

Comparative Costs of Candidate Nomination and Political Party Primaries in Nigeria: A Study of the PDP and APC (2019-2024)

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Abstracts

Elections in Nigeria have gradually shifted the democratic procedures towards resembling a marketplace, where the contender offering the highest financial bid emerged victorious. The arrangements for the 2023 general election, specifically the procurement of expressions of interest/nomination forms and party primaries, presented a potential threat of marginalizing candidates who lacked substantial wealth. By examining the costs linked to the nomination and party primary procedures within the All-Progressives Congress and the People's Democratic Party, this study delved into the degree to which financial motives influenced the Nigerian democratic system. The study employed a descriptive research design; depended on secondary sources of data and was analysed using thematic content analysis. Clientelism was utilized as a theoretical construct to expound upon this issue. It was found that the APC and PDP deliberately increased the costs of nominations to marginalize less affluent and economically disadvantaged competitors. This was evident in the extravagant use of dollars during the parties' primaries. In order to restore the integrity of nominations and party primaries in Nigeria, it was necessary to implement changes that extended beyond politics and involved civil society, the voters, international partners, and other stakeholders.

Keywords: Cost, Nomination forms, Delegates, Dollarization, Election, and Political parties' primaries.

1. Introduction

Democracy advocates consistently urge for accountability, transparency, and people-centric policies and programs to support the idea that this form of governance is superior and inevitable, however, the recent occurrences have portrayed a contrasting scenario (Lu & Chu, 2022).

Influential international actors have long grappled with the issue of political party recruitment, nomination, and financing of primaries. This problem stems from widespread electoral and political misconduct, which is deeply ingrained in the system, and the elusive characteristics of this phenomenon (Norris, 2018). Worldwide, there is ample documentation of transparency and misconduct in the

nomination and primary procedures of political parties. This problem is especially prominent in developing democracies, where weak institutions and a lack of political determination to address this particular cultural problem have now become the main causes of concern (Ohman, 2018).

Nigeria is recognized as a developing democracy, and the Fourth Republic has made notable advancements and remarkable achievements that are unprecedented in Nigerian political history. People who are participating often find comfort in this experience. In the last twenty-two years, Nigeria has carried out six successive elections, leading to the effective removal of the ruling party by the opposition (Sule et al., 2022). Notable advancements include increased freedom to voice personal opinions, the expansion of civil society's initiatives, the acknowledgement of dissent, and improvements in electoral procedures and conduct (Nwagwu et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the organization of party primaries remains a recurring and lamentable issue in Nigeria's electoral process. Concerns over undemocratic procedures, the excessive influence of affluent candidates, the weakening of the process, the presence of godfatherism, and other related impediments have plagued party primaries in Nigeria.

The ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) held party primaries in anticipation of the 2019 and 2023 general elections, surprising observers and revealing a significant risk of unduly commercializing the Nigerian primaries and nomination processes (Mudashir et al., 2022). The two major political parties consistently exclude those who are financially disadvantaged and not affluent from the process, as evidenced by the analysis of the expenses associated with expressions of interest and nomination forms. Furthermore, the party primaries reveal that only individuals with stupendous wealth can participate. This circumstance led many notable figures to describe the Nigerian primary elections for both the APC and PDP as an instance of democracy becoming commodified. The price for the expression of interest and nomination form for presidential candidates in the APC was N100 million (\$225,504.56), while the charge for the PDP was N40 million (\$103,732.10) (Vanguard Newspaper, 2022b). This illustrates the extreme difficulty faced by those with low incomes and those in the middle class when attempting to access positions of power. This study reveals that the widespread use of the US dollar has significantly impacted Nigerian democracy, giving those with the highest financial resources control over it. As a result, this undermines the principles of transparency and freedom of choice for both voters and their elected representatives. This paper investigates the issue, analyses its numerous aspects, and provides policy recommendation.

