

Party Politics and Conflict in the All Progressive Congress (APC), in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, 2015-2022

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Abstract

Internal party democracy entails inclusiveness, democratic values, accountability and fairness in power distribution and decision-making. This makes internal democracy vital for the survival of any political party and democratic system. However, its lack leads to political party conflicts, threatening government stability and democratic governance. Conflict in the All Progressive Congress in Nasarawa state has become worrisome and caused the party to be locked in a continuous political standoff. This is undoubtedly a microcosm of the conflicts that have characterized the APC at the national level, leading to division, anti-party activities, factionalism, defection, and a decline in the party's electoral performance. This is attributable to the neglect of democratic tenets by the party elite, flouting of the party constitution, imposition of candidates, and concentration of political power in a small individual or group's hands. Therefore, this paper explains how non-adherence to regulations governing recruitment by the party elite accounts for the conflict leading to defection in the APC in Nasarawa State. The paper was anchored on institutional theory as its analytical framework. Methodologically, the study relied on the documentary data collection method and depended on content analysis. The paper found that the non-adherence to regulations governing recruitment by the party elite accounted for the conflict, leading to defection within the APC in Nasarawa State. The paper concludes that the conflict in the Nasarawa state chapter of the APC reflects the problems that characterized the party at the national level. Arising from the paper's findings, the paper recommended enactment and enforcement by the APC, of transparent recruitment regulations based on fairness, equity and justice, consistently complied with by all party members.

Background to the Study

Nasarawa State as a newly created state located in the north-central geopolitical zone of Nigeria, has experienced significant political development through different political evolutions, the rise of strategic political actors, and the growth of the state's political landscape (Okwori & Okpogho, 2014). The state carved out of Plateau State during the military administration of Late General Sani Abacha on October 1, 1996, is a product of political activism and agitation by various ethnic groups such as the Eggon, Alago, Mada and the Gwandara. According to Binbol and Marcus (2010), the geographical entity known as Nasarawa State existed on October 1, 1996. It has a central location in the middle belt region of Nigeria. The state lies between latitude 7 45' and 9 25' N of the equator and between longitude 7 and 9 37' E of the Greenwich meridian. It shares a boundary with Kaduna state in the north, Plateau state in the east, Taraba state, and Benue states in the south, while Kogi state and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory in the west. The state has a total land area of 27,137.8 square kilometres and a population of about 1,826,883, according to the 2005 population estimate, with a density population of about 67 persons per square kilometre. Nasarawa state is divided into 13 local government areas; Akwanga, Awa, doma, Karu, Keana, Keffi, Kokona, Lafia, Nasarawa Eggon, Obi, Toto, and Wamba.

Nasarawa is a heterogeneous and multi-ethnic state besieged by various cleavages with penchants for decentralization. Some of the ethnic nationalities are Eggon, Alago, Mada Rindre, Kulere, Kantana, Afo, Tiv, Gbagyi, Egbura, Hausa, Fulani, and the Gwandara, among others (Binbol and Marcus, 2010). It is usually challenging to achieve and maintain friendly relationships among and between groups in a homogeneous social order and even more so in the state's diverse, plural and multi-ethnic nature. As a newly created and heterogeneous state, the structures of its leadership and level of economic development have proved incapable of welding its multi-ethnic character into a strong state. Therefore, it lacks the socio-economic, cultural, and political linkages essential for preventing and managing conflict within political parties, especially the All Progressive Congress (APC). This has constituted a bottleneck and caused the APC to be locked in a perpetual political impasse in the state (Mbah, 2017). The problem of internal conflict in the All Progressive Congress in Nasarawa state has become a troublesome feature of political life, negatively impacting the party's performance in the 2019 and 2023 general elections. This is undoubtedly a microcosm of the larger problems that have characterized the party at the national level, leading to division and a decline in the party's popularity. This has weakened the party's ability to govern effectively, making it difficult to win the presidential election and three senatorial seats in the state, including the loss of majority members of the state assembly to the opposition parties in the 2019 and 2023 elections.

