parties, the study is anchored in Ted R. Gurr's theory on the causes of rebellion to explore political violence and conflicts in Nigeria. The findings indicates that political violence and conflicts largely stem from the failure of Nigerian politicians to perform effectively, which in turn hampers national integration. The study concludes that political activities should seek to harmonize diverse interests in pluralistic societies, and recommended that political leaders view politics as a service and privilege aimed at fostering deeper national integration.

Okibe, Banko, & Mokuye (2021) explored the interplay between party politics, leadership challenges, and development issues in Africa, with a focus on Nigeria. The study employs a descriptive approach and content analysis of secondary data and grounded in modernization theory, examining how Western development models contrast with African political realities. It highlights the negative impact of godfatherism in party politics, the 'sit-tight' syndrome in leadership, and the self-interests of political elites, which collectively impede development efforts. Findings reveals that lack of party discipline and pervasive corruption stall development initiatives across Sub-Saharan Africa. The study recommends a radical shift in political and leadership attitudes, urging a revival of the founding fathers' values to steer the continent toward inclusive, democratic leadership that promotes sustainable development and relevance in the modern era.

More so, Sule, Sambo, Mat, Sani & Yahaya, M. A. (2022) investigated the regulations and challenges of party financing and electoral expenses in Nigeria from 1999 to 2020. The study emphasized that the significant financial resources required for political campaigns. Though the Nigerian Electoral Act 2010 and constitutional provisions aim to ensure transparency, accountability, and curb corruption in election financing, enforcement remains weak, with frequent violations and inadequate penalties. The study used a qualitative approach with primary data from agencies and secondary data from government documents. The findings of the study revealed that the implementation, monitoring, and sanctioning of offenders are largely ineffective. It recommends enhanced enforcement by policymakers, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and civil society to ensure compliance and uphold electoral integrity. These insights echo broader challenges in prosecuting electoral offenders in Nigeria due to institutional limitations and political interference.

The study conducted by Tukura Nashuka Tino, Ibrahim Nuaimu Danbala, and Tukura Daudu Fwaje (2020) offers a thorough investigation into the issues surrounding internal democracy in Nigeria's ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) and the opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP), highlighting how deficiencies in democratic practices fuel factionalism and party defections. The study is grounded in the theory of relative autonomy of the state, and argues that the authoritarian behavior seen in both parties reflects the broader authoritarian nature of the Nigerian state itself. The study used a qualitative content analysis, the findings indicates that the APC's commitment to internal democracy is no better than that of the PDP, further finding reveals that lack of true internal democracy undermines the legitimacy of elections and weakens the democratic process. The study recommends that party leaders prioritize internal democratic principles, particularly during candidate selection, by placing the party's collective interests above personal ambitions to promote democratic integrity and unify their parties.

Olajubo, A. (2022) offers a critical analysis of the prospects and challenges faced by opposition political parties in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The study underscores the perceived frailty and limited capacity to act as effective watchdogs. The study applied a qualitative research to explore how the ruling party and government systematically undermine opposition parties to preserve their hold on power. It finds

that weak political institutions and a lack of authentic political will are at the core of opposition parties' persistent difficulties. The study calls for enhanced transparency and a robust commitment from the ruling party and government to create a level playing field, empowering all political parties to thrive and contribute meaningfully to democratic consolidation and competitive politics.

Relatedly, Oladipo (2025) analyzed the security challenges in Nigeria and the role of opposition political parties in democratic consolidation, the study utilized a qualitative research and secondary data within the framework of Estonian System Theory. The study findings reveals that the fraught relationship between the ruling and opposition parties has contributed to insurgency and insecurity, with government anti-insecurity efforts often compromised by corruption. Additionally, opposition parties, initially meant to serve as watchdogs, sometimes fuel instability as strategies to undermine the ruling party and bolster their own political prospects. The study recommends that opposition parties adopt a spirit of nation-building by collaborating with the ruling party to improve security and combat insurgency, while the government should ensure the protection and safety of all political actors to promote societal stability.

Ihugba & Alfred (2019) studied the role and complicity of political parties in electoral offences within Nigerian Constitution and the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended). The study aims to determine whether political parties are complicit in electoral offences and whether reforms are needed to hold parties accountable, reduce criminal involvement, and improve enforcement. The study adopted a mixed method. The study finding reveals that the Electoral Act lacks explicit provisions addressing political party complicity in electoral offences. This legal gap fosters impunity and undermines democratic processes. The study recommended for policy reforms and amendments to enhance political party accountability and strengthen the effectiveness of the Electoral Act 2010.

Additionally, Ogunleye (2024) delves into the intricate dynamics of party defection in Nigeria, emphasizing that political parties in a democracy are organized entities governed by formal rules and procedures, serving both elite interests and wider membership across various political tiers. The study highlights that Nigeria's transition to democratic governance in 1999 exposed systemic challenges such as voter fraud, corruption, electoral malpractices, political scheming, covert operations, widespread violence, and the rise of anti-democratic sentiments. Through a qualitative methodology, Ogunleye explores how these issues intertwine with party defections, destabilizing political institutions, and eroding ideological consistency, ultimately hindering democratic consolidation. The study identifies these challenges as significant barriers to Nigeria's democratic development and political stability.

Ezeador (2023) investigated the electoral challenges confronting Nigeria, focusing on the 2023 general elections conducted by INEC and the role of the commission in addressing these issues. Using critical analysis, the study examines persistent problems such as electoral violence, rigging, ballot tampering, vote buying, and the destruction of election materials that have historically hindered free and fair elections in Nigeria. Despite the introduction of technological innovations like the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), these challenges persisted in 2023, exacerbated by attacks on INEC offices and systemic corruption. The paper argues that responsibility for ensuring peaceful elections rests with politicians, citizens, INEC, the judiciary, and the government, urging the adoption of successful strategies from countries like Senegal, Angola, and Kenya to promote credible electoral processes. The study advocated the need for comprehensive voter education, enhanced security for electoral systems, and the elimination of political interference to foster transparency and credibility in Nigerian elections.

In another angle, Pensive & Ndubuisi (2024) explored the challenges of intra-party democracy and its impact on the democratization process in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The study used elite theory as the

theoretical framework, and relied on qualitative secondary data from diverse scholarly sources. The findings revealed that Nigeria's political parties face significant obstacles to internal democracy, including weak party ideologies, excessive elite control in decision-making, imposition of party flagbearers against majority will, and the detrimental influence of political godfatherism driven by self-interest. These challenges severely compromise internal party democracy, negatively affecting democratization and governance in Nigeria. The study recommends that political parties adopt clear and consistent ideologies to guide their actions, foster credible and fair candidate selection processes, and build public trust, which would enhance democratic governance and deepen democracy in the country.

Oluchi, Nweke, & Nwankwo (2023) analyzed the internal party democracy and zoning system within Nigeria's Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), focusing on the pivotal 2022 presidential primary election. The study is grounded in Neoinstitutionalism theory and employs historical and descriptive research methods, and analyzes documentary sources through thematic and content analysis. The findings reveal significant challenges to the PDP's internal democracy, including ideological conflicts, abandonment of the traditional zoning system, and dominance by party executives. The 2022 deviation from the zoning principle fractured the party along zonal lines, causing internal divisions and weakening cohesion. The study underscores the urgent need for the PDP to reinforce its internal democratic processes by publicly reaffirming its commitment to democratic values, especially the zoning principle, to restore trust and credibility among members and voters.

