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PARTY POLITICS, LEADERSHIP CRISIS AND GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Over the years selfless leaders have sustained political party system and democratic governance. In this context, Leadership becomes a *sine qua non* that multiparty democracies look upon to lead the way to electoral success. In time of crisis, party leaders fall back on the extant rules and regulations to pacify both losers and winners. This way, many political parties have remained indivisible as well as focused, not only to attain the objectives of the political parties and party members but also for the good of the polity. Notwithstanding, there are positive and negative leaders. Both types of leaders are found within and among the party platforms. Either way, their positive and negative contributions are important for sustainability and durability or otherwise democratic governance. The study relied on secondary data and Elite theory show that when perennial leadership crises pervade party system it could undermine governance with severe consequences on the delivery of good governance; and can threaten the retention of the governing party in Nigeria. Leadership crises in the parties unsettled problem of governance. The magnitudes of these challenges in the ruling parties have distracted the attention of the governments. The study concludes that leadership conflict can be resolved when the leaders themselves are democratic and adhere to the liberal tenets of democracies as well as democratic institutions across the federation. Party politics is about aggregating different shades of opinion delivery of dividends of democracy should take central stage for party organizations especially any political party willing to gain the confidence of the people as well as to retain political power.

Keywords: Party Politics, Internal Crisis, Leadership, Governance, Nigeria.

Introduction

The ubiquitous of leadership in all organizations particularly in party democracies is indispensable in modern political systems. A political party is made up of a congregation of individuals with the sole aim to control the government (Agbaje, 2015; Omoruyi, 2002; Duverger, 1954; Sartori, 1976). A political party, to win political position electorally, requires competent leaders to organize the party and the entire members. The party members elect the leaders to lead them (Kapur, 2008). In essence, the leaders are look upon to influence members to achieve the political goals “without a leader ... each one of the members may be going his own way” (Chaturvedi, 2006, p. 170). Party politics as the activities of political parties in democratic societies ensure that the leaders show the direction and carry everyone along without discrimination either by colour, language, race, socio-economic and political status. Party organization is oligarchic in nature where “the leadership of parties tends to assume oligarchic form” with intension to exclude the majority of party members from taking crucial and important decision on who become what, within the party platform (Duverger, 1954, p. 151). Viewing party organizations this way, they have “failed miserably” to uphold the paramount power of the citizens in terms of participation, inclusion and institutionalization (Ostrogorski, 1964, p. 539). The domination of party organization by the few elites largely obliterates the individual’s rights for free expression and the essence of being a card-carrying party member.

However, the party organization has the final say in the selection of the party flagbearers for any election and to keep the wheel of party administration going with a view to keep all members intact and indivisible. This is because men and women holding similar views must be duly organized. Without proper organization, the people make just a disorganized crowd and it is impossible to conform to the common principles on which they agreed. It is organization into a permanently cohesive body that enables them to acquire strength so as to act in concert” (Kapur, 2008, p. 639). On the contrary, over-bearing power and the tendency to fully adhere to Iron law of oligarchy and inability to follow firmly the extant laws in the books more often than not, informs instability of political parties. They are opposite of what Roucek, Huszar, and Associates (1950) described as absence of “knot-organization” that creates unacceptable party leadership as well as leadership crisis in the party system, while the “clever politicians” capitalize on the phenomenon to pass a vote of no confidence on the leadership and pronounce themselves as the new leaders but without the capacity to unify the remnant followers (Kapur, 2008).

Since Nigeria return to democratic rule in 1999, the Nigerian political parties are in precarious situations. The political parties were hurriedly put together by different ideological persuasions and different ideological positions to take over the country’s governance. The presence of party officials in the public offices across the federation have turned the party platforms into the battle-fields. For these leaders, party politics have become a war and a do or die matter. The first five years of the People’s Democratic Party administration for instance, witnessed arbitrary removal of representatives freely without a due process. The question that comes to mind is to what extent has non-adherence to the extant rules and regulations by the party organization or vis-à-vis party leadership have created leadership crisis? And what are the consequences of the leadership crises on governance in the country. The paper aims to interrogate leadership instability in Nigerian party system. The study is spread into introduction; party politics and leadership; theoretical framework; leadership crisis and implications on governance in Nigeria and conclusion.