Similarly, the desperation by political elites to acquire power at all costs and the winner-takes-all character of politics in Nigeria causes conflict within political parties in a multi-religious and multi-ethnic state such as Nasarawa and consequently, weakens the democratic system in the country at large (Momodu & Matudi, 2013). In the present modern world, democracy exists within the ambit of political parties in which internal

party democracy is seen as the minimal set of principles which provides a top-down approach to decision-making within a political party and the internal sharing of power at various levels of government and among individuals or groups. The minimal principles embody internal regulations and processes that give average party members greater power on issues such as party policy platform selection of party leaders and candidates for the general election. Therefore, the utmost engaging models of internal party democracy include inclusiveness, democratic values, accountability and fairness in state power distribution. This makes internal party democracy a critical principle in the operation and survival of any political party and democratic state worldwide. However, lacking it leads to severe internal conflicts in political parties, which could jeopardize government stability and good governance (Sule & Yahaya, 2019).

However, as political parties and members struggle for state power, conflicts arise within and among them. Accordingly, Abba and Babalola (2017) define party politics as the politics involving people through political parties and expressed through the channel or thoughtful ideal of political parties as against national interest. Momodu and Matudi (2013) view party politics as activities of political parties in a democratic setting to influence and control the machinery of government through democratic institutions. Hence, political elites employ all means, including undemocratic and unconstitutional, to capture political power through elections marred by fraud and irregularities (Yusuf, 2015; Chibuike & Ernest, 2015). Political parties in Nigeria have a notoriety for internal party conflict since the achievement of political independence on 1st October 1960 because the internal rules of political parties in the nation are not guided by accountability, transparency and independence, as well as by effective links between party's leadership and other levels of the structure and organization of parties especially the All Progressive Congress (APC) in Nasarawa state.

The Nigerian Fourth Republic, which started on 29th May 1999, shows increasing party politics and internal party conflicts because their relationship with their members is not always based on cooperation, mutuality and dialogue, and lack of homogeneity in political parties' approaches which predispose party members to articulate incompatible interests leading to conflict (Momodu & Matudi, 2013). This seems to be more pronounced within and among the two leading political parties, the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), in Nigeria. The conflicts within these political parties have taken a hot magnitude and witnessed adverse political setbacks that have increased the rate of decamping, factions, anti-party activities, collapse of the parties and political violence (Jude and Ika, 2013). The All Progressive Congress (APC) in Nasarawa state has suffered internal conflict leading to division, anti-party activities, breakdown of party activities, factionalization within the party, and defection of party members as a result of the struggle for control of the party's machinery, conduct of party primaries, clashes of interest between the party's acclaim owners (former governors) and its members, and lack of a strong central leadership.

Scholars and social commentators have advanced propositions to explain internal party politics and conflict within political parties. Scholars such as Roy (2021), Morrison (2019),

Sides et al. (2018), Wintour (2021), Oladesu (2017), Ojukwu and Olaifa (2011), Aleyomi (2013), Toyin (2014), Awofeso and Irabor (2017), Dionne (2019), Watt (2019), Momodu and Matudi (2013), Nwafor and Unaji (2016), Gold (2013), and Shale and Matlosa (2008) have identified factors responsible for internal party conflict to include clashes between strong personalities and egos within a party, imposition of candidates, corruption or scandals involving party leaders and members, favouritism, unequal sharing of resources, poor electoral performances or consecutive election defeats, lack of regular meetings, centralization of power and regional or ethnic politics.

However, it can be argued that the triggers of internal party politics and the conflict in the All Progressive Congress (APC) in Nasarawa State are non-adherence to party regulations governing recruitment by the party elite. This could be attributed to the desire to impose their loyalists or whims and caprices on the party's structure to ensure perpetual control and domination of the party. Therefore, it is based on this observed problem that the paper seeks to address this crucial research question:

- i. Does the non-adherence to regulations governing recruitment by the party elite account for the conflict leading to the defection within the APC in Nasarawa state, Nigeria?