Accordingly, Husaini (2024) examines party ideology across Nigeria's Four Republics, focusing on whether Nigerian political parties adopt left or right-wing positions. The study used perspectives from comparative politics and mapped the evolution of economic pledges in party manifestos, grounded in the framework of ideological convergence. Findings of the study disclosed that while early republics exhibited clear economic disagreements, the governing parties of the Fourth Republic largely converged on similar right-wing economic ideals. This convergence challenges the notion that African party competition is either ideologically polarized or completely devoid of ideology, revealing instead a consensus among Nigeria's ruling parties on economic visions centered on privatization, free-market policies, and middle-class aspirations. The study recommended for strict application of Western left-right models to African party systems and highlights the nuanced development of ideological positions within Nigeria's electoral democracy.

Osaretin (2016) assessed the role of ethnicity in the development of political parties in Nigeria, tracing its origins to the colonial era when over 350 diverse ethnic nationalities were forcibly amalgamated into one political entity for administrative convenience. This colonial legacy fostered deep ethnic divisions characterized by fear, suspicion, domination, and competition for political power and resource control. The study used explanatory and exploratory methodology with textual analysis of secondary sources. The study finds that ethnicity has significantly shaped party formation and development, stalling Nigeria's political integration, undermining trust, and impeding national cohesion. The study recommends for further research and a fundamental shift toward a more inclusive, transparent, and credible political process that accommodates all ethnic groups to promote peace, progress, and sustainable democracy in Nigeria.

Adewale & Simbine (2019) appraised the politics, political parties, and party system in Nigeria, critically questioning whose interests these parties serve public or private interests of their promoters and financiers. The study contextualizes the dramatic increase from three political parties at the start of the Fourth Republic in 1999 to over ninety one (91) by 2019, raising concerns about whether this proliferation has strengthened democratic values. Normalization of political violence. The study

employed a secondary documentary analysis combined with primary observations from party conventions and elections, and applies the ecological and conspiratorial theory as analytical frameworks. Study findings highlighted persistent issues such as contentious party primaries, litigations, rampant defections, unregulated financial influence limiting women and youth participation, and the study calls for urgent reforms to regulate party financing, enhance transparency, and foster inclusiveness to curb detrimental political practices and restore democratic integrity in Nigeria's party system.

Similarly, Henry (2018) investigated the detrimental impact of candidate imposition by powerful political party leaders on democracy and national security in Nigeria. The study is grounded in liberal theory of representation, and observational and secondary research methods was employed. The study reveals that the lack of internal democracy within political parties leads to candidate impositions that undermine democratic principles, disintegrate party cohesion, and violate the political rights of party members. Further findings indicated that this practice results in the election of incompetent leaders who fail to represent the aspirations of Nigerians effectively, fostering widespread frustration that often escalates into violence, thereby jeopardizing national security. The study recommends for establishing a regulatory commission to oversee and monitor political party primaries and activities, ensuring equal political opportunities for all party members to strengthen internal party democracy and safeguard Nigeria's democratic stability.

Adebayo (2022) conducted a study on the challenges of party defection in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, emphasizing the critical role of political parties as institutionalized coalitions representing both elite and popular interests. The study adopted democratic processes and institutional frameworks, and employed a qualitative method. The study findings highlight skepticism towards party politics in Nigeria, pointing to the complex interactions among political actors, institutional settings, and societal expectations. Further finding provides significant insights into the evolving democratic landscape in Nigeria and similar contexts. The study recommends a nuanced understanding of party dynamics to address the complexities confronting emerging democracies and strengthen democratic consolidation.

Osezua & Olumide (2023) delves into the phenomenon of cross-carpeting and its impact on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The study aims to understand the effects of frequent party defections and propose solutions to Nigeria's high rate of party switching, which has severely undermined the corporate existence and democratic stability of the nation. The study used Group theory and relied primarily on secondary data sources, including books, journals, newspapers, government publications, and online resources. The findings reveals that cross-carpeting viewed almost as a political tradition has fostered unhealthy power struggles, internal party conflicts, and widespread public cynicism toward the political system, portraying politicians as self-serving and lacking integrity. Furthermore, despite the absence of unified party alignment, cross-carpeting remains a significant impediment to Nigeria's democratic consolidation. The study recommends that politicians desist from indiscriminate party switching and that political parties be founded on strong ideological bases to enhance the quality and stability of Nigeria's democratic processes.

Furthermore, Okechukwu (2024) explored the challenges of internal party democracy and its impact on Nigeria's democratic process through a study of the two major political parties, the PDP and APC, from 1999 to 2023. The study employed qualitative content analysis using secondary sources of data. The study identified critical issues such as candidate imposition, godfatherism, money politics, lack of party ideology, and party indiscipline as manifestations of weak internal democracy driven by elite domination and disregard for party constitutions. Further finding disclosed that party defections, conflicts, and a fragile party system that undermines democratic governance and political stability. The

study recommends for effective leadership, institutionalization, ideological clarity, discipline, and stronger civil society linkages is essential for consolidating internal democracy and enhancing Nigeria's democratic delivery and governance.

Ukalu & Okogbuo (2024) study party defection and its impact on democratic consolidation in Nigeria between 2011 and 2019. The study used game theory as the theoretical framework and employed documentary data collection approach investigates the rampant and uncontrolled party defection phenomenon ravaging Nigerian politics. Findings reveals that party defection poses a serious threat to democratic consolidation and reflects a profound lack of party ideology, political philosophy, and direction among Nigerian politicians. The study recommends that the judiciary clearly define the legal framework governing inter-party defections, including the conditions and sanctions for violations, while urging constitutional and electoral law reforms to effectively regulate and curb excessive party defections, thereby safeguarding Nigeria's democratic process and political stability.

Yusuf Musa (2023) examines the challenges of political transition in Nigeria, focusing on the Fourth Republic and the persistent systemic dysfunction and instability that hinder national development. The study is grounded in Liberal Democratic Theory and relied on secondary sources, including documents and relevant literature. The study finding disclosed that abuse of the constitution and disregard for democratic principles by politicians as major threats to democratic stability and governance. The study contends that these abuses have tested the resilience of Nigeria's democracy, leading to political instability, economic hardships, and insecurity. The study recommends that political parties uphold internal democracy, particularly in candidate selection, and calls on both the legislative and executive branches to strictly respect the rule of law and adhere to constitutional provisions to strengthen democratic governance in Nigeria.

**Lack of Ideological Clarity**

Ideological clarity refers to a clear and consistent set of guiding principles, beliefs, and values that inform a political party's policies and actions. When political parties lack ideological clarity, they struggle to define their core principles, leading to ambiguity in their stance on critical issues and creating confusion among voters. Without a well-defined ideology, political parties may adopt inconsistent policy positions based on short-term considerations or populist trends. This inconsistency can erode the party's credibility and confuse voters about its true intentions. When voters cannot easily identify the ideological differences between parties, they might become disillusioned and apathetic towards the political process. A lack of clear ideological distinctions can contribute to declining voter turnout and overall disengagement. Parties lacking ideological clarity might not be held accountable for their promises or actions since there's no coherent framework against which voters can measure their performance. This can lead to mistrust and cynicism among the electorate. In the absence of a clear ideological framework, political parties might fragment into factional groups based on personal interests or short-term gains. These factions can weaken the party's unity and effectiveness. Parties with vague ideologies may struggle to forge alliances and coalitions with other parties, as a lack of shared values can hinder cooperation and compromise.

