

Intra-Party Crisis and Democratic Consolidation: A Study of the 2022 Abia State Peoples Democratic Party Primaries

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Abstract

The correlation between the political party and political leadership recruitment in democracies has remained integral to any democracy. As such the continuous cases of intra-party crisis have been observed as a threat to the consolidation of democracy. This study focused on intra-party crisis and democratic consolidation in Nigeria with emphasis on the 2022 Peoples Democratic Party primaries in Abia State. Three research objectives, questions and three hypotheses were formulated and used to explore the subject discussed. The study relied heavily on the proposition of the conflict theory by Karl Marx and Charles Wright Mills as the theoretical framework of analysis. The study was essentially qualitative and data were generated from secondary sources such as journals and textbooks. The findings revealed that lack of internal party democracy, elite-centred control of political parties, and poor implementation of party constitution and Electoral Act are all enablers of intra-party crisis in Nigeria's political parties, and this impact adversely on the consolidation of democracy. The study recommended that if Nigeria's political parties must help deepen Nigeria's democracy, internal party democracy should be promoted, the masses should have a voice in the affairs of political parties, and the dictates of the party constitution and Electoral Act must not be compromised. The study concluded that political parties remain an important institution for any democracy to succeed and the continuous cases of intra-party crises have constrained political parties from contributing to the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria.

Keywords: Conflict, Democracy, Election, Political Party, PDP

Introduction

It is axiomatic that every electoral process starts with the political parties and their involvement in the electoral process, even after the elections. Political parties have remained products of representative democracy designed to harness public opinion and as such the organization of political parties and their modus operandi are expected to demonstrate the democratic ideals they strive to enthrone in the polity. Since the successful conduct of an election serves as an avenue for measuring the nature, character and political strength or weakness of a political system; therefore, the political party structure, ideology and modus of conducting its primaries and selection of representatives in any election remain subject of discourse requiring attention for the survival of a democracy (Scarow, 2000).

Thus, political parties have devised mechanisms for choosing leaders and candidates for elective offices, and the most democratic is party primaries. Party primaries can be described as the initial electoral contest amongst aspirants to win the nominations of their parties to become candidates of the party for the general elections (Eme & Anyadike, 2011). Also, political parties rely on the democratic principle of a popular mandate to contest and win elections, and this is the case in the political party primaries process. Therefore, it is expected

that political parties as vehicles for democratisation should showcase true democracy in their internal decision-making and selection process of leaders/candidates for election. It is observable that within the Nigerian polity, the political parties have been enmeshed in unnecessary infighting about who represents the political party in the general elections, and this in recent times has become a notable feature of political primaries in Nigeria (Ibeanu, 2018). Among the reasons highlighted for this intra-party crisis, the issue of lack of internal party democracy, elitist-centred control of the political party, monetisation of candidacy, factionalization, and non-compliance to the provision of the party constitution and the Electoral Act have been observed as the most engaging problems facing the cohesion and objectivity of political parties in Nigeria.

In recent times, the Nigerian judiciary has not helped to ease the tension and political brouhaha as portrayed by the activities of political parties and the outcomes of their primaries. There have been claims and counterclaims, injunctions and counter injunctions; and the masses have been on the receiving end (Ndubuisi and Ebubechukwu, 2020). In Nigeria's representative democracy, especially since the return to democracy after a prolonged military rule, the challenge has become a despicable situation asking for redemption. A situation where political parties present more than one candidate for an elective position because each is armed with a court judgment declaring him or her as the legitimate candidate of the political party or each is supported by a faction of the same political party, with the attendant consequence that voters are not only confused but cheated out of an electoral contest in which they vote for a candidate of a particular political party and another is declared the winner either by the courts or by the national executive committee of the political party (Ndubuisi and Uduma, 2025).

