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POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING, ELECTORAL COMPETITION, AND REGULATION IN NIGERIA: EVIDENCE FROM APC AND PDP IN MALUMFASHI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA DURING THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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Abstract

The study investigated political party financing, electoral competition, and regulation in Malumfashi Local Government Area of Katsina State during the 2023 general elections, focusing on the APC and PDP. Using a quantitative method, data were collected from all 78 party officials and candidates through a validated and reliable questionnaire (CVI = 1; Cronbach's α = 0.98) and analysed with SPSS 23. Findings revealed that both parties relied mainly on donations, fund-raising activities, levies, and material support rather than membership dues. The APC enjoyed significantly greater financial and logistical resources, which enhanced its campaign effectiveness and electoral performance. Party finance was largely unregulated, as 70.5% of respondents indicated, prompting 92.3% to support stricter enforcement and the establishment of an independent regulatory agency. Consequently, the study recommended strengthening internal financing mechanisms, enforcing membership dues, institutionalizing transparent fund-raising, promoting equitable resource distribution, introducing limited public funding, enforcing campaign spending limits, and enhancing monitoring, auditing, and voter education to improve compliance, transparency, and accountability in Nigeria's electoral process.

Keywords: Political Party Financing, Electoral Competition, Regulation in Nigeria, APC and PDP, 2023 General Elections; Malumfashi LGA, Katsina State.

Introduction

Political parties constitute one of the most fundamental institutions of liberal democracy and the broader democratization project across the world. In democratic systems, political parties are expected to be responsive and accountable, while serving as intermediary and mediatory agents between the electorate and the government. They play a decisive role in government formation and contribute significantly to political stability and coherence, particularly when governance is anchored by shared party ideology and allegiance. As essential vehicles for organizing modern democratic polities, political parties provide platforms for political pluralism and perform a range of functions that are indispensable to democratic governance. Beyond their structural importance, political parties function as channels through which individuals and social groups are integrated into the political system. Corduener (2019) observes that political parties mobilize and socialize citizens, especially during elections, while also serving as core vehicles for the articulation and aggregation of societal interests. They further play a critical role in the recruitment of political elites through candidate nomination and selection for public offices. As Etzioni (2021) argues, the central objective of political parties is the pursuit, conquest, and retention of political power in order to advance a shared policy agenda. However, the effective performance of these roles is heavily dependent on the availability of adequate financial resources.

Political party financing remains a crucial determinant of electoral participation, competitiveness, and performance. Parties require substantial funds to conduct campaigns, nominate candidates, pay staff salaries, maintain party secretariats, procure media publicity, and manage election logistics. Political finance, defined as the use of money and material resources for political and electoral activities, is therefore central to democratic practice (Helmky & Levitsky, 2021). However, scholars have noted that the pressure to secure campaign funds often leads to illicit financing, corruption, and vote-buying, particularly where legitimate funding sources are limited (Etzioni, 2021). In competitive elections, voters may demand material inducements, while political actors divert public resources or sell political influence for private gain (Burgis, 2015). The Sambo Dasuki arms deal scandal, involving approximately 2.1 billion US dollars allegedly used to fund the 2015 PDP presidential campaign, illustrates the depth of this challenge in Nigeria (Davies, 2016). The relationship between political party financing and electoral competition has prompted the introduction of regulatory frameworks aimed at safeguarding democratic integrity. Mendilow (2018) explains that campaign finance regulations are designed to prevent the undue influence of wealthy actors, ensure electoral fairness, and protect popular sovereignty. In Nigeria, Sections 221–229 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) empower the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to monitor political party finances, while the Electoral Act 2022 prescribes sanctions for violations (Dung, 2018; Bryant, 2022). Despite these provisions, weak enforcement has allowed practices such as vote-buying to persist, with Bunte and Ufen (2009) noting that such practices have characterized nearly every Nigerian election since 1999. This highlights the importance of examining political party financing, electoral competition, and regulatory effectiveness as interconnected variables. Political party financing is included to assess access to and use of resources; electoral competition captures the fairness and intensity of party contestation; while regulation examines the capacity of legal frameworks to control financial excesses and ensure compliance.