Literature Review

Here, the review of the extant literature is based on the theme derived from the above research question.

Regulation Governing Party Recruitment, Conflict and Party Defection

Political parties are often governed by regulations stipulating how new members should be recruited. These regulations may be enshrined in the party's constitution, by-laws or informal rules that have evolved. The purpose of these regulations is to ensure that the party's membership is diverse and representative of the larger population and that new members are recruited fairly and transparently. However, the non-adherence to the recruitment regulations by party elite and leaders predisposes political parties to conflict, leading to divisions and defection of party members to other political parties or the formation of new ones.

Scholars such as Leong (2020), Bako (2020), Gerring (2019), Bulli (2020), Rajagopal (2019), Eichhorn et al (2019), Paker (2020), Lee (2018), Wanna (2018), Marrian (2019), Benton (2018) and Weaver (2020) among others, argued that conflict within a political party is caused by factors such as ideological differences, autocratic or top-down leadership styles, clashes of personalities and interpersonal dynamics among party members, lack of internal party democracy, weak party organization and structures, exclusion of party members in the decision-making processes, imposition of candidates as well as unequal distribution of resources. Weaver (2020) maintains that disputes over the arbitrary admission or expulsion of party members or groups within a party cause internal party conflict.

Weaver (2020), also argues that ideological differences, party policy positions, or individual relationships could influence decisions concerning party membership, leading to divisions and pressures in a party. The Labour Party in the United Kingdom was involved in internal conflicts due to disputes over the party membership admission standards and disciplinary actions. However, Weaver does not analyze how ethnic, regional or identity divisions within a political party could fuel internal party conflict. Martin (2012) also argues that external election results, such as electoral losses or poor performance, could trigger internal party conflicts. For him, a political party flops to realize its electoral aims or experiences a consequential drop in voter support, internal blame games, finger-pointing, and leadership challenges could arise. Consequently, election defeats can increase prevailing internal divisions and fuel conflicts within a political party. For example, the Republican Party in the United States, after the loss of President Donald Trump in 2021, has faced internal party conflicts resulting from electoral losses and disputes over the party's direction.

Another reason responsible for the internal party crisis, as advanced by scholars such as Ojukwu and Olaifa (2011), Azazi (2012), Aleyomi (2013), and Ojougboh (2015) is the conventions of political parties that permit zoning arrangement of their offices. Therefore, this means that party convention, which enables zoning of political offices, denies eligible individuals their constitutional rights to contest for any elective position and does not allow for broader participation, which is a fundamental tenet of any democratic arrangement. This partly explains why Ojougboh (2015) argues that the action of former President Goodluck Jonathan sabotages the common trust that guided the PDP from its inception by some PDP members who rejected the zoning arrangement in the PDP's constitution for Jonathan to contested in the 2011 general elections, contributed to the internal crisis in the party which eventually led to its defeat in the 2015 general elections. Leong (2020) submits that autocratic or top-down leadership styles that exclude party members in the decision-making process breed the thwarting of expectations and dissatisfaction and amplify internal party conflict. Leong further posited that contradictory leadership styles, like emphasising consensus-building instead of progressive decision-making, induce internal divisions and conflicts in political parties. The People's Action Party (PAP) in Singapore, for illustration, has witnessed internal conflicts related to leadership style and decision-making.

Jaensch and Rozzoli (2019), argue that power dynamics and sectarian competitions for influence and control of party machinery destabilize party unity and thwart effective decision-making, leading to internal party conflict. The Australian Labor Party (ALP) has experienced internal conflicts connected to factionalism and power struggles to control the party's machinery. According to Marrian (2019), conflict within a political party is driven by clashes of personalities and interpersonal dynamics among party members. She argues that differences in communication styles, personal animosities, and historical grievances can generate tension and divisions within a party. For her, internal party conflicts intensify when individual differences dominate party policy discussions or when individuals prioritize personal vendettas over a party's interests. For instance, the

African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa has faced internal party conflicts swayed by personal clashes and interpersonal dynamics.