It is inarguable that Nigeria's political parties recently have been bedevilled by the control of political elites posing as godfathers with their unending demands and ambition to control the party structure and even the state resources (Abeyomi, 2013). Godfatherism, lack of internal party democracy, elite-centred leadership, corruption, lack of accountability, and many more have spelled doom for the relevance of political parties in Nigeria's developing democracy. A situation where delegates who are supposed to emerge from the wards are handpicked by the political elites or in most cases the sitting governor. The delegate list is usually doctored by the political elite and forced on the people and as such not reflecting the consent and decisions of the people on who represents them at the party level in the selection of candidates for elective positions in the general election. This situation leads to dire consequences, sowing seeds of division, emergence of factions and in most cases, candidates unhappily moving over to another political party in search of platform to attain their political ambition.

In the case of Abia State, in the pre-election period to the 2023 general elections, there was accusations of a doctored delegate list comprising individuals loyal to the then governor, His Excellency Dr. Okezie Ikpeazu. It was alleged that these individuals were instructed to only deliver the candidates of the governor in the forthcoming party primaries. Many of the stakeholders of the Peoples Democratic Party in Abia State argued that the delegates should have emanated from the wards reflecting the peoples voice in the selection of who represents the party in the various political offices for contest in the forthcoming 2023 elections (Nwankwo, 2022; Sampson, 2022). The resultant effect of this political expedition was the resignation and defection of notable stakeholders of the Peoples Democratic Party to other political parties to pursue their political ambition since it was obvious that their interests has been jeopardised by political sentiments; and also, the defeat of candidates featured by the political party in the 2023 general elections. One year and some months after the election the

Peoples Democratic Party in Abia State is still facing intra-party conflicts and has failed to rise from the 2023 general elections defeat. The study is motivated by the quest to find out whether internal party democracy, elite control of party structure, and poor implementation of party constitution and Electoral Act have all affected the extent of democratic consolidation for Abia State Nigeria in particular and Nigeria as a whole.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

There are many theories that attempt an analysis of intra-party crisis and the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. Some of these include the Conflict theory by Karl Marx, the structural functionalist theory by Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell, the elite theory developed by Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, and Robert Michels and others. For the understanding of the subject matter of this study, the conflict theory as pioneered by Karl Marx a German sociologist was deployed. Karl Marx in his conflict theory posits that society is naturally characterized by conflict and competition for limited resources, driven by social class divisions, particularly between the bourgeoisie (owners of capital) and the proletariat (workers), leading to social inequality and potential revolution to resist the social disparity and introduce an equitable society where everyone has equal access to resources of the society. Improving on the submissions of Karl Marx; Charles Wright Mills an American Sociologist who has been considered as key figure in the development of modern conflict theory posits that society remain a dynamic entity ultimately shaped by power struggles and competition for resources existing therein. The bid to close the gap between those who control state power and resources and those who do not necessitates disagreements, as interests remain paramount in each of these ensuing disagreements.

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) as a political party, performs interest articulation, interest aggregation, political communication and socialization functions, and political recruitment. The effectiveness with which political parties like the People's Democratic Party (PDP), carry out these outlined input functions depends on the internal characteristics of the political party and the prevalent conditions of the political and social environment. The application of the theoretical framework to the subject of study highlights the power struggle between groups and individuals within the People's Democratic Party in Abia State for the control of state resources. Conflict is inevitable in any political party where people are denied their voice and aspiration for identity, equality, recognition, security, dignity and participation. In a situation where any of these are not in place there is bound to be disagreements as parties, groups or individuals affected resist status quo in a bid to assert relevance.

Only political parties can organize the required enthusiasm based on a solidarity of interests with citizens outside the government. Therefore, it is obvious that a crisis-ridden political party divided in purpose and interest cannot be effectively positioned to perform functions expected to sustain the political system (Ejumudo, 2010). To put our argument clearly, it has remained obvious that the intra-party crisis within political parties in Nigeria has remained a product of ideological differences, power struggles and even ethnoreligious factors. These factors accentuate intra-party crises and culminate in the emergence of factions and defections to other political parties, leadership tussles and fragmentation of the political party. Saliu and Ifejika (2018) acknowledging the need for functional political parties explain that since political parties are the heart-beat of democracy, it is important for Nigerian political parties to do everything possible to cherish the values of internal democracy in managing their affairs.