2. Theoretical Underpinning

The paper adopted clientelism as its theoretical foundation. Muno, (2014) avers that clientelism is a political-economic framework characterised by the exchange of incentives and favours throughout both the electoral process and governance. Latin American words 'Cluere' (meaning to listen and obey), 'Clientela' (referring to a group of individuals with representatives advocating for them in the public interest), and 'Patronus' (representing the patrons who support aristocrats through covert arrangements) form the basis of the term "clientelism". These words indicate the involvement of three main participants in the negotiation process, as well as seeking and exchanging favours (Stokes, 2007). Clientelism is the practice of giving favours and resources during various phases of an election, including before, during, and after. Gans-Morse et al. (2014) developed this model over multiple stages. His initial stage of the study was in Europe (Isaksson & Bigsten, 2013; Muno, 2014; Stocks, 2013b). The first phase is considered to be limited to Europe because a significant number of countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean were either colonised by European states or ruled by authoritarian governments. These nascent and evolving nations did not completely create a democratic system. Clientelism has been a long-established tradition in Europe, originating from the era of Greek democracy and the Roman system. Therefore, with the heightened accountability, openness, and representation of contemporary liberal institutions, one would expect a decline in the frequency of clientelism in Europe. Unfortunately, clientelism is prevalent across Europe.

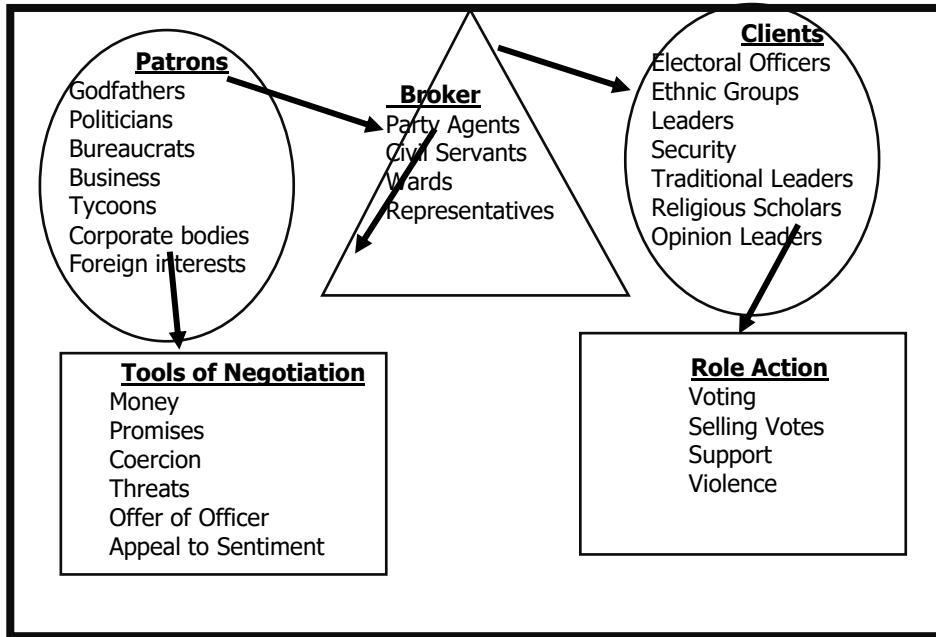
The second phase predominantly concentrates on Europe and America (Brun, 2014; Szwarcberg, 2015; Wang, 2014). During this age, America embraced a democratic government inside a liberal framework. The extent of affluence within a population exerts a significant influence on the American democratic system due to the formidable influence of financial resources (Ufen, 2014). Nevertheless, the American political landscape and election protocols have deficiencies in upholding the core tenets of liberal democracy, such as responsibility, transparency, the integrity of democratic institutions, and inclusive governance, particularly in relation to party financing. Currently, America's advancements in promoting global democracy exceed those of Europe. Nevertheless, European nations, especially those in Western Europe, persist in collaborating with and supporting the United States in its endeavours to advance liberal democracy on a global scale (Szwarcberg, 2015). Moreover, this era is limited to America and Europe, while developing democracies did not experience democratisation processes during that time.