Against this backdrop, this study examines political party financing, electoral competition, and regulation in Nigeria, using evidence from the All Progressives Congress

(APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Malumfashi Local Government Area during the 2023 General Elections. The study is premised on the thesis that unequal access to financial resources significantly shaped electoral competition between the two dominant parties, thereby undermining regulatory safeguards and electoral fairness. The rationale for conducting this research lies in its contribution to understanding how grassroots-level electoral outcomes are influenced by financial disparities and weak enforcement of campaign finance laws. By focusing on Malumfashi LGA, the study provides localized empirical insight that is critical for strengthening electoral governance, promoting transparency, and advancing democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the existence of constitutional and legal frameworks regulating political party financing in Nigeria, electoral contests continue to be significantly influenced by unequal access to financial resources, weak enforcement mechanisms, and pervasive monetization of the political process. While political party financing is intended to promote fair competition and democratic accountability, in practice it has often distorted electoral competition by advantaging financially dominant parties and marginalizing weaker ones (Dung, 2018; Bryant, 2022). This problem is particularly evident at the local government level, where political parties' access to funds largely determines campaign intensity, voter mobilization, and electoral outcomes. In Malumfashi Local Government Area during the 2023 General Elections, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) operated under unequal financial conditions, despite constitutional provisions and the Electoral Act 2022 designed to ensure transparency, accountability, and regulatory compliance. The persistence of vote-buying, patronage politics, and limited monitoring by relevant authorities raises critical concerns about the effectiveness of existing regulations and their capacity to ensure a level playing field. Consequently, there is a clear gap in empirical understanding of how political party financing and regulatory enforcement interact to shape electoral competition at the grassroots level, necessitating a focused investigation into the dynamics of party finance, competition, and regulation in Malumfashi Local Government Area during the 2023 General Elections.

Research Objectives

The study aims:

- i. To investigate the key sources of political party finance of the APC and PDP in Malumfashi Local Government Area during the 2023 general elections.
- ii. To investigate how financial inequalities between the APC and PDP affect the electoral performance of the two parties in Malumfashi Local Government Area during the 2023 general elections and
- iii. To proffer recommendations that would benefit government and other related stakeholders such as INEC in improving existing policies and regulations in place to ensure compliance and effective monitoring of Party finance.

Literature Review

Political party finance has been widely conceptualized as encompassing all financial and material resources used by parties for both electoral and non-electoral activities (Etzioni, 2021; Cassas-Zamora, 2008). Scholars have identified multiple sources of party finance, including membership dues, individual donations, levies on elected officials, fundraising events, and, in many developing democracies, illicit sources such as godfather sponsorship, diversion of public funds, and illegal donations (Sule & Kwarah, 2018; Kura, 2014). In Nigeria,

party funding is largely opaque and dominated by wealthy elites and incumbents who invest heavily in parties in anticipation of political patronage and economic returns (Olarinmoye, 2018). This pattern has weakened internal party democracy and entrenched godfatherism, particularly at the grassroots level. Investigating the sources of party finance in Malumfashi LGA is therefore crucial, as local-level financing dynamics often reveal how national patterns of money politics are reproduced at the subnational level, shaping party behavior, campaign strategies, and electoral outcomes (Sule, 2017).

Financial inequalities can affect the performance of political parties during elections. It is assumed that the performance of APC and PDP during the 2023 general elections depended on the funding strength in Malumfashi L.G.A. Existing literature has consistently demonstrated a strong relationship between access to financial resources and electoral success, especially in emerging and dysfunctional democracies where elections are highly monetized (Mampilly, 2018; Mendilow, 2018). In Nigeria's Fourth Republic, electoral competition has increasingly been defined by the ability of parties and candidates to deploy money for voter mobilization, media visibility, logistics, and vote-buying (Nkechi & Innocent, 2014; Omilusi, 2016). Incumbent parties or those connected to state power often enjoy disproportionate access to resources, enabling them to dominate the electoral space and undermine fair competition (Sule & Mohammed, 2021). Vote-buying, bribery of electoral officials, and inducement of voters have become normalized practices, weakening voter confidence and distorting electoral outcomes (Babayo, 2018). Examining financial inequality between APC and PDP in Malumfashi LGA allows for a localized assessment of how disparities in party finance translate into uneven campaign capacity, voter influence, and ultimately electoral performance during the 2023 elections.