The impact of intra-party crises is far-reaching. It weakens the political party, reduces public confidence in political parties and in most cases disrupting governance (Okolie, 2016). Intra-party crises affect the political system maintenance input functions expected of the political party as one of the major structures of the political system and in turn, affect the performance of the political system as highlighted in the output functions which may be on the average or less in a democracy.

Political Parties and the Journey to Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Political parties are saddled with the responsibility to psyche up the enthusiasm of the masses to participate in the country's political activities; and as such the political parties are integrally involved in political communication, political education, political socialization, political recruitment, interest articulation and interest aggregation (Diamond, 2005; Unumen, 2019). Apart from the necessity to create and influence governmental agendas, political parties, as pointed out by Almond and Powell (1978), have two major, but multifaceted functions in any democracy which are input-output functional variables. Input in terms of demands made into the political system and the output in terms of policies and programmes emerging from the political system.

Thus, the consolidation of democracy cannot be discussed without acknowledging the instrumentality of political parties. It is a fact that political parties are at the heart of modern democracy considering their strategic roles, as they are responsible for strengthening newly emerging democracies and in most cases improving the quality of democracy in established democratic societies (Gambari, 2008; Unumen, 2019). The existence of vibrant political parties remains a prerequisite for democracy. This is so especially in a multiparty system providing an opposition to hold the government in power accountable. Therefore, we cannot fail to acknowledge the impact and role of political parties, especially as it pertains to participation of members in the democratic process, leadership recruitment and policy formulation and most times evaluation.

In terms of democratic transition through elections, Nigeria's fourth republic has experienced reasonable stability and has witnessed seven general elections though still faulted due to weak institutions and lack of commitment to ensure democratic growth. According to Mbaegbu (2015:59) elections in Nigeria since the first republic till the present democratic dispensation have been acrimonious. As such pre-election and post-election periods in Nigeria generate so much concern within the polity. Eme, Anyadike, Ugwu and Idike (2015) commented that among the challenges facing the fourth republic at its kick-off was the inability to have a serious and focused strong opposition due to the inability of the existing opposition parties to settle down to business considering the internal crisis they faced. Also, the frog-jumping of politicians from one political party to another was another challenge. Till the present moment, the narrative has remained the same, as nothing seems to have changed. There have been continuous cases of intra-party crises bedevilling Nigerian political parties. As such, causes of these intra-party conflicts have been identified by most party members and even scholars to include lack of internal democracy, godfatherism and imposition of candidates, non-compliance of members to the party constitution and the electoral law, injustice and oppression within the party (Unumen, 2019; Ndubuisi and Uduma, 2025).

On the whole, these factors have profound negative implications on the stability of political parties as well as the democratisation process in Nigeria. A former PDP national Chairman Okwesilieze Nwodo, aptly captures the dilemma facing Nigerian political parties as follows:

We sought to restore the image of our party because the image of our dear party, the largest political party in Africa has been grossly eroded due to strife, imposition of candidates, godfatherism, moneybag politics, injustice and lack of understanding of our party manifesto. As the ruling party, if we get it right, Nigeria will get it right (Aziken, 2010)

It is only strong political institutions that can propel a country's democracy on the path of consolidation. Political parties are charged with fostering the development and strengthening of democracies through institutional and structural functions (Ereke & Ogendegbe, 2016). This analysis therefore underscores the crucial role that political parties play in the democratisation process as it provides the channel for changing government and continuity of the democratic system through periodic elections. This is so because democratic stability cannot be super-imposed or predicated on a shaky, unstable and unpredictable crises-ridden social and political environment.