The third phase of examining the paradigm of clientelism expands its scope to include African countries, Asia, South America, and the Caribbean. Researchers like Abdallah (2017), Aspinall & Berenschot (2019), Aspinall & Sukmajati (2019), Cendales et al. (2019), De Elvira et al. (2019), Kuo (2018), Mendilow & Phelippeau (2018), and Nichter (2018) support this expansion. This era is considered the pinnacle of clientelism's advancement due to the concurrent existence of the fourth wave of democracy. The colonial era witnessed the liberation of African, Asian, Eastern European, Latin American, and Caribbean territories. Consequently, numerous nascent nations surfaced, with a majority opting for diverse Western democratic frameworks like parliamentary, presidential, federal, unitary, confederal, or trusteeship systems (Nichter, 2018). These emerging nations are presently engrossed in the continuous endeavour of instituting democratic establishments and structuring political factions and electoral processes. The author further contends that electoral activities and party financing in these regions are significantly influenced by practices such as money politics, vote-buying, extravagant spending, bribery, corruption, and tactics tailored to specific cohorts. However, it is essential to acknowledge the ubiquity of clientelism not only in Europe but also in America. This examination postulates that the diffusion of clientelism occurs concurrently from European customs to democratic setups in America and various global regions.

Clientelism is observable in the process of persuasion and bargaining among patrons (such as politicians and influential individuals), intermediaries (including political operatives and representatives of prominent political figures and parties) and clients (comprising of voters and the general populace). This process encompasses the provision of benefits in the form of monetary resources or commodities, the pledge of a reward or sanction, and the enforcement of repercussions. On occasions, authorities resort to coercion and intimidation to induce compliance among the electorate. Citizens in emerging democracies like Indonesia and Nigeria frequently accept poverty and lack as primary determinants (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019). Conversely, in developed democracies, cultural affinities, personal advantages and the expectation of future acknowledgement are the key motivators for negotiation and exerting influence. Various efforts have been made to illustrate the scenario of clientelism in Nigeria, predominantly sustained by influential political figures and affluent individuals throughout the electoral process (Sule et al., 2018).

In the Nigerian context, there is a deliberate effort to set the price of expression of interest and nomination forms, as well as the cost of party primaries at a level that only the affluent and high-ranking political officials can afford. Negotiators promise rewards, favours, and other perks to executives in order to manipulate the outcome. In party primaries, the unrestricted flow of money within the election venue vividly demonstrates the presence of clientelism in Nigeria. The affluent and influential national politicians engaged in a competition to acquire delegates through monetary means, thereby commercialising the entire system, including the primary elections. Wealthy individuals make diligent efforts to support the most affluent candidates in the APC and PDP parties to gain the presidential ticket. Similar occurrences are observed in other political positions but they are not as excessive or extravagant as in presidential elections. The graphic below provides a comprehensive

illustration of the process of clientelism in the Nigerian setting (figure 1), aiming to enhance comprehension of its mechanisms.



Source: Adapted from Mohammed et al (2024), and remodified by the Researchers (2024).

Literature Review

This section diligently and systematically examines crucial subjects relevant to the title of the study, drawing upon contemporary literature within the field. The literature is dissected thematically with a focus on areas concerning party primaries and the impact of financial resources on political matters. This research has provided a notable insight by pinpointing a gap in research regarding the financing of political parties in Nigeria. There is a scarcity of research that has specifically delved into the expenses associated with expressions of interest and nomination forms. Particularly, the general elections of 2019 and 2023 represent recent and unexplored occurrences with their procedures introducing a distinctive phenomenon that distinguishes them from preceding elections. This investigation underscores a noteworthy escalation in the expenses of forms for party primaries in Nigeria, a phenomenon unparalleled in records. It illustrates the considerable rise in costs linked to these forms.