The benefit of the government and other relevant stakeholders, particularly INEC, is in improving existing policies and regulatory mechanisms for effective monitoring and compliance with party finance regulations. Although Nigeria has established constitutional and legal frameworks to regulate political party finance, most notably Sections 221–229 of the 1999 Constitution and the Electoral Act 2022, scholars argue that weak enforcement has rendered these provisions largely ineffective (Dung, 2018; Bryant, 2022). Regulatory institutions often lack the capacity, autonomy, and political will to monitor party finances, sanction violators, and ensure transparency (Sule & Mohammed, 2021). As a result, excessive campaign spending, illegal donations, and vote-buying persist with little consequence, reinforcing corruption and undermining democratic consolidation (International IDEA, 2019). By grounding policy recommendations in empirical evidence from Malumfashi LGA, this study aims to contribute practical insights for strengthening regulatory oversight, enhancing transparency, and promoting equitable electoral competition. Such recommendations are essential for restoring public trust in elections and ensuring that political parties operate within the bounds of democratic accountability and the rule of law.

Methodology

The study employed a quantitative research method, targeting party officials of the All-Progressives Congress (APC) and candidates of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), totalling seventy-eight (78) respondents, as these are the major political parties in Malumfashi Local Government Area. A total enumeration sampling technique was employed to include all members of the population in the study. Both primary and secondary data sources were utilized, with the questionnaire serving as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was validated through face and content validation, using a Content Validation Index (CVI) where each item scored 1, ensuring relevance and clarity. Reliability of the

instrument was tested using the Cronbach’s alpha formula, yielding a coefficient of 0.98, indicating high reliability. The data collected were analysed using frequency tables and percentages, with the assistance of SPSS version 23.

Result

A total number of **seventy-eight (78) questionnaires**, representing **100% of the target population**, were distributed and successfully retrieved, making the **response rate 100%**.

RO1: To investigate the key sources of political party finance of the APC and PDP in Malumfashi Local Government Area during the 2023 general elections.

Table 1: Opinion of respondents on the key sources of political party finance of the APC and PDP in Malumfashi Local Government Area during the 2023 general elections

Statements	SD		D		UD		A		SA		F(x)	Mean
Respondents’ opinion on the statement: All members of my party in Malumfashi Local Government Area pay for their membership dues annually	11	14.1	18	23.1	16	20.5	26	33.3	7	9.0	234	3.0
Respondents’ opinions on the statement: During the conduct of the 2023 general elections in Malumfashi Local Government my party received grants from its friends, supporters and other well-wishers.	1	1.3	7	9.0	2	2.6	33	42.3	35	44.9	328	4.2
My party organized a well-planned fund-raising campaign in Malumfashi Local Government Area during the conduct of the 2023 general elections in order to get more funds from friends and supporters of the party to fund its electoral activities in the 12 wards of the Local Government Area	1	1.3	3	3.8	1	1.3	30	38.5	43	55.1	345	4.4
My party received a considerable amount of money and campaign materials like posters, banners and billboards as gifts from supporters and well-wishers of the party during the conduct of the 2023 general elections in Malumfashi Local Government Area.	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	41.0	46	59.0	358	4.6

My party was able to initiate a well-organized campaign to generate considerable amount of money as levies during the conduct of the 2023 general elections in Malumfashi Local Government Area.	3	3.8	4	5.1	4	5.1	43	55.1	24	30.8	315	4.0
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(Field Survey 2026, Key: SD= Strongly Disagree; D= Disagree; UD= Undecided; A= Agree; SA= Strongly Agree)

Based on the data presented for RO1, which investigates the key sources of political party finance for APC and PDP in Malumfashi Local Government Area during the 2023 general elections, the results indicate that party funding was primarily derived from contributions by party members, supporters, and well-wishers rather than systematic membership dues alone. While the statement regarding all party members paying annual membership dues received a moderate mean of 3.0, suggesting a fairly neutral or mixed perception, other sources of funding were rated much higher. Grants from friends, supporters, and well-wishers had a mean of 4.2, reflecting strong agreement among respondents. Similarly, well-planned fundraising campaigns (mean = 4.4) and the receipt of money and campaign materials such as posters, banners, and billboards from supporters (mean = 4.6) were highly endorsed, showing that these were significant sources of finance. Additionally, organized levies during campaigns also contributed substantially (mean = 4.0). This shows that political party financing in Malumfashi Local Government Area during the 2023 general elections relied more on external support and organized fundraising than on regular membership dues. Respondents strongly agreed that parties received grants, campaign materials, and monetary contributions from supporters and well-wishers, while well-planned fundraising campaigns and levies also generated substantial funds. In contrast, annual membership dues were less consistently observed, with a mixed response from participants. This shows that party finances were primarily sustained through community support and strategic fundraising efforts rather than solely through internal membership contributions

RO₂: To investigate how financial inequalities between the APC and PDP affect the electoral performance of the two parties in Malumfashi Local Government Area during the 2023 general elections