Though it is not yet Uhuru in terms of appreciable democratic growth due to contributions by Nigeria's political parties, there are still areas worthy of commendation that have helped strengthen Nigeria's democracy initiated by political parties, especially in the fourth republic. Nevertheless, political parties especially since the inception of the fourth republic through its organizational structure starting from the ward level, through local government level, state levels, zonal levels and national levels have ensured political communication, political socialization, political participation and mobilization; and at the same time creating room for effective interest articulation and aggregation (Jega, 2013). There has been an increased level of awareness of political activities and participation. Also, it is worthy to mention the commitment to electoral reforms and the level of faith reposed on the judiciary even though Nigeria's electoral process in recent times cannot be said to have been concluded until the courts make pronouncements. In recent times, many judicial pronouncements particularly on political cases have become rather controversial.

Intra-Party Crisis in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: The Peoples Democratic Party in Focus

According to Anifowose & Enemuo (1999), a political party is a group of people sharing common political views that come together to pool their resources seeking to elect their candidate to public office, providing a label or platform by which the electorate can identify them. From the above definition of a political party, what connotes a political party centre on the place of unity of purpose and ideology among political party members. Therefore, intra-party crisis portends a situation where cooperation and unity of purpose become unachievable due to the existence of factions with divergent interests within a political party. Intra-party crisis is the inability to achieve collaboration and unity of purpose due to factions with divergent interests within a political party resulting in most cases from factors like money politics, lack of internal democracy, elitist-centred democracy among others (Unumen, 2019). Egobueze (2021) regards intra-party as the evident disagreement among members of the same political party, usually caused by a clash of diverse interests, in most cases ego and many other factors against the general interest of the party. It can be explained as a resulting conflict due to the pursuance of incompatible political goals or even a bid to influence the decision-making process of the political party for individual or group advantage (Mbah, 2011).

Ojukwu and Olaifa (2011) argue that party unity enhances party strength in the electoral arena and as such makes it easy to sell their ideas and policies as enshrined in their manifestoes to the people. In other words, conflict among members of a political party has horrendous implications for the success of political parties since a unified front is missing. Describing the nitty gritty of democracy, Dahl in Gberevbie (2014) highlighted the existence of civil liberties, political pluralism, and political participation providing choices (candidates) for the electorate to select from in a free and fair election, as a prerequisite for a democratic society. This implies that any likelihood of authoritarianism in handling democratic institutions like political parties would be a constraint on democracy and thus may result in intra-party crisis. Thus, democracy needs political parties as strong and sustainable institutions with the capacity to represent citizens and provide policy choices that demonstrate their ability to govern for the public good of the citizenry.

Nigeria's political parties have constantly faced the challenge of how to choose the party leadership and candidates (flag bearers) in inter-party elections. This often has resulted in grievances and disagreements, which in most cases consume the party itself or even lead to loss of members decamping to another party. It has remained obvious that if the wrong candidate is foisted on party members in flagrant disregard of democratic procedure, it would bring disaffection and agitations within the party while also affecting the quality of alternatives that the electorate is presented with. Political parties are supposed to be pillars sustaining the electoral process and, most especially, democracy, but, unfortunately, the unprecedented cases of controversial primaries question their continuous existence (Olaniyan, 2009; Ereke and Ogendegbe, 2016).

It is noteworthy that while political parties rely on a popular mandate to contest and win elections, thus ensuring acceptable leadership. This has not been so in Nigeria's political parties where divide and rule policy, the end-justifying-the means mantra, factionalization and money politics are all against harmonized interest hinged on promoted democratic tenets (Iredia, 2019). Across political parties, the question of who controls the party structure and what each group stand to benefit or lose if they concede to others within the same political party and even outside have fanned the embers of intra-party crisis, thus necessitating in most cases defections and legal battles. The paramount interest exhausting energies on both divides has always been what benefits the elite class and not the people. Ndubuisi and Timothy (2021) reiterate that one central and reoccurring factor in all definitions and descriptions of what connotes democracy and even democratic governance has remained 'the people' and such significant pillars that promote the interest of the people.