Party Politics and Leadership

In liberal democracies, political parties are structured towards certain objectives and goals. And it is not an individual but collective project. Although, the idea of party formation is anchored on an individual and their collection, but the leadership of political parties' champions the course of their parties for acceptability nationally. The issue of leadership therefore becomes serious factor in party organizations. The achievement of organizational goals depends on the quality of leadership. Leadership is considered one of the most important elements affecting organizational performance. While Leadership is simply a process of influence being exercised by those who lead their followers, exercising influence by leaders, however, may be good or bad. In this context, Leadership is defined as the art or process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly and enthusiastically towards the achievement of group goals (Iyorwueze, 2002). However, party leadership is found to promote an oligarchy instead of popular and inclusive democracy. The argument put forward by Michels (1962, p. 15) is that "a party ... is an organization which gives birth to the domination of the elected over the electors; of the mandatories over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators". Thus, party organizations or structures are built and centered on the personalities of the founding fathers. As such, leaders may not pursue desirable objectives for the corporate bodies as a whole, and may neither hold every member of the party together. For instance, Roucek, Huszar, and Associates (1950) declared that a political party is held together by its organization. In other words, without an organization, a political party may not survive. The survival of party organization depends much on how its gives or serves as a means of giving every member of the party, benefits and advantages. The organizational theory argued that the mission or goal of an organization, like a political party, can rationally be broken down into specific tasks, which can lead to the accomplishment of goals. Structurally, the arrangements in political parties constitute rules which allow the organs of political parties to work continuously, while roles are designated to members to carry out. The structure gives vitality, form, subdivision, a hierarchy of status, and distribution of functions.

Party structure and other levels of the party hierarchies are delegated with specific functions. These functions however differ from one another. For instance, Milbrath (1970, p. 18) identified three specific functions; namely "gladiatorial", "transitional", and "spectator" activities. The gladiatorial activities include: holding public and party office, being a candidate for office, soliciting political funds, attending a caucus or a strategy meeting, becoming an active member of a political party, and taking an active part in a political campaign. Secondly, transitional functions include attending a political meeting or rally, making a monetary contribution to a party or candidate, and contacting a public official or a political leader. And finally, spectator activities including wearing a button or putting a sticker on the car, attempting to talk another into voting a certain way, initiating a political discussion, voting and exposing oneself to political stimuli. All these categories help the structure and organs of political parties to be able to win elections on one hand and to lose as well. The leadership of any party naturally devolves on a small number of leaders. Thus, the measure of success of a particular party is a product of its leadership, constitution, capacity, appeal, and function. Generally, the leadership of a political party establishes the general setting of its members and the focus of their solidarity (Osumah & Ikelegbe, 2009).

When a political party lack knit organization that should hold members together, such a political party transform into factional parties (Kapur, 2008). According to him, a factional party lacks a stable organization and it is a group with a scattered leadership in

pursuit of sectional interests. Such a party remains vague, shapeless, and not capable of doing their real work which is to form and control the government. They are not political parties in the true sense of it, but groups without any unified programmes and policy, have a definite influence on the voters and since the life of the group is short and precarious, they rarely develop lasting traditions and loyalties; neither do they dominate and influence the governmental policies and instead become an instrument in the hands of clever politicians who use the structure to perpetuate crisis in governance. Factionalization in party systems, although “faction is a bad term” but as factional leaders and members are concerned, their attitudes disorganize the parties including its activities, top hierarchies of the parties, party members and even the quest for good governance in the country.