Benton (2018), argues that internal party conflicts occur as a result of the way a party is structured and organized. This is because when party structures are unproductive, lack transparency and accountability, or fail to provide opportunities for meaningful participation, it can lead to frustration and conflicts among party members. The Communist Party of China, for example, has witnessed internal party conflicts arising from issues of party structure and organization. Wanna (2018) believes conflicts within political parties are amplified due to a lack of consensus on a party's overarching policy agenda or when groups push for conflicting policy positions. The Liberal Party of Australia has faced internal party conflicts associated with party policy disputes and conflicting priorities. Seyd and Whiteley (2019) believed that conflicting ideologies of party members and divergent interpretations of party principles can provoke internal divisions and conflicts in a political party. The Labour Party in the United Kingdom has encountered internal party conflicts correlated to ideological differences and clashes over party principles.

Accordingly, Parker (2020), avers that conflicts in political parties occur when individual party members or groups digress from a party line or publicly criticize party decisions, leading to internal splits and tautness. In this case, implementing party punishment becomes an issue of contention, mainly when there are conflicts between party loyalty and individual or group rebellion. For instance, the Republican Party in the United States has experienced internal party conflicts related to challenges in upholding party unity and discipline. This view is not wrong because piloting ideological differences, managing leadership changes efficiently, and promoting party discipline are vital for reducing internal party conflicts and sustaining party unity. However, Parker does not look at divisions arising from regional or ethnic identities as a trigger of internal party conflict.

Vaishnav (2017), argues that internal party conflicts happen when party members from diverse regions or ethnic affiliations nurture a feeling of marginalization or unequal representation, as well as disputes over the allocation of resources and policy primacies. For example, the Indian National Congress experienced internal party conflicts due to regional and ethnic divisions. Despite this near-excellent argument advanced by Vaishnav, there was no effort to explain how the tasks of handling coalition politics and alliances could trigger conflict in a political party. Hix and Hönnige (2012), paying attention to the challenges of managing coalition politics and associations, argued that disputes among party members on managing coalition politics and alliances could lead to splits and conflicts within a political party. This was the experience of the Christian Democratic Union in Germany, which was bedevilled by internal party conflicts due to the challenges of managing coalition politics and alliances. This assertion is correct because managing regional multiplicity, addressing allegations of corruption efficiently, and steering coalition dynamics are critical factors for preserving party harmony and decreasing internal party conflicts.

Eichhorn et al. (2019), also posited that conflict within a political party is driven by party membership and inclusion issues. They further argue that when members of a political party feel marginalized, excluded, or underrepresented within a party, it could lead to internal divisions and conflicts. In a related analysis, Rajagopal (2019) says internal party conflict occurs when individual party members prioritize their interests or ambitions over the common goals of a party. This assertion is not wrong because when individual interests or ambitions overshadow the collective interests of party members, conflict is bound to ensue. Kaplan and Sargent (2020) argued that the outside party-political scenario and the competitive nature of the political system could influence internal party conflict. This is true because political parties can face internal divisions and conflicts when such parties experience electoral challenges, threats from opposing political parties, or changes in the political environment and dynamics. However, Kaplan and Sargent do not perceive the feeling of inequality and injustice among party members as instigators of internal party conflict.

Mangu (2019) pays particular attention to the perception of unfairness and injustice among members of a political party and argues that conflicts within a political party can ensue due to the perception of inequality and unfairness within a party. This argument is not out of place because when members of a political party perceive a lack of equal opportunities, favouritism, or unequal treatment, it could result in frustration and anger, leading to factionalization and the defection of party members. For instance, the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa has experienced internal party conflicts due to feelings of inequality and unfairness. Therefore, promoting a sense of justice and fairness in a political party is crucial for encouraging party cohesion and diminishing internal party conflict. Bulli (2020) also argues that political parties may be confronted with challenges from outside tremors such as economic recessions, natural disasters, or significant political humiliations, which may result in conflicting views among party members on how to react to these challenges or apportioning blame for a party's leadership management of the disaster leading to internal party conflict. The Italian Democratic Party has faced internal party conflicts connected to external challenges and crises.