After sixteen (16) years of military rule, the Nigeria military regime under General Abdulsalami Abubakar initiated a transition to civilian rule through a hand-over to the former military head of state, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, who emerged as the winner of the 1999 presidential election and thus the emergence of the fourth republic. The declaration of an intention to transition to civilian rule by the then military government before the 1999 general elections, a lot of activities kick-started and even continued after the general elections. Interest articulation, consultations, denials, betrayals and their implied effects became the order of the day, with the pervasive crisis rocking all the political parties and most especially the major ones that have emerged from then till date. According to Joe-Akunne, Nnamani, Egodike, & Azuakor (2022:7):

In portraying the crises inside Nigeria political parties, a useful methodological course will be to provide indicators of crisis situations. One is the visible alteration within the ranks of party membership at all levels of the

federal structure. The second is high turnover in the election and/or appointment of members of the executive committees of political parties. A third indicator is the breakup of parties and subsequent formation of factions. The fourth manifestation of party crisis is rampant defections across parties.

Since 1999, the PDP has had its due share of crises rocking Nigeria's political parties and to date is still trying to scamper out of these crises. Even with the victory in the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 general elections, the party has constantly faced a great deal of infighting within its hierarchies, caucuses and regions. An example of this is the spectacular rate of turnover in its National Executive Committees, litigations within the party, court orders and judgements. Idris and Terzungwe (2016) explaining the extent of the crisis experienced by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) stated thus:

...If the life span of the party is to be shared among the chairmen it produced, each of them spent an average of 13 months in power. And all the leaders it produced, only few had a glorious exit; most of them were forced out of office in controversial circumstances.

For instance, between 1999 to 2003, the party had more than 3 National Chairmen: Chief Solomon Lar, the pioneer chairman, Chief Barnabas Gemade, Chief Audu Ogbe, and Ahmadu Ali. From 2003 to 2023 the party had the following as its National Chairmen; Chief Audu Ogbeh, Ahmadu Ali, Prince Vincent Ogbulafor, Dr. Okwesilieze Nwodo, Dr. Haliru Bello Mohammed, Alhaji Kawu Baraje, Alhaji Bamanga Tukur, Alhaji Adamu Mu'azu, Prince Uche Secondus, Senator Ali Modu Sheriff, Senator Ahmed Makarfi, Senator Iyorchia Ayu, and presently Umar Illiya (Ereke & Ogendegbe, 2016; Idris & Terzungwe 2016).

This situation also applies to the numerous National Secretaries that the party had over time, some were kicked out and some resigned. The states and local governments were not left out of this infighting and thus had their due share of displaced officers. The ouster of Chief Solomon Lar, Chief Barnabas Gemade and Chief Audu Ogbeh was a result of falling out of President Obasanjo's good book (Ghali' Nabba, 2001; Olowolagba, 2018). In the case of Prince Vincent Ogbulafor who was booted out of office in 2010 after the death of President Yar'adua. Ogbulafor started having issues with the then Acting President, Goodluck Jonathan following the prolonged sickness of President Yar'adua when he stated that the presidential ticket would return to the North after the death of Yar'adua. The statement was not tolerated and thus was considered an abomination by then-President Goodluck Jonathan and his supporters (Umoru, 2013; Adeniyi, 2017).

Dr Nwodo who replaced Ogbulafor met his Waterloo following the initiation of policies meant to limit the control of the party by state governors; this eventually led to a gang-up and his unceremonious ouster. For Bamanga Tukur it was a battle for the heart of the party between him and his supporters and the aggrieved PDP members comprising mainly Governors forming the New PDP with other party bigwigs like Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and this eventually saw the group defecting to the then opposition All Progressive Congress (APC). Attempting to draw a picture of the state of party affairs in the People's Democratic Party, Joe-Akunne, Nnamani, Egodike, & Azuakor (2022:9) narrate thus:

At the Mini-Convention that the PDP conducted in 2013, seven state governors – Kano, Kwara, Rivers, Sokoto, Adamawa, Niger and Jigawa with their teaming supporters walked out of the venue, the Eagle Square in Abuja, moved to the Yar'Adua Centre where they

addressed a press conference and announced their intention to form a new party to be called the new PDP...

