

Intra Party Conflict and Electoral Performance: The Experience of the Peoples' Democratic Party in the 2023 Nigeria's Presidential Election

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Abstract

This paper investigated the issues that gave rise to the internal conflict in the PDP at the national level prior to the 2023 presidential election, and argues that it adversely affected its performance at the poll. To support this argument, the paper deployed intra-group conflict theory as a framework of analysis, and generated data from primary sources such as Structured Questionnaire (SQ) and Key Informant Interview (KII), and secondary sources such as books, journals, newspapers/magazines and online materials among others. Data generated from the field survey using SQ were presented in tables and descriptively analysed while the contents of data collected via KII were qualitatively analysed. Research hypotheses were tested at 5% level of significance using non parametric statistics (chi square). The paper found weak internal democracy, desperation for power, clash of irreconcilable interests, and poor conflict resolution mechanism among others as responsible for the internal crisis in the PDP. The paper equally found that intra-party conflict in the PDP manifested in the forms of personality clash between Governor Nyesom Wike and Senator Iyorchia Ayu and media war with the resultant consequences of incessant defections and dwindling party membership among others. Based on these findings, the paper concluded that PDP may still suffer more political woes in future presidential elections if urgent steps are not taken to address the conflict. Based on the findings and conclusion drawn, the paper recommended, among others that, the contentious issues responsible for the internal strife in the party should be amicably resolved as soon as possible for the party to be able to reclaim power from the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

Keywords: Electoral Performance, PDP, Presidential Election, Intra-Party Conflict, Political Party

Introduction

Intra-party conflicts are part and parcel of party politics in modern democracies World over. Conflicts result among party members and even among groups within the party for different reasons and purposes. Whatever may be the cause of intra-party conflicts, amicable resolution of such fracas are fundamental for the growth and development of the party in particular and the country's democracy in general. Scholars like Aleyomi, (2013, p.288) among others contend that intra-party conflict is a derivative of multiple factors, including poverty of party ideology, party funding, selection of candidate, zoning arrangement, party executive arrogance and conduct of party primaries.

Intra-party conflicts in Nigeria started since 1923 when the country got her first opportunity to engage into party politics after the introduction of elective principle by the Clifford

Constitution of 1922. Following the introduction of the *elective principle*, the Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) became the first political party to be formed in Nigeria in 1923. There after the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was formed in 1934. Since then, conflicts among members of the same party have been an enduring legacy of democratic governance and party politics in the country. On the nature and causes of intra-party conflict in the NNDP and NYM, which eventually led to their collapse, Moliki (2020, p. 108) had this to say: “the first political party, the NNDP which was formed in 1923 ceased in to exist in 1938 due to the inability of the party leaders to successfully manage their differences. Subsequently, the political party, the NYM was largely affected by intra-party feud due to ethnic chauvinism, personality clash, and ideological differences”. In fact, intra-party conflicts seem to have changed in frequency, ramifications and intensity in recent years.

In the first republic of Nigeria also, intra-party conflicts characterized party politics in the country. For instance, there were conflicts between members of the Action Group (AG) in 1962 and this crisis cost the party major victories in national elections at that time. The conflict was more of a personality clash between two political heavy weights in the party, namely Chief Obafemi Awolowo (the party leader) and Chief S.L Akintola (the deputy party leader). Other factors that contributed to the crisis in the AG include the formation of opposing factions in the party, adoption of a new ideology, expulsion motion moved against Chief S.L .Akintola, and the passing of a vote of no confidence on S.L. Akintola among others (Dibie, 2018, p.314). The patterns of intra-party conflict in the first republic was largely in the forms of personality clashes, verbal attacks, character assassination, false allegations, and clash of interests, which were influenced by regional and acrimonious politics (Ogundele & Rosenje, 2022, p.186)

Party politics in the second and third republics were not immune against intra-party conflicts. These conflicts however became more pronounced in Nigeria’s fourth republic since 1999 when the country returned to electoral democracy after over 13 years of military dictatorship. This situation has led to reckless party defections and counter-defections, which has culminated in political instability and electoral violence, and served as a threat to free, fair and credible election and democratic consolidation in Nigeria (Moliki, 2020; Yusufu, Idrees & Ogaji, 2022).