Political Parties' Primaries

Political parties serve as the primary force in the democratic system, playing a crucial role in facilitating political participation and electoral competition. They formulate and institutionalize ideologies and manifestos, in addition to enlisting and educating both fresh and existing members to cultivate leadership skills and accumulate experience. Of utmost significance is the provision of avenues for representation on a public platform. The adoption of party primaries serves as a manifestation of the shift made by local party officials in the process of choosing candidates for national political competitions. This idea, which originated in the United States, is employed to explain this evolution (Maisel, 2022). People often use it as a synonym for concepts such as party leadership races, legislative candidate choices, and candidate pre-approvals. Although different nations interpret the term diversely, it pertains to the same process (Cross et al., 2016). In their research, Sandri and Seddone (2015) consider party primaries as a means of developing and promoting intra-party democracy, as well as facilitating internal decision-making and agreement. The prevalence of democratic government in the

21st century has driven the global proliferation of internal democracy and party primaries across all continents in the modern age.

In most contemporary democracies, the process of picking party leaders is primarily done through the party caucus or executives, with some notable exceptions where party followers and delegates are engaged (Kenig et al., 2015). Cross et al. (2016) conducted research, highlighting that more than 90% of democracies globally choose party candidates through delegates who exhibit party loyalty. Political parties solely finance party primaries without any governmental intervention, unlike other countries where funds are allocated for general elections. Political party primaries are more cost-effective than general elections.

Legislative regulations outlined in the 1999 Constitution and the recently amended Electoral Act of 2022 supervise the regulation of party primaries in Nigeria. Sections 1 and 2 of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) outline the laws and procedures for organising and conducting party primaries. The regulations define a specific schedule for organizing party primaries. This includes the processes, legal requirements, prerequisites, and other relevant issues (Abba & Babalola, 2017). The significant challenges facing party primaries in Nigeria include the presence of patronage networks, clientelism, financial influences, electoral malpractice, inducement, violence, authoritative impositions, deficiencies in internal democratic processes, ethnic biases, religious sentiments, and regional loyalties (Sule, 2022). Furthermore, an in-depth examination was conducted on the significant utilization of financial assets during the 2019 APC and PDP party primaries. This entailed the procurement of delegates by the major political parties, with each delegate incurring a cost of \$5,000. The present scrutiny is focused on the electoral cycles of 2019 and 2023, necessitating an expansion of research endeavours. The concept of transparency within Nigeria's democratic framework necessitates a critical re-evaluation and scrutiny due to the exorbitant costs associated with declaring interest and receiving nominations, the prevalent practice of financial inducements and vote-buying, and the increasing dependency on the use of foreign currency in the electoral process.

Cost of Nomination Forms

The expression of interest and nomination form fees allude to the monetary payments made by individuals aspiring to represent their political party in the major elections. Acquiring expressions of interest and nomination forms enables party members to take part in internal party primaries. The cost of declarations of interest and nomination forms varies across different political parties. The purpose of expression of interest and nomination forms is to provide an opportunity for party members to express their desire to represent their political parties in the main elections. However, the rising cost of these forms among Nigeria's major political parties has become a detrimental factor that hinders inclusive political participation in the Fourth Republic.

According to Olarinmoye, (2008), political parties have taken advantage of election seasons to generate revenue by selling expressions of interest and nomination forms to candidates. The total amount considered the maximum for election expenditure does not include the costs associated with these forms. Nevertheless, these items are available for purchase at excessively high prices, rendering them accessible only to those of considerable wealth. Although it is logical to require finances to ensure that only committed candidates receive them, the exorbitant expense hinders people from participating in politics. The expenses for indicating interest and submitting nomination forms in recent years have become unaffordable for party members. This has resulted in the elimination of a significant number of potential candidates and has prevented loyal party members from participating in government as elected officials.