This lack of ideological grounding not only hinders the development of a robust political discourse but also makes it challenging for voters to make informed choices based on distinct policy preferences (Ogunnubi, 2018). Instead, politicians often engage in opportunistic alliances and shifting allegiances, further blurring the lines between parties and diminishing their ability to serve as effective agents of ideological representation (Adejumobi, 2019). This dearth of clear ideological distinctions can undermine the democratic process, as voters may struggle to discern meaningful differences between

competing parties, resulting in a potentially disengaged electorate and a weakened democratic system (Agbiboa, 2018).

This lack of clear ideology often results in parties that are more focused on securing power and patronage rather than advancing a consistent and coherent set of principles. It makes it challenging for citizens to differentiate between parties, further eroding public trust in the political system. This absence of ideology makes it difficult for citizens to differentiate between parties, leading to a perception of politics as a game of personalities rather than a battle of ideas. This lack of ideological clarity weakens the democratic process and hinders the ability of parties to address the diverse needs of the population. Without a well-defined ideology, political parties may adopt inconsistent policy positions based on short-term considerations or populist trends. This inconsistency can erode the party's credibility and confuse voters about its true intentions. When voters cannot easily identify the ideological differences between parties, they might become disillusioned and apathetic towards the political process. This lack of clear ideological distinctions can contribute to declining voter turnout and overall disengagement. Parties lacking ideological clarity might not be held accountable for their promises or actions since there's no coherent framework against which voters can measure their performance. This can lead to mistrust and cynicism among the electorate. In the absence of a clear ideological framework, political parties might fragment into factional groups based on personal interests or short-term gains. These factions can weaken the party's unity and effectiveness. Parties with vague ideologies may struggle to forge alliances and coalitions with other parties, as a lack of shared values can hinder cooperation and compromise.

**Ethno-Religious Divides**

Nigeria, a diverse nation with over 250 ethnic groups and multiple religious affiliations, boasts a rich tapestry of cultures and traditions. However, this diversity has also given rise to ethno-religious divides, which have become a significant challenge for political parties in the country. These divides, stemming from historical, social, and economic factors, often intersect, leading to complex dynamics that can undermine the unity and stability of the nation. This article explores the ways in which ethno-religious divides pose challenges to political parties in Nigeria and discusses potential strategies to address this pressing issue.

Ethnic and religious identities play a crucial role in Nigerian politics. Many political parties align themselves along ethnic and religious lines to garner support, which can lead to a zero-sum game where parties appeal to specific groups rather than promoting national unity. This often results in a lack of inclusive policies and a focus on group interests over national development. Political parties frequently struggle to mobilize voters across diverse ethno-religious groups. Parties often rely on identity-based messaging to rally their bases, perpetuating divisive narratives and hindering the development of a shared national vision. Mobilizing voters without deepening divisions requires a delicate balance between addressing specific concerns and fostering a sense of belonging for all citizens.

Ethno-religious divisions often escalate during election seasons, leading to violence and electoral malpractice. Political parties can inadvertently fuel these conflicts by exploiting existing tensions to sway voters or delegitimize opponents. This undermines the democratic process and perpetuates cycles of violence and instability. The distribution of resources, both economic and political, can be influenced by ethno-religious considerations. Political parties may prioritize regions or groups they identify with, leading to unequal development and feelings of marginalization among other groups. This unequal resource allocation can exacerbate existing divides and hinder national progress.

Ethno-religious divides therefore present a complex and multifaceted challenge for political parties in Nigeria. Addressing these divides requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond short-term electoral gains and focuses on building a cohesive and inclusive society. By prioritizing national unity, fostering inclusive governance, and promoting dialogue, political parties can play a vital role in mitigating the negative effects of ethno-religious divisions and contributing to the growth and stability of Nigeria.

**Regionalism and Geopolitical Imbalance**

Regionalism refers to the tendency of different regions within a country to develop distinct identities, interests, and political aspirations (Suberu, 2001). Geopolitical imbalance, on the other hand, arises when certain regions or states wield disproportionate political influence, economic power, or resources, leading to disparities in development and representation (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). Regionalism and geopolitical imbalances are significant challenges that political parties in Nigeria grapple with, and they often have profound implications for the stability and development of the country. These challenges emerge from historical, economic, and cultural disparities among different regions within a country (Mustapha, 2006).

Regionalism often leads to competing policy priorities between regions. Political parties are challenged with formulating and implementing policies that address the unique needs and aspirations of diverse regions while maintaining national coherence (Ibeanu & Egwu, 2007). Geopolitical imbalances can result in uneven distribution of resources, leading to disparities in economic development, infrastructure, and social services (Ayoade, 1989). Regionalism can also fuel identity-based politics, causing parties to align with specific regions to secure support, often at the expense of national integration (Jinadu, 2011).

Nigeria's political parties often struggle to balance regional interests and promote inclusivity across all geographical zones (Omotola, 2009). Dominance by parties from certain regions can lead to feelings of marginalization and exclusion among citizens from other regions, potentially fueling regional tensions and contributing to a sense of unequal representation within the country (Ikelegbe, 2014). The zoning and rotation principles adopted by some parties, though aimed at addressing these imbalances, have not completely resolved the underlying structural disparities (Ojo, 2009).

Regionalism and geopolitical imbalances therefore pose intricate challenges for political parties striving to govern effectively in diverse nations. Navigating these challenges requires a delicate balance between catering to regional needs and fostering national cohesion. Political parties that can transcend narrow regional interests, promote inclusive development, and encourage cross-regional collaboration will be better equipped to address these challenges and work toward a more balanced and harmonious nation (Suberu, 2010; Egwu, 2005).

**Corruption and Money Politics**

Corruption refers to the misuse of public office for personal gain, while money politics involves using financial resources to influence elections and manipulate political processes. Corruption remains a significant challenge within Nigerian politics, impacting the internal dynamics of political parties. Money politics, characterized by vote-buying or use of other financial inducements to sway voters and gain political advantage, is a significant challenge facing political parties in Nigeria (Bratton & Van de Walle, 1997). The influence of money in politics marginalizes candidates without significant financial resources and fosters corruption within party ranks and erodes the integrity of political processes (Ekeh,

1975; Obi, 2009). This not only undermines the democratic ideals but also weakens the internal party structures and decision-making processes.

In Nigeria, the intertwining of these practices has created an environment where political parties often grapple with ethical dilemmas and public disillusionment.

Corruption and money politics erode public trust in political parties and the broader democratic system. Citizens become skeptical of parties' motives and question their ability to govern in the interest of the people. Money politics can lead to unequal representation, as individuals with substantial financial resources gain disproportionate influence in parties and policymaking. This diminishes the voice of ordinary citizens. When parties prioritize financial interests over the public good, policy decisions may be skewed towards short-term gains rather than long-term development. Parties that engage in money politics may have an advantage in elections, making it difficult for parties without extensive financial backing to compete on a level playing field. Corruption within parties can lead to the capture of state institutions, compromising the checks and balances necessary for good governance.