The PDP, which is the focus of this paper, was formed in 1997 to challenge the self-succession bid of the Abacha military regime. To Ojukwu and Olaifa (2011), the PDP was made up of three groups. The first were the politicians who were denied registration by the Abacha administration, and thus later formed a group under the G-18. The second group were those politicians who were former members of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and called itself the All Nigeria Congress (ANC). The third were the loyalists of late General Shehu Musa Yar’Adua under the platform of the People’s Democratic Movement (PDM). These groups had the same goal, which was to remove the Abacha’s military regime through a civil and democratic process.

The PDP produced the President of Nigeria for sixteen successive years between 1999 and 2015, when the APC under Muhammadu Buhari took over in a presidential election that was keenly contested. The party’s loss of the presidency to the APC in the 2015 general election was largely due to the crisis that riddled the party in the build-up to that election. The PDP has a zoning arrangement for elective positions and party offices contained in its Constitution. For instance, Article 7(2c) of the PDP Constitution defines how elective and party offices should be shared. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo became the first person to benefit from this zoning arrangement in the build-up to the 1999 general elections. He contested and

won the presidential elections conducted in 1999 and 2003. Chief Obasanjo served the country as President between 1999 and 2007. Chief Obasanjo became the first to benefit from the party's zoning arrangement in the country's fourth republic in 1999.

The zoning arrangement which has been an enduring legacy of the PDP was however jettisoned in the build-up to the 2023 general election in Nigeria. This resulted in a clash between faction loyal to Nyesom Wike (the former Governor of Rivers state) on the one hand and faction loyal to Atiku Abubakar/Iyorchia Ayu on the other hand. The PDP went into the 2023 general election without amicably resolving the conflict in the party. The failure of party leadership to resolve internal conflicts leads to defection of members to other political parties, and assassination of opposing factions' members (Babatope, 2012). The failure of the leadership of the PDP to amicably resolve its internal conflict could be blamed for the failure of the party to win the presidential election at a time when the APC had under performed in virtually all the sectors of the Nigerian economy. The extent to which the internal conflict in the PDP affected its performance in the 2023 general election, especially the presidential election, is the focus of this paper.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the Intra-Group Conflict Theory (IGCT) as its framework of analysis. The theory is traceable to the works of Karen Jehn (1992). Some of the assumptions of the theory were however modified and expanded by Mannix and Jehn (2009), Forsyth (2009), De Wit, Greer and Jehn (2012) and Wahlig (2019) among other scholars.

Jehn (1995) and Forsyth (2009) view intra-group conflict as any conflict that results between two or more members of the same group, which occurs based on task or relationship. To Wahlig (2019), intra-group conflict occurs between members of the same group who are united over a common goal or objective. The conflict sometimes manifests in the forms of verbal disagreements between group members, and it could sometimes lead to division of the group into opposing factions. The theory assumes that conflict between and among individuals or groups in the society is a derivative of multiple factors, which include clash of interests, stiff competition for scarce available resources, and the desperate desire to control and dominate other individuals or groups among others.

For Jehn and Manniz (2001), intra-group conflict usually occurs as a result of personal issues that could take the forms of personality clashes, tensions and frictions within the group. Such tensions and frictions have the capacity of threatening intra-group cohesiveness, if they are not well managed. Also, the achievement of common goal or objective of the group would be jeopardized in the event that conflict lingers for a relatively long time without been properly managed by the leadership of the group. A major repercussion of the persistence of intra-group conflict is the fact that, it tends to engender defection of members to other similar group as was the case in the PDP and several other political parties in the build up to the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. And this, in a way, grossly affected the performance of the party in the 2023 general election, especially the presidential election.