Money Politics

Democracy is a costly system of governance that necessitates substantial financial investment from candidates and competitors in order to have a significant impact. Countries around the world recognized this trend and implemented legislative structures and laws to regulate political spending,

ensuring it remains at a respectable level, to prevent the unfair advantage of wealthier candidates. Globally, finances play a crucial role in influencing the outcome of party primaries and even general elections. The studies conducted by Ohman (2014) and Ufen (2014) offer empirical evidence to substantiate the assertion that money plays a pivotal role in assisting candidates in obtaining party nominations, financing campaign expenditures, and finally attaining electoral triumph. These studies conducted comprehensive field surveys on all continents. Moreso, because of the inflationary tendency, costs associated with media advertisements, jingles, posters, billboards, rallies, and other connected expenses are excessively high however, candidates are obligated to adhere to these procedures. The problem of incurring substantial expenses during elections necessitates immediate changes and the establishment of a legislative policy framework to control this issue. The objective is to restore the integrity and transparency of democracy on a worldwide scale (Ohman, 2018). Party finances pose a significant challenge for key individuals involved in promoting democratic good governance.

In Nigeria, the influence of money in politics is evident in all elections. During the electoral festival, financial transactions influence all collaborating parties through the exchange of substantial sums of money (Sule et al., 2018). Money politics in Nigeria are influenced by a variety of factors, including severe deprivation, widespread poverty, illiteracy, a political culture that prioritises winning at all costs, and clientelism (Dauda et al., 2019). Godfathers participate in money politics by distributing money and offering bribes to election officials, security agencies, and other important individuals or groups (Nwagwu et al., 2022). For example, Sule et al. (2018) documented that the Uba family in Anambra financed the campaign expenses of governors in the state through the use of funds, intimidation, physical force, bribery, and corrupt practices. Sule et al. (2018) also revealed that Diezani Allison Maduekwe, the former Minister of Petroleum, bribed INEC officials with N34 billion to grant the PDP preferential treatment during the 2015 General Election. Additionally, Dasuki, a former National Security Adviser, misappropriated \$2.1 billion that was intended for purchasing weapons to combat the Boko Haram insurgency and instead used it for the PDP presidential campaign in 2015 (Atakpa, 2023). The influence of money in politics hinders the effective implementation of good governance in several ways. Vote-buying marginalizes credible candidates in favour of wealthier ones, while the population endures violence, rigging and manipulation, opposition suppression, and the denial of fair political opportunities (Sule, 2022).

3. Research Methodology

The study employs a descriptive research design and depends on secondary sources of data, by examining the specific expenses associated with the 2019 and 2023 general elections, focusing on the cost comparison of tickets for political party primaries between the APC and PDP. The sources include academic journals, official publications, internet resources, the revised 1999 Nigerian Constitution, the 2022 Electoral Act and newspapers. Internet sources, including those from the United Nations, significantly contributing to research resources. The gathered data is analysed using content analysis tools to undergo thorough scrutiny. The text adequately refers to earlier research to address the gap and its contribution. The theoretical framework chosen is examined concerning the existing literature and findings.

4. Discussion of Findings

This section presents a qualitative and content analysis of the key issues. It is categorised and organised into thematic groups to provide a coherent and systematic representation of factual information and concepts. The three primary themes identified are as follows:

Examining the Expenses of Political Party Nomination Beyond the Majority

The exorbitant fees linked to expressing interest and submitting nominations for the party primaries of the APC and PDP in 2019 and 2023 caused concern among observers and posed a substantial risk of fully commercializing the Nigerian election process, thereby favouring individuals with the greatest

financial means. Although the "not too young to run" law was enacted before the 2019 general election, allowing individuals as young as 25 to run for senatorial seats, the exorbitant financial requirements imposed by the two main political parties suggest a deliberate effort to discourage young people and other eligible candidates from participating. The expensive cost of nomination tickets has significantly risen, acting as a disincentive for economically disadvantaged party members, especially young individuals and women, who aspire to take part in the campaign. From 2019 to 2023, the cost tripled, as indicated by Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Cost Comparison of Tickets for the Party Primaries in the APC and PDP for the 2019 Elections.

| Position | APC | PDP |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Presidential ticket | N45 million (\$101520.55) | N12 million (\$27072.15) |
| Governorship candidate | N22.5 million (\$50760.27) | N6 million (\$13536.07) |
| Senate | N7 million (\$15792.09) | N4 million (\$9024.05) |
| House of representatives | N3.85 million (\$8685.65) | N1.5 million (\$3384.02) |
| State house of assembly | N850, 000 (\$1917.61) | N600, 000 (\$1353.61) |

Source: Lawal, (2018) Conversion into dollars was made by the Researchers.