Nigerian political parties lacked institutionalization because party institutionalization is germane to the functioning of party organizations. Party literature pays importance to “parties as institutions” (McDonald, 1955, p. 17), and “describes the party’s interface with society” (Janda, 1970, p. 86). Huntington (1968, p. 394) defines institutionalization as “the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability. ... coherence of its organizations and procedures”. Put differently, the institutionalization of a political party is “when a party finds new activities and functions to perform or when it identifies new objectives to achieve, the party is said to have institutionalized organizationally” (Felizzo, 2006). The level of a party’s institutionalization reflects its age (how long the party has been in existence or created), its generational age (whether and how many times a political party can transfer power from one generation to another), and whether it has been able to adapt or rooted to environmental changes. The national spread of political parties can be viewed from the number of organizational levels; the more complexity of party organizations increases, the more the number of organizational levels increases. For instance, a political party characterized by four organizational levels (national, regional, provincial, local) is more complex than a political party with only three levels (national, provincial, and local). In other words, party complexity reflects not only the number of organizational levels but also the number of units at each level of the organization. The larger the number of units, the bigger and more complex the party organization is.

A stable party organization ensures that the objectives and functions are carried out by recognized leadership. A well-structured political party is like a small state within a big one. The attributes include active membership and its passive adherents, local branches or constituencies; branches of propaganda, fund-collecting and recruiting, conducting elections into the party councils, responsible for its choice of leaders and officials both at the local, state, and national levels as well as the adoption of party policy. Organizationally, they cover a whole political system including buildings and newspapers, mass media, advertising experts, songs and slogans, heroes and martyrs, money and campaign experts, officials and prophets, feast days, and fast days (Finer in Kapur, 2008). In Nigeria, it is a truism that political parties have some political tentacles across the federation, but a close look at their activities as well as organizations needs much to be desired. Nigeria is characterized with the leadership unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise above personality and ethnic sentiments. In party systems, the issue of leadership cannot be taken for granted because they provide knowledge, experience, and direction for the organizations to attain their goals. Leadership in the Nigerian political parties were taken for granted. For instance, the organs of political parties are structured toward political leadership at every stage in the party constitution. Each organ is headed by the ward chairman, local government chairman, and state chairman as well as at the national level by the national chairman. In Nigeria, the

leadership of these political parties is not democratic, or transparent in their operations to the extent that they do not adhere to the extant laws of their various political parties and even that of the nation. Achebe (1983) made an observation of the root of the country's problem as a simple and squarely leadership problem. Leadership problems characterized the Nigerian party system. There is no clear cut between the leadership of the party and the elected or appointed, whether president, governor, senator or minister. There is nothing wrong with Nigeria as a state, but the country has suffered from the arena of good leaders to move the country for growth and greatness. Poor leadership is responsible for many crises the country has witnessed.

Theoretical Framework – Elite Theory

This study is built on the elite theory. Pareto (1935), Mosca (1939), Michels (1962) are known as elite theorists. They all concurred that elites are a small minority group of citizens that control a large-sum of socio-economic and political powers in political systems (Vergara, 2013). Pareto (1935) observes that the elites' possession of power is centered on the fact that they are "more fitted" than any other group in the polity. This position, according to Mosca (1939, p. 50) "in all societies... two classes of people appear; a class that rules and a class that is ruled". The few that is, the first class, although less numerous but with "special qualities such as abilities and talents which make them the 'natural' leaders and holders of power in the society, perform socio-economic and political functions". They monopolize power and enjoy the advantages accompanying their positions in power. The second class that is, the ruled class is more numerous with a huge population than the few. He argues that this class or masses remain mere passive, manipulated pawns and lacking in qualities and less able and hence unfit to govern. From the scholars' perspectives, there is a sharp distinction between the elites and non-elites. Both are fact of modern life. Notwithstanding, there is a distinction, the distinction is that the elite continue to recycle themselves in power. Pareto and Masco tagged this as elite circulation. According to Pareto (1968, p. 1430) "elites" do not last and only live for a certain time "history is a graveyard of aristocracies". The circulation of elite is necessitated in re-ordering of social positions when new classes will come to power as the economic system evolved historically (Mosca, 1939). The theory has demonstrated that all societies are divided into undifferentiated elite and as well as atomic mass. The elite decide on behalf of the people irrespective of colour, race, and language, among others:

In every case, however, an organized minority – a political class, defining 'political' in a wide sense took the real decisions. A king's decisions were always taken with the participation of his advisers, in an aristocracy, a smaller group of activists made the policies issued in the name of all the aristocrats and democracy, the sovereign electorate was manipulated by the politicians (Parry, 1971, p. 24).