Literature Review

The principles of representation and election are fulfilled through the organisation of political parties in modern democracies. A political party may be conceived as a group of people who are organised in such a way that their main aim is to contest election, win election, and form a government for the purpose of implementing the contents of their manifesto. Political party can also be perceived as an institutional creation by interest based individuals or groups

whose ultimate aim is to capture political power (Daniel, 2016, p.53). In other words, a political party tantamount to an organisation of citizens bound together by common interest in the nation's politics, and having the desire to contest elections with the aim of forming the government (Olisa, Okoli & Nwabufo, 1991, p.64).

Political parties in Nigeria like most countries in Africa, are characterised by a top-down organisational structure in which power and decision making are highly centralized. Consequently, little room is left for any deliberative decision making processes involving party membership. This rigid organisational structure is a part of the country's colonial heritage which gave the colonial administrators and political elite the powers to dictate to and make decisions on behalf of the native population without consultation (Ibrahim, 2014).

Democratic governance of states could be compared using political parties as an index. Thus, the structure and operation of party politics in polities tend to serve as measuring tool for determining the fragility or otherwise of democratic systems (Omodia 2010). That becomes the case where political parties are not properly structured to perform their functions of articulating and aggregating interests as well as communicating and educating the populace. Any political system where this happens, there is likely going to be poor political culture which could likely make the democratic process fragile and weak. However, a political system where political parties are properly structured to perform their expected roles; such a system is often associated with participant political culture which tends to ensure a stable democratic process (Almond 2010 cited in Aleyomi, 2013, p.283). It is instructive to note that, political parties organize and aggregate public opinion, transmit public demands to the government and vice versa, recruit political leaders in political mobilizations and socialization as well as provision of welfare services (Titus, Ahmed & Umaru, 2020, p.21).

The democratic process in Nigeria like most countries in Africa has been riddled with poor party politics, which is a derivative of factors ranging from poor political leadership, excessive westernization of the concept 'democracy', party indiscipline, lack of clear-cut party ideologies, the politicization of the higher echelon of the military profession and *ethnicization* of political parties and lack of internal party democracy among others (Ntalaja 2000 cited in Aleyomi, 2013, p.283).

Awofeso, Obah-Akpowoghaha, and Ogunmilade (2017, p.99) simply define intra-party conflict as a conflict within a given political party. According to Basiru (2019, p.113), intra-party conflict refers to a clash of irreconcilable interests among members of a political party who are struggling over the control of the decision-making machinery of the party and other resources that could confer certain benefits on themselves. Momodu and Matudi (2013, p.3) define intra-party conflict as a conflict which arises when members of the same political party pursue incompatible political goals or trying to influence the decision-making process of the party to their advantage.

What comes to the fore from these definitions is that intra-party conflicts involves members of the same political party; it's a struggle over allocation of values in the same party; it has to do with opposing interests; and it also centres on the benefits accruable to the members involved. For us in this paper, intra-party conflict is simply a disagreement between members of the same political party who have conflicting, incompatible and irreconcilable interests. For instance, the conflict between faction loyal to Nyesom Wike (the former Governor of Rivers state) on the one hand and faction loyal to Alhaji Atiku Abubakar (the party's presidential candidate) and Dr. Iyorchia Ayu (the former national chairman of the PDP) on the other hand over the choice of the party national chairman and the presidential candidate

from the northern region of the country was a clash of interest. The conflict between the two political gladiators soon began to manifest in the forms of personality clash and media war.

Since 1999 when the country returned to democratic rule, intra-party conflicts have assumed different dimension leading to decampment arising from lack of viable mechanism of conflict management process. This has therefore given rise to a heated debates among academicians, policy analysts; political commentators and even in the public parlance as to the viable strategy, approach or method that could be adopted to address intra-party squabbles (Awofeso, Obah-Akpowoghaha, & Ogunmilade, 2017, p.97).

In a study carried out prior to the 2023 general election by Ogundele and Rosenje (2022), they contended that the major implications of the conflict were that the PDP became more vulnerable due to attendant division, media war and defection from the party to other parties. They thus concluded that the conflict would likely affect the electoral success of the party at the poll. Similarly, Moliki (2020) while examining the nature of intra-party conflicts in Nigeria's political parties, identified factors such as the inability of party leaders to manage their differences in a cordial manner among others, as being responsible for intra-party conflicts, which eventually led to the collapse of the first political party in Nigeria, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). In the words of Moliki (2020, p.108)

The first political party, the NNDP, which was formed in 1923 ceased to exist barely five years after its formation due to the inability of party leaders to successfully manage their differences. Subsequent political party, the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), was largely affected by intra-party squabble due to ethnic prejudice, personality clash and ideological differences.