Furthermore, the ouster of Prince Uche Secondus was a result of a misunderstanding between him and the then Governor of Rivers State Nyesom Wike, who is presently a Minister of the FCT in an All Progressives Congress government. The two who were political allies turned out bitter political enemies (Ukpong, 2022). Another notable case of intra-party crisis in the People's Democratic Party (PDP) during the Obasanjo regime was the continuous misunderstanding between President Obasanjo and his Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. Alhaji Atiku Abubakar was a foundation member of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), having played an active role in the late Musa Yar'adua's Peoples Democratic Movement (PDM) that eventually metamorphosed into People's Democratic Party (PDP). Following the animosity between the two, President Obasanjo and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the latter defected to the Action Congress which became the new name of Alliance for Democracy (AD) after an open pitched battle with his boss, the President. He contested as the presidential candidate of the Action Congress in the 2007 general elections, returned to the PDP in 2011, decamped again from the People's Democratic Party (PDP), joined the New PDP as a leading voice as he crossed over to the All Progressives Congress (APC) and later returned to People's Democratic Party (PDP) to contest the 2019 and 2023 Presidential elections as the People's Democratic Party (PDP) flag bearer (Tukur, 2017). Also, another case of intra-party crisis within the People's Democratic Party (PDP) was that of the replacement of former governor of Rivers state, Hon Chibuike Amaechi who won the PDP's gubernatorial primaries held in early 2007, subsequently due to a misunderstanding between him and President Obasanjo bothering in an unsubstantiated allegation of financial malfeasance when he was Speaker of Rivers State House of Assembly (Chukwu, 2022).

During the build-up to the 2023 General Elections, the Group of 5 (G5) Governors; comprising of Governors from Rivers State (Nyesom Wike), Abia State (Okezie Ikpeazu), Enugu State (Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi), Benue State (Samuel Ortom), and Oyo State (Seyi Makinde); also known as the Integrity Group became aggrieved when the People's Democratic Party (PDP) presidential primaries candidacy was zoned to the North. The aggrieved five Governors demanded that the PDP National Chairman, Iyorchia Ayu step down for a Southern replacement as a precondition to support the presidential candidate of the party, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar in the 25th February 2023 poll. Bode George who is a member of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) Board of Trustees as well as a member of the Integrity Group explained that the People's Democratic Party (PDP) was divided and already defeated even before the presidential poll and a divided house is a defeated house. The rancour and disagreement within the party eventually led to the defeat of the party at the presidential poll (Akinkuotu, 2023).

After the defeat of the People's Democratic Party in the 2023 elections, the infighting within the People's Democratic Party has continued, with ensuing court injunction and even physical violence in a bid to determine who controls the leadership structure of the party even with the resignation of Iyorchia Ayu. The Fubara/Wike controversy in Rivers State centered on who controls the party structure and State resources; the sack of Samuel Anyanwu as PDP national Secretary and his refusal to vacate the office, the sack of the party's Board of Trustees (BOT) Chairman Adolphus Wabara by a section of the party in Abia State, rebuttal of the sack of Senator Wabara by his ward and the ensuing court injunctions and more all point to the fact that internal party democracy is lacking in the People's Democratic Party. Though these issues are not only seen in the People's Democratic Party alone, but it is

concerning considering the journey of the People's Democratic Party since the return to democracy in 1999.

Intra-Party Crisis in the 2022 Abia State Peoples Democratic Party Primaries

Political parties have been described as pillars sustaining the electoral process and most especially democracy but, unfortunately, the unprecedented cases of controversial primaries question their continuous existence (Ereke and Ogendegbe, 2016). Nigeria's political parties have constantly faced the challenge of how to choose the party leadership and candidates (flag bearers) in inter-party elections. This often has resulted in grievances and disagreements which in most cases consume the party itself or even lead to members decamping to another party. It has remained obvious that if the wrong candidate is foisted on party members in flagrant disregard of democratic procedure, it would bring disaffection and agitations within the party, while also affecting the quality of alternatives that the electorate is presented with. Prior to the 2023 elections, the Abia State Peoples Democratic party was enmeshed in an intense intra-party crisis which eventually denied them election victory in most of their former stronghold and electoral position contested for.