Table 2: Cost Comparison of Tickets for the Party Primaries in the APC and PDP for the 2023 Elections.

| Position | APC | PDP |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Presidential ticket | N100 million (\$240,884) | N40 million (\$68,376) |
| Governorship candidate | N50 million (\$85,470) | N21 million (\$35,897) |
| Senate | N20 million (\$34,188) | N3.5 million (\$5,982) |
| House of representatives | N10 million (\$17,094) | N2.5 million (\$4,273) |
| State house of assembly | N2 million (\$3,418) | N1.5 million (\$2,564) |

Source: Itodo, (2022). Conversion into dollars was made by the Researchers.

The tables illustrate the extent to which the process of expressing interests and submitting nomination forms for the APC and PDP in 2023 became monetized, appearing to be beyond the reach of ordinary politicians. It is surprising that in the annals of Nigeria's party primaries, there has never been a time when aspirants purchased the forms, as high as what obtained in 2023. For N100 million (\$240,884) each, approximately 28 aspirants purchased the forms, and 25 of them returned it (Vanguard Newspaper, 2022a). The new electoral law mandates that any prospective candidate must resign from a public or political office. Consequently, the Minister of Labour, Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, and Minister of State for Petroleum declined to submit their forms after spending N100 million (currently \$240,884) to acquire it (Vanguard Newspaper, 2022b).

According to Vanguard Newspaper (2022b), the most vexing issue is the impolite and offensive replies provided by the APC party chairman when questioned about the exorbitant price of candidates' nomination forms. The Chairman of the APC said that their "party nomination was not intended for the poor and ordinary Nigerians; politics is reserved for the affluent." In addition, he asserted that a candidate who is unable to rally supporters to cover the expenses of the nomination form is not a genuine contestant (Maishanu, 2022). The APC then offered a 40% discount to female and youth candidates; nonetheless, it is unfair to allow weak and disadvantaged groups to take part. This demonstrates the existence of clientelism in the Nigerian party primaries.

In the 2019 general election, a total of 23,000 candidates contested for diverse elected positions, ranging from the Presidency to the State Houses of Assembly. The electoral process observed the involvement of 91 officially registered political organizations. These political bodies presented 73 candidates for the Presidential position, 73 aspirants for the Vice-Presidential role, 1,064 contenders for the gubernatorial competition, 1,064 individuals vying for the Deputy Governorship positions,

1,903 participants competing for seats in the Senate, 4,703 hopefuls running for positions in the House of Representatives, 14,643 candidates seeking membership in State Houses of Assembly, 105 individuals aiming for the Chairperson position in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, along with 701 others. The total revenue accrued from the purchase of nomination forms reached N6.9 billion for the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC). This amount included N45 billion received from the sale of nomination forms for President Buhari, N3.59 billion from 160 gubernatorial candidates, N1.95 billion from senatorial candidates' expressions of interest and nominations, and N1.39 billion from House of Representatives members (Okakwu, 2021).