In their analysis of the effects of intra-party conflicts management on democratic consolidation in Nigeria's forth republic, Awofeso, Obah-Akpowoghaha, and Ogunmilade (2017) identified imposition of candidates, patron-client politics, lack of frequent party meetings and corruption among others as responsible for intra-party conflicts in Nigeria. The study contends that a few high-ups in the party hierarchies usually determines the winners and losers at the expense of their party's cohesion. The study further describes the Nigeria's political environment as being in a confused state, which has led to the marginalization of dividends of democracy. It is out of this confusion that some of the politicians found their ways into the corridors of power and it is the same reason their behavior is so anathematic since their loyalty is automatically owed to those who engineered their ascension.

Research Methodology

The study adopted mixed methods approach (triangulation). Data were collected from primary sources such as Structured Questionnaire (SQ) administered to 384 respondents determined using Krejice and Morgan (1970) statistical formula; and Key Informant Interview (KII) involving 6 informants selected using purposive sampling technique and secondary sources such as books, journal, newspapers/magazines and online materials among others. The Key Informants (KIs) who were interviewed during the course of this study were drawn from among Political Scientists/Analysts, PDP members and Election Observers (EOs) among others. Data collected using SQ were presented in tables and descriptively analysed using simple percentage, bar charts and pie charts while the contents of data collected using KII were qualitatively analysed.

The locations selected for this study include Lokoja in Kogi state of north-central zone; Jalingo in Taraba state of north-east zone; Katsina in Katsina state of north-west zone; Enugu

in Enugu state of south-east zone; Port Harcourt in Rivers state of south-south zone; and Akure in Ondo state of south-west zone.

The exact sample size was determined using Krejice and Morgan (1970) statistical formula as illustrated below:

$$S = \frac{X^2 NP(1 - P)}{d^2(N - 1) + X^2 P(1 - P)}$$

S = Required Sample size

X = Z value (e.g., 1.96 for 95% confidence level)

N = Population Size

P = Population proportion (expressed as decimal) (assumed to be 0.5 (50%))

d = Degree of accuracy (5%), expressed as a proportion (.05); It is margin of error

$$S = \frac{1.96^2 * 6,596,971 * 0.5 (1 - 0.5)}{0.05 * 0.05(6,596,971 - 1) + 1.96^2 * 0.5(1 - 0.5)}$$

$$S = \frac{6335730.948}{16492.4275}$$

S=384

Table 1: Sampled Population for Questionnaire Administration

Metropolises	State	Zone	Population	Sample Size
Jalingo	Taraba	North-East	438,971	26
Lokoja	Kogi	North-Central	791,000	46
Katsina	Katsina	North-West	505,000	29
Enugu	Enugu	South-East	820,000	48
Port Harcourt	Rivers	South-South	3,325,000	193
Akure	Ondo	South-West	717,000	42
Total	Six States	Six Zones	6,596,971	384

Source: Researchers' Computation, 2023

Table 1: shows that the population of the study was **6, 596, 971** and sample size of **384** respondents determined using Krejice and Morgan (1970) statistical formula.

As per the sample size per metropolis, the breakdown as shown in figure 1 indicates that **26** respondents were selected in Jalingo; **46** respondents in Lokoja; **29** respondents in Katsina; **48** respondents in Enugu; **193** respondents in Port Harcourt; and **42** respondents in Akure.