Table 1:
Elective Positions and Candidates that Emerged after the 2023 Elections in Abia State

Position	Political Party	Name of Winner	Candidate's party before the Primaries
Governorship	Labour Party (LP)	Dr. Alex C. Otti	LP member
Abia House of Assembly State Constituencies			
Aba South	Labour Party (LP)	Hon. Emma Emeruwa	LP member
Aba North	Labour Party (LP)	Hon. Destiny Nwangwu	LP member
Aba Central	Labour Party (LP)	Hon. Ucheonye Stephen	LP member
Umuahia East	Labour Party (LP)	Hon. Austin Okezie Meregini	LP member
Umuahia South	Labour Party (LP)	Hon. Emeka Jacob Obioma	LP member
Umuahia North	All Progressives Congress (APC)	Hon. Barr Akaliro Anderson	APC member
Umuahia Central	Labour Party (LP)	Hon. Chinasa Anthony	LP member
Osisioma South	Young Progressives Party (YPP)	Hon. Fyne Ahuama	YPP member
Osisioma North	Young Progressives Party (YPP)	Hon. Nwogu Iheanacho	YPP member

Umunneochi	Labour Party	Hon. Ume Mathias	LP member
Ukwa West	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Hon. Godwin Adiele	PDP member
Ukwa East	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Hon. Lewis Obianyi	PDP member
Ugwunagbo	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Hon. Chijioke Uruakpa	PDP member
Obingwa West	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Hon. Erundu Uchenna Erundu	PDP member
Obingwa East	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Hon. Solomon Akpulonu	PDP member
Isiukwuato	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Hon. Lucky Johnson	PDP member
Ohafia South	Labour Party (LP)	Hon. Nwoke Kalu Mba	LP member
Ohafia North	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Hon. Mandela Obasi	PDP member
Isiala Ngwa South	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Hon. Rowland Ceaser	PDP member
Isiala Ngwa North	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Hon. Ugochukwu Iheonunekwu	PDP member
Ikwuano	Labour Party (LP)	Hon. Boniface Isienyi	LP member
Bende South	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Hon. Emmanuel Ndubuisi	PDP member
Bende North	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Hon. Nnamdi Ibekwe	PDP member
Arochukwu State	Labour Party (LP)	Hon. Uchenna Okoro	LP member
Senatorial			
Abia South	All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA)	Sen. Enyinnaya Abaribe	PDP member
Abia North	All Progressives Congress (APC)	Sen. Orji Uzor Kalu	APC member
Abia Central	Peoples	Sen. Augustine	PDP member

	Democratic Party (PDP)	Akobundu (declared by the court)	
House of Representatives			
Aba North/ Aba South	All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA)	Rep. Alex Mascot Ikwechegh	APGA member
Arochukwu/Ohafia	Labour Party	Rep. Ibe Okwara-Osonwa	LP member
Bende	All Progressives Congress (APC)	Rep. Benjamin Kalu	APC member
IsialaNgwa North/ IsialaNgwa South	Labour Party (LP)	Rep. Ginger Onwusibe	PDP member
Isuikwuato/ Umunneochi	Labour Party (LP)	Rep. Amobi Ogah	LP member
Obingwa/Ugwunagbo/Osisioma	Labour Party (LP)	Rep. Munachim Alozie	LP member
Ukwa East/ Ukwa West	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Rep. Christian Nkwonta	PDP member
Umuahia North/ Umuahia South/ Ikwuano	Labour Party (LP)	Rep. Obinna Aguocha	LP member

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Politics in a democracy entails politics conducted within the organisational framework of political parties and the object of organised politics has always been the winning of election and the capturing of political power at all levels of government (Ukah, 2008). Thus, the ability to have political followership and especially the grassroot mobilisation capacity through performance and most at times charisma has a way of effectively selling the prospects of a candidate and the political party to the electorate with ease. The inability to convincingly get the support of the electorate has resulted in politicians resorting to depending on Nigeria's judiciary and its penchant for legal technicalities to sneak in candidates as winners even with little or no voter input into the political system as political leaders in various political leadership platforms.