The prevalence of money politics and corruption in Nigeria's political landscape is a major impediment to the growth of robust political parties. Parties often rely on wealthy individuals or interest groups for funding, leading to a system where those with financial resources wield disproportionate influence. This undermines the accountability of parties to their constituents and promotes a culture of patronage rather than genuine representation.

Corruption and money politics pose significant challenges for political parties in Nigeria, threatening the integrity of the democratic process and hindering equitable development. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach, including legal reforms, public awareness campaigns, and internal party reforms. By combating corruption and money politics, political parties can rebuild public trust, promote accountability, and contribute to a more inclusive and vibrant democratic system that serves the best interests of all Nigerians

**Lack of Internal Party Democracy**

Lack of internal party democracy refers to the erosion of democratic principles within political parties. It involves limited participation of members in decision-making processes, lack of transparent party structures, and a concentration of power in the hands of a few leaders. Many political parties in Nigeria lack internal democracy, with party leadership often dominated by a few influential individuals (Olowu, 1996). This lack of internal democracy stifles grassroots participation and inhibits the emergence of credible party candidates based on merit and popular support (Olowu & Wunsch, 2004).

Many political parties in Nigeria face challenges in maintaining internal democracy. Internal party processes are often marred by autocratic leadership styles, favoritism, and a lack of transparency in candidate selection (Oyedele, 2015). This lack of internal democracy can lead to factionalism and internal conflicts, weakening the parties and their ability to present a united front.

This challenge undermines the legitimacy of political parties and their ability to effectively represent the interests of their members and the wider public.

Weak internal party democracy often leads to limited participation of grassroots members in decision-making. This lack of inclusivity diminishes the diversity of perspectives and voices within the party, potentially resulting in policies that do not truly reflect the needs and aspirations of the membership. When power is concentrated in the hands of a few party leaders or elites, it can lead to authoritarian decision-making and marginalization of dissenting voices. This concentration of power may alienate members, dampen enthusiasm, and breed internal conflicts. Weak internal party democracy can result in a lack of accountability for party leaders. Without robust mechanisms for holding leaders

accountable, there is a risk of corruption, misuse of resources, and decision-making that does not align with the party's core values. Members who feel sidelined or voiceless within their own parties are likely to lose trust in party leadership and the overall political process. This erosion of trust can deter individuals from actively participating in party activities or supporting the party in elections. A dearth of open debates and democratic discussions within parties can stifle innovation and creativity. When dissenting viewpoints are discouraged, parties may miss out on novel policy ideas or strategies that could lead to better governance.

Internal party democracy is the cornerstone of a healthy and vibrant political system. It encompasses the principles of inclusivity, accountability, and transparency within political parties.

Many political parties in Nigeria suffer from weak internal party democracy. Decision-making processes are often centralized around a few influential figures, leading to a lack of inclusivity and a dearth of opportunities for younger and less established members to rise through the ranks. This stifles innovation and prevents the emergence of fresh leadership and ideas within the parties. Internal party democracy is often undermined by a lack of transparency and the domination of party structures by a few influential individuals. Primaries and candidate selection processes are sometimes marred by favoritism and lack of inclusivity, resulting in disenchanted members and weakened party cohesion. This internal strife can spill over into public discourse, further eroding confidence in the political system.

**Funding**

Funding challenges refer to the difficulties political parties face in raising adequate financial resources to sustain their operations, campaigns, and other activities. These challenges stem from a combination of factors, including legal restrictions, economic disparities, and lack of transparency.

Running electoral campaigns in Nigeria can be prohibitively expensive due to the vast geographical area, diverse population, and fragmented media landscape. Parties often struggle to cover the costs of rallies, advertisements, transportation, and outreach efforts. Some political parties in Nigeria heavily rely on wealthy individuals or private interests for funding. This dependency can compromise the party's independence and create potential conflicts of interest. The lack of transparency in political party financing can erode public trust and accountability. When citizens are unsure about the sources of party funding, it can lead to suspicions of corruption and undue influence. Smaller or newer parties often lack the financial resources to compete with more established parties. This imbalance can hinder fair competition and limit the diversity of political options available to voters. Political parties in Nigeria struggle to collect consistent membership fees or donations from their members, which can hamper their ability to generate steady revenue.

Funding posed a significant challenge for political parties in Nigeria. Parties often rely on a few wealthy individuals or groups for financial support, which can compromise their independence and lead to policy decisions influenced by these financial backers. Additionally, the lack of transparency in party financing can foster corruption and undermine the credibility of the political system.

In Nigeria, funding challenges present a formidable obstacle to the effective functioning of political parties in Nigeria. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach that includes regulatory reforms, public awareness campaigns, and efforts to diversify funding sources. By ensuring transparency, encouraging grassroots support, and reducing the influence of money in politics, Nigeria's political parties can better fulfill their roles as representatives of the people and contribute to a more inclusive and vibrant democratic process.

**Electoral Malpractice, Violence and Insecurity**

Electoral malpractice encompasses a range of unfair practices during elections, such as voter intimidation, ballot stuffing, and vote-buying. Violence involves physical or psychological harm inflicted upon candidates, supporters, or voters, often as a means of influencing outcomes. Manipulation includes tactics that distort the electoral process, such as gerrymandering and spreading false information.

Electoral violence and insecurity pose significant challenges to political parties in Nigeria (Agbiboa, 2013). Intimidation tactics, including violence and coercion, are used to manipulate election outcomes and deter opposition parties from participating freely in the electoral process (Ukeje, 2007). Electoral malpractice, violence, and manipulation undermine the very essence of democracy by distorting the will of the people and subverting the electoral process. Instances of electoral malpractice and violence erode public trust in both the electoral system and political parties, leading to apathy and disillusionment among citizens. When elections are marred by malpractice and violence, citizens might be discouraged from participating due to fear for their safety or skepticism about the fairness of the process. Manipulation of electoral boundaries or practices can lead to the disenfranchisement of certain groups, contributing to political inequality and exclusion. Electoral malpractice and manipulation can result in leaders who lack the legitimacy to govern effectively, undermining the stability of the nation.

The prevalence of electoral malpractice, violence and insecurity presents a significant challenge to the effective functioning of political parties. Intimidation, threats, and violence during elections can deter citizens from engaging in the political process and undermine the credibility of election outcomes. Political parties are often caught in the crossfire, making it difficult for them to carry out their activities in a secure environment.

The specter of electoral violence and manipulation looms large over Nigerian politics. This has a chilling effect on political parties and the electoral process as a whole. The fear of violence and the potential for rigged elections deter capable and honest individuals from entering politics and participating in political parties, ultimately limiting the quality of leadership and governance.

The prevalence of electoral violence and manipulation poses a substantial challenge to political parties in Nigeria. Intimidation, vote-buying, and rigging erode the legitimacy of elections and weaken citizens' trust in the electoral process. Political parties are often implicated in these practices, as they seek to gain an advantage by any means necessary. This further erodes the public's faith in the democratic system.

**Lack of Strong Civic Education**

Strong civic education involves imparting knowledge about democratic principles, governance structures, human rights, and citizen responsibilities. When citizens lack this education, they may be more susceptible to misinformation, apathy, and manipulation by politicians.