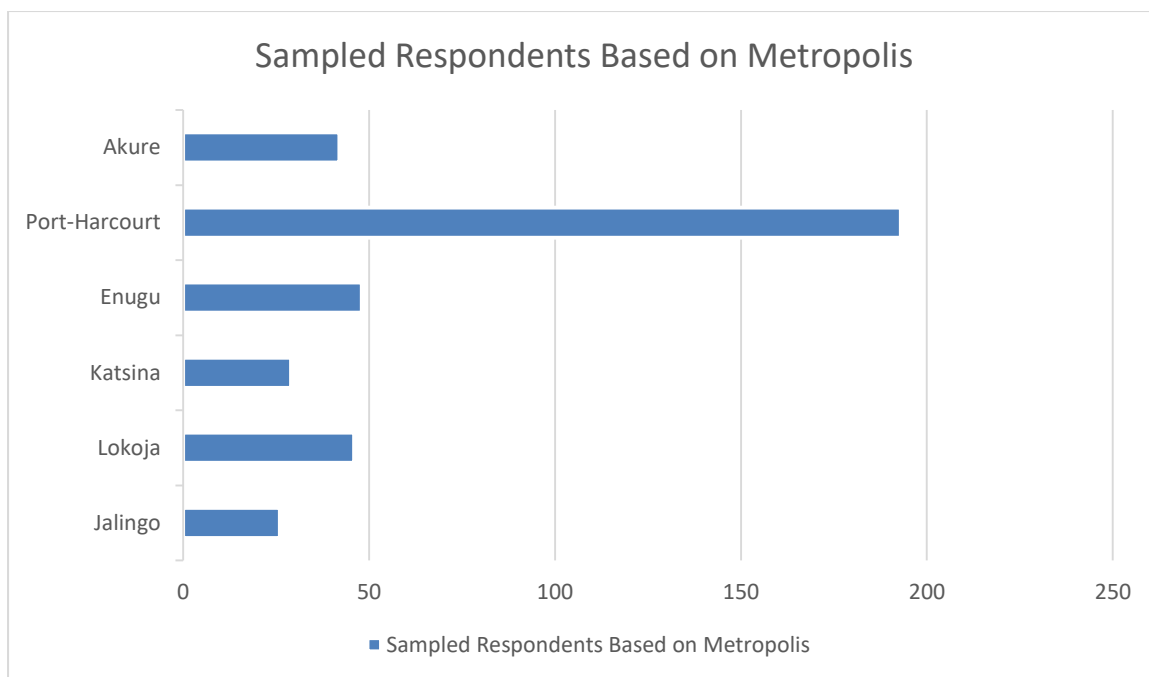


Figure: Sampled Respondents Based on Metropolis

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Results and Discussion

This section presents data generated from the field survey in tables and charts. The section addresses the research questions on intra-party conflict and electoral performance in the 2023 Nigeria's presidential election with special focus on the PDP. The research hypotheses were tested using non-parametric statistics (chi square) at 5% level of significance. The data are presented, analysed, and the results discussed as follows:

Table 2: Patterns of Intra-Party Conflict in the PDP

Patterns	Rating and Weight Value			
	A (2)	D (1)	TWV	MI
Personality clash	341 (88.8%)	43 (11.2%)	725	1.89
Media war	338 (88%)	46 (12%)	722	1.88
Supremacy battle	335 (87.2)	49 (12.8%)	719	1.87
Leadership tussle	333 (87)	51 (13%)	717	1.86

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From table 2, a question was asked on the patterns of intra-party conflict in the PDP. The results show that personality clash was the most significant manifestation/pattern of the conflict in the PDP prior to the 2023 general elections in Nigeria with MI= 1.89. Another significant manifestation of the conflict in the PDP is media war (MI=1.88). This finding is in tandem with the finding of similar study conducted by Ogundele and Rosenje (2022) who found that the crisis in the PDP made the party more vulnerable to further bickering, division, media war, and incessant defection from the party to other political parties.

Other significant patterns or manifestations of the conflict in the PDP include: supremacy battle (1.87); and leadership tussle. These findings are in tandem with the findings of similar

studies conducted by Moliki (2020); Ogundele and Rosenje (2022) who found personality clash as being a major factor responsible for intra-party conflict in Nigeria.