Poroma and Iwuoha (2018) averred that the power struggle had prevented the economic development of most states in Africa because the Foreign Direct Investment rate flow to Africa is centred in fewer nations and mostly in extractive industries due to the struggle for power, internal conflicts and political crisis. However, Poroma and Iwuoha did not explain how the process of undermining the critical roles and hegemony of the state in conducting peaceful elections by the political class due to intense power struggle results in crisis. Strachan (2017) argues that the fierce and persistent struggle for powers between and among political elite groups affects the success or failure of political transitions in most Third World Countries. Nevertheless, Strachan's view of the struggle for political powers and how it affects the success or otherwise of political changes is short-sighted because he failed to foresee or predict the possibility of how the struggle for political authorities in developed countries could affect the success or failure of political

transitions as evidence in the United States between Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Seyd and Whiteley (2019) enumerated the lack of transparency, nepotism, corruption and authoritarian tendencies of party leaders as causes of internal party conflict. However, they failed to analyze how the absence of internal party democracy and the poverty of political ideology could induce conflict within political parties.

Lee (2018), looks at ideological differences and challenges political parties face in maintaining stability with their core values and principles as reasons for internal party conflict. However, Lee does not see the perception of unfairness and injustice among political party members as a factor responsible for conflict within a political party. Bako (2021) argues that lack of internal party democracy, centralization of authority within a party, the concentration of decision-making processes, inadequate participation and input from party members, and processes of party leadership selection and candidate nominations are causes of internal party conflict. This argument is appropriate because promoting inclusive leadership, preserving party ideological coherence, and fostering internal party democracy is indispensable for upholding party unity and decreasing internal party conflicts.

Boucek (2009), in his book *Rethinking Factionalism: Typologies, Intra-Party Dynamics and Three Faces of Factionalism*, outlined three significant types of factionalism: cooperative, competitive and degenerative factionalism. He argues that cooperative factionalism seeks to encourage consensus building, party consolidation and electoral coordination, which promotes party harmony and integration of the party. At the same time, competitive factionalization entrenches party democracy by widening voters' choices and empowering party followers, consequently leading to a balance of internal power. However, degenerative factionalization is self-serving and promotes rent-seeking, factional jockeying and a shift of focus away from the party's collective goals, ultimately leading to instability or potential break-up or collapse. In essence, degenerative factionalization accurately depicts resultant factions in Nigeria's political parties; internal conflicts did not help solidify its democratic structures but created factions. Factionalization within this context is of two types: factions within the party, which resulted in spanning disagreements, or factionalization, which led to a total break up of the party.

According to Omotola (2009), the factions resulted from internal conflict in the PDP; the case of Atiku Abubakar vs Olusegun Obasanjo represents one example of internal squabbles leading to factions. The disagreement was borne out of the Atiku's presidential ambition, which Obasanjo was said to have sabotaged. The conflict resulted when Atiku and his supporters ditched the PDP and launched the Action Congress (AC). Beller and Belloni (1978) define factions as 'any relatively organized group that exists within the context of some other group and which (as a *political* faction) competes with rivals for power advantages within the larger group of which it is a part' (emphasis in the original). Köllner and Basedau (2005) argue that faction is synonymous with any intra-party combination, clique, or grouping whose members share a sense of common identity and

common purpose and are organized to cooperate as a distinct bloc within the party to achieve their goals.

Gap in Literature

From the review of the extant literature on internal party politics and conflict in the All Progressive Congress (APC) in Nasarawa state, it is evident that scholars did not establish a link between the non-adherence to regulations governing recruitment by party elite and the conflict leading to the defection of APC members in Nasarawa state to the opposition parties such as the Social Democratic Party (SDP), the Zenith Labour Party (ZLP), the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP). This constitutes our point of departure and contribution to knowledge.