Table 2: Respondents opinion on how financial inequalities between the APC and PDP affect the electoral performance of the two parties in Malumfashi Local Government Area during the 2023 general elections

Statements	SD		D		UD		A		SA		F(x)	Mean
APC was able to possessed more financial resources than PDP in Malumfashi Local Government Area during the conduct of the 2023 general elections	0	0	4	5.1	3	3.8	53	67.9	18	23.1	319	4.1
APC had more logistics support to take care of its logistics needs than PDP in Malumfashi Local Government	12	15.4	10	12.8	5	6.4	27	34.6	24	30.8	275	3.5

Area during the conduct of the 2023 general elections.													
Adequate finance has an effect on the performance of political parties in the 2023 general elections in Malumfashi Local Government. Since it offers parties the chance of propagating their messages	0	0	2	2.6	7	9.0	41	52.6	28	35.9	329	4.2	
Party finance determines which political party wins an election in Malumfashi Local Government Area during the conduct of 2023 general election. Since it gingers and incentivizes party officials to work more energetically.	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.3	37	47.4	39	50.0	347	4.4	

(Field Survey 2026, Key: SD= Strongly Disagree; D= Disagree; UD= Undecided; A= Agree; SA= Strongly Agree)

The respondents' opinions in Table 2 indicate that financial inequalities between the APC and PDP significantly influenced their electoral performance in Malumfashi Local Government Area during the 2023 general elections. A large majority of respondents (91.0%), reflected by a mean score of 4.1, agreed or strongly agreed that the APC possessed more financial resources than the PDP, demonstrating a clear funding disparity. This financial advantage was also evident in logistics support, where 65.4% of respondents (mean = 3.5) affirmed that the APC had superior capacity to meet campaign and election-day needs compared to the PDP. Furthermore, 88.5% of respondents, corresponding to a mean of 4.2, acknowledged that adequate finance positively affects party performance by enabling wider message dissemination and effective voter mobilization. Most notably, 97.4% of respondents (mean = 4.4) agreed that party finance determines electoral success by motivating party officials to work more vigorously and sustain campaign efforts. Collectively, the data show that greater financial and logistical resources enhanced the APC's campaign effectiveness and overall performance, highlighting the decisive role of party finance in elections. This reveals that the APC's superior financial resources and logistical support gave it a clear advantage over the PDP, which struggled with limited funding and campaign capacity. The high percentages of agreement and corresponding means across the statements confirm that financial strength not only enables effective campaign management and voter mobilization but also incentivizes party officials to work harder, ultimately shaping electoral outcomes in Malumfashi Local Government Area during the 2023 general elections.

RO₃: To proffer recommendations that would benefit government and other related stakeholders such as INEC in improving existing policies and regulations in place to ensure compliance and effective monitoring of Party finance.

Table 3: opinion of respondents on proffer recommendations that would benefit government and other related stakeholders such as INEC in improving existing policies and regulations in place to ensure compliance and effective monitoring of Party finance

Statements	SD		D		UD		A			SA	F(x)	Mean
There was unregulated use of party finance during the conduct of the 2023 general elections in Malumfashi Local Government Area	2	2.6	2	2.6	19	24.4	39	50.0	16	20.5	319	4.1
There should be strict compliance and enforcement of party finance regulations in election and non-election periods through a specialized and separate agency independent from INEC.	1	1.3	1	1.3	4	5.1	16	20.5	56	71.8	275	3.5

(Field Survey 2026, Key: SD= Strongly Disagree; D= Disagree; UD= Undecided; A= Agree; SA= Strongly Agree)

The respondents' opinions in Table 3 indicate a clear need for stronger regulation and monitoring of party finance to ensure compliance and accountability in Malumfashi Local Government Area. A majority of respondents (70.5%), reflected by a mean score of 4.1, agreed or strongly agreed that there was unregulated use of party finance during the 2023 general elections, suggesting lapses in oversight and potential misuse of funds. Furthermore, an overwhelming 92.3% of respondents (mean = 3.5) supported the establishment of a specialized and independent agency, separate from INEC, to enforce party finance regulations during both election and non-election periods. This indicates strong public perception that current policies and monitoring mechanisms are insufficient and that more robust, independent structures are required to promote transparency, compliance, and equitable management of party finances. This shows that unregulated party finance is a significant issue in Malumfashi Local Government Area, and there is broad consensus among respondents that stricter compliance measures and an independent regulatory body are necessary.