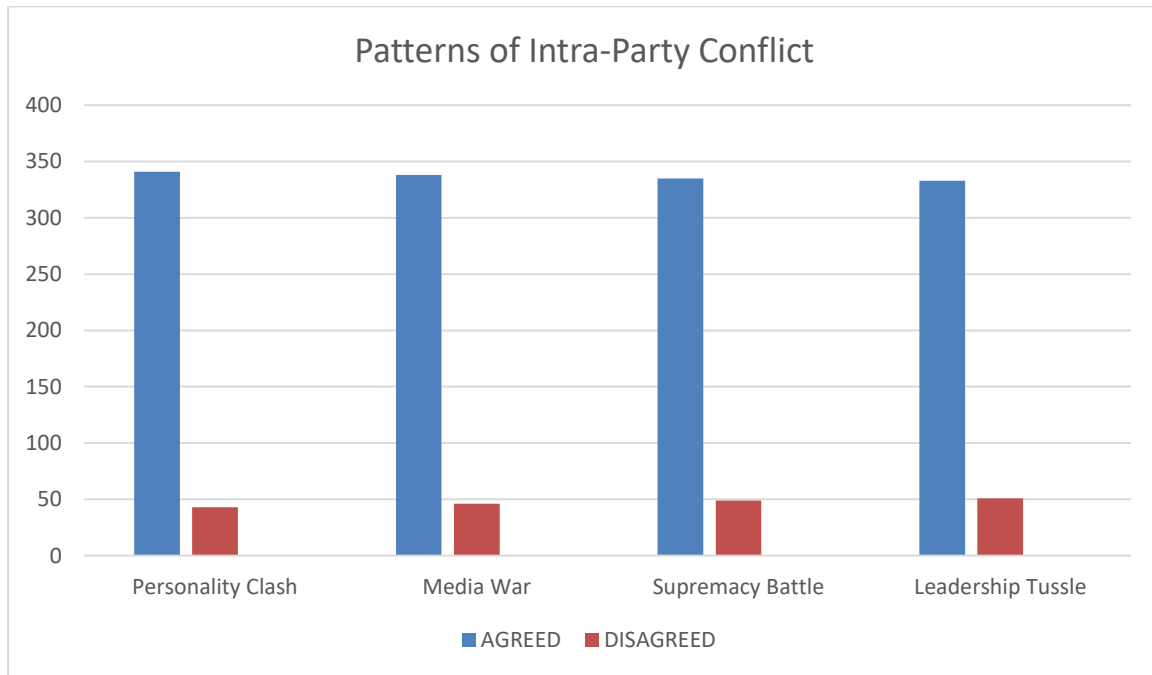


Figure 2 Patterns of Intra-Party Conflict in the PDP

Source: Field Work, 2023

Table 3: Issues that gave rise to the Conflict in the PDP

Issues	Rating and Weight Value			
	A (2)	D (1)	TWV	MI
Failure to comply with the party's zoning principle	347 (90.4%)	37 (9.6%)	731	1.90
Monetization of party primaries	318 (82.8%)	66 (17.2%)	702	1.83
Absence of internal democracy	369 (96.1%)	15 (3.9%)	753	1.96
Desperation for power	329 (86%)	55 (14%)	713	1.86
Clash of irreconcilable interests	344 (89.6%)	40 (10.4%)	728	1.89
Poor conflict resolution mechanism	338 (88%)	46 (12%)	722	1.88

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From table 3, a question was asked as to the issues that gave rise to the conflict in the PDP in the build-up to the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. The results show that the major issue that led to the conflict in the PDP prior to 2023 presidential election, according the respondents was the absence of internal party democracy with MI= 1.96. The second most significant issue is the party's failure to comply with its own zoning principle (MI=1.90). While corroborating this finding, a key informant had this to say:

Selection of the party’s presidential candidate without regard for the party’s zoning arrangement was the major issue that led to the crisis in the PDP. Before the party’ primary election, the then chairman of the party, Senator Iorchia Ayu (a northerner) had told the whole world that he would voluntarily resign if a Northerner emerges as the party’s presidential candidate. Alhaji Atiku Abubakar (a northerner) eventually emerged as the party’s presidential candidate, Ayu who had earlier promised to resign; bluntly and blatantly refused to do so. Ayu’s action was not acceptable to the former Governor of Rivers state, Nyesom Wike and the Governors of Oyo state (Seyi Makinde), Benue state (Samuel Ortom), Abia state (Okezie Ikpeazu), and Enugu state (Ifeyanyi Ugwanyi). The G-5 Governors and other stakeholders of like minds felt this injustice must be addressed. Wike and his supporters decided to fight this injustice (KII, 2023).