Methodology

Methodologically, the paper was anchored on institutional theory as its theoretical analysis framework. The article depended on the documentary data collection method by utilizing secondary sources. Data generated for the paper was analyzed through content analysis.

Framework

This paper is anchored on institutional theory developed by John Meyer, Brian Rowan, and Richard Scott in 1977. The institutional theory is a famous and popular viewpoint in sociology and organizational studies that tries to understand how institutions shape and influence the behaviour of individuals and organizations. The theory highlights the role of isomorphism in producing conformity and stability within social systems while acknowledging actors' agency in shaping institutions. Through its extensive application, institutional theory remains a foundational framework for scholars and experts seeking to understand social and organizational life dynamics. Institutional theory helps explain why certain behaviours and practices become broadly recognized and institutionalized within societies and organizations. Institutional theory postulates that institutions are formal and informal rules, norms, and practices that govern and structure social interactions. These institutions can include political parties, laws, regulations, cultural beliefs, and organizational procedures.

The theory assumes that institutions are governance structures representing rules for social behaviour. This means that institutions are not just physical entities but also the norms, values, and beliefs that guide social behaviour (Scott, 2008). The institutional theory argues that groups and organizations conforming to rules for social behaviour rules are accorded legitimacy, a condition contributing to their existence. The theory posits that institutions are characterized by inertia, a tendency to resist change, which means institutions can be sluggish to change, even in new information or circumstances. The theory also assumes that institutions are socially constructed. This means that they are not natural or unavoidable but shaped and sustained by human beings. This significantly affects understanding of how institutions change, as it submits that they can be altered by human action. The theory further argues that institutions can be both

restraining and permitting. On the one hand, institutions can control social behaviour by setting rules and norms that must be obeyed. On the other hand, institutions can also allow social behaviour by offering frameworks and resources enabling people to act.

Theory Application

The connection between internal party politics and conflict in the All Progressive Congress (APC) in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, is better explained through institutional theory. This is because institutional theory as a social theory focuses on the role of institutions in shaping social behaviour. Institutions are the formal rules, norms, and procedures that structure social interactions (Hall & Taylor, 1996). Therefore, from the perspective of political parties, institutions can include parties' constitutions, their rules and regulations, procedures, leadership structures, and their internal factions. These institutions can shape conflict within a political party by defining the laws of the game for political struggle; they can provide resources to diverse factions and generate opportunities for conflict, especially when party elite and members do not adhere to or comply with these rules and regulations.

In line with the theory's basic assumptions, an institution or political party such as the APC that is weak, corrupt, unproductive and lacks supremacy is predisposed to conflict within it. This is because of the non-adherence to rules and regulations governing recruitment by the party elite, especially in a party like the APC that lacks the authority to enforce compliance to laws and regulations, imposition of candidates in the name of consensus or conduct of parallel party primaries induce conflict leading to factionalization and defection of party members, particular in the Nasarawa state chapter of the APC in Nigeria.

Indeed, by focusing on the role of institutions (political parties) in shaping social behaviour and human actions, when a political party is weak, corrupt, and de-institutionalized, under these circumstances, building a solid party as an institution is sabotaged and becomes the political equivalent of impunity in a rather conflict form. Therefore, building a strong APC in Nasarawa state presumes a violent attribute since the party elite and members undermine rules and regulations governing the selection of party leaders or candidates.

Discussion and Finding

The All Progressives Congress (APC) in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, has been plagued by conflict, factionalism and defection due to the non-adherence to regulations governing recruitment by the state's party elite, among other factors. The APC's constitution (2013) stipulates the procedures for recruiting new members, selecting candidates for election, and appointing party executives at all levels of government. However, in the Nasarawa state chapter of the APC, these procedures are often disregarded by the party elite, who often hand-pick and impose their supporters or loyalists for critical positions or as the party's candidates for election. This has led to many party members feeling marginalized and excluded from the decision-making process, resulting in internal conflict and