Elites formed political parties and invited others to join. The joiners become the electorates and vote during elections. Elite in the name of party leadership control the party organization and influence the nomination of party flag bearers even sometimes without recourse to due process. They tend to be democratic when in fact, Parry (1971, p. 26) observes that they have turned the party organization into the personal office and "as they were drawn into the fundamentally middle-class parliamentary politics they would become as bourgeois in their way of life as their opponents in the established parties".

Leadership Crisis and Implication on Governance

The 1999 Federal Constitution of Nigeria (as amended) and the INEC regulations provided for political parties to conduct periodic democratic congresses and conventions to elect official(s) in collaboration with the electoral body, INEC for supervision and legality. Article 16(1) provided as follows: “the National Convention, the Zonal, State Local Government Area, and Ward Congresses shall meet to elect the officers of the party at the various levels of the party structure as specified in this constitution except in the Federal Capital Territory where officers of the party shall be elected based on geopolitical zones”. The guidelines for the nomination of candidates into public offices are stated clearly in the national constitution vis-à-vis the party’s extant laws. The provision provides for the National Executive Committee to formulate guidelines and regulations for the nomination of candidates for election into public offices at all levels and shall be the final authority for resolving all disputes relating to the choice of candidates for the party for any election and for confirming the names or list of names of candidates for the party for any elective public office in the federation. The organizational structures of the party system with institutional mechanisms are indeed adequate to guide the party leadership and members aspiring into both the party offices and public offices. It allows a certain level of democracy in which candidate selection and nomination are predictable. This is in tandem with the general assumption by the students of party democracy that institutional designs strengthen the internal and external democratic practices of political parties and democracy in general and good governance in particular (Ballington, 2004; Scarrow, 2005).

Over the years, however, these legal provisions are ignored by the party leadership, thereby turning the party congresses into political chaos leading to political pogrom, disintegration, and lawlessness. While the party constitution seems to be democratic and allows a level playing field for all members in terms of being nominated by the party for public elective and appointive positions, the constitution equally puts a clause that sidelined all eligible party members and denied them to stand for election. In this sense, inequality prevailed within the political parties. The implication is that it encourages favoritism on the part of those who have contributed to the parties heavily, thereby breeding godfatherism, clientelism, and patronage with severe consequences on the party’s hierarchies and its disorganization. It is at this point that the new joiners hijacked the platforms of the parties from their founding fathers and divided them into factions with cancerous effect on governance in the country.

The leadership positions are supported by regular elections during the party conventions. This is well enumerated in the party constitutions. The provision provided that All National, Zonal, State, Local Government Area, and Ward officers of the party, shall hold office for a term of four years and shall be eligible for re-election at the National Convention or appropriate congress for a further term of four years and no more. These provisions have not been binding on the leadership of the political parties across the federation; the opposite has been the case. The structure of the parties is democratic and based on the inclusion and the participation of party members. This is meant to accommodate conflicting interests within its fold and strengthen its support base across the length and breadth of the country. The structure of the parties, in theory, is to carry every member of the party along, but in practice, it is not what the structure stands for. Although, we may be tempted to say that they are political gimmicks to deceive the whole world that there is a structure in the parties. There is no structure, it's just on paper. It is not used. There is nothing that we can refer to as internal democracy within them, so there is no internal democracy and if there is

no internal democracy, how do we want to compare the relationship between internal democracy in the parties and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The absence of leadership eroded the supremacy of the political parties and breeds the internal crises in the party system. The consequences are that there was no respect for internal party democracy and constitutional order. The parties turned out to be the elite rule which Michels' (1962, p. 13) Iron Law of Oligarchy says all organizations are not democratic "who says organization, says oligarchy". For example, the Nigerian political parties tended to be oligarchic because only a few people decided and took the decision for the rest of the party members. The various structures of leadership within the political parties, particularly the PDP were subordinated to the will and caprices of the President of Nigeria, that is, what was in the party.