Another key informant said “by not allowing power to go to the south, the PDP erred. This error made some staunch members of the party like Wike who felt betrayed, to work against the party. Atiku who was the presidential candidate is a northerner; Ayu the then party chairman is also a northerner. All efforts to settle the crisis in the party failed as Atiku was bent on pursuing his presidential ambition and at the same time keeping Ayu as the party chairman. Out of pride, Atiku was carried away by the advice of some sycophants around him and felt he could win the election with or without the support of Wike and his faction. The rest is now history (KII, 2023).

Other significant issues that led to the crisis in the PDP include: clash of irreconcilable interests (MI=1.89); desperation for power by some party members (MI=1.86); and monetization of the PDP primary elections (MI=1.83). This finding validates the submission of Ayode (2008) and Ikelegbe (2014) that election of most party’s flag bearers in Nigeria is based on monetary reasons and not on credibility.

Table 4: Impact of the Conflict on the electoral performance of the PDP

Impact	Rating and Weight Value			
	A (2)	D (1)	TWV	MI
Failure to win the presidential election	361 (94%)	23 (6%)	745	1.94
Defection of PDP members to other parties	358 (93%)	26 (7%)	742	1.93
Anti-party activities	353 (92%)	31 (8%)	737	1.91
Withdrawal of support for the PDP by its own members	349 (91%)	35 (9%)	733	1.90

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From table 4, a question was asked on the impact of the conflict in the PDP on its electoral performance in the 2023 Nigeria’s presidential election. The results show that the failure of PDP to win the 2023 Nigeria’s presidential election with MI= 1.9 is the most significant impact of intra-party conflict on the performance of the party.

This finding is supported by a key informant who said:

The crisis in the party had a serious negative impact on the performance of the party especially during the 2023 presidential election, coupled with the fact that Peter Obi defected from the PDP to Labour Party (LP). If Peter Obi had not left the party, Atiku

Abubakar would have picked him as his running mate, and this arrangement would have made it very difficult for the All Progressives Congress (APC) to win the presidential election. Due to this crisis, the PDP lost the presidential elections in all the G-5 Governors' states, and this was a big blow for the party (KII, 2023).

While subscribing to the finding above, another key informant had this to say:

If not for the crisis in the PDP before the 2023 general election, the party would have won the presidential election. APC had performed woefully for eight (8) years during the Buhari administration. Consequently, Nigerians became tired of hunger, hardship and insecurity of their lives and property, and then began to yearn for a positive change. The abysmal performance of the APC was supposed to be an advantage for the PDP, but this opportunity was thrown away by the party because of Atiku's desperation to become the president of Nigeria (KII, 2023)

Another significant impact, according to the respondents, is defection from the PDP to other political parties (MI=1.93). This finding is in agreement with the findings of a study conducted by Ogundele and Rosenje (2022) who found that the crisis in the PDP made the party more vulnerable to further bickering, division, media war, and incessant defection from the party to other political parties. Other impacts includes: anti-party activities (MI=1.91) and withdrawal of support for the PDP by its own (MI=1.90). These findings are in tandem of the submission of a key informant who said:

The internal crisis in the PDP negatively affected its performance at the poll. The party lost some of its prominent members like the G-5 Governors. Some of the members of the party began to engage in anti-party activities such Wike who as a member of PDP supported Bola Tinubu of the APC during the 2023 presidential election. After the election, President Bola Tinubu decided to compensate Wike with a ministerial post. He was appointed as the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Also, some members of the PDP, even though they did not come out in the media or in public to declare support for the ruling APC, they actually voted for the APC during the presidential election (KII, 2023)

Test of Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses stated below were tested using non-parametric statistics (chi-square at 5% (0.05) level of significance.