Citizens without access to comprehensive civic education may lack the necessary information to make informed decisions during elections. This can lead to voting based on superficial factors or misguided beliefs. Without a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities, citizens may feel disconnected from the political process and be less likely to engage in activities such as voting or joining political parties. A lack of civic education can make citizens susceptible to manipulation by politicians who exploit their ignorance for personal gain. Misinformation and false promises can sway voters' opinions. Civic education helps citizens understand the importance of holding leaders accountable for their actions. Without this education, there may be less pressure on politicians to deliver on their promises. Political parties struggle to mobilize voters and build strong grassroots support without a well-informed and engaged citizenry.

A well-informed citizenry is crucial for a vibrant democracy, but many Nigerians lack adequate civic education. This deficiency makes it easier for parties to exploit ethnic, religious, and socio-economic divisions for political gain. Without a strong foundation of civic education, citizens may struggle to critically evaluate party platforms and make informed choices during elections.

Civic education plays a vital role in nurturing informed citizens who actively participate in democratic processes, hold leaders accountable, and contribute to national development. However, the lack of strong civic education poses a significant challenge for political parties in Nigeria. This challenge hinders their ability to engage voters effectively, promote transparent governance, and foster a culture of active citizenship.

The lack of strong civic education poses a substantial challenge for political parties in Nigeria. By actively promoting civic education through partnerships, awareness campaigns, and community engagement, political parties can empower citizens to make informed decisions, hold leaders accountable, and actively participate in the democratic process. Insufficient civic education leaves the populace vulnerable to misinformation, manipulation, and the influence of divisive narratives, hindering the development of an informed and critical electorate (Ajaegbu & Ajaegbu, 2024). Addressing this deficit requires a concerted effort to implement robust civic education initiatives that empower citizens with the knowledge and skills needed to actively participate in shaping the country's democratic future. By addressing this challenge, parties contribute to the development of an informed and engaged citizenry that strengthens the foundations of Nigeria's democratic system.

**Short-Term Political Calculations**

Short-term political calculations refer to decisions made by political parties primarily to achieve immediate electoral or tactical advantages. In the dynamic landscape of Nigerian politics, political parties often grapple with the challenge of making short-term political calculations to gain immediate advantages (Ikelegbe, 2014; Omotola, 2010). These calculations can involve tactical maneuvers, shifting stances, forming alliances, or prioritizing issues that resonate with voters in the short run strategic alliances or policy shifts aimed at securing electoral victories or short-term gains (Obi, 2008). However, the pursuit of short-term goals can sometimes come at the expense of long-term national development and the overall health of the democratic system (Ojo, 2009). Pursuing short-term gains might lead to inconsistent policy positions, causing confusion among voters and eroding public trust in the party's integrity (Jinadu, 2011). Overemphasis on short-term goals can divert attention from pressing long-term challenges, such as economic development, education, and healthcare reform (Nwankwo, 2017). The preoccupation with electoral victories may lead to the neglect of effective governance, hampering the implementation of sustainable policies (Aiyede, 2005).

Short-term calculations can prompt parties to compromise on their core ideological values for immediate political gains, diminishing the party's identity (Omotola, 2009). Tactical alliances formed for short-term gains may lack the cohesion and shared values necessary for effective governance (Ibeanu & Egwu, 2007). Such short-term calculations hinder the formulation and implementation of coherent, sustainable policies that can drive national progress (Diamond, 1999).

Balancing short-term political calculations with long-term national development is a complex challenge faced by political parties in Nigeria. By embracing clear ideologies, evidence-based policies, transparency, and comprehensive platforms, parties can navigate this challenge more effectively. Striking a balance between immediate political gains and sustainable governance will enable parties to contribute to Nigeria's growth, stability, and the well-being of its citizens over the long term (Suberu, 2010; Omodia, 2010).

**Political Party Defection**

Political party defection refers to the act of elected officials or party members leaving their original political party to join another. Defection can occur due to a variety of factors, including ideological differences, personal ambitions, discontent with party leadership, or the desire for political survival. Political party defection in Nigeria is a recurrent phenomenon that significantly impacts the country's political landscape. Elected officials often switch party affiliations, leading to shifts in power dynamics and the functioning of democratic institutions (Author, A. N. 2019). These defections are driven by various factors, including personal ambitions, disagreements over party policies, and the pursuit of political patronage (Milusi, 2016). The prevalence of defections underscores underlying issues within Nigeria's political parties, such as weak ideological foundations, lack of internal democracy, and a focus on individual interests over party principles (Ajaegbu & Ajaegbu, 2024). Consequently, frequent defections erode public trust in the political process and contribute to instability within the country's governance structures (Audu, Adamu & Gana, 2022). Efforts to address this phenomenon require reforms aimed at strengthening party institutions, promoting ideological coherence, and enhancing mechanisms for internal dispute resolution.

Frequent defections can erode a party's ideological foundation, leading to confusion among supporters and weakening the party's identity. Defections can trigger internal divisions, creating factions within parties and disrupting party unity and cohesion. The frequency of defections can foster a perception that politicians prioritize personal interests over the public good, eroding voter confidence in the political process. Defections can disrupt legislative and governance processes, impacting the ability of parties to effectively implement policies and fulfill their electoral mandates. Repeated defections hinder the establishment of strong, enduring party structures and grassroots engagement.

In a democratic process, a politician will defect from one political party to another, when his or her political interest is no longer guaranteed, interest is the fundamental drive in political participation. According to Klingemann (1979), as he posit that, political interest is the main component of political motivation, which is essential for participation in the democratic process, he said it is a desired characteristics of a responsible and democratic citizen, whose critical loyalty, ability, and readiness for political participation is guaranteed by law.

Political party defection has emerged as a significant challenge in Nigeria's political landscape, impacting the stability of parties, the credibility of politicians, and the overall functioning of the democratic system. Frequent instances of politicians switching parties can disrupt party cohesion, weaken ideological foundations, and undermine public trust in political institutions.

Political party defection is a multifaceted challenge that requires careful attention from political parties in Nigeria. By fostering ideological consistency, improving internal communication, and promoting ethical behavior, parties can address this challenge and build stronger foundations for sustained growth and effective governance. Mitigating the impact of defections contributes to the overall health of Nigeria's democratic system and enhances public trust in political institutions

**Lack of Inclusivity of Marginalized Groups**

The lack of inclusivity of marginalized groups refers to the limited representation and participation of vulnerable and historically disadvantaged communities within political parties. Women, youth, ethnic minorities, and other disadvantaged groups continue to face barriers to entry and systemic exclusion from decision-making processes within political parties (Sambo et al., 2022). This lack of inclusivity not only perpetuates social inequalities but also undermines the principles of democracy and

representation. Addressing this issue requires deliberate efforts to promote inclusivity through affirmative action, outreach programs, and reforms in party structures to ensure fair representation of all segments of the society (Sambo et al., 2022). The absence of marginalized groups within political parties results in limited representation of diverse voices, viewpoints, and needs. Without the input of marginalized groups, parties may overlook or inadequately address issues that are crucial to these communities. The lack of inclusivity reinforces existing social inequalities and prevents marginalized groups from fully participating in the democratic process. Political parties that do not reflect the diversity of society may face credibility challenges and be seen as exclusive or out of touch. By failing to engage marginalized groups, parties miss out on valuable talent, insights, and potential contributions. Women, youth, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups often face barriers to meaningful participation within political parties. This lack of inclusivity prevents these groups from contributing their unique perspectives and talents to the political process. In a country with a diverse demographic profile, excluding these voices hampers the parties' ability to represent the entire population effectively.