The crises in the Nigerian parties cum the question of leadership, the kind of leaders that are leading the party system, were the antidote that influenced the military intervention in the nation's democracy in 1983 (Enefe, 2008; Akinboye & Anifowose, 2015; Agbaje, 2010; Falola & Ihonvbere, 1985). General Ibrahim Babangida who lifted ban on party politics banned and unbanned politicians with aim to establish a viable and enduring people-oriented political system devoid of perennial disruption or interference by the military. In the aborted third Republic, the two parties decreed, viz the Social Democratic Party and the National Republican Convention, were not immune from leadership conflict. There was political struggle for supremacy between the various factions and personalities (Tyoden, 2002; Muhammad, 2008; Ogunwa, 2022; 2009).

The fourth Republic started with three political parties PDP, APP, and AD. They evolved organically to produce a prior long term political association between the various groups that came together in 1998 but leadership problem characterized them. These parties have been immersed with cantankerous and witnessed frequent discords, unresolved political issues, recriminations, threats of impeachment of executive, treacheries, flagrant breach of party rules, carpets-crossings as well as the resurgence of factional cleavages within the party, which have continued to threaten the functioning of democracy in Nigeria (Anifowose, 2004). Across the party system, the National Working Committee (NWC) and the National Executive Committee (NEC) have substantially failed to manage the affairs of their parties very well. These organs took the form of partisanship even collapsed their structures, the PDP in particular, before the 2015 general elections. The disorganization of the party resulted in conflicts, suspension of party stalwarts, among others (Sambo et al, 2022). In an interview with the Deputy Chief Whip, Honourable O. Oduntan (2005), observed.

In cases where we have Mr. A being appointed in a particular office that Mr. B wanted and because you know the perception that in Nigerian politics there is hardly the next time, it will be a do or die thing, they believe that now is the time and there is no other time, they believe that I must have my way. I believe that that was what tore the parties including the PDP apart, they were looking at the size of their interest only, they believed that they must win at all cost, and that to me is the cause of these crises because they failed to agree with one another especially with the party hierarchy¹.

Since 1999 political parties have heavily relied on the supports and patronages of rich individuals. The control of party structures gradually passed into the hands of the new joiners. They include governors, senators, presidents, retired military generals, and politicians from previous Republics. They are financially resourceful and have benefited from oil money, the country's civil war, and served under the military. They have quantum resources and became the kingmakers, godfathers, and redirected the structures of the

parties to be answerable to their interest. As the new stakeholders in the parties, they greatly affected the internal democracy in the party. For instance, former President Olusegun Obasanjo was not part of the formation of the PDP in 1998, but was brought in by the military to be the president in 1999. Umar Ardo (2015) observed that all efforts of well-meaning PDP members to achieve this noble objective through the entrenchment of internal and participatory democracy and the creation of institutional collaboration and cooperation within the party structures were rebuffed as people of questionable character were allowed a free hand to do with the party as they will. Ethics and values were thrown to the dogs. The leadership in the PDP became an unjust and unfair with no truth in its mouth, no compassion, no sincerity of purpose, and their actions always intrinsically self-serving and deceitful (cited in *Daily Trust Newspaper*, April 5, 2015).

Party literature agreed that political parties are instilling appropriate attitudes and expectations in the public and by contriving through their actions to “give substance to constitutional rules and thus confirm and enlarge on the formal outcome of transition” (Pridham, 1990, p. 22). For instance, after four general elections and overwhelming victory in those elections, the former President Olusegun Obasanjo sidelined many of the G-34 members who brought him into the office. By the end of his presidency in May 2007, he took over the organizational machinery of the PDP. He alone made all major decisions for the party members including candidate selection and amendments to the PDP Constitution in December 2006 which guaranteed him the chairmanship of the Board of Trustees of the party. Under him, the due process of electing party leaders was not adhered to. A chieftain of Accord Party, Mr. Oluranti Jamiu (2005) argued thus:

When we are talking of structure it means the national executive in mind, the national working committee in mind, and the national convention of the party in mind, if you study the history of the PDP national executive, you will see that the national executive is led by the chairman and the chairman is always the President of Nigeria during the time. For example, Obasanjo was the one discharging the duties of the national chairmen at will, so to say. If the other chairman disagrees with him, he will change him without referring to the other structures of the party. Even the National Working Committee did not have a life of its own outside the President of Nigeria. At the end of the day, all the structures were not effective in taking decisions so whatever they wanted to do was within what the president wanted².