defection within the APC in Nasarawa State. Notable among the APC defectors in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, are John Danboyi, who defected to the New Nigeria People Party (NNPP), Senator Godiya Akwashiki to the Social Democratic Party (SDP), Mohammed Tsimbabi (NNPP), Musa Saidu Gude (SDP), Musa Ibrahim Abubakar (NNPP), and Tanko Tunga. Others include Abubakar Sarki Dahiru, Muazu Mohammed Adogi, Mohammed Muluku, Aliyu Safiyanu, Jonathan Gaza Gbefwi, Sherrif Albasheer, and Ahmed Aliyu Wadada. This defection in the APC in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, has led to the poor electoral performance of the party in the 2023 general election in the state, resulting in the loss of the APC in presidential election and three Senatorial seats, House of Representatives seats and some State Assembly members to the opposition parties.

Table 1: Showing Names of APC Defectors in Nasarawa State, Nigeria

S/N	Name	Political Designation	Senatorial Zone	Party
1	John Danboyi	Former Senate Member	Nasarawa North	NNPP
2	Muazu Mohammed Adogi	Former Member NSHA	Nasarawa South	SDP
3	Jonathan Gaza Gbefwi	Serving Member HoR	Nasarawa West	SDP
4	Godiya Akwashiki	Serving Senator	Nasarawa North	SDP
5	Musa Ibrahim Abubakar	Former Commissioner	Nasarawa South	NNPP
6	Ahmed Aliyu Wadada	Former Member HoR	Nasarawa West	SDP
7	Aliyu Safiyanu,	Aspirant HoR, 2023 election	Nasarawa North	SDP
8	Abubakar Sarki Dahiru	Former Member NSHA	Nasarawa South	SDP
9	Mohammed Tsimbabi	Former Member NSHA	Nasarawa West	NNPP
10	Mohammed A. Muluku	Chief whip NSHA	Nasarawa North	SDP
11	Tanko Tunga	Majority Leader NSHA	Nasarawa South	SDP
12	Sherrif Albasheer	Aspirant, HoR, 2019/2023, elections	Nasarawa West	SDP
13	Musa Saidu Gude	Aspirant, NSHA, 2019/2023, elections	Nasarawa West	SDP

Source: Compiled by the author with data generated from Ukumba, I. (2023)

Data from Table 1 above shows that of the thirteen (13) APC defectors between 2019 and 2023 across the three Senatorial zones of Nasarawa State, Nigeria, five (5) are from Nasarawa West Senatorial District, while in Nasarawa North and South Senatorial District, there were four (4) defectors each giving the total number of 13 defectors from the APC to opposition parties as a result of the conflict arising from the non-adherence to regulations governing recruitment by APC elite in the state. Similarly, of the 13 APC defectors, three (3) defected to the New Nigeria People's Party, while ten (10) defected to the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

The defection was also due to the imposition of favoured candidates, disregard for internal party democracy by not allowing a level playing field for all APC members in Nasarawa state to compete for elective positions, changing of delegate lists, and the imbalance in the distribution of political positions in the state. This led to a feeling of marginalization, exclusion and frustration among the APC members in Nasarawa State, resulting in conflict and consequent defection in the party. Therefore, the most critical

dimensions of the factors that accounted for the conflict and defection within the APC in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, are the irregularities in the party recruitment process, lack of diversity within the party, the decline in internal party democracy and increases in intra-party conflict within the APC in the state.

Conclusion

Non-adherence to regulations governing recruitment by the party elite is a severe problem with several negative consequences, including internal party conflict, factionalism and defection within a political party. Therefore, political parties must have clear and transparent rules for recruiting new members, selecting candidates for election, appointing party leaders, and ensuring that these rules are honestly and regularly enforced.

Recommendation

From the preceding finding and conclusion, this paper recommends that the APC leadership enact and enforce clear and transparent recruitment regulations based on principles of fairness and equality and should be applied regularly to party executives at all levels of government and party members. This would discourage the irregularities in the APC recruitment process, causing conflict, factionalization and defection within the party in Nasarawa state, Nigeria.

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