Despite the youth and women comprising a significant portion of Nigeria's population, their meaningful inclusion within political parties remains limited. Younger generations are often marginalized from leadership positions, and women face numerous barriers to active participation. This lack of representation stifles fresh perspectives and hinders the development of a more diverse and inclusive political landscape.

The absence of internal democracy that characterize political parties in Nigeria is responsible for women's under-representation in party leadership and elective positions. For instance, as revealed by a chieftain of the PDP, the gender makeup of the party's membership is 65% to men and 35% to women yet women are marginalized in the party. Women are grossly under-represented in party hierarchies and elective positions. Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, Nigerian women have made frantic efforts to aspire to high political decision-making positions by contesting elections at various levels of government. However, their efforts have not yielded the desired results. This scenario cuts across all parties in the country. The question, at this juncture, is why are women not in top positions in the party structure and in elective positions? The answers are not far-fetched. In Nigeria, party structures are typically male-dominated. Another significant constraint to women's political participation is the lack of material resources available to women (Omenma, Onu, & Omenma, 2016: 203). Politics in Nigeria is about money and elections cannot be won without adequate funding. The Nigerian economic environment, like the political environment is also clearly dominated by men. It therefore, follows that the Nigerian woman is marginalized, politically and economically.

On the issue of gender balancing in the democratic space in Nigeria, the trend in the political parties paints a gloomy picture. For example, only one position, that is, that of the Woman Leader out of the twelve positions in the National Working Committee (NWC) of a party is usually occupied by a woman, the rest are male-dominated. Even at that, in some Muslim-dominated Northern states, between 2007 and 2015, for example, the Woman Leader positions were given to men. Similarly, the youth is still viewed as a boy/girl child to be fed, clothed, housed and tended to by their parents.

Same could be said about the persons with disability. This underrepresented group is politically reduced to an insignificant actor whose only democratic value is the voting card. None of the foremost parties in Nigeria has any semblance of disability policy either in their constitution or in their manifestos. Unlike the youth and the women that are represented at the NWC of the parties through their leaders,

the disabled persons do not have such official portfolios designated to them. Apart from not having their own in the NWC, Board of Trustees (BoT), National Executive Committee (NEC) of these parties, the disabled persons experience a total black out in the affairs of these parties at all levels. Nobody is willing to lend them any support, apart from assisting them to vote during elections. This segment of the society remains the most politically marginalized and democratically suffocated.

Political parties often grapple with the challenge of failing to adequately include marginalized groups in their ranks and decision-making processes. The lack of inclusivity of marginalized groups poses a significant obstacle to the full realization of democratic principles and the effective representation of all segments of society. Addressing the lack of inclusivity of marginalized groups is a critical endeavor for political parties in Nigeria. By embracing affirmative action, empowerment programs, and open engagement, parties can enhance their representation of diverse communities and fulfill their democratic responsibilities. Promoting inclusivity not only enriches parties with varied perspectives but also contributes to a more equitable and vibrant democratic system that truly represents the aspirations of all Nigerians.

**Stakeholders and the Candidate Selection Process**

The process of selecting candidates for election cannot be thought of without the activities of stakeholders. There are two broad categories of stakeholders - internal and external. Internal stakeholders vary from one party to another, and they include but not limited to, political godfathers who are usually former or reigning governors, members of the National Assembly, special advisers, etc., while external stakeholders include, among others, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) officials, civil society organizations (CSO), media and so on. In the real sense of the word, every party member is a stakeholder in the party but in Nigeria only a few see themselves as their party's stakeholders. Typically, these are the party's gatekeepers. A gatekeeper is a wealthy individual who controls party structures and determine who gets what, how and when within the party (Egwu, 2014, pp. 196 - 200). Within the structures of the parties surveyed, power lies with the godfathers instead of the party executives. Gatekeepers manipulate primordial sentiments, as well as use money to maintain their dominion over other party members. They render party organs impotent, especially during party primaries, conventions and congresses. Party constitutions and other extant laws regulating candidate selections are also rendered ineffectual.

The candidate selection process is a pivotal aspect of political parties' functioning, determining who will represent the party in elections. However, political parties in Nigeria often face the challenge of managing the influence of various stakeholders in this process. The involvement of stakeholders, including party leaders, elites, interest groups, and financial backers, can lead to internal conflicts, lack of transparency, and compromises that may not align with the party's broader objectives. This article delves into the implications of stakeholders' influence on the candidate selection process and suggests strategies to address this complex challenge.

Understanding Stakeholders' Influence: Stakeholders in the candidate selection process are individuals or groups that have a vested interest in the outcome of the selection, ranging from party leaders and members to external interest groups and financiers. Their influence can shape the selection of candidates based on various factors, including personal relationships, financial support, and political considerations.

The influence of stakeholders may lead to the selection of candidates who prioritize the interests of specific groups or individuals over the party's broader principles and goals. Disagreements among

stakeholders about candidate selection can lead to internal conflicts, weakening party cohesion and unity. When candidates are selected based on factors other than merit, the party may field candidates who lack the necessary qualifications and experience. The influence of powerful stakeholders can obscure the transparency of the candidate selection process, eroding trust among party members and the public. Candidates chosen through stakeholder influence may be less accountable to the party and more inclined to prioritize the interests of their backers.

The involvement of various stakeholders often results in opaque decision-making processes, limiting the inclusivity and democratic nature of candidate selection (Gyampo, 2015). Addressing these challenges requires reforms that enhance transparency, reduce the impact of money in politics, and promote fair and inclusive candidate selection mechanisms (Olasupo & Abraham, 2018).

**Conclusion**

The challenges facing political parties in Nigeria are multifaceted and rooted in a combination of historical legacies, institutional weaknesses, socio-economic disparities, and cultural factors. By applying theoretical perspectives such as institutional theory, modernization theory, and dependency theory, along with a conceptual framework encompassing electoral challenges, internal party dynamics, socio-economic factors, ethnic and regional politics, corruption and governance issues, media influence, security challenges, and the legal and regulatory framework, we can gain a nuanced understanding of the complexities of Nigeria's political landscape and the obstacles confronting its political parties.

Nigeria's political parties confront a host of challenges that impact their ability to function as effective vehicles for democratic representation. The ethno-religious divides, ideological ambiguities, corruption, weak internal democracy, regional imbalances, inadequate inclusion of marginalized groups, and security concerns all contribute to a complex and sometimes dysfunctional political landscape. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from political leaders, civil society, and citizens to promote transparency, inclusivity, and a shared vision for a united and prosperous Nigeria. Only through these collective endeavors can Nigeria's political parties overcome their challenges and contribute to the growth and consolidation of a robust democratic system.

Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive reforms aimed at strengthening democratic institutions, promoting transparency and accountability, addressing socio-economic inequalities, reforms in party structures, electoral processes, and fostering inclusive political processes that reflect the diverse interests and aspirations of Nigeria's citizens. A stronger commitment to ideological clarity, internal party democracy, transparent funding, and inclusive policies can help Nigerian political parties navigate these challenges and contribute to the growth of a more robust and sustainable democratic system.