In effect, the Nigerian party system was administered by those who have the structure of the party, maintain their seats, and wield power in the party because they have access to the nation's resources, that is, the Federal Government of Nigeria. The quest for inclusion, participation, and institutionalizing of members created dissenting voices that led to factionalization as well as an internal crisis that occurred when major stakeholders in the party were excluded. This also occurs in all political parties. They lack inclusiveness which seriously undermined the party structures in Nigeria.

Specifically, Article 12(72)(d) of the 1999 Federal Constitution mandated the National Executive Committee (NEC) to “ensure that all the organs of the party function democratically and effectively”. In theory, the highest decision-making organ of the Nigerian party system is the NEC but in reality, in the case of the party system, it is the Board of Trustees (BoT). Membership in the BoT is by influence, power, affluence, and experience. The members of the BoT are all politicians. According to Akinbade (2004, p. 154), a politician is that “person who is so pre-occupied with winning an election that he may sacrifice such

notable values as justice, fairness, equity and transparency at the expense of his determination to win the election at all costs". Unfortunately, in Nigeria, party affiliations are determined by the economy or business affiliations. In the Second Republic, for example, the NPN was a conglomeration of businessmen. Nigerian politicians are businessmen and all businessmen are politicians. It is difficult in most cases to differentiate a businessman from a politician in Nigeria. This set of people participated in the formation of political parties and are the financiers of the parties. They finance the parties to recruit more money to finance their businesses. They are all in politics. They are in politics to get party membership cards and use their financial capability to cause disaffection and factionalization among members. The fact is that who pays the piper dictates the tune because "nobody will pick anybody (candidate) that does not have somebody" (godfather or financier) in the polity (Interview with Engr. S. Alagbe, 2025)³.

Political leaders usually maneuver the general interests of all the organs of the party including its members. That is why it is logical to say that the kind of structure of the political parties in Nigeria have failed to promote democracy since a few people at the top take the decision and control the party. For instance, the decision to re-register all the party members that decision was not democratically arrived at. It was more of an oligarchy within the party, where a few people created a division and became the alpha and the omega. And this had a major effect in 2015 general elections when many of members of PDP simply walked out of the party during the national convention in Abuja. Furthermore, it is the question of leadership, if the leaders become too partisan to the point that every decision is around partisanship it may challenge development. This affected the former president Jonathan who turns everything into politics. For instance, the oligarchic tendencies within the party organs exhibit undemocratic attitudes which led to changes of PDP national chairmen unceremoniously about eleven times within a space of 16 years (*New Telegraph Newspaper*, February 10, 2016). At the echelon of the party system, the leaders have not shown that public office is not a do-or-die matter, while the parties could not pursue some definite policies and programmes or observe the sanctity of constitutional government "a party acts by counting heads, a faction acts by breaking heads". The Nigerian party system has chosen the breaking of heads within its ranks and files without putting their heads together for good governance for Nigerians and national development (Ogunwa, 2026). A chieftain of the PDP as well as a permanent member of the BoT, Chief Bode George (2025) observation is instructive:

To me, wrangling cannot be eradicated, even in developed countries; it is part of the system because as human beings, some people get more emotional on issues than others. To some, they lay the issue for the other segments of the polity to see reason, consider and lobby them to see things the way they are, and also help resolve those issues in their favor. Democracy in Nigeria is just 26 years old. What is a child of 26 years be called, a mature mind? He is still growing up. America is over 200 years; the Britons had a long history. Since 1999 to date there has been a gradual improvement. We are moving gradually but surely. The national building takes time. Wrangling will continue but needs to be moderated or minimized⁴.