The data mentioned above do not account for the considerable expenses associated with the nomination of state houses of assembly, amounting to billions of naira. In comparison, the PDP received nearly N3 billion from the sales of nomination forms during the 2019 primaries, as reported by the party's headquarters in Abuja (Mudashir, et al. 2022, May 13). During the 2023 primaries, the APC raised billions of dollars from the sale of candidacy forms. The total cost for the expression and nomination procedure during 2023 reached N100 million. The political party sold the presidential nomination forms to more than 25 candidates, resulting in a revenue of approximately N2 billion (Sule, 2023). In the 2023 primaries, the APC made a total of N30 billion from the sales of expressions of interest and nomination forms (Uwugiaren & Akinwale, 2023). It is anticipated that the primary opposition party, the PDP, garnered approximately N17.3 billion from the sale of nomination forms for all elected positions.

1. Delegates and the Dollarization in Nigerian Party Primaries

The party primaries in Nigeria differ depending on the constitutions of the various parties. Within the two main political parties, there are three recognised methods: direct primaries, including all party members; delegate-based primaries; or consensus-based selection. The PDP primaries involve delegates' participation and the formation of a consensus. Under the APC, President Buhari emerged as the presidential candidate in 2019 through direct primaries. According to the APC, he received a total of 14,842,072 votes from the 35 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Abuja, securing his position as the party's candidate in the 2019 presidential election (Alechenu, 2018).

Delegates are commonly used in party primaries. During the 2022 primaries, the delegates became vulnerable to being bought by the highest bids. According to reports from the convention arena in Eagle Square, Abuja, respective candidates provided sums of \$5,000, \$10,000 and even \$15,000 to the delegates to obtain their votes (Adedayo, 2022). Just before the APC convention, the situation caused a significant depreciation of the naira against the dollar. In March and April 2022, the naira exchange rate in the black market ranged from N550 to N570. However, just one week before the APC and PDP conventions, the exchange rate reached an unprecedented high of N595. Politicians hoarded dollars to purchase delegates, causing this increase.

The last concluded primaries of APC and PDP were characterised by blatant clientelism as delegates engaged in negotiations through intermediaries to secure support for certain candidates in exchange for promised monetary rewards. Upon achieving victory, they assured others of favour and reward. The risk associated with party primaries is that the selection of candidates is based on the greatest financial offers rather than their credibility, which hinders the attainment of effective governance (Nwagwu et al., 2022). The irresponsible conduct of politicians during the primaries undermines the Nigerian economy (Mudashir et al., 2022). The economy which is already in a state of struggle, is further deteriorating, leading to a loss of confidence in the prospect of competent leaders. This, in turn, gives rise to bribery and electoral corruption, which will exacerbate political corruption and clientelism.

2. The Costly Nomination Process and Political Party Primaries: Implications for Nigeria's Democracy

The astronomical expenses associated with candidate nomination and political party primaries in Nigeria, specifically within the PDP and APC between 2019 and 2024, have significant consequences for the country's efforts to strengthen its democratic system. Primarily, it restricts political participation. The costly nomination forms effectively bar several potential candidates, especially younger and less affluent citizens, from engaging in the political process. Every person should have the opportunity to participate in political candidature, a fundamental principle of inclusive democracy (Abubakar et al., 2023). It is further argued that the exorbitant costs are indicative of the commodification of politics, transforming elections into a marketplace that is accessible primarily to the wealthy. This phenomenon erodes the credibility of democratic procedures and cultivates a mentality that perceives political posts as financial ventures rather than public service responsibilities. Furthermore, the matter of corruption and accountability emerges: candidates who spend substantial amounts of money to get nominations may face coercion to recoup their investments through unlawful methods after they assume government. This trend erodes the principles of responsibility and openness, which are essential elements of a robust democratic system. Finally, the exorbitant expenses can also lead to frequent desertions among politicians who pursue more economical or advantageous platforms, thereby destabilizing party structures and undermining political cohesion. Collectively, these factors slow down the process of democratic consolidation by creating an environment that gives political power to the wealthy elite. This makes the political system less open to everyone and more flexible.