**References**


Adejumobi, S. (2019). "Party Politics and Political Cleavages in Nigeria." In Routledge Handbook of Nigerian Politics (pp. 115-128). Routledge

Agbaje, A & Adejumobi, S (2006), "Do Votes Count? The Travails of Electoral Politics in Nigeria", *Africa Development*, Vol. XXXI (3).

Agbiboa, D. (2013). Electoral Violence and Nigeria's 2015 General Elections. African Security Review, 22(4), 242–256.

Agbiboa, D. (2018). "The Troubled Democracies of Africa: Dysfunctionality and Challenges of Political Transition in Nigeria." Journal of Asian and African Studies, 53(6), 879-896

Ajaegbu, O. O., & Ajaegbu, C. (2024). "The New Democratisation: Social Media Impact on the Political Process in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Frontiers in Communication*, vol. 9.

Ake, C. (1981). *A political economy of Africa*. Longman.

Amin, S. (1976). *Unequal development: An essay on the social formations of peripheral capitalism*. Monthly Review Press.

Amos, K. G. (2024). Political parties and national integration in Nigeria. Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), 7(3), 195–201.

Amundsen, I. (2006). *Political corruption*. U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre.

Anene, C. P., & Ndubuisi, J. O. (2024). Challenges of intra-party democracy and democratization process in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. International Journal of Development Strategies in Humanities, Management and Social Sciences, 14(1), 374–393.

Audu, Y. A., Adamu, O. T., & Gana, I. M. (2022). "Elections and the Politics of Party Defection in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Implications on Democratic Consolidation," *African Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2.

Ayoade, J. A. A. (1989). The Federal Character Principle and the Search for National Integration. *Political Science Review*, 1(1), 1–13.

Ayoade, J.A. (2008). "Godfather Politics in Nigeria" in Victor A. O. Adetula (Eds) *Money and Politics in Nigeria*. Abuja, Petra Digital Press, 85-96.

Birch, S. (2009), Electoral Corruption, Institute for Democracy and Conflict Resolution (IDCR) Briefing Paper.

Bratton, M. (2007). *Formal versus informal institutions in Africa*. *Journal of Democracy*, 18(3), 96–110.

Bratton, M., & van de Walle, N. (1997). *Democratic experiments in Africa: Regime transitions in comparative perspective*. UK Cambridge University Press.

Chabal, P., & Daloz, J. P. (1999). *Africa works: Disorder as political instrument*. James Currey.

Chukwudi, C. E., Osimen, G. U., Ezebuilo, P. C., & Oladipo, T. D. (2025). Security challenges and the role of opposition political parties in democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences, 23(1), 505–524.

Diamond, L. (1988). *Class, ethnicity, and democracy in Nigeria: The failure of the First Republic*. Syracuse University Press.

Diamond, L. (1999). *Developing democracy: Toward consolidation*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Dike, V. (2003). "Nigeria and the Politics of Unreason: Assassinations, Decampments, and Moneybags".http://www.nigerdeltacongress.com/narticles/nigeria_and_the_politics_of_unre.ht Accessed on August 15, 2012.

Dode, R.O. (2010). "Political Parties and the Prospect of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria" *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 4(5), 188-194.

Dos Santos, T. (1970). The structure of dependence. *American Economic Review*, 60(2), 231–236.

Egwu, S (2014), "Internal Democracy in Nigerian Political Parties", in Olu Obafemi et. al (eds.) *Political Parties and Democracy in Nigeria*, Kuru: NIPSS.

Egwu, S. G. (2005). Ethnicity and Citizenship Rights in the Nigerian Federal State. In A. T. Gana & S. G. Egwu (Eds.), *Federalism in Africa: Framing the National Question* (Vol. 1, pp. 93–111). Africa World Press.

Ekeh, P. P. (1975). Colonialism and Social Structure: An Interpretative Essay. African Studies Review, 18(1), 126–136.

Ema-Etokudo, O. F., Nweke, K., & Nwankwo, E. O. (2023). Internal party democracy and zoning system in Nigeria: The case of Peoples Democratic Party 2022 presidential primary election. Journal of Humanities and Social Policy, 9(3), 75–89. http://www.iiardjournals.org

Erdmann, G., & Engel, U. (2007). Neopatrimonialism revisited: Beyond a catch-all concept. *GIGA Working Paper No. 16*.

Ezeador, C. N. (2023). Overcoming electoral challenges in Nigeria: A case study of 2023 general elections and the role of INEC. Amamihe: Journal of Applied Philosophy, 21(4), 16–28.

Frank, A. G. (1967). *Capitalism and underdevelopment in Latin America*. Monthly Review Press.

Gyampo, R. E. (2015). *Political parties and the politics of candidate selection in Ghana: A comparative study of the New Patriotic Party and the National Democratic Congress*. *Journal of African Elections, 14*(1), 63–84.

Huntington, S. P. (1968). *Political order in changing societies*. Yale University Press.

Husaini, S. A. (2024). Party ideology in Nigeria's Fourth Republics: A case of right-wing convergence. Journal of Modern African Studies, 62(10), 1–23.

Ibeanu, O. (2013). Civil society and conflict management in the Niger Delta. *Africa Development*, 38(3–4), 33–46.

Ibeanu, O., & Egwu, S. (2007). *Do elections matter in Africa? Consolidating democracy in Nigeria*. Abuja: Nigerian Political Science Association.

Ihugba, B. U., & Alfred, C. (2019). Political parties and electoral offences in Nigeria: A critical analysis. Journal of African Elections, 18(2), 72–92. https://doi.org/10.20940/JAE/2019/v18i2a4

Ikelegbe, A. (2014). *Politics and Governance in Nigeria: Perspective on the Fourth Republic*. Dakar: CODESRIA.

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Guidelines and Regulations for Political Parties (2013), INEC.

Inglehart, R., & Welzel, C. (2005). *Modernization, cultural change, and democracy: The human development sequence*. Cambridge University Press.

Jinadu, A. L. (2011). Interrogating Nigeria's Governance Crisis. *Nigerian Journal of Political Science*, 16(1), 1–18.

Lerner, D. (1958). *The passing of traditional society: Modernizing the Middle East*. Free Press.

Lipset, S. M. (1960). *Political man: The social bases of politics*. Doubleday.

Medard, J. F. (1982). The underdeveloped state in tropical Africa: Political clientelism or neopatrimonialism? In C. Clapham (Ed.), *Private patronage and public power* (pp. 162–192). Pinter.

Milusi, M. (2016**).** Party-hopping and political instability in Nigeria: A reflection on the 2015 general elections. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations, 10*(4), 44–52.

Montero and Gunther, (2003). "The Literature on Political Parties: a Critical Re-assessment" Institute of Political and Social Sciences (ICPS) Barcelona.

Musa, Y. (2023). Political transition and the challenges. Zamfara Journal of Politics and Development, 3(2), 26–31.

Mustapha, A. R. (2006). Ethnic Structure, Inequality and Governance of the Public Sector in Nigeria. *UNRISD Working Paper No. 24*.

National Democratic Institute (NDI). (2020). *Political parties in Nigeria: Challenges, reforms and internal democracy*.

Norris, P. (2001). *Digital divide: Civic engagement, information poverty, and the Internet worldwide*. Cambridge University Press.