Sampson (2022) points out that the intra-party crisis rocking the People's Democratic Party in Abia state has deepened and resulted to disaffection and defection of party members. He indicates that their withdrawal and later defection was as a result of a strange delegate list which allegedly emanated from the then sitting governor, Dr Okezie Ikpeazu. All the People's Democratic Party governorship aspirants in the state, except the late Prof. Uche Ikonke, who was believed to be the governor's candidate, had insisted that there was no three-man delegates' election held in the state.

Prior to the 2023 general elections, the Abia state, the People's Democratic Party was enmeshed in a deep intra-party conflict which in the long run eroded the bond holding the party together. The disaffection and selective political patronage and issues bothering on performance since the political party held political positions in Abia were at the fore front of so many issues that decapitated the possibilities of the once prominent political party in Abia

State. According to the Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party Abia State, Abraham Amah, the major reasons why the PDP performed poorly in the 2023 general election in the state were fielding wrong candidates and embezzlement of election funds by party members (Nwakanma, 2023; Effiong, 2023).

Example of these defections are the cases of Representative Ginger Onwusibe who defected to Labour Party, Senator Darlington Nwokocha who also defected from the People's Democratic Party to the Labour Party prior the 2023 general elections, another out of many notable examples is also the defection of Chief Umeh Kalu (SAN), who was a former commissioner of justice in People's Democratic Party (PDP) defecting to Labour Party (LP). The then Nigeria Senate Minority Leader and Peoples Democratic Party governorship aspirant in Abia State, Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe, also left the PDP and resigned as the Minority Leader in the Senate. Abaribe, who was one of the top contenders for the party's governorship ticket in Abia State, withdrew from the primary about 78 hours before the contest and defected to the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). Senator Abaribe later won the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) senatorial ticket, jettisoning his aspiration to govern Abia State and winning the Senatorial election for Abia South Senatorial district (Odufowokan, 2022; Effiong, 2023). It may be pertinent to indicate that Senator Abaribe defeated Governor Ikpeazu in the senatorial election. In some wards and local governments where it would have been a walk over considering the political party's long hold to power and stakeholders coming from such places, the defections by most of these stakeholders tilted the balance and gave victory to other political parties.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Political parties remain an important institution for any democracy to succeed and the continuous cases of intra-party crises have constrained political parties to contribute towards the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. It has been argued that political parties rely on popular mandate to contest and win elections, thus ensuring acceptable leadership. It is unfortunate that much is not seen in the area of increased political participation and competition due to political apathy resulting from the messy intra-party politics witnessed by the electorate; there is evident increase in the infighting in political parties, both in major and minor political parties in Nigeria. The misconception that politics is one of the profitable ventures that gives access to control, distribute and use public funds has made the issue of intra-party crisis increase as divergent interests are not tolerated since self-interests is always at fore. The findings revealed that lack of internal party democracy, and poor implementation of the party constitution and Electoral Act are all enablers of intra-party crisis in Nigeria political parties and these affect the consolidation of democracy. The study showed that intra party crises can adversely affect the electoral fortune of an otherwise dominant political party in an election. This was empirically validated by the outcome of the 2023 election in Abia state where the PDP performed poorly and even an incumbent governor lost a senatorial election. The study concludes that political parties remain an important institution for any democracy to succeed and the continuous cases of intra-party crises have constrained political parties to contribute towards the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria.

The study recommends that to deepen Nigeria's democratic ethos, internal party democracy should be promoted and that political parties should not be regarded as the private enterprise of money bags, powerful elected and appointed officials who assume the role of godfathers and dictate what happens in the parties. It further recommends that the voice of every party member should count and that party constitutions and relevant provisions of the Electoral Act should guide the conduct of political parties in the wards, local government areas, states and

national level. Also, political parties in Nigeria should develop a mechanism for social harmony and peace building considering its peculiarities and diversities.

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