The leadership crisis has led to the exodus of prominent party members from one party to another and without end in sight. The governors, senators, among other governmental functionaries have left their parties. A political party as an association is not like a family or

union. Everybody has something at the back of his mind as a member of a political party. And if it becomes obvious that a member's interest cannot be guaranteed in that party, self-expulsion of party membership is expected to launch that person into another party to realize political ambition. The changing characters of the party leadership and individuals became powerful than the party themselves (Aluko, 2021). This is evident in Jonathan's administration because of the thirst for power and indiscipline as well as non-adherence to extant laws. Senator B. Omoworare (2025) observed thus:

They were not able to handle their internal disagreements and ... it means that our politicians have not learned from the political experience of the past. The people who had money in some cases had hijacked the party, you see the same party men and women with different loyalties and interests. For instance, in Imo State PDP was so strong until it was taken over by the opposition party, APC. It's simply because they could not manage the situation and also because of the selfish interest of those groups as well wanting to have a place where they would be able to control and bite as much as they could (Interview with ⁵).

The feud in the party leadership, in party system in the country is an indication that Nigerian politicians are only interested in the coveted public offices. Ake (1996, p. 5) argued rightly "as they pulled apart, they placed more value on capturing political power for themselves and grew increasingly fearful about what seemed to them to be the grave consequences of losing to their rivals in the competition for the control of state power". In this context, "the premium on political power rose higher and higher". The internal crisis shows that the party supremacy and party discipline are not in politicians' favour which resulted to loss of focus on governance, "much energy is dissipated on the crisis by the governors involved, and less time for governance at the home front" (Oladesu, quoted in *The Nation Newspaper*, Monday, 16, 2020, p. 31). The cumulation of these crises affected all levels of government across the country. They were distracted to attend to governance matters such as lingering insecurity, corruption, killings, bad roads, hunger, unemployment, unstable energy, among others (Ogunwa, 2026; Sambo, 2022).

Conclusion

The study has revealed that leadership is a necessity in all organizations. The existence of leaders is to direct running of the administration day-in and day-out. Like other organizations, political leaders in party organizations have the responsibilities to direct and influence decisions in the party and the government to achieve the set objectives, but the perennial leadership crises in the Nigerian political parties not only contributed to disorganizations, pathologies and proliferations of more political parties, but have rendered the utility of the party platforms to an intolerable and unacceptable level. The leadership influence in party institution and democratic institutions across the country owe largely to non-adherence and using the party platforms as personal and patronage-estate where prospective party members need to seek for support and be sponsored by godfathers before being nominated to represent their parties in general elections. One of the overwhelming challenges confronting party leadership is a deliberate attitude not to yield to democratic principles. Nigerian politicians cum party leaders are not democratic. Although, the position of Michels (1962) is that no organization is democratic, particularly party institution, for Nigerian politicians attaining democracy in the party system which they control is an uphill task. However, for sustainability and institutionalization, there is the need for equality and

fairness along the liberal democratic principles. This is the essence of leadership which in turn will make party politics to harness various shades of interests and tone down the crises associated with governance within a political system. The leadership has quantum of responsibilities to sustain and maintain party organizations as well as members; if the leaders in the political parties are to remain and retain their positions as leaders and if the members as well will still remain in the party fold.

Though, a party is formed by a group of individuals before others are invited into the fold, this does not give absolute power to the founders to control the party as if it is a personal organization and as a sole proprietorship. Control in this manner has led to defections and proliferations of political parties. Yet, the numbers of parties have not contributed to good governance but constantly overheating the polity. The formation of a political party should be centered among the like-minds. Put this way, party formation entails those individuals who believe in the same issue/s and the strategies to achieve those matters of the moment. It may not immediately spread across the length and breadth, but gradually it would become known as a party to beat. The party leadership must also be democratic. When a leader is not democratic, the party organization he controls may not be democratic no matter how spread and laudable is the name, the constitution, the ideology and the manifesto. Adherence to internal party mechanism to solve party crisis is important for a political party to live long. Along this line, the party itself must be institutionalized and cover the people. The people must know the product they are buying in the political market of party politics where all political parties are showcasing their products for the electorates to buy. The more the product of a political party, the higher the party patronage.

Footnotes

1. Oral interview with Honourable O. Oduntan (2025)
2. Oral interview with Mr. Oluranti Jamiu (2025)
3. Oral interview with Engr. S. Alagbe (2025)
4. Oral interview with Chief Bode George (2025)
5. Oral interview with Senator B. Omoworare (2025)

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