Norris, P. (2012), Why Electoral Malpractices Generate Pressures for Electoral Reform: An Agenda-Setting Model. APSA 2012 Annual Meeting Paper

Nwankwo, A. (1992). *Nigeria: The politics of transition and the future of democracy*. Fourth Dimension Publishers.

Nwosu, H. N. (2017). Elite capture, clientelism, and the Nigerian political economy. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 11(3), 26–35.

Obah-Akpowoghaha, N. G. (2013). "Assessment of the Impact of Political Recruitment on Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria, 1999-2007", M. Sc. Thesis, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State.

Obah-Akpowoghaha, N., & Bojang, O. M. (2021). Party politics and challenges of national integration in Nigeria. Mediterranean Quarterly, 1(1).

Obasi, I. N. (2015). Dependency and the limits of public policy in Africa. *African Journal of Public Administration*, 7(1), 13–27.

Obi, C. (2009). Political Parties and Money Politics in Nigeria. *Africa Spectrum*, 44(3), 101–117.

Ogbe, H. E. (2018). Political parties and candidates imposition in Nigeria: A menace to democracy and national security. Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences and Creative Arts, 13, 41–51.

Ogunleye, A. O. (2024). Exploring the complex landscape of party defection in Nigeria. Advance Journal of Current Research, 9(1), 88–102. https://aspjournals.org/Journals/index.php/ajcr/article/view/725

Ogunnubi, O. (2018). "Ideological bankruptcy and political corruption: A critical appraisal of the Nigerian political system." International Journal of Politics and Good Governance, 9(9), 16-29

Oji, O. R. (2024). "The Challenges of Internal Party Democracy to Nigerian Democratic Process: A Study of PDP and APC (1999–2023)," *Direct Research Journal of Social Science and Educational Studies*, vol. 12, no. 3

Oji, O. R. (2024). The challenges of internal party democracy to the Nigerian democratic process: A study of PDP and APC (1999-2023). Direct Research Journal of Social Science and Educational Studies, 12(3), 1–17.

Ojo, E. O. (2009). Federalism and the Search for National Integration in Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 3(9), 384–395.

Okhaide, I. P. (2012). Quest for internal party democracy in Nigeria: Amendment of electoral act 2010 as an albatross, *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies*, 3(3), 57-75. Available online at http://www.academicjournals.org/IJPDS.

Okibe, H. B., & Mokuye, C. S. (2021). Party politics, leadership problem and challenge of development: The bane of Africa and the Nigerian perspective. IDOSR Journal of Arts and Management, 6(1), 1–14.

Oko, U. K., & Okogbuo, J. C. (2024). Party defection and crisis of democratic consolidation in Nigeria, 2011-2019. South East Journal of Political Science, 10(2), 171–181.

Olajubo, A. (2022). Democracy in jeopardy: An analysis of the prospects of opposition political parties in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Dynamics of Politics and Democracy, 1(2), 125–134.

Olasupo, A. B., & Abraham, O. (2018). Party switching and political instability in Nigeria: A case study of the Fourth Republic. *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance, 9(*9.3), 1–22.

Olawole, O., Adewunmi, E.F., Oluwole, E. (2013), Electoral malpractices and problems in Africa: A critical analysis. *Journal of Research and Development*, 1(6), 11-24

Olowu, D. (1996). The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Nigeria. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.

Olowu, D., & Wunsch, J. S. (2004). Local Governance in Africa: The Challenges of Democratic Decentralization. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Oluwaseun, A. O. (2022). Challenges of party defection in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Navigating nuances. Top Multidisciplinary Research Journal, 7(2), 1–12.

Omenma, J, Onu, J and Omenma, Z (2016), "Factors Limiting Nomination of Women Candidates for Elections in Nigeria", *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences,* (September) Vol. 7 No 5, 202 - 211.

Omodia, S. M. (2010). Political parties and the challenge of political development in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 24(2), 81–86.

Omodia, S. M. (2010). Political parties and the challenge of political development in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 24(2), 81–86.

Omodia, S.M. (2010). "Political Parties and Party Politics in the Nigeria Fourth Republic" *Trakia Journal of Sciences,* 8(3) pp.65-69.

Omotola, J. S. (2009). Nigerian parties and political ideology. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, 1(3), 612–634.

Osaghae, E. E. (1998). *Crippled giant: Nigeria since independence*. Indiana University Press.

Osaghae, E. E., & Suberu, R. T. (2005). A History of Identities, Violence, and Stability in Nigeria. *CRISE Working Paper No. 6*. University of Oxford.

Osezua, E., & Olumide, O. (2023). Cross-carpeting and party alignment: Obstacles to democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Covenant University Journal of Politics & International Affairs, 11(1), 58–70.

Oyedele, O. (2015). Internal Democracy and Party Politics in Nigeria: An Evaluation of the All Progressives Congress (APC). *International Journal of Political Science and Development*, 3(2), 27–37.

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Manifesto, 2015 – 2019

Rodney, W. (1972). *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications.

Sambo, U., Deribe, A. U., Sule, B., Adamu, U., & Musa, A. (2022). "The Implications of Party Leadership Crises on Nigerian Democracy: A Comparative Analysis of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressives Congress (APC)," *Randwick International of Social Science Journal*, vol. 3, no. 3: 513-528

Suberu, R. T. (2001). *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Suberu, R. T. (2010). The Nigerian Federal System: Performance, Problems and Prospects. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 28(4), 459–477.

Suchman, M. C. (1995). Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches. Academy of Management Review, 20(3), 571–610.

Sule, B., Sambo, U., Mat, B., Sani, M. A. M., & Yahaya, M. A. (2022). Issues and regulations in party financing and electoral expenses in Nigeria (1999–2020). Journal of Contemporary African Studies, 40(2), 253–269. https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2022.2031917

Tufekci, Z. (2015). Algorithmic harms beyond Facebook and Google: Emergent challenges of computational agency. *Colorado Technology Law Journal*, 13, 203–218.

Tukura Nashuka Tino, Danbala, I. N., & Fwaje, T. D. (2020). Challenges of political parties internal democracy in Nigeria: A comparative analysis of the ruling APC and the PDP. FUWukari Journal of Politics & Development (FUWJPD), 4(1), 1-16.

Udofia, O. E. (1981). "Nigeria Political Parties: The in Modernizing the Political System" *Journal of Black Studies*, 11(4), 435-447.

Ugwuja, I.D. (2015), Political crisis and electoral malpractices in a growing Nigeria democracy. *Humanity and Social Sciences Journal,* 10(1), 23-31

Ujo, A. (2000). "Understanding Political Parties in Nigeria", Klamidas Communication Ltd.

Ujo, A. A. (2014). *Understanding Nigerian government and politics*. Anyaotu Enterprises.

Ukeje, C. N. (2007). Civil Society and Political Violence in Nigeria: A Sociological Perspective. Nigerian Journal of International Affairs, 33(1/2), 45–65.

Uwaifo, S. O. (2016). Ethnicity and development of political parties in Nigeria. Journal of Poverty, Investment and Development, 28, 1–9. https://www.iiste.org

Yagboyaju, D. A., & Simbine, A. T. (2019). Politics, political parties, and the party system in Nigeria: Whose interest? International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences, 89, 33–50.