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

$$\alpha = 5\% (0.05)$$

$$df = (c-1) (r-1)$$

H₀: Intra-party conflict did not affect the performance of the PDP in the 2023 Nigeria's presidential election

H₁: Intra-party conflict affected the performance of the PDP in the 2023 Nigeria's presidential election

General Decision Rule

The decision rule for statistical significance states that whenever the calculated chi-square is greater than the table value, the alternate hypothesis should be accepted, while the null

hypothesis should be rejected. On the other hand, whenever the table value is greater than the calculated value, the null hypothesis should be accepted, while the alternate hypothesis should be rejected (Spiegel, Schiller & Srinivasan, 2004).

Table 4.1: Test of Hypothesis Table

Variable	Male	Female	Total
A	359	17	376
D	02	06	08
Total	361	23	384

Source: Authors' Computation, 2023

$$df = (c-1)(r-1)$$

$$df = (2-1)(2-1)$$

$$df = (1)(1)$$

$$df = 1$$

$$\alpha = 5\% (0.05)$$

$$f_e = \frac{\text{Column Total} \times \text{Row Total}}{\text{Grand Total}}$$

s

Table 4.2: Observed Frequency (F₀) & Expected Frequency (F_e) Table

F ₀	F _e	(F ₀ -F _e)	(F ₀ -F _e) ²	$\frac{(F_0-F_e)^2}{F_e}$
359	353.5	5.5	30.25	0.09
17	22.5	-5.5	30.25	1.34
02	7.5	-5.5	30.25	4.03
06	0.5	5.5	30.25	60.5
TOTAL				65.96

Source: Authors' Computation, 2023

$$X^2_{c} = 65.96$$

$$X^2_{t} = 3.841$$

$$df = 1$$

Decision

Since the calculated chi-square is greater than the table value ($X^2_{cal.} = 65.96 > X^2_{tab.} = 3.841$), the alternate hypothesis (H₁) is hereby accepted while the null hypothesis (H₀) is rejected. Therefore, the test of hypothesis suggests that intra-party conflict affected the performance of the PDP in the 2023 Nigeria's presidential election. This indicates that the internal crisis in the PDP could be said to be largely responsible for the failure of the party to win the 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. This finding agrees with the prognostic submission of Ogundele and Rosenje (2022) who said that the PDP's electoral success at the 2023 general election was being threatened if the conflict in the party was not amicably resolved before the election.

Conclusion

This paper examined the impact of intra-party conflict on the performance of political parties in Nigeria with specific focus on the performance of the PDP in the 2023 presidential election. The paper generated data from both primary and secondary sources, and deployed intra-party conflict theory as a framework of analysis. Findings of the paper revealed that absence of internal democracy in the PDP, which led to the jettisoning of its own zoning principle was the major issue responsible for the internal conflict in the party. Further findings showed that the conflict in the party was the major factor that accounted for the failure of the party to win the 2023 presidential election in the country. Based on these findings, the paper concluded that PDP may still suffer more political woes in future presidential elections if urgent steps are not taken to address the root causes of conflict in the party.

Based on the findings and conclusion drawn, the paper makes the following recommendations:

- i. Recruitment of quality party members as party leaders. The leadership of the party should be made up of people of unquestionable character and proven integrity. It should comprise of people who can provide the necessary leadership in the party.
- ii. There is need for internal democracy in the PDP. There is an urgent need for equity and justice in the allocation of leadership positions in the party as well elective positions in the country.
- iii. The PDP should also be seen by Nigerians as providing better and quality alternative leadership, especially in PDP controlled states and also at the National Assembly (Senate and House of Assembly). Nigerians will now be in a position to decide which party to vote for in future elections in the country.
- iv. The PDP already has a zoning principle (arrangement) in its Constitution. This principle should be adhered to in the allocation of all leadership positions in the party and elective positions in the country.
- v. There is an urgent need for the PDP to go into a merger with other smaller political parties in the country so as to be able to wrestle power from the hands of the ruling APC in future elections.

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