Discussion of Findings

- i. To investigate the key sources of political party finance of the APC and PDP in Malumfashi Local Government Area during the 2023 general elections. The findings show that membership dues were not a consistent or major source of party finance for APC and PDP in Malumfashi LGA. Instead, party funding during the 2023 general elections relied heavily on donations from supporters, organized fund-raising activities, and levies. Material support such as posters, banners, and billboards also constituted a significant source of campaign resources. This finding aligns with earlier studies which observed that political parties in Nigeria depend heavily on private donations and informal funding mechanisms rather than institutionalized membership contributions (Gallego & Wantchekon, 2017; Mendilow, 2018). Similar conclusions were reached by Etzioni (2021), who noted that weak internal financing structures push parties toward elite-driven and supporter-based funding, often undermining transparency and accountability.
- ii. To investigate how financial inequalities between the APC and PDP affect the electoral performance of the two parties in Malumfashi Local Government Area during the 2023 general elections. The results show that the APC enjoyed greater financial and logistical resources than the PDP during the 2023 elections in Malumfashi LGA. Adequate finance enhanced campaign outreach, logistics, and motivation of party officials. Consequently,

financial inequality significantly influenced the electoral performance and outcomes of the two parties. This finding corroborates previous research which emphasizes that access to financial resources significantly shapes electoral competitiveness and outcomes in developing democracies (Burgis, 2015; Donovan & Karp, 2017). Mendilow (2018) similarly argued that financial asymmetry among political parties often confers electoral advantages on well-funded parties, thereby distorting the level playing field expected in democratic contests.

- iii. To proffer recommendations that would benefit government and other related stakeholders such as INEC in improving existing policies and regulations in place to ensure compliance and effective monitoring of Party finance. The findings indicated that most respondents (70.5%) indicated that party finance was unregulated during the 2023 elections in Malumfashi LGA, showing weak enforcement of existing rules. An overwhelming 92.3% supported strict compliance with party finance regulations. Respondents strongly recommended creating an independent agency, separate from INEC, to effectively monitor and enforce party finance laws. This finding is consistent with earlier studies which identified weak enforcement mechanisms and institutional capacity constraints as major challenges to effective regulation of party finance in Nigeria (Dung, 2018; Bryant, 2022). Scholars such as Bunte and Ufen (2009) have similarly called for stronger, autonomous oversight institutions to curb abuses associated with political finance. Overall, the findings of this study reinforce existing literature while providing localized empirical evidence from Malumfashi LGA, thereby extending the discourse on political party finance, electoral competition, and regulation in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that political party financing played a decisive role in shaping electoral competition and outcomes during the 2023 general elections in Malumfashi Local Government Area. The study established that both the APC and PDP relied largely on informal and external sources of funding such as donations, fund-raising activities, levies, and material support, rather than stable internal mechanisms like membership dues. It further revealed that significant financial and logistical inequalities existed between the two parties, with the APC enjoying greater access to resources, which enhanced its campaign effectiveness and electoral performance. Additionally, the study found that party finance was largely unregulated due to weak enforcement of existing laws, prompting strong support among respondents for stricter compliance measures and the establishment of an independent regulatory body to oversee party finance. Overall, the study underscores the need for strengthened institutional frameworks, improved transparency, and effective regulation of political party finance to promote fairness, accountability, and democratic consolidation in Nigeria's electoral process.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The APC and PDP should strengthen their internal financing structures by enforcing regular payment of membership dues and subscriptions through transparent and traceable mechanisms, such as digital payment platforms. Parties should also institutionalize fund-raising activities by ensuring they are well-documented, publicly disclosed, and conducted in line with existing legal provisions. Additionally, clear

- guidelines should be developed to regulate material donations to ensure accountability and prevent undue influence by wealthy individuals or interest groups.
- ii. There is a need for policies that promote a more level playing field among political parties. The government, through relevant institutions, should consider introducing limited public funding or subsidies for political parties that meet basic eligibility criteria to reduce excessive dependence on private donors. Campaign spending limits should be strictly enforced to prevent financially dominant parties from overwhelming weaker ones. Furthermore, political parties should adopt internal measures to ensure equitable distribution of resources across wards and constituencies to enhance competitiveness and internal democracy.
 - iii. The establishment of an independent and specialized agency to oversee political party finance, separate from INEC, is strongly recommended to enhance neutrality and effectiveness. This agency should be empowered with investigative authority, adequate funding, and clear sanctions for violations. Additionally, continuous voter and party education on campaign finance laws should be intensified to improve compliance, transparency, and accountability in the political process.

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