The high expenses associated with nomination forms and the generally costly nature of the nomination procedure in Nigerian political party primaries carry significant implications for the democratic landscape of the country:

1. The imposition of high fees for nomination forms acts as a deterrent for numerous competent individuals, thus hindering their involvement in the political sphere. This practice effectively bars those lacking substantial financial means, consequently eroding the fundamental democratic value of inclusive participation (Mohammed & Danbaba, 2023).
2. The phenomenon of commercialization of politics is increasingly prevalent in Nigeria. The imposition of nomination fees and the overall financial demands of electoral activities render politics accessible primarily to affluent individuals capable of making significant financial investments. This trend results in elections being transformed into a marketplace where positions are essentially purchased by the highest bidder, thereby jeopardizing the integrity of democratic processes (Sambo, et al, 2024).
3. The repercussions of this situation on governance are noteworthy. Candidates who successfully secure nominations often seek to recover their investments by engaging in corrupt behaviours post-election. This cycle can perpetuate poor governance practices and diminish public confidence in democratic institutions.

The escalation of nomination fees diminishes political competition within parties by limiting the pool of contenders to those with financial capabilities. Consequently, less qualified individuals are frequently nominated due to their financial resources rather than merit or popular appeal. It is imperative to address these challenges to fortify Nigeria's democracy and ensure that the political arena genuinely reflects the population and encourages inclusivity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper argues that the political party primaries conducted in 2023 by Nigerian political parties, especially the APC and PDP, present a substantial threat to the fundamental values of accountability and transparency in the country's democracy and promote clientelism, which has significant influence and dominates the party primary process, mirroring its impact in other countries worldwide. The deliberate design of these political party primaries favors the wealthy and the ruling class exclusively. Because nomination forms are prohibitively expensive, politicians and political parties disproportionately exclude ordinary and disadvantaged people, particularly youth and women, from

the nomination process. This unethical practice of buying votes in a currency-based electoral system intensifies the carefully devised strategy to remove any opponents who are not extraordinarily affluent. At the moment, Nigerians are unable to attain trustworthy options, competent administration, and accountable representation, and until participants constantly execute changes, these objectives will remain unachievable.

Based on the findings, the paper recommends the following, examining possible enhancement beyond existing policies:

1. It is critical to establish openness to address the issue examined in this study. However, attaining transparency is a challenge that extends beyond the realm of policy-making, since officials are unlikely to endorse measures that would restrict their questionable acts and transactions. To effectively combat election corruption, clientelism and money politics, it is necessary to implement comprehensive reforms that include punishments, regulations, citizen oversight and robust election management bodies at both the global and local levels. Several scholars (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019; Cendales et al., 2019; Davies, 2021; and Sule et al., 2022) posit that immediate action is necessary to tackle the threat of money politics and corruption, which erode democratic good governance and transparency. They urge for the implementation of local and international reforms that involve the participation of citizens, local and international observers, strict regulations on maximum spending limits, effective monitoring, sanctions and other measures.
2. Any attempt at change will be unsuccessful if it lacks adaptability and fails to effectively involve all the parties. The aspiration to avoid illicit political transactions and financial misconduct in the party primaries should extend beyond just theoretical improvements. It is critical to raise awareness among individuals about the perils of their activities as it is imperative to abstain from such unethical behaviours before the issue escalates.
3. To achieve significant, pragmatic and effective changes in election integrity and to reduce corrupt activities like delegate purchasing and vote-buying, a comprehensive strategy is necessary (Norris, 2018). Norris suggests that the following actions should be taken: a thorough examination of laws, bolstering electoral management bodies, allowing international observers, promoting active domestic civil societies, ensuring well-informed citizens, implementing effective monitoring systems, imposing sufficient penalties to discourage corruption, fostering international cooperation, endorsing treaties and conventions on corruption and fraud, and establishing connections with organisations and institutions focused on accountability and transparency (Norris, 2018). These steps will significantly aid in preventing corruption and the influence of money in Nigerian politics.
4. The paper strongly advocates for comprehensive tripartite changes that encompass policy, international cooperation, the active participation of citizens, domestic observers and civil society. These reforms should also include rigorous monitoring and stringent